

GLOBE UNITY



Character Pieces
Rebecca Trescher Tentet (Enja)
Things Will Pass
Hyeseon Hong Jazz Orchestra (with Rich Perry)
(Pacific Coast Jazz)
OR
Tracy Yang Jazz Orchestra (BJU Records)
by Daniel A. Brown

A set of recent releases are worthwhile collections that can be heard as assurances that the state of big-band, large-scale jazz music is alive and well. While the three composer-leaders are women of distinct international backgrounds, the triumvirate of Rebecca Trescher, Hyeseon Hong and Tracy Yang, are most crucially forward-thinking musicians who pen engaging music, performed by equally sympathetic and adroit accompanying players.

Inspired by the ethereality of the natural world and musical forebears running the gamut from Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter to Björk and Radiohead, German-born clarinetist and bandleader Rebecca Trescher and her Tentet put contemporary jazz through the paces with *Character Pieces*. In total and through certain variations, the collective theme and

color of the eight songs seem fueled by tension and release and improvisational atmospherics. A four-note motif anchors “High Altitude Air”, and the assembled players add and subtract embellishments. “Wild Dream” shifts from an atonal, phantasmagoric intro and then shifts to modernist swing; “Nacht” is a dark-hued, Third Stream affair. Trescher emphasizes that each member of the band—Julian Hesse (trumpet, flugelhorn), Joachim Lenhardt (tenor, flute), Markus Harm (alto, soprano, clarinet), Anton Mangold (concert harp, alto, flute), Juri Kannheiser (cello), Andreas Feith (piano), Roland Neffe (vibraphone), Christian Diener (bass) and Silvio Morger (drums)—contributed ideas directly to and for the album. The end result is an impressive product of jazz-collective egalitarianism and empathic playing.

Using a palette colored with facets of modern jazz big band, classical and traditional Korean music, Hyeseon Hong Jazz Orchestra with tenor saxophonist Rich Perry streamline these elements into a straight-ahead jazz orchestra setting with *Things Will Pass*. “Road to Hana” leads in the collection with a casual, syncopated feel; “Raindrop’s Journey” has a playful, waltz-feel, highlighting the languid soloing of pianist Broc Hempel. Unison and call-and-response playing propels “Treasure Hunt”, with a solo turn by saxophonist Ben Kono. Composer-conductor Hong’s heritage inspires the main melodic push of flute and strings with “Memoirs of Ladies”,

capped by an unhurried solo by Perry. Featuring 20 members in total, in lesser hands this jazz orchestra could wander or wither ideas away; under the guidance of Hong, they are deft at performing economical, signature charts.

Led by the titular Taiwanese composer-bandleader, the Tracy Yang Jazz Orchestra add their imprint to the contemporary big band scene with the eight-song release, *OR*. Boasting a 20+ player roster, the album offers a unique arsenal of sounds courtesy of a heavy presence of trumpets, trombones and woodwinds. According to Yang, the title track is a musical telling of a surgical operation. Yet, medical science aside, the title track plays out as a bluesy swing with some tasty brass horn fluttering and a persuasive solo from pianist Martha Kato. The dense, opening avant soundscape of “Melting Arctic” morphs into a cautionary ecological warning by way of jabbing horns and unpredictable melodic twists. The three-part “MMXXI suite” (“I. Uncertainty”, “II. Healing” and “III. Reunited”) is a sort of musical memoir of both the world’s then-condition and Yang’s mental outlook for the years 2021-2022, at roughly 13 minutes in total. Yang and her orchestra are commendable for visiting such a range of themes in a trilogy format, avoiding any pretension in the process.

For more info visit enjajazz.de, pacificcoastjazz.com and bjurecords.com. Hyeseon Hong Jazz Orchestra’s album release concert is at Drom Mar. 2. See Calendar.

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