



**Complete Communion**  
**Don Cherry (Blue Note Tone Poet)**  
**Music for Turkish Theater**  
**Don Cherry/Okay Temiz (Caz Plak)**  
 by Andrew Schinder

Though October represents avant garde trumpeter Don Cherry's 30-year deathaversary, two recent album releases celebrate (in advance) his 2026 centennial: an exquisite reissue of the pivotal *Complete Communion* (one of free jazz' most seminal records) and *Music for Turkish Theater*, which is closer to what one may assume as prototypically "avant garde."

*Complete Communion*, originally released in 1966, has been expertly remastered for Blue Note's Tone Poet Series on 180gr vinyl in a deluxe gatefold tip-on jacket; liner notes by the late, eminent jazz journalist, Nat Hentoff, provide historical context to a work that rewards multiple (if challenging) listens. The recording followed Cherry's departure as a regular member of free jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman's band. Thereafter he spent time taking on leader and sideman gigs in Europe; while in Italy he met tenor saxophonist Gato Barbieri, and ultimately recruited him for this session. Cherry's years playing with Coleman and touring Europe served him well on this album, a quartet which is rounded out by bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Ed Blackwell (Cherry's Coleman Quartet bandmate). Proving himself to be a fully-formed artist,

this is Cherry's American label debut (his *Togetherness* album for the Italian Durium label, which also includes Barbieri, was recorded months earlier, and is thus technically his very first recording as leader). Somewhat betraying the "free jazz" label (and posing the question as to what "free jazz" actually is or could be), *Complete Communion*, despite any challenges, is still highly accessible and is certainly one of the most broadly appealing works in the trumpeter-cornetist's catalog (as well as the free jazz idiom generally). The album is divided into two suites: the title track and "Elephantasy", each based on a trumpet motif as the players break off into free-flowing improvisation before returning to the respective main themes. Cherry and Barbieri prove to have tremendous chemistry. A neophyte in the studio during the recording of the album, for Barbieri it was a coming out party, and in the ensuing years he would become a star.

In comparison, *Music for Turkish Theater* is somewhat of a curiosity, although certainly a fascinating item in Cherry's discography. In 1969, writer-activist James Baldwin helped stage a Turkish version of the John Herbert play *Fortune and Men's Eyes* (*Düşenin Dostu*), a work the Turkish government tried unsuccessfully to ban, since its theme was the exploration of homosexuality in Turkish prisons. Baldwin recruited his friend Cherry to provide a musical accompaniment for the work, with Turkish percussionist and frequent Cherry collaborator, Okay Temiz joining. The play became a huge hit in Istanbul. Fast forward and Turkish record label Caz Plak recently recovered and reissued the recording. There are no structural motifs, however, to assist the listener. Cherry had asked Temiz to play in several rhythmic times simultaneously, which can be audibly unsettling. While there are bursts of joyful funk, the recording's overall mood is appropriately somber. To the Western

ear, the music also can feel incomplete, especially since it was originally written as underscoring for the play, serving as an enhancement to the drama. Nevertheless, the recording certainly is a valuable entry in Cherry's oeuvre and is a captivating example of his forays both in avant garde and global music.

For more info visit [bluenote.com](http://bluenote.com) and [cazplak.bandcamp.com](http://cazplak.bandcamp.com)



**Syzygy, Vol. 1**  
**Brandon Lopez/DoYeon Kim (577 Records)**  
 by Kurt Gottschalk

It's no easy game to guess the instrument Brandon Lopez and DoYeon Kim play. The baryton, perhaps, an augmented bass viol with six or seven strings and a dozen or more resonating strings running underneath. But it might be a detuned theorbo, or an oversize hurdy-gurdy, or a giraffe piano played inside the case. An astute observer, however, will soon surmise, in fact, that they play but two instruments: string bass and gayageum (Korean plucked zither)—but the deep sonorities of their thick, thumping strings and the close attention they pay to their shared improvisation suggest a single instrument, even a single player with somewhere between three and six hands.

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