

final stretch locks into a mesmerizing trance, driven by repeating, alternating time signatures that keep the listener fixated. That rhythmic playfulness explodes into joy on "When Kabuya Dances", which opens with an elegant piano statement before transforming into a raucous, tantalizing dance party. Reid's plucked bass line and Smith's buzzing cymbals make the groove impossible to resist. "Dream Archive" offers one of the album's most revealing journeys: it opens with a mosaic of quick, darting fragments, percussive and slightly disjointed, like thoughts flickering through a half-remembered dream. An ethereal, electronic atmosphere slowly emerges, and the two worlds circle each other before yielding to a gorgeous piano interlude and a wild, free-form ending. Reid's versatility is on full display throughout, from muscular pizzicato to luminous bowed lines, especially on the closing "Enchant", where her cello lines really sing. Smith matches her range, equally convincing in shimmering, dreamlike textures or in grounded, dance-ready grooves.

Together with Taborn's ever-searching imagination, this trio creates a debut that feels expansive and exploratory, but also intimate and luscious.

For more info visit ecmrecords.com. Craig Taborn is at The Stone at The New School Feb. 12 (with Tomas Fujiwara) and Close Up Feb. 16-17 (with Steve Lehman). Ches Smith is at The Stone at The New School Feb. 6 (with Sally Gates) and Nublu Feb. 11 (with Celine Kang). See Calendar.



Transgender Music 2025

Selendis Sebastian Alexander Johnson (s/r)
by John Pietaro

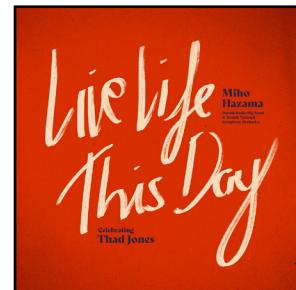
Selendis Sebastian Alexander Johnson is a musician with a visionary scope. She also happens to be a transgender woman. The latter may seem inconsequential to some, but as this artist went so far as to name this recording *Transgender Music 2025*, it's apparent that Johnson sees a cultural strength not always recognizable from without. The multi-instrumentalist has had a profound impact on the LGBTQ avant garde, one thriving and in fight mode against the Trump regime's wholesale dissolution of the "T" designation. Though the struggle is a collective one, Johnson here goes it alone with two lengthy, live solo organ pieces titled "Side 1" and "Side 2".

"Side 1" is Johnson's *tour de force*, often jarring and making rather extreme use of the instrument's volume pedal. For horror aficionados, if *Carnival of Souls* remains memorable, listen for the creeping remnants of Gene Moore's artful brooding, grasping organ score, here under the weight of Johnson's spiraling intensity: thickets of sound, smears, howls, glissandi and church-heavy chords against darkly rumbling bass. Towards the end of "Side 1", new emulsions of tone are heard and use of the volume pedal produces pulsating, pivoting reconstructions of melodic phrases and unexpected quotes (Monk is in there). Shades of Sun Ra, Johnson's stabbing, long-held major and minor seconds shatter the skies.

"Side 2" begins tonally, possibly modally, before adding a length of blue thirds and flatted fifths into the sonic web. With a right hand playing rapid runs over keyboards, smashing blue notes with vigor, Johnson brings to mind the late organist Larry Young. If "Side 1" demonstrated raw emotive expression, the apparent *yang* in this two-sided personage, this work serves as the *yin*, albeit with presto runs alternating with pensive, melodic

statements. But the complexity also extends into the written word, particularly that of the revolutionary poet Kuwasi Balagoon who tragically died in 1986 of AIDS complications at age 39. In lieu of detailed liner notes, Johnson offers Balagoon's "With No Questions": *the leaves are changing/to sheaves of fire/rust 'n indigo/in waves/And all at once/And one by one/different in their deaths/like all times/and loved ones/and memories of places/faded from lack of presence/and fallen from the attention of today/to lie like a quilt on the earth/and winter/and change to the rich pungent ground/that feeds realities to come/with no questions.*

For more info visit ssaj.bandcamp.com. Johnson is at Nublu Feb. 11, 18 and 25 (as leader) and Close Up Feb. 5 (with Samantha Kochis). See Calendar.



