



**Sextet**  
Pitch, Rhythm & Consciousness (Reva)  
by Tom Greenland

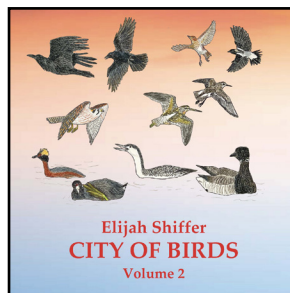
Pitch, Rhythm & Consciousness' third album, *Sextet*, reflects the musical and self-growth of its founders Charlie Burnham (violin) and Tony Jones (tenor), the first two terms of the group's name serving as a vehicle to explore and express the third. After its 2011 debut *Trio* with Kenny Wollesen (drums) and 2019's *Quartet* with Marika Hughes (cello), this release adds Jessica Jones (tenor) and Rashaan Carter (bass). The lasting friendships within the group, combined with the spiritual intent of the repertoire, which is inspired by Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Taoist texts, gives this session an atmosphere of gentle determination.

Burnham is the trigger, his coarse soulful vocals opening the set with an ecstatic excerpt from the 23rd Psalm titled "I Shall Not Want", bookended by Jones' two-part, free-form tenor chorale. On "The Beginning of the Universe", Burnham's stream-of-consciousness singing is embedded in ambient rubbings, rustlings, whistles and whispers of the acoustic instruments; on "Prepare a Refuge", the final track, he exhorts listeners to free themselves from flaws and passions so that they "need never return to the cycle of birth

after death." The prickly pizzicatos and angular bow-strokes from his violin add the sharpest outlines to the music, in places recalling a koto, an oud, even a third saxophone. He, Hughes and Carter form a string section of sorts, their tones blending and layering with subtle but telling differences. Hughes employs sliding double-stops on her solo feature "This Herein Goes Nowhere" that suggest a muezzin's call to prayer. Wollesen's presence, somewhat subdued in the mix, comes to the fore on "Shadow Box", where he combines low malleted tom-tom tones with airily brushed cymbals, something like echoes from the deep ocean floor.

The Jones' tandem tenors are a marvel, he a bit mellow and burnished, she a shade lighter and brighter. Their sounds and styles are deeply simpatico, as heard in the opening prayer, Nasheet Waits' "Kush" (the album's only cover), "Whose Tears Are These" (perhaps the project's emotional highpoint) and especially on their improvised duet, "Fundamental Blue", where each takes and shares the initiative, breathing and phrasing as one. Their bond, stretching back over four decades when they first sat together in the saxophone section of the Berkeley High School jazz band, is just one of many shared between sextet members, bonds collectively responsible for the close, personal and musical chemistry that pervades and elevates this album.

For more info visit [revainc.org/revarecords](http://revainc.org/revarecords). Charlie Burnham is at Shirt Factory Jul. 29 (with Creative Improvisers Orchestra). See 100 Miles Out.



**City of Birds, Volume 2**  
Elijah Shiffer (Star Jelly)  
by Fred Bouchard

Alto maven/birdwatcher Elijah Shiffer again assembles his cheery gaggle of Big Apple mockingbirds in wry homage to avian denizens of, and migrants through, the five boroughs of NYC. Kevin Sun (tenor), Dmitry Ishenko (bass) and Colin Hinton (drums) follow their leader's keenly observed and briskly portrayed sketches of familiar and unusual species, capturing their voices, plumage and essential character in engaging post-bop melodies. Sam Day Harmet (mandolin) plinks subtle unison lines at beak, and at tail, the electrifying *skreek!* of a Horned Grebe.

Be advised that Shiffer's entertaining catalog offers neither cursory generalizations (i.e. Charles Mingus' "Bird Calls") nor bucolic excursions (such as Dave Holland's "Conference of the Birds") but rather focused snapshots homing in on key aspects of eleven species. The leader is compiling a veritable jazz-oriented guide to Northeast American birds. (The astute TNYCJR review of *Volume 1* [Mar. 2024 issue], by Elliott Simon, who passed away just last month, outlines the basics.) So we "hear" the elegantly no-wasted-motion soaring Kestrel (small falcon), the dreamy, downward spiral of a slowed-up Veery (robin-like thrush) and shyly nasal braying of a Brant (coastal goose). Shiffer instantly proves himself an accomplished student of birdlore when, not content to portray waves of shorebirds' skittering sandy strands stilettoing micro-mollusks, he troubles to reproduce the dry triplet titters of Short-billed Dowitchers and Semipalmated Sandpipers. Lively interplay is a given

with such largely gregarious subjects.

