

1. **Thoughts Become Things** 3:54
2. **October** 6:20
3. **Brand New** 4:19
4. **Karma** 5:49
5. **Let Go** 7:31
6. **Inheritance** 8:08
7. **Polka Dots and Moonbeams** 7:56
8. **What Do We Need?** 6:47

All songs composed by Victor Gould except
Polka Dots and Moonbeams composed
by Jimmy Van-Heusen

VICTOR GOULD - Piano/Composer
JEREMY PELT - Trumpet
GODWIN LOUIS - Alto Sax/Soprano Sax
DAYNA STEPHENS - Tenor Sax
ANNE DRUMMOND - Flute/Alto Flute
VICENTE ARCHER - Bass
RODNEY GREEN - Drums
LUCAS PINO - Bass Clarinet
AARON JOHNSON - Bass Trombone
YOOJIN PARK - Violin
JIM TSAO - Violin
JOCELIN PAN - Viola
SUSAN MANDEL - Cello
ISMEL WIGNALL - Percussion

BRM Blue Room Music 1006

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 JEREMY PELT - Co-producer

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VICTOR GOULD | THOUGHTS BECOME THINGS

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THOUGHTS
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with
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Much has elapsed since pianist Victor Gould issued his debut *Clockwork* in 2016, followed by *Earthlings* in 2018. Of particular note: his membership in a superb recording and road band led by trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, documented on *Make Noise!*, *Noir en Rouge: Live in Paris* and *Jeremy Pelt The Artist*. The bassist in Pelt's group, Vicente Archer, seemed ideal to shore up the rhythm section on Gould's third outing, *Thoughts Become Things*, along with the highly interactive and spirited drummer Rodney Green — a player with “brilliant instincts,” Gould offers, “whose first priority is being very sensitive to what makes the music sound good.” And Pelt appears here as well, as he did on *Clockwork*, as part of a compact and richly voiced reed and brass section also featuring flutist Anne Drummond, alto saxophonist Godwin Louis and tenor saxophonist Dayna Stephens.

That's not all, however: a full string quartet, along with Lucas Pino on bass clarinet and Aaron Johnson on bass trombone, deepens the intricacy of Gould's orchestrations, and Ismel Wignall (from Pelt's group as well) provides the element of percussion that's been present on every Gould outing to date. While *Thoughts Become Things* features Gould's piano virtuosity more prominently than *Clockwork* did, there's a comparably ambitious scope in terms of instrumentation overall. It's central to what Gould is hearing as a composer.

“I've been thinking recently about how we manifest our own future,” Gould says of the title *Thoughts Become Things*, “and how our thoughts mold our reality, both negative and positive. That goes for art and new ideas but also socially.” Throughout the album, on the title track as well as “Karma,” “Let Go” and “What Do We Need,” Gould engages with this theme, broadening the perspective to humanity at large, anchoring everything in what he calls “the simplest rule: just to be kind to everyone and think positively.”

Gould made the decision to feature only one horn soloist per song, giving each their own platform to shape at will. On “Karma” we hear the burning swing and mercurial grace of Godwin Louis on alto, a key presence on *Clockwork* and *Earthlings*, not to mention Gould's closest friend and ally in music and life. On the calmly rolling “Let Go” Dayna Stephens steps forward on tenor, after Gould's own thorough and absorbing exposition. Pelt is featured on “Inheritance” as well as the album's one standard, a stark and beautiful duet reading of “Polka Dots and Moonbeams.”

"At some point on tour Jeremy and I started doing encores as a duo," Gould says, "and we continue to do that sometimes. 'Polka Dots and Moonbeams' was one of our go-to encore songs." The title has a certain abstract ring in keeping with the album's theme, he maintains: "It reminds people to be creative, rather than think of things that are already existing, when instead you can think of whatever you want. We tend to be nailed down by our thoughts, which are influenced so much by what's already here. If we can just think of new things, then that's how we move forward."

After a haunting string quartet introduction and searing piano solo from the leader on "October," Anne Drummond's alto flute emerges as a major focus. "She's taking a lot of melodies on the entire record in fact," Gould observes. "I was hearing her unique way of playing; her vibrato is very soulful and human. My dad is a flutist, and that instrument is really important to me. I grew up listening to Hubert Laws, James Spaulding, Frank Wess, Yusef Lateef."

Percussion is the other unmissable ingredient in Gould's music, and Wignall's contribution, so central to the riveting pulse of "Inheritance" and "What Do We Need," continues a thread begun by Pedrito Martinez on *Clockwork* and Kahlil Kwame Bell on *Earthlings*. "I really love to accentuate the connection between the swing feel and African drums," Gould says. "The percussionists I've worked with so far have really accentuated African rhythm, and that's an important connection to me."

Gould's melodic gift is never more evident than on the opening improvised solo piano piece "Brand New," or in the gorgeous legato cello line of the title track, just before the piano solo begins. There's a haunting and expressive beauty in the descending chromatic chords of "Inheritance," so glowingly enhanced by string quartet as Gould's powerful solo nears its apex, before Pelt takes over.

And on the closing "What Do We Need," in what is perhaps the album's most strikingly intimate moment, Gould has the drums lay out for the entire piano solo, opting for string quartet and bass as the only other instruments present. "If the melody is the question," Gould muses, "then the solos on the record are a kind of musical answer, or musical solution. The solo section with strings insinuates compassion and understanding — that's what we need."

David R. Adler, March 2019