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Experience the vibrant spirit of live jazz in Jazz at Lincoln Center's most intimate venue. At Dizzy's Club, world-class musicians bring swinging, high-level performances to life each night, with panoramic view of the Manhattan skyline, a welcoming ambiance, and a delicious seasonal menu.

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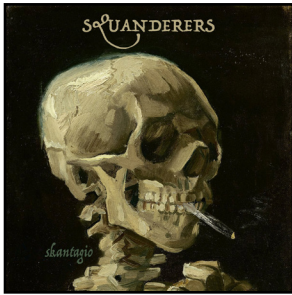
BIG BAND HOLIDAYS

THE JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER ORCHESTRA

Celebrate the season with the world-renowned **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra**, led by JLCO trombonist **Chris Crenshaw**. From beloved holiday classics to swinging seasonal favorites, this festive tradition brings warmth and joy to Rose Theater. Joining the JLCO are two standout vocalists: **Shenel Johns**, celebrated for her rich, emotive voice and deep connection to jazz traditions, and **Kate Kortum**, a rising star who brings youthful energy and a fresh perspective to the stage.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

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Photos by Gilberto Ladany



Skantagio
SQUANDERERS (Shimmy-Disc)
by JR Simon

Skantagio is the second offering from the trio of Wendy Eisenberg (guitar, vocals), David Grubbs (guitar) and producer (Bonner) Kramer (bass). The follow up to last year's *If a Body Meet a Body*, the album title derives from an Ancient Greek term for "sounding lead," a simple tool for measuring the depth of water. It's the perfect image for this quiet, but radiant, set of real-time, ambient improvisations. The album explores seven "themes," as the group plumbs the contours of the past's impact on the present in unhurried exploration.

There are no overdubs or synthesizers. Through the threesome's superb listening and obvious trust of each other and the process, Eisenberg, Grubbs and Kramer achieve a sound that is ephemeral, probing and profoundly calm. Eisenberg's playing is inquisitive and weightless, the tone rounded and glowing, with most phrases left to ripple outward. Grubbs offers grounding counter lines, mirroring and at times gently redirecting the current. Beneath them, Kramer's bass acts like a gravitational pull—supportive, sometimes shadowy and surfacing most dramatically in the album's closer "Theme for Undivided Neglect", where its deep, troubled pulse lends a final magnitude to this endeavor.

Three tracks were released with videos assembled by Kramer, offering visual complements to the record's exploration of themes. The opening "Theme for Skantagio", accompanied by images of burning objects, suggests destruction as a means of renewal. Its echoing guitars trace a kind of sonic measurement, gauging the unseen. "Theme for Narcoleptics" drifts in uneasy slumber, while "Theme for Insufficient Overpreparation" pulses in cycles of effort and futility, building in intensity without resolution. The sixth track, the luminous "Theme for Fruitful Tangents", is gentle and unhurried, embodying the album's central invitation: to wander without haste, to find some clarity, perhaps fleetingly, in the act of drift.

Skantagio is a meditation on sound as presence: sparse, contemplative and welcoming. A quiet, but powerful rejection of noise and speed in favor of simple, resonant depth.

For more info visit squadnersofficial.bandcamp.com. Wendy Eisenberg is at The Owl Music Parlor Dec. 11. See Calendar.



The Call
Frank Kimbrough (Sunnyside)
Sacrosanctity
Matt Mitchell (Obliquity)
by George Kanzler



For many decades, from jazz' earliest days, solo piano playing was a chance to display dazzling virtuosity, especially in the decades before bebop, when completely two-handed, ambidextrous virtuosity featured a left hand that was the pianist's own churning rhythm section. Players such as Art Tatum, Erroll Garner and

Oscar Peterson were akin to self-contained orchestras. It was a showy, bravura virtuosity, one that is still often on display today. But there's also another vein of solo jazz piano, one with a subtler, more introverted command. Both of these albums under review display this vein, while one also invokes some more traditional solo jazz piano traits. Frank Kimbrough and Matt Mitchell each stretch the sonic landscape of piano jazz, as space is often a more important element than rhythm, as is mood and sometimes even silence.