The lean, mean (economical, laser-focused) quartet aptly mirrors spartan if exuberant bird life. Alto and tenor toss off angled unison lines, solo with passion, engage in the aerial antics of sparring Crows. Sun slap-tongues the Raven's dry sagacity. Shiffer wails klezmerifically, quirkily Coot-like. Each has his unique take on the Bobolink's chatterlalia: manic burble vs. split-reed larynx. Bass and drums nail Crows' smart-ass 3/4 swagger and swoon bluesy balladry of a lonely Loon. Hinton's exquisite subtlety and feather-breadth sensitivity is netted by accurate micing. Ishenko limns the roost.

A congenial musical excursion on any listener's level, *City of Birds* adds serious tools of appreciation to any birdwatcher's apologia or expedition. *Volume 3* is likely in the works: perhaps Shiffer will zoom in on heretofore overlooked families: shy Sparrows, elusive gemlike Warblers, stunning Raptors. My note to the leader suggests unique challenges: Ruffed Grouse? Chimney Swift? BTW, kudos on excellent cover sketches of the birds!

For more info visit [elijahshiffer.bandcamp.com](http://elijahshiffer.bandcamp.com). Shiffer's *City of Birds* is at Sherman Creek Park Jul. 19. Shiffer is also at Little Honey Jul. 15. See Calendar.



**Shadows and Silence: The Erik Satie Project**  
Tessa Souter (NOANARA Music)  
by Andrew Schinder

French composer and avant gardist Erik Satie neatly fit the cliché of the brilliant yet eccentric artist. He was a noted iconoclast who adopted many personas in his life and who made his living as a cabaret pianist. Yet he was a critically important figure in early 20th century classical music, influencing the works of Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, and later John Cage. This month marks the 100th anniversary of Satie's death (Jul. 1) and his influence is still felt. His oeuvre forms the inspiration for the new release, *Shadows and Silence: The Erik Satie Project*, by powerhouse vocalist Tessa Souter.

Souter lightens up Satie's compositional eccentricities and avant garde tendencies despite the often serious and solemn themes on the resultant recording, making the album eminently listenable and joyous. Her crackerjack backing band features, among others, Luis Perdomo (piano), Yasushi Nakamura (bass) and husband Billy Drummond (drums, percussion), who support and lift up her vocals. Guest appearances include Nadjé Noordhuis (trumpet), Steve Wilson (soprano) and Pascal Borderies (spoken word).

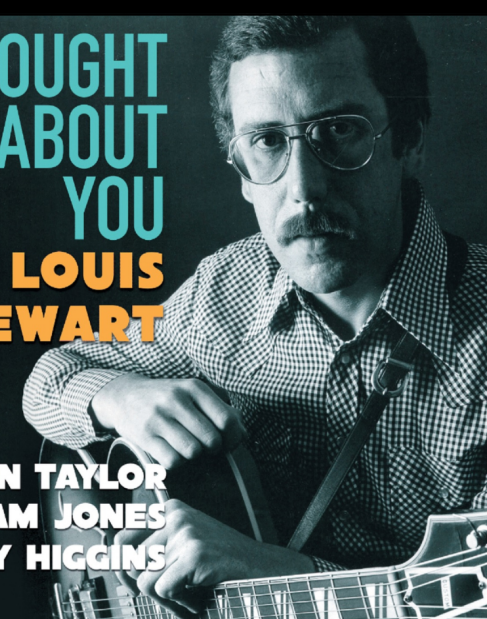
Here Souter has taken certain Satie works, including his notable "Gymnopédies" and "Gnossiennes" compositions, and adapted them as sultry vocal jazz pieces, adding lyrics in both English and French. The songs examine such subjects as beauty, loss and renewal. While Satie lived his life and composed in eccentric and modernist fashion, the vocalist has repurposed many of his works as romantic odes or meditations on human emotions. Her interpretation of "Gnossienne No. 3", entitled "Holding on to Beauty", a love letter to her husband, is a brilliant addition to the canon of jazz love ballads. "D'Ou Venons-Nous (Gymnopédie No. 3)"

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is a mournful rumination on mortality that features a haunting soprano solo by Wilson.

