

BOXED SET



XL-LX
Danish Radio Big Band (Storyville)
by Ken Dryden

The Danish Radio Big Band is one of the oldest European large jazz ensembles, known for its musicianship, its exploration of a wide range of repertoire and invitations to visiting composers, arrangers and conductors. To celebrate its 60th anniversary, Storyville has released a special limited-edition 5-LP boxed set, with one-sided 180gr discs, featuring five different composers.

Percussionist Marilyn Mazur (1955-2025) contributed the suite *Sparkles* and joins the big band, conducted by Miho Hazama. Mazur's five-movement suite is driven but not dominated by percussion. This wide-ranging work showcases a number of influences. Soloist Hans Ulrik plays recorder in the Asian-flavored "Sprinkles", while

Mazur's percussion comes to the forefront in the exotic "Magic 7", which also incorporates a bit of rockish guitar by Per Gade. There's a hint of Frank Zappa influence in the humorous "Intrusion", with playful bursts of cacophony and abrupt twists.

One of pianist Carla Bley's final works was *Roller Coaster*, which was inspired by her love of amusement parks. It was commissioned for a short Scandinavian tour in 2017 with electric bassist Steve Swallow and recorded during an off day at that time. This eight-part suite conveys the overall imagery of approaching a roller coaster, with its slow climbs and sudden turns, though even the climactic final movement is subtle in nature, rather than focused on the terror from rapid descents as the ride gets nearer to its end point. The band's musicians navigate their guest's demanding scores with finesse.

Flugelhornist and trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg was commissioned to compose the six-part suite *The Mind Behind* to celebrate his 75th birthday. Mikkelborg serves in a dual role as soloist and conductor. Each of its six movements has a unique character, ranging from the haunting introduction to the increasingly dramatic middle sections that segue from one to the next, with the conclusion offering a ray of hope. Additional guests include Mazur, harpist Helen Davies and electronics wizard

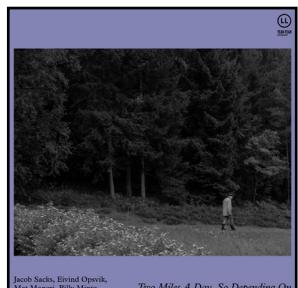
Mike Sheridan.

Peter Jensen's "Reflections for Clarinet & Jazz Orchestra" is his reimagining of Danish classical composer Carl Nielsen's "Concerto For Clarinet and Orchestra, Opus 57". Jensen uses the original work as a starting point, re-composing portions of it along with arranging it for jazz instrumentation. Andreas Veto conducts the big band with virtuoso clarinetist Peter Fuglsang as the only soloist. The work successfully straddles classical music and jazz by intermingling the old and the new in a manner that pays tribute to one of Denmark's most important composers.

Hazama's three-part *Suite Electus*, which she also conducts, is the grand finale of the set. "Nereus" is filled with tension and bright colors, showcasing Ulrik's melancholy soprano spotlight, backed by an ominous backbeat. Flugelhornist Mads la Cour's expressive solo is the centerpiece to the bright, galloping "Leda", along with the rich harmony of reeds and brass.

The audio of this LP set is outstanding—a very quiet pressing with a perfect balance of the instruments, giving the listener the feeling of being inside the actual studio.

For more info visit storyvillerecords.com. Danish Radio Big Band (featuring Miho Hazama) is at Dizzy's Club Feb. 23. See Calendar.



Two Miles A Day, So Depending On
Jacob Sacks, Eivind Opsvik, Mat Maneri,
Billy Mintz (Loyal Label)
by Tom Greenland

As I was saying...Jacob Sacks and Eivind Opsvik's *Two Miles a Day, So Depending On* seems to begin, as its subtitle implies, *in medias res*, as if the listener has been plunged into an ongoing musical conversation. The conversation began two decades ago, when the pianist and bassist invited their dream drummer,

Paul Motian (1931-2011), to record *Two Miles a Day*, also enlisting violist Mat Maneri. *Two Miles a Day, So Depending On* documents the continuing conversation, with Billy Mintz filling the drum chair for the late Motian, Sacks and Opsvik again splitting the writing credits, each contributing a half dozen compositions.

Like its predecessor, this sophomore date is a delight for many reasons. The themes are well wrought: lithe, hummable, but with just enough quirks and twerks to keep things interesting—Opsvik's "Cake, Cross, and Flowers" and "The Piano Sings" being standout examples. Maneri and Sacks deliver these themes with relaxed, yet precise synchronicity, the former's snarky, serpentine phrases goaded and ghosted by the latter's equally supple interjections, best epitomized by "Dribbs and Drabs", "Cake, Cross, and Flowers" and "The Mechanic". The compositions emphasize process over product, written with just enough roadmapping for musicians to reach their presumed

destination, also allowing plenty of options for how to arrive there.

Tracks verge along a continuum from fixed to free-form, lyrical to abstract, delicately understated to deliberately abrupt. "Awaits Melody" exemplifies the concept of *in medias res*, Opsvik plying a relentlessly iterative vamp that suggests several time frames simultaneously. "Stilling" suggests the ambiance of a free improv, and "Thoughts", the collective movement of a contemporary classical string quartet interpreting a serial composition. There's a touching duet by Opsvik and Maneri opening "Kerb's Mood", both strings bowing in close counterpoint. Some of the strongest soloing occurs on "Irreverent Mayhems", where Maneri's ideas curl and coil with remarkable flexibility and invention, followed by Sacks' equally remarkable rhythmic counterpoint, his left hand trailing behind the right, an inversion of Erroll Garner's signature style, followed by extended three-way trading between viola, piano and drums. As Motian did on the original

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