

GLOBE UNITY



Slätter på kontrabass
Håkon Thelin (Motvind)
Tide
Mike Majkowski (s/r)
Solo
Wojtek Mazolewski (NoPaper)
by Daniel A. Brown

The double bass is physically demanding and unyielding in its precise intonation, at times even an unforgiving instrument. Compound that with the bassist's spinal and meaty role as a melodic, harmonic and rhythmic cornerstone of most jazz combos, via propulsive pizzicato or on-point arco playing; the rigor and expectation of bass players is rivaled only by the instrument's upright, tree-like size and tactile dimensions. Thankfully, even with expectation and daunting technique, the potential for melodic, harmonic and timbral possibilities of the double bass are infinite. This month, we feature three recent solo albums by current, international vanguard bass players who, whether alone or in collaboration, reveal the state of the experimental low-end scene.

Norwegian bassist-composer Håkon Thelin,

who co-leads contemporary trio POING with accordionist Frode Haltli and saxophonist Rolf-Erik Nyström, and who has worked in opera and ballet, can perhaps best be understood with the bassist company he keeps, which has included fellow forward-thinking players such as Barre Phillips, Joëlle Léandre, Mark Dresser and Stefano Scodanibbio. On *Slätter på kontrabass* (Folk Tunes for Double Bass), Thelin digs deep into ancient Scandinavian songs and unearths tender, mysterious, even paganistic, folk treasures with his solo and emotional renderings. Opener "Musikus" uses precise arco to glide through an anthemic, heralding melody. Bowed octave leaps fuel "Bukkehornspolen", while on "Kristiania", drones and overtones build a veritable cathedral of hymnal sound.

Self-recorded, produced and released by Australian bassist-composer Mike Majkowski, the four-part *Tide* is a mesmerizing collection of contemporary, avant garde, electro-acoustic music. Over the course of 16 minutes each, "Part I" and "Part II" both use a two-tone, minor-second motif as the bedrock to support rising and falling, organic and inorganic, droplets of sound. Like its titular inspiration, the music (including two edits of the core tracks) ebbs and flows; notes, glimmers of near-melodies, even taps and soft rattles, pull the listener into an engulfing, albeit soothing riptide. The album and Majkowski's passion for otherworldly sound has more in common with the

unpredictable, "acousmatic" music of Romanian composer Iancu Dumitrescu than Paul Chambers or any overtly jazz-bass playing. Yet its very charm and progressive nature illustrates the wide and boundaryless domain that jazz has become—which is an encouraging development for both the genre and present, as well as future, players.

Polish bassist-composer Wojtek Mazolewski is perhaps best known for leading his notable modern jazz group Pink Freud. On *Solo*, he adds electronics, flute, harp, percussion and soft vocals to the mix for the recent 12-track release, which features Wojtek Urbański (electronics), Marysia Osu (harp), Józef Rusinowski (percussion) and vocalist Matylda Sokolowska. Atmospheric opener "Monada" is a darkly-hued, reverb-heavy mix of scraped arco and Mazolewski's guttural vocals. The bassist and Osu create an Ennio Morricone-tinged duet on "Rodeo Spirit", highlighting both players' deft staccato plucks. Clacking bass-string slaps and a syncopated rhythm are engulfed by Urbański's electronic touches on "Sylfy", while "For Marysia" conveys a kind of unhurried Romanticism with its stereo-panned bass lines in a wandering conversation. "Dawn of Wolves" kicks in with a deceptive, sliding blues line from Mazolewski, goaded by a soft, snare-brushed shuffle that Rusinowski slowly interjects with cymbal and tom strikes.

For more info visit mikemajkowski.bandcamp.com, motvindkulturlag.no and nopalpaperrecords.bandcamp.com



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