

divided among all three members, each contributing inspired music. Album opener, "Lionel's Dream", is a moody ballad by Heberer that sets an unusual opening tone for the rest of the album's nine tracks. Drummer Hertenstein contributes two lively compositions with a strong rhythmic drive: on "Hippopp", the tricky melody is to the fore with Heberer and Fonda wending their way through its rhythmic complexities with ease. Fonda's three compositions turn out to be all driving standouts, including "Jutta On Top", which ends the album on a victorious, upbeat note.

For the group's most recent release, *Remedy + Aki Takase*, the trio becomes a quartet with the addition of Japan-born, Germany-based pianist Aki Takase—and it's an excellent decision, as she is clearly in sync with the others, both compositionally and improvisationally. Three tracks are group improvisations ("Coming Through the Leaves", "Futatsu", "Antistrophe"), with two compositions by Takase ("Late Night in Berlin" and "Snowball") and one each from Heberer ("D for Dowland") and Hertenstein ("Panic Ballad"). The pianist blends with the group seamlessly, while Heberer's wide-ranging sound and musical ideas contribute to the melodic and sonic qualities of the group. Hertenstein delivers his incisive drive and subtle shading without overwhelming the music, while Fonda's sturdy bass is what gives the music its grounding.

Both of these releases consolidate Remedy's reputation as one of the most unique groups to emerge in the last quarter-century.

For more info visit sluchaj.bandcamp.com. Joe Fonda is at Downtown Music Gallery Jan. 12. See Calendar.



A Window, Basically
Peter Evans/Mike Pride (Relative Pitch)
by Bill Meyer

It might be tempting to perceive this duo as a reduction of Pulverize the Sound: trumpeter Peter Evans and drummer Mike Pride play in both endeavors, and one could accurately say that their music is made possible by subtracting electric bassist Tim Dahl and all of the plugged-in gear. But the equation is more complicated than that. Remove Dahl, and you don't just remove the instrument he plays, but also an orientation towards idioms as forms to be reckoned with. Dahl rocks, and even when Pulverize the Sound plays completely improvised music, the trio's plugged-in heaviness, its willingness to resort to riffing and to blast-force beats, manifests an overt rock consciousness. While one cannot say for sure that Pride and Evans discard their rock baggage when they improvise together in Pride's home studio, neither can one say that what the duo plays really "rocks."

The album's seven tracks (or thereabouts—the last one is actually two pieces separated by a couple of minutes of silence), all named "Substance", contain loads of space—space enough to hear the different elements of Pride's drumkit, to sense the sounds from Evans' horn impacting the walls, and to get a sense of two people in a room. This music isn't the outcome of one musician being taken away; rather, it expresses something that is completed by an openness that is as essential an ingredient as the sounds of brass and drums. However, it's not minimal in any sense of the word, nor do the musicians treat playing and

improvising as an end unto itself. Evans isn't shy about using his prodigious technique to shift attacks and organize disparate sounds into linear, evolving forms. Pride's playing is responsive, but never merely supportive; he is an equal contributor to music that is eventful and complete. Each musician contributes to each piece's rewarding revisits.

For more info visit relativepitchrecords.bandcamp.com. Evans is at Bar Bayeux Jan. 21 (with Aaron Burnett). See Calendar.



Live at Pierre Boulez Saal
Amir ElSaffar New Quartet (Maqām)
by John Sharpe

Chicago-born trumpeter Amir ElSaffar unveils a striking new ensemble in action at Berlin's prestigious Pierre Boulez Saal. Expanding his regular trio of Ole Mathisen (tenor) and Tomas Fujiwara (drums), ElSaffar invited singular Greek pianist Tania Giannouli into the fold. She's a significant presence as the clanging dissonances of her microtonal instrument, reaching beyond the tempered Western scale, doesn't merely color the group's sound, but reshapes it, mirroring the leader's command of Arabic maqam modes heard on previous outings such as *The Other Shore* (Outnote, 2021), *Not Two* (New Amsterdam, 2017) and *Two Rivers* (Pi Recordings, 2007).

Granted the rare luxury of a residency, entailing two days of rehearsal, a concert and a subsequent recording session, ElSaffar composed fresh material tailored to this quartet. Most of the album derives from live performance, while the CD and download editions add alternate takes of three interlinked central numbers "Orientations I-V", "Le Marteau de la Maitresse" and "For the Victims of Genocide" from the next day's recording session. Each reveals different facets through the ensemble's evolving dialogue. Despite the virtuosity on hand, the focus remains collective. Mood carries more weight than individual glory. In the absence of a bass, Fujiwara's savvy beats, in consort with Giannouli's left-hand gravity, anchor the driving rhythms, creating a platform for the loosely entwined horns of Mathisen and ElSaffar. Their well-honed interplay surges and recedes like the tide, conjuring realms variously brooding and ecstatic. Giannouli's curdled harmonies lend the music a spectral charge, nowhere more so than on the lengthy introduction to "Ghazalu", where ElSaffar's voice joins in prayerful but austere incantation.

ElSaffar himself peppers his trumpet rhetoric with reiterated phrases compounding the mesmeric effect of the charts. Fujiwara, ever the dramatist, shapes his accompaniment with the precision of a composer, underlining structural turns rather than soloist flair. The mournful "Autumn Comes" and the elegiac second version of "For the Victims of Genocide" show the trumpeter's melodic sense at its most distilled—thoughtful and deeply human. If the music resists closure (that open-endedness feels deliberate), the pleasures can be found as much in the journey as any ultimate destination.

For more info visit maqamrecords.bandcamp.com. ElSaffar is at Drom Jan. 9 (part of Winter Jazzfest) and Roulette Jan. 23 (part of "Improv Nights: A Tribute to Derek Bailey"). See Calendar.

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