

A half-dozen years later, in 1988, Hart recorded with Baltimore native and contemporary Gary Bartz (both Hart and Bartz were born in 1940) for the alto saxophonist's *Monsoon*, reissued for the first time by Nils Winther's durable SteepleChase (Hart was virtually the label's house drummer). The drummer's dry, firm rim-ticks, key tom-tom rolls, and one-off accents fuel proceedings, and his sly ear perks up 4s 'n 2s with Bartz' pro-Bird lyric duende. Fleshed with Clint Houston's resonant bass and Butch Lacy's piano, this date fairly sings.

For more info visit smokesessionsrecords.com, sunnysiderecords.com and steeplechase.dk. The Jazz Legacies Fellows All-Stars concert, featuring Billy Hart (plus George Coleman, Roscoe Mitchell, Julian Priester, Bertha Hope, Tom Harrell, Reggie Workman and others) is at Rose Theater Jan. 8 (part of Unity Jazz Festival). Hart is also at Close Up Jan. 10 (with Carmen Quill) and Dizzy's Club Jan. 14 (with Yotam Silberstein). See Calendar.



New Monuments: *Live in Vilnius*
Amirtha Kidambi Elder Ones (Fernflower)
by Bill Meyer

The third album by Amirtha Kidambi's Elder Ones, *New Monuments*, was released in early 2024. Its appearance signaled both changes in the Elder Ones camp and the commencement of a period of intense activity. For each of this project's recordings, the combo has had different line-ups, but its core members remained: Kidambi (vocals, harmonium, synth), Matt Nelson (soprano), Jason Nazary (drums, synth), Lester St. Louis (cello) and Eva Lawitts (bass). That album's four tracks represented an advance in the group's sound, adding a potent charge of electronic processing to open-ended compositions that synthesize free jazz, protest song-craft and a long tradition of Indian vocal artistry. Kidambi's words articulate a well-read, no-holds-barred opposition of colonial and fascist practices around the globe, and the album's title prescribes an antidote to the institutional celebration of oppressors: it's time to build some new monuments for the people who have always been under the boot.

New Monuments: Live in Vilnius (released late last year) repeats the original album's song list and its performances document what became of its music after the band had hit the road. Once more, the line-up changed: Lawitts yielded her chair to St. Louis and the group's cello component, and tenor saxophonist Alfredo Colon joined. St. Louis is more of a bass fundamentalist than his predecessors, and holds down linear rhythms that are alternately reinforced by Nazary's backbeats and buffeted by his rhythmic countercurrents. The excision of cello, which tended to double the harmonium, lightens the music's acoustic textures and opens up additional space for electronics, which are more tactile and present than before. But the biggest difference is the room given over to improvisation. Every track is between two and ten minutes longer than its original edition. Colon's presence is felt more in his solos and embellishments behind Kidambi's voice than in ensemble passages, and drums, voice and soprano all get more room to stretch. In the main, this is a good thing; Elder Ones sounds best when the instrumental intensity keeps building or, paradoxically, when a spacy interlude temporarily dispels the song's guardrails.

This release will probably be recognized as a punctuation mark on the Elder Ones timeline. At the same time as its release, the band, line-up intact, has introduced a new and even harder-hitting set of tunes. The struggle continues.

For more info visit fernflower.art. Kidambi's Elder Ones is at Union Pool Jan. 10 (part of Winter Jazzfest). See Calendar.



7 Shades of Melancholia (featuring Ingrid Jensen)
Mehmet Ali Sanlikol (DÜNYA)
by Daniel A. Brown

The latest from GRAMMY-nominated, Turkish pianist-composer Mehmet Ali Sanlikol, *7 Shades of Melancholia* (featuring Ingrid Jensen), deepens Sanlikol's ongoing explorations and successful mergers of jazz, traditional Turkish music, inventive classical and prog-rock. Using piano, voice and his patent-pending digital microtonal piano (Renaissance 17, or R17), Sanlikol leads a skilled and empathic band—Jensen (trumpet), Lihi Haruvi-Means (soprano, sopranino), James Heazlewood-Dale (bass) and George Lernis (drums, gongs)—through seven distinct compositions.

Album opener, "A Children's Song", highlights the leader's gentle piano lyricism and cascading arpeggios. "One Melancholic Montuno" is a potent duet between Sanlikol's impressionistic piano lines and the plaintive, tender playing of Jensen. Microtonal keyboard-shimmering timbres and mournful vocals invoke deep mystery within "Şeddi Araban Şarkı". Unison horn lines, vocals and keyboard, prodded along by the rhythm section's sizzling accompaniment, all propel the swirling "Hüseyini Jam" into ecstatic delirium. Lernis and Heazlewood-Dale take the reins on the lilting waltz of "Nikriz Semai", while Sanlikol offers an effective blend of traditional vocal melodies and deft scat singing. The closer, "My Blues", plays like a musical farewell and departure, the horn lines of Haruvi-Means and Jensen containing the same mournful mood that Kenny Wheeler so perfected.

Sanlikol has explained that the "melancholia" (or "hüzün" in his native Turkish) of the album's title refers to a thread of cultural history originating in clashes with Greece dating back to the Byzantine-Seljuk wars (1046-1243). This emotional aesthetic permeates Turkish music, literature and films. In many ways, Sanlikol is emblematic of a fully-integrated 21st-century jazz musician: he holds a doctorate from the New England Conservatory, studied jazz at Berklee College of Music and has a certain passion, understanding and evident reverence for traditional Turkish forms and idioms. Arguably, Sanlikol is a kindred spirit and spiritual offspring of peripatetic jazz icon Don Cherry.

The compositions and collective playing of *7 Shades of Melancholia* result in an unpredictable and winning listen. In lesser hands, the music could have degraded into heritage-as-pastiche. But Sanlikol and his band use traditional Turkish song forms, unique instrumentation—including of course the brass of Jensen (who celebrates her 60th birthday this month)—plus restraint to create something altogether vital and fresh.

For more info visit dunyainc.org. Ingrid Jensen is at The Jazz Gallery Jan. 17 (with Ryan Keberle's All Ears Orchestra). See Calendar.

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