



Spooky Jazz, Vol. 3
Hannah Gill (Turtle Bay)
by Marilyn Lester

Clearly, considering that this new release is the third volume in the *Spooky Jazz* series, vocalist Hannah Gill is among the devotees that consider Halloween a High Holiday. Those into blood-and-gore slasher epics can now leave the room. Gill's ode to skeletons and spooks is geared to the, well, fun side of the day, for those who groove on '40s Hollywood movies—think *Abbott and Costello Meet the Wolfman*—and the output of the Gothic British Hammer films. Her spoken intro is right out of old-time radio, where midnight ghost stories abounded on shows such as "Suspense", "Mysterious Traveler" and "The CBS Radio Mystery Theater". The first of ten superbly-curated tracks follow, with a funky, Nola-inspired "Spider in the Web", a Gill original. Two selections are fairly well-known standards: a Latin-tinged "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" with a faintly French air, and Gill wafting along with the "gigolos and gigolettes," atmospherically aided by a feature for Philip Ambuel (bass), with Sasha Papernik (accordion) and Gabe Terracciano (violin). "Old Devil Moon", Burton Lane's swinger from *Finian's Rainbow*, has a hip intro by Ben Zweig (drums), with Gordon Webster (piano) anchoring the swing with creative ideas throughout.

Quirkiness prevails in many of the more or less esoteric tracks. The blues are represented in "The Richest Guy in the Graveyard", once addressed by Dinah Washington and in "He's a Demon, He's a Devil, He's a Doll", an assessment of the vagaries of love, introduced on *Presenting Betty Hutton* in 1952. Closer is also a blues and another Gill original: "Wolves in the Tree Line", gothically reminiscent of "Why Don't You Do Right?", with guitar shredding by Justin Poindexter. J.S. Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D minor", now a horror trope, opens "I'm Gonna Haunt Ya", a clever, uptempo, spooky novelty tune most associated with Ray Noble's dance band. Gill is multi-tracked, providing a chorus of ghostly voices that accompany solo features in this rapid-fire funhouse of a tune.

Anchoring the sum total of *Spooky Jazz, Vol. 3* is the authority of Gill's solid vocals. She's got a pleasant soprano-range vocal tone, enhanced by superb arrangements and a first-rate band. This is an album that's not only loads of fun, but is worthy of a year-round listen just because.

For more info visit turtlebayrecords.com



Mutualism
Flyways (Mara Rosenbloom, Anaïs Maviel,
Jordyn Davis) (Daily Music)
by Franz. A. Matzner

The new release *Mutualism* by the Flyways trio—Mara Rosenbloom (piano), Anaïs Maviel (vocals, percussion)

and Jordyn Davis (bass)—is an unusual album grounded by two Adrienne Rich poems, "Purely Local" and "Origins and History of Consciousness". According to Rosenbloom, the music and lyrics represent a meditation on the interconnectedness of human beings. Within this frame, the trio delivers concise pieces that tend to focus on relationships between individuals and small-scale interaction rather than grandiose metaphysics. However, the sophisticated manipulation of the poems is not what makes the album stand out: it is the atypical blend of instrumentation with the absence of traditional drums and Maviel's vocal approach, the latter in many ways forming the central pillar to this project's unique sound.

Challenging even the broadest contours of jazz vocals, Maviel's delivery runs the gambit from straightforward to operatic flights to keening and shrieking atonal departures. Pitches shift erratically and sonics plunge and rise unexpectedly, whether adhering to a poem's lyrics or entering spheres all their own. Often, these techniques combine within individual compositions, such as "These Two Selves" and "Simple". Simultaneously, gongs reverberate and singing bowls hum, adding peculiar textures, which are often offset by Davis' stable grooves and Rosenbloom's deft piano performance. Not all the pieces display this cataclysmic style, which at times creeps toward the abrasive. The paean to identity's dynamism, "Affirmation", for example, mirrors the lyrics' profundity with soft transitions, sonorous vocals, calm piano and Davis' gentle inflections. A second example is "Not Simple", which merges "Simple" and "Two Selves" thematically and musically. Rosenbloom places her notes like a restful walk over moss. Aided by Davis' arco technique and Maviel's melodiousness, the mood is contemplative. "Not Simple" also evidences another of the album's defining traits.

Across the recording, Rosenbloom's exceptional piano playing remains more reserved than flamboyant, providing structural through-lines even when the music reaches tumultuous peaks. In fact, structure is an apt word to describe this project. Despite Maviel's experimental razor's edge and the overall tonal singularity, *Mutualism* is held together by a clear architecture that allows the lyrics, musical themes and improvisation to form its holistic dedication to humanism.