Despite its subtitle, *Shadows and Silence* does not only focus on Satie interpretations. Souter's version of the classic Léo Ferré song "Avec le Temps" provides what is arguably the album's emotional climax. Her rendition is stunning, featuring Perdomo's superb piano accompaniment and a striking bass solo by Nakamura. The album closes with a bilingual version of Jacques Brel's "Ne me quitte pas (If You Go Away)", made famous by Edith Piaf as well as Nina Simone. Souter certainly stands her ground against those legends, providing somberly naked emotive depth to a famously melancholy song. Perdomo, surprisingly and delightfully, cuts the sadness of it with an unexpectedly upbeat piano showcase, ending an emotionally complex album with a hint of both poignancy and uplift.

For more info visit [texasouter.com](http://texasouter.com). The album release concert is at Joe's Pub Jul. 1 and Deer Head Inn Jul. 20. Souter is also at Mezzrow Jul. 27, and Dobbs Ferry Waterfront Park Jul. 30 (part of Jazz Forum Art's Summer Music Series). See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



**The Copenhagen Session Vol. 1**  
**Scandinavian Art Ensemble with Tomasz Stańko**  
(April)  
by Franz Matzner

This recently unearthed album, *The Copenhagen Session Vol. 1* by the Scandinavian Art Ensemble with Tomasz Stańko, not only marks an intriguing historical context, but the music itself is also gorgeously rendered.

Born in wartime Poland in 1942, and subsequently raised behind the Cold War's Iron Curtain, legendary trumpeter Stańko (whose birthday and deathaversary fall on this month: b. July 11, 1942 – d. July 29, 2018) was one of the earliest Eastern European jazz musicians to capture the wave of free jazz at a time when political barriers were eroding and it was no longer a crime simply to play jazz. He exposed the contemporary scene to the distinctive sounds of Polish and other Eastern European countries, adding its characteristic pathos and resonance.

This originally reported lost session from 2016 (two years prior to Stańko's passing) captures the trumpeter's lucid tone and lyricism, merged with a collection of young Polish and Scandinavian artists, an ensemble comprised of two other trumpeters (Tomasz Dąbrowski and Snorri Sigurðarson) with Thomas Hass (saxophone), Martin Fabricius (vibraphone), Artur Tużnik (piano), Richard Andersson (bass), Radek Wośko (drums) and featured vocalist Johanna Elina Sulkunen. Overall, the ensemble substitutes overt intensity with emotional clarity. But the freer approach of Stańko's earliest work still exists within the hallmark spatial openness of Scandinavian jazz. Each selection was composed by a different bandmember—yet the integrated sound of the ensemble stands out, the compositions contributing to a stable scaffolding of somewhat traditional-leaning forms upon which the band's luminescent improvisation rests. "One O'clock Junk", for instance, swings with tenacity alternating between merger and splintering, while Fabricius' vibraphone lines float across the turmoil.

Another album feature is its sumptuous pathos. Without becoming overbearing, a consistent depth of controlled emotion permeates. "Before the Rain" proceeds with pleasant nostalgia marked by Tużnik's tripling piano. The sandy textured blues of "Circles" attains a peak of sadness with Sulkunen's elasticated vocalizations. Album closer, "Dark Eyes of Maretha Hirsh", shimmers with aural incandescence as the group runs the gambit from abstract expressionism, then shifts dynamics and swings with a stolid beat.

Whether you're a Stanko aficionado or simply seeking introduction to the veteran trumpeter's sound; whether you're searching for a view into younger Scandinavian jazz or just have the desire to sit back and relax to some gorgeous, fluid music—the Scandinavian Art Ensemble with Tomasz Stańko's *The Copenhagen Session Vol. 1* fits the bill, with the promise of a second volume soon to come.

For more info visit [aprilrecords.com](http://aprilrecords.com)



**The Longrun Development of the Universe #6:**  
**For Albert**  
**Carl Ludwig Hübsch, Wolter Wierbos,**  
**Matthias Schubert (Jazzwerkstatt)**  
by Ken Waxman

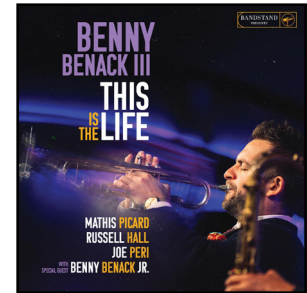
Probably the final album in a long run for this veteran trio of European improvisers after more than two decades, *For Albert* is both a summation and a salute. And despite what many Americans would figure, the Albert in the title isn't Ayler but one of the pioneers of free jazz in Europe, German trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff (whose 20-year deathaversary is Jul. 25). This trio tribute is more than just name checking too. Dutch trombonist Wolter Wierbos, known for his long tenure in the ICP Orchestra, is, with his command of multiphonics, one of Mangelsdorff's true heirs. German tenor saxophonist Matthias Schubert was a member of the German trombonist's groups from 1986-90, while German tubist Carl-Ludwig Hübsch has played in The Multiple Joy[ce] Orchestra and the European Tuba Quartet.