The Call is culled from recently unearthed 2010 recordings by the late Frank Kimbrough (who passed away five years ago this month at age 64). They include his unique takes on jazz and pop standards as well as three of his own compositions. The pianist's original, "November", is a dark, brooding piece, his left hand swaying like an autumn breeze as his right parses out a lean melodic strain. He explores an emotionally resonant core on his album, from a sensitive, heartfelt "I Loves You Porgy" to two stunningly evocative Duke Ellington pieces: "In a Sentimental Mood" is taken at an even slower than usual tempo, exploring and dissecting the melody, while "Reflections in D" (from the rare Ellington piano album, *The Duke Plays Ellington*, later reissued as *Piano Reflections*) sustains a hypnotic mood reminiscent of Bill Evans' captivating "Peace Piece". Kimbrough also upends expectations of Dizzy Gillespie, treating "Tin Tin Deo" as a moody, contemplative ballad, and examining "Night in Tunisia" [sic] in myriad angles, from semi-rubato to deeply melodic, ending with a flourish of the famous six-peat kicker that usually comes before the first solo.

Sacrosanctity is Matt Mitchell's second excursion into original solo pieces, from a pianist best known for his work in adventurous ensembles, many of them based in NYC. Mitchell uses each of his seven originals to explore different possibilities inherent in his piano's sound. The album tends to pick up steam as it progresses, the earlier pieces very spare, full of space and echoing notes, the later ones more upbeat. Titles provide a clue toward the end: "Thither" consists of whimsical yet fervid, contrasting lines from hands that seem to be chasing each other, hither-thither. "Fillip Leaps (Philippe)" does just that, leaping two-handed clusters in the closest thing to a bravura display of pianistics on the album. The longest track (17 minutes), "Hibernaculum", has a stark, three note repeating left-hand chord-ostinato under myriad variations of single note right-hand waves and spare arpeggios.

Both of these singular, solo piano jazz albums prove richly revelatory, unfurling new surprises with repeated listenings.

For more info visit sunnysiderecords.com and matt-mitchell.bandcamp.com. Matt Mitchell is at Close Up Dec. 8. He is also at Solar Myth (Philadelphia, PA) Dec. 4 and Firehouse 12 (New Haven, CT) Dec. 5. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Sweet Nancy (Melanie Scholtz Sings Nancy Wilson)
Melanie Scholtz (s/r)
by Marilyn Lester

Recorded in New Orleans in 2023 and recently released, *Sweet Nancy* is a celebration of Nancy Wilson's legacy by South Africa-born jazz singer, composer, dancer and visual artist Melanie Scholtz. The album pays homage to the versatile, three-time GRAMMY-winning jazz

vocalist whose career spanned over five decades and 70+ albums. Wilson (who died seven years ago this month at age 81) also sang blues, R&B, pop and soul, but preferred to be called a song stylist. Her wide repertoire included well-known standards and tunes probably scarcely remembered today, famously delivered with the emotive skills of a seasoned and acclaimed actress. The album, *Sweet Nancy*, is named for one of Wilson's several nicknames (others included "The Baby" and "Fancy Miss Nancy") and over its nine tracks, Scholtz is supported by an able ensemble: Oscar Rossignoli (piano), Jason Stewart (bass), Adonis Rose (drums) and Derek Douget (tenor, soprano).