For more info visit mararosenbloom.com. Mara Rosenbloom is at *Ibeam Brooklyn* Mar. 6, *Loove Annex* Mar. 13 (part of *OUT Fest*) and *Ibeam Brooklyn* Mar. 18 (with William Hooker). Anaïs Maviel is at *The Stone at The New School* Mar. 4 (with Aruán Ortiz). See *Calendar*.



Solo (I)
The Freedom Suite, Novoa/Carter/Mela Trio, Vol. 2
Eva Novoa (577 Records)
by John Pietaro

Over many years, Eva Novoa has been a consistent new music force, with numerous recent releases by the innovative pianist-composer, including a brand-new solo set and a sequel recording to one of her established trios. Taken together, the two offer visions of Novoa amid the ghostly recall of Satie, Les Six, master Cecil Taylor and contemporaries Matthew Shipp and Vijay Iyer.

Novoa's *Solo (I)* offers the illusion of an ensemble with *outré* visions. On the haunting album opener, "Left Behind", she sonically widens the piece with several gongs, often muted to varying degrees as a

compelling counter. And compelling it is. The gongs sing their own mournful melody and, played in concert with the piano, the overall effect is hypnotic. She follows with "Dime Con Quien Tu Andas", which is roughly translated as "Tell Me Who You Are Hanging Out With", a common, innocuous Spanish-language phrase realized here as anything but innocuous. Novoa plays her piano's wooden casing and the muted low-end strings not simply percussively, but with near rage against a largely static vocal ("Diiiiim-e!") and brief chromatic transitional lines over the instrument's keys. By the time the ear reaches "Stilte Cabine" ("Quiet Cabin", sort of), the pianist appears to be in a celebration of 20th century classical music, boiling over with pointillist and expressionist flavor, plus raw atonality, yet with moments very much Gershwin. The pianist proves not only a prodigy of sound, but of the silence birthed from the decays between the striking harmonic accents.

Novoa's musical journey extends most naturally into her second trio set featuring free jazz vet Daniel Carter (tenor, alto, soprano, clarinets, trumpet, flute) and Francisco Mela (drums, voice). *The Freedom Suite, Novoa/Carter/Mela Trio, Vol. 2*, sparked with the embers of the first, encapsulates collectivity via generic works of the moment. Conceptually, the album was deemed a tribute to Ellington: Duke's genius and widespread vision for the big band was a network of previously unimagined orchestration without loss of swinging jazz innovation. Here, Novoa and company uniquely reach into themselves seeking the macro within. The album, a set of brief "études," sketch portraits of Ellington with orchestra as well as within the all-star trio album *Money Jungle* (Duke, Charles Mingus, Max Roach). Listen for the width of Novoa's chordal voicings ("Big Grande") against the variety of Carter's winds: the

RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Melissa Aldana—*Filin* (Blue Note)
- Dawn Clement—*Delight* (Origin)
- Sylvie Courvoisier Trio—*Éclats (Live in Europe)* (Intakt)
- Marilyn Crispell/Anders Jormin—*Memento* (ECM)
- Amalie Dah's Dafnie EXTENDED—*Live at Moldejazz* (Sonic Transmissions)
- Kris Davis and the Lutosławski Quartet—*The Solastalgia Suite* (Pyroclastic)
- Maryanne de Prophetis—*Come O Light* (Enna)
- EVERY (Mara Rosenbloom & Barbara Majnarić)—*Tried in the Fire* (Daily Music)
- Ella Grace—*Figments* (Shifting Paradigm)
- Ingrid Jensen—*Landings* (Newvelle)
- Haeun Joo—*Just Gravity* (577 Records)
- Magda Mayas' Filamental—*Murmur* (Relative Pitch)
- Angelika Niescier—*Chicago Tapes* (Intakt)
- Eva Novoa—*Solo (I)* (577 Records)
- Audrey Ochoa—*The Sorceress* (Chronograph)
- Meg Okura & The Pan Asian Chamber Jazz Ensemble—*Isaiah* (Adhyāropa)
- Tessie Overmyer—*Tidelines* (earshift music)
- Kerry Politzer—*Alternate Route* (Whirlwind)
- Marta Sánchez—*For the Space You Left* (Out Of Your Head)
- Trio Carbon (Mia Zabelka, Ola Rzepka, Łukasz Marciniak)—*Black Heart* (Setola Di Maiale)