Its unique instrumentation allows the trio to cannily reconstitute Mangelsdorff's conventional and cutting-edge musical legacy. With its vamping counterpoint and bright, cool jazz feel, "Hot Hut" suggests the trombonist's early boppish style. "Sonntagsgrau" relates to his latter ground-breaking experiments as floating brass choir timbres are surmounted by strained tuba snores and altissimo saxophone whistles. *For Albert* is much more than this of course. The four remaining Hübsch compositions explore metallic sonorities, angling and positioning all the timbres that can be extracted from this brass/reed combination. Although the three are adroit at using such extended techniques as Wierbos' gutbucket whoops, Schubert's split tones and Hübsch's undulating rumbles, most expositions give way to horizontal advances in three-layered registers. Besides passing flattened timbres from one to another, there are points where the group members combine for near-marching band cadences with buttery trombone breaths and staccato reed trills moving rhythmically atop burbling tuba continuum.

The three-part tone integration on "Osti-Nato" creates a literal canon with the trio members closely-harmonized syncopation advancing from highest to

lowest pitches during the exposition. An interlude of vocalized murmurs, yells, wails and tongue slaps underlines the group's unique interaction, although the final sequence evokes unselfconscious swing. Unusual only in instrumentation, The Longrun Development of the Universe clearly demonstrates on this notable set that sophisticated Euro improv continues to evolve in an exceptional fashion. That promise will only be intensified as its members go their separate ways.

For more info visit [jazzwerkstatt.eu](http://jazzwerkstatt.eu)



**This Is the Life**  
**Benny Benack III (Bandstand Presents)**  
by Marilyn Lester

This is the life indeed! The third-generation musician-bandleader-composer in his 34 years has an Emmy nomination and appeared around the world on a seemingly uninterrupted circuit. He sings, plays a mean trumpet and, as a showman at heart, always entertains full bore. His brand is joy, and in his latest, 12-track release, *This Is the Life* (recorded live at the Blue Llama Jazz Club in Ann Arbor, MI), Benny Benack communicates as much of his personality on record as he does in person. The personnel are his usual trio: Mathis Picard (piano), Russell Hall (bass) and Joe Peri (drums), plus the bonus of father, Benny Benack Jr. playing tenor saxophone. The title cut, by Richard Strouse and Lee Adams for Broadway's *Golden Boy*, is a fine demonstration of the leader's affinity for American songbook standards—classic and modern—with plenty of swing. In addition to the autobiographical nature of the tune, this number is a terrific introduction to Picard's incredible pianistic talents, and, of course to the range of the star's trumpet playing, most often melodic and straight ahead.

Broadway love continues with a balladic (and scat-filled) "The Sound of Music" (Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II). With soft, supple piano (sans bass and drums), there's a romantic, crooner's version of "Crazy She Calls Me" (Carl Sigman, Bob Russell). Benack the composer reveals a boppish-standard sensibility with "Song for Our Roger", which features a superb harmony with Benack Jr. and an emotive solo by the *pere*; the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Another BB III original, "Sugar and Spice" similarly played with BB Jr., is a midtempo swing piece that once again demonstrates senior's technical improvisational prowess, often with wry/sly statements that no doubt have informed son BB III's performance persona who was not to be outdone with some technical tricks of his own. A solo feature for Hall likewise was in the spirit of relaxed improvisational fun. The leader puts a button on the number with a fun scat ending. "When You're Smiling (The Whole World Smiles with You)" (Mark Fisher, Joe Goodwin, Larry Shay) was generously given to BB Jr. to shine, with BB III in showman mode, channeling the spirit of Louis Prima. That spirit appeared in a wild and somewhat unhinged outro in his "Without a Love".

If music is the best medicine, then take a heaping dose of Benny Benack III.

For more info visit [bandstandfoundation.com](http://bandstandfoundation.com). Benack is at Laissez Faire Jul. 9 & 23, Gin Mill Speakeasy Jul. 21 and Smalls Jul. 22. See Calendar.