With an amazingly similar vocal timbre, the leader opens with a mildly-swinging "The Great City" (Curtis Lewis), featuring Douget's tenor. Therein follows a cornucopia of works that inspired Scholtz, including a wailing, Latinized, soul-based "The Old Country" (Nat Adderley, Curtis Lewis) with some very short and mild scat, and, among others, the love theme from the film *Houseboat*, "Almost in Your Arms" (Ray Evans, Jay Livingston), which is taken with a welcome uptempo vibe and a short but engaging piano feature for Rossignoli. Album closer, "The Very Thought of You" (Ray Noble's 1934 hit) is performed at the same languorous tempo as Wilson's version, sans the extended verse, which beautifully sets up the arc of the tune's story. No, the verse isn't vital, and verses in general are cut from most standards performed today, but they have purpose. To listen to Wilson singing this tune with its verse is a revelation, and it's too bad that Scholtz forgoes it. Yet, notably, she did include the lengthy verse of "The Shadow of Your Smile" (Johnny Mandel, Paul Francis Webster).

Scholtz' honorific to Wilson suffers the problem many tribute works have that are performed by sound-

alikes. Try as they will to differentiate their approaches, comparisons will be made. In *Sweet Nancy*, Scholtz has admirably created an album that can stand on its own, but for fans of Wilson, inevitably the comparisons might harbor disenchantment.

For more info visit melaniescholtz.bandcamp.com



Chance
Miki Yamanaka (Cellar Music)
by Ken Dryden

Pianist Miki Yamanaka has been a breath of fresh air since moving to the US over a dozen years ago from her native Japan, abandoning her graduate studies in biology in favor of music. Her previous five recordings have primarily focused on original compositions, though she tends to play mostly standards and works by others in live sets. With *Chance*, Yamanaka was thrilled to be making her first recording in the hallowed Van Gelder Studio (now run by Maureen Sickler, the founder's longtime assistant, and husband-trumpeter Don Sickler), known for its excellent acoustics and engineering.

This, her third album for Cellar Music and first-ever standard piano trio date, finds her in top form, joined by her long-time drummer (and husband) Jimmy Macbride

and bassist Tyrone Allen. Exploring an invigorating set of works both well-known and deserving of wider recognition, she includes unjustly overlooked songs beginning with the inspired setting of George Cables' "Dark Side, Light Side", capturing its power with the leader's propulsive attack; the trio interacts with the pianist, rather than serving as mere accompanists. Yamanaka's similarly driving interpretation of Bobby Hutcherson's "Herzog" showcases imaginative chops in a manner reminiscent of McCoy Tyner, while she shares the spotlight with Allen's nimble bass playing and Macbride's invigorating drumming.

The reflective, yet upbeat, setting of Geri Allen's "Unconditional Love" captures the late composer's soulful side. Yamanaka's robust exploration of pianist Kenny Kirkland's sadly neglected "Chance", creates a constantly shifting piece, building to its dramatic finale, buoyed by Allen's strong pulse and Macbride's crisp support on brushes and sticks. The leader brings out the humor within Thelonious Monk's tricky "Trinkle Tinkle", as her darting chords back Allen's dancing bass lines; she then adds a slower, jaunty variation to its theme. The bassist introduces Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz" with a disguised chorus before Yamanaka and Macbride make their entrance, offering a subtle, atypically slower approach that unveils the composer's lyricism and whimsical spirit. Charlie Parker's "Cheryl" is turned inside out by the trio's twisting take. The pianist excels in finding fresh approaches to standards. She disguises "I Wish I Knew" with a bossa nova setting, Allen playing its theme with Macbride's light, swinging touch adding perfect seasoning, while her harmonically rich rendition of "Body and Soul" brings out her most lyrical side.

For more info visit cellarlive.com. Yamanaka is at Close Up Dec. 12. See Calendar.

SUNDAY
DECEMBER 14
2PM

A discussion and Q&A with the director follows the screening.

Take Me To Fendika is a 23 minute documentary film that illuminates the traditional and innovative musical culture of Ethiopia at what has been called "the best venue in Africa" –Fendika– through its founder, world renowned dancer Melaku Belay.

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This program is supported, in part, by funds from individual donors, the New Music USA Organization Fund, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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