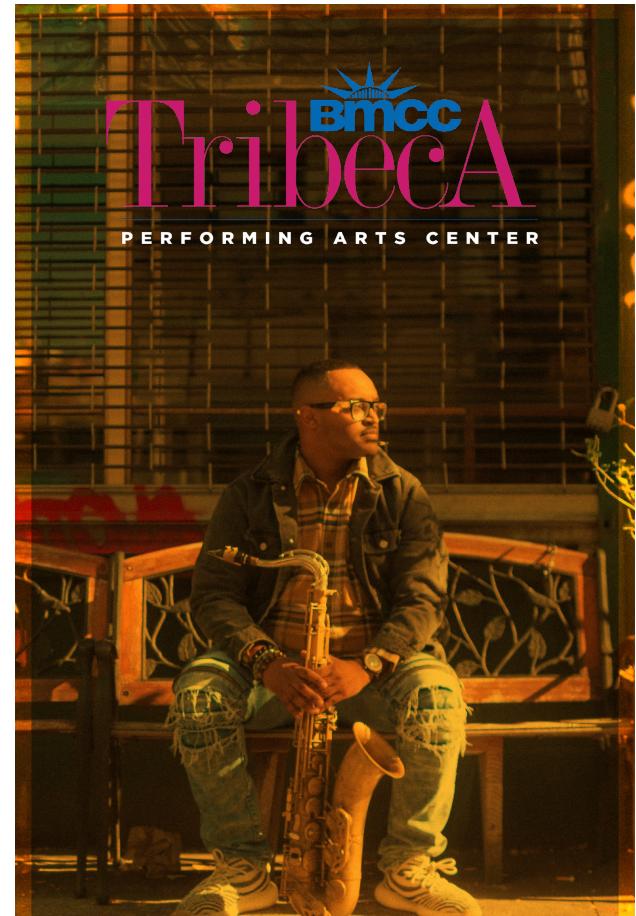
Live Life This Day: Celebrating Thad Jones
Miho Hazama (Edition)
by Andrew Schinder

For music fans who believe that big band jazz largely died as the 1940s became the 1950s, giving way to bebop and pop crooners, trumpeter Thad Jones most certainly would have disagreed. Jones was considered one of the best soloists of his day, serving as right-hand man for Count Basie for several years before joining drummer Mel Lewis in 1966 to found the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra (then known as the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra). He held court there every Monday until leaving suddenly to join the Copenhagen-based Danish Radio Big Band (DR Big Band), serving as its leader from 1977-78.

Since 2019, Tokyo-born composer-arranger Miho Hazama, who plays piano and electric keyboard, has led the DR Big Band. With *Live Life This Day: Celebrating Thad Jones*, she reinterprets and rearranges several of Jones' big-band compositions. It is a joyous, blissful celebration, exactly what you might expect from the leader of one of the world's foremost big bands exploring the work of one of the world's most legendary big band masters of the past. Here, Hazama enlists both the DR Big Band and the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, combining the jazz vibes with the Orchestra's classical symphonics. Recorded at the DR Koncerthuset (the Danish Radio Concert Hall) in Copenhagen, the result is a beautifully colossal amalgam of the two genres.

The title track, a suite divided into three movements, represents the album's centerpiece. The first movement, which was nominated for a 2026 GRAMMY Award for Best Instrumental Composition, initially plays like an old-time showstopper—exactly what one would imagine of a big band of yore. But Hazama's sophistication and intent shifts the listener from this blustery introduction into a modern, midtempo, groovy mood piece showcasing some masterful brass work. In the second movement, the tempo slows and emotions swell, highlighted by the orchestra's strings and woodwinds sections. The suite ends with a funkier vibe, paying tribute to Jones' frequent explorations of the darker side of jazz. "Mornin' Reverend" and "A Child Is Born" are reworkings of two pieces he wrote with Lewis. The former is a cinematic exploration of Jones' aforementioned jazz-funk tendencies; the latter is an interpretation of one of Jones' more famous standards, a gorgeous ballad effortlessly elevated by the blend of the DR Big Band and the Orchestra.

For more info visit editionrecords.com. Hazama is at Dizzy's Club Feb. 23. See Calendar.



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