

Track Listing:

1. Chance [03:22]
2. Links [05:36]
3. Desnudo [04:50]
4. A Modern Memory [05:26]
5. Tenderly [05:27] *Comp: Walter Gross*
6. Reaching Out for More [04:58]
7. I Hear a Rhapsody [04:37] *Comp: Fragos, Baker, Gasparre*
8. Reconnected [06:37]

All original compositions and arrangements by Altin Sencalar unless otherwise noted.

Personnel:

Altin Sencalar - Trombone & Euphonium
Utah Hamrick - Bass
Daniel Dufour - Drum Set

Special Guests:

Roxy Coss - Saxophone (Track 6)
Pete Rodriguez - Flugelhorn (Track 2)

Recorded At:

Orb Studios ATX - Engineer: George Shalda
Frontera Chica Recording Studios - Engineer: Eliud Garcia

Mixing Engineer: Nathan Borton

Mastering Engineer: JJ Golden Mastering

Album Photography: Sarah Milligan Arts

Album Design: Lauren Brumbach Art & Design LLC & Justin Smith

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ALTIN SENCALAR RECONNECTED

IN 2025

ALTIN SENCALAR

RECONNECTED

Thanks David!

Linear notes
were Great!

UTAH HAMRICK
DANIEL DUFOUR

WITH
ROXY COSS
PETE RODRIGUEZ

Jazz musicians hail from all over the globe, but history has also produced generations of American players who contain the globe within them, so to speak. Trombonist Altin Sencalar is one: born in California, raised in Texas, with a graduate degree from Michigan State, now the Director of Jazz Ensembles and Adjunct Professor of Trombone at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. In 2020, with fellow trombonist and schoolmate Chris Glassman, he released the Sencalar-Glassman Quintet's debut album *Realization*, featuring MSU mentors Rodney Whitaker and Michael Dease. With *Reconnected*, Sencalar appears under his own name and undertakes a different mission: to pay homage to his combined Mexican and Turkish ancestry, as well as his solid and growing roots in the soil of the jazz tradition itself.

For this outing, Sencalar made the bold choice of a trio with no chordal instrument. It's a common format for saxophone, less common for trumpet, rarer still for trombone. But Sencalar, in the company of bassist Utah Hamrick and drummer Daniel Dufour, has the resources he needs: a big sound, a keen rhythmic sense and a body of original music that can shine in a context as texturally spare as this.

The title *Reconnected* has meaning on more than one level. First, it refers to Sencalar's roots, his connections to the grandfathers he holds so dear. On his mother's side, John Fernando García, who passed away in late December 2020, was a father figure and a mentor: he and Sencalar talked four or five times per week for years. "People say I'm exactly like him down to every mannerism," the trombonist says. "I was his first grandchild. We both were born in California and moved to Texas to be with family at a young age. He was a really big inspiration for me to pursue what I want to do."

"Desnudo" was written for the late Mr. García and inspired by the experience of his funeral, during which a conjunto (accordion) player performed the Mexican standard "Un Puno de Tierra" (roughly, "a fist full of dirt"). "It's about how you depart from the earth bare, with nothing more than dirt over you. I called my song 'Desnudo' as it translates to bare or naked, uncovered. The song itself is about building up to that shift in beat. I wanted to go into a 2-3 Son Salsa groove. I chose that feel because it's somewhat tension-filled, which is how dancing can be."

With the title track, "*Reconnected*," Sencalar honors his paternal grandfather, Bülent Şençalar, a noted qanun (box zither) player in Turkey. Grandfather and grandson share a surname, although Altin's is pronounced, in his words, "the Irish way": Sen-Claire. In Turkish, Şençalar is Shen-cha-lar, which translates loosely as "gold entertainer/music maker" according to Sencalar's father, Ates Bulent Sencalar. "The name originally came from being curators for dancing at social gatherings. That's why I wanted to incorporate dance elements and tempos in all the pieces, in order to bring out that entertainment aspect of playing jazz." There's a video of Bülent Şençalar playing a gorgeous virtuosic solo on qanun while sitting casually in his dining room. Sencalar learned the melodic elements and transformed them into his own "*Reconnected*," which subtly combines Spanish and Turkish influences with a '60s Coltrane aesthetic. "Now that I'm exploring my unique heritage and how it all relates," he says, "I'm really seeing the genius of my Turkish grandfather's music."

It stands to reason, as 2020 gives way to 2021, that *Reconnected* would also mean simply getting in touch, finding a way back to normal as musicians renew relationships with their esteemed peers. In that (*cont'd*)

spirit, Sencalar invites Pete Rodriguez to contribute flugelhorn on "Links," a piece inspired by Cedar Walton's "Firm Roots" but with a samba twist. "Pete got me my first gig as a leader at 18 at a venue in Austin, Texas called The Brass House," Sencalar recalls. "He was an early mentor in my career and I still consider him one." And tenor saxophonist Roxy Coss, another top-tier leader in her own right, makes a fine showing on Sencalar's rhythmically intriguing post-bop invention "Reaching Out for More": "I've always admired Roxy's playing and her mission for the world, and I wanted to make a connection during times like these."

The swinging "I Hear a Rhapsody" and the ballad "Tenderly" shine a light on Sencalar's refined interpretive ability with standards. Listen closely for a different sound and approach on "Tenderly": Sencalar is playing his first instrument, euphonium. "I started my band career on euphonium and I still try to involve it in my professional life," he says. "I think about how things are played on euphonium and then put them on trombone, even to this day. The main difference is that I don't think about trombone when I play euphonium — I think about Rich Matteson, Nat Adderley and Chet Baker. I really cater to that valve kind of vibe and try to use that same nuance. I think with more simplicity and warmth in my soloing, which is why I played the ballad on it. It's a beautiful instrument and I try to bring trombone and euphonium together when possible, as it's a beautiful texture."

But the sound that Sencalar foregrounds on *Reconnected* is the core trio with Hamrick and Dufour. The three of them shine as soloists and execute at a high level on demanding fare like Sencalar's opener "Chance," which almost puts one in mind of the New York loft scene of the '70s. There's a spaciousness in the group's sound: Dufour's earthy, animated sticking complements the assertive bass lines that Sencalar doubles with Hamrick — and Sencalar is not shy about making the trombone shout, hitting those braying low notes when the music needs. As Hamrick starts to solo and departs from the bass line, Sencalar picks it up, with consummate tonal control and a deeply rooted beat. Relatedly, his tuneful legato on "A Modern Memory," a boppish midtempo vehicle with hip, precise accents, highlights his instrumental command from another angle. Hamrick is the first to solo, a nice twist.

Having *Reconnected* in this probing, engaged way with his family heritage, his fellow musicians and his own evolving voice on the trombone, Sencalar can take satisfaction in the thought that he's done John Fernando García and Bülent Şençalar proud. Hailing from different cultures at great distances apart, the two men share a spiritual unity in their common grandson. *Reconnected* is Sencalar's way of giving back, learning about himself in the process as he plans the next steps in his artistic journey.

— David R. Adler

This album is in dedication to my grandfathers, John Fernando García who passed on Dec 28th, 2020 and Bulent Sencalar who resides in Turkey. They have enabled me to pursue my heritage and make music out of it. For that I thank them dearly.