

UNEARTHED GEM



At the Peninsula Library 1972
Marian McPartland (Liberation Hall)
by Ken Dryden

Within a career stretching over six decades, Marian McPartland (whose 107th birthday we commemorate this month) developed into a versatile pianist capable of playing a wide variety of styles with authority. While she enjoyed a decade-long stint at the Hickory House in New York City and recorded for several labels, by the mid '60s her career stalled. Undeterred, McPartland launched her own record label and sought out audiences wherever she could find them. When she played this 1972 trio concert at the Peninsula Library on Long Island, she was not yet the jazz giant that she would become a half dozen years later after her NPR series "Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz" launched. But on this date, it's immediately apparent that she had developed greatly as an improviser since her Hickory House years.

Accompanied by her regular trio of Rusty Gilder (bass) and Joe Corsello (drums), the pianist played for

an audience of children and their parents, not letting the youngsters up front distract her from putting on a great show. Her 78-minute set mixes standards including a blues-infused "Willow Weep For Me" (a longtime favorite frequently part of her live shows), a driving interpretation of "A Night In Tunisia" and a playful, fluid take of "Giant Steps". Yet she also connects with the younger people, who weren't yet necessarily jazz fans, by including familiar, then-current pop songs such as Burt Bacharach's "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" and James Taylor's "Fire and Rain". Further evidence that the pianist's chops had grown tremendously is revealed in her remarkable post-bop setting of "Close Your Eyes". McPartland was known for joking about her "fake fugue" introduction, which she created for her arrangement of "All the Things You Are", even though the body of the piece swings effortlessly in her hands, supported by Gilder's creative bass lines and Corsello's nimble percussion. Her rollicking rendition of the early jazz favorite "Royal Garden Blues" (Clarence and Spencer Williams) is followed by a strikingly abstract treatment of Thelonious Monk's "Straight, No Chaser", segued to a brief sign-off with Sonny Rollins' "Oleo".

This previously unissued concert was recorded from the audience by Boris Rose, who was known for recording live jazz broadcasts and selling them as pirate LPs. The audio isn't high fidelity, as audience conversations intrude at times, but the chemistry of McPartland's trio and the diversity of styles throughout the set make it an important addition to the pianist's vast discography.

For more info visit liberationhall.bandcamp.com



simpletrio2000
Anna Webber (Intakt)
by Mike Shanley

Anna Webber's new album might be called *simpletrio2000* but the only thing simple about this group relates to the ease in which they navigate the bandleader's complex ideas and original compositions. Along with Webber (tenor, flutes), the trio includes Matt Mitchell (piano) and John Hollenbeck (drums), a unit whose origins date back just over a decade and were heard most recently on half of Webber's double-disc 2021 release *Idiom* (the second disc features a large ensemble). Together they mesh with a precision that feels intuitive, anticipating solo and support role changes in the music, and playing stuttering passages with tight cohesion that occasionally creates the feel of a skip in the recording. Like much of Webber's work, *simpletrio2000* dexterously walks the line between unhinged, unrestrained improvisation and modern composition.

"Idiom VII" starts with droplets of tenor notes, matched precisely by drums, rising and falling in dynamics before the trio really begins to gain momentum. Like the album, the music may sound a tad rigid, but certainly not stiff. Hollenbeck keeps it spiky

by accenting a trippy beat. By the end, the saxophonist and pianist escape the gravitational pull of the tune's ostinato. "Fixed Do" makes the case that Webber could easily pull off a solo tenor album. Barely over two minutes, it features an inventive flow of ideas both lush and rough that could go on for much longer, instead of climaxing with some incredible octave leaps. "Five Eateries (In New England)" also features some rapid-fire playing in the opening minutes.

But it is on the selections where Webber switches to flute which offer some of the album's most electric and memorable moments. "Foray" begins with an ominous low-end piano figure that spurs both flute and drumming interplay to ecstatic heights. Along with "miire" (on which bass flute is added), the trio seems to create their own new version of swing, where knotted-up clusters have an effortless facility. Mitchell and Hollenbeck, who also get brief solo pieces of their own, contribute mightily throughout, making the sound more expansive than one might expect from this bare-bones instrumentation. The pianist's combination of pedal point and delicate rolling chords provides a great foil to Webber's tenor overtones in "8va", and Mitchell's performance on "Moveable Do (La/La Bémol)" closes the album with sheer fire power.

The music might not be simple but it sure feels inviting.

For more info visit intaktrec.ch. Webber is at Bar Bayeux Mar. 22. See Calendar.

unhurriedly and with emotional authenticity. "A Ship Without a Sail" (Rodgers, Hart), a song about life as a loveless tale, might make you weep. The beloved ballad "Prelude to a Kiss" (Ellington, Gordon), slowed down in pace, is reimagined in a fresh, new way. The light accompaniment boldly places d'Ambrosio's voice front and center: her delivery dream-like, her notes elongated and her phrasing impeccable. The tune's beautiful instrumental sections are also noteworthy. "This Happy Madness" (Jobim, Lee) opens with a haunting, wordless vocal segment, followed by a mesmerizing vocal-guitar duet.

The soon-to-be 84-year-old (her birthday is Mar. 20) d'Ambrosio is as brilliant as ever in her delivery of jazz songs and *Midnight Mood* will delight audiences of all ages.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.com



Eyes to the Sun
Camila Nebbia, Leo Genovese, Alfred Vogel
(Boomslang)
by John Sharpe

Argentinean tenor saxophonist Camila Nebbia flares like a beacon on *Eyes to the Sun*, a combustible first time summit with her countryman Leo Genovese (piano) and Austrian Alfred Vogel (drums). It is Vogel, head honcho at Boomslang, who forms the glue, having established partnerships with both separately, but not all together until they assembled in a Buenos Aires studio in December 2023. Nebbia has thrived since moving to Europe three years prior, performing with many of the continent's finest, as well as developing an increasing presence internationally through collaborations with the likes of pianists Angelica Sanchez and Marilyn Crispell, bassist Michael Formanek and drummers Vinnie Sperrazza and Lesley Mok. Like many free saxophonists she reveals a fascination with timbre and texture, but unlike the majority does so without prolonged recourse to furious screaming, even on a foot to the floor date like this. Instead, she excavates a wealth of scintillating colors from a throaty middle register with prodigious imagination and stamina, while occasionally inclining towards a fragile abstraction, maximizing the emotive impact through manipulation of hushed split tones.

At times Nebbia picks up on a phrase from Genovese to fuel her explorations, but she is also content to forge her own path. Indeed, the seven off-the-wall cuts often suggest three streams running in parallel, particularly when the pianist surges freely across the keyboard, creating waves of sound, as if trying to activate all the notes at once. Differentiation arises from where the outpourings start, as tributaries rise variously from spacious dialogue, whispered murmurs, staccato prancing or polyrhythmic churn. Vogel's approach too determines the overall feel, whether electing for a patient build, tumbling tattoo or clattery momentum. The two pieces where Genovese forgoes the keys to interweave splintered soprano around Nebbia's forthright tenor playing are among the highlights and provide welcome variety, as at over 76-minutes the high-energy pursuits, while viscerally thrilling, can become overwhelming. Consequently, this fare is perhaps best sampled in bite-sized chunks, but the most important thing is that one way or another it should be on the menu.

For more info visit boomslang-records.com

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