



Beneath Lifted Skies
Linda May Han Oh (Biophilia)
by JR Simon

Is there anything sexier than upright bass and tenor saxophone? With *Beneath Lifted Skies*, bassist Linda May Han Oh and guest star, saxophonist Melissa Aldana, make the question rhetorical. In this intimate duo setting, every note is exposed, each gesture matters and the musicians are deeply attuned to one another. The result is intoxicating.

They announce themselves immediately with a breakneck “Anthropology”. The tempo is fast but never harried. Oh’s bass is surefooted and driving, with Aldana’s tenor equally assured. That confidence is sustained throughout an album drawn largely from the jazz canon. On Charles Mingus’ “Duke Ellington’s Sound of Love”, the saxophonist’s playing drips with emotion. Her dynamic swells and decrescendos explore the multitudes hidden within a single note. Wayne Shorter’s “Dance Cadaverous” is another standout; familiar, but newly transparent without piano or drums, it is as though the air has been cleared, revealing this duo’s extraordinary interplay. On John Coltrane’s “26-2”, Aldana handles the knotty saxophone line with fluid authority, while Oh maintains exacting time even as she offers an exhilarating interpretation of the melody.

The freely improvised tracks—“Infinite”, “Resolve” and “Shoulder to Shoulder”—confirm that the pair’s chemistry extends well beyond established repertoire. On “Resolve”, the bassist’s repeating figure provides a steady foundation beneath Aldana’s melancholy melody, distilling the duo’s responsiveness into something spare and deeply affecting. But it is Oh’s unaccompanied “God Bless the Child” that sits as the album’s jewel. Aching, reaching and unafraid of silence, her staggering technique is always in service of pure expression. After this emotional peak, “Winter” feels less like an encore than a benediction. Oh’s closing solo, built around resonant, impeccably-executed double stops, is spacious and quietly hopeful.

Beneath Lifted Skies brings together two musicians whose formidable chops open the door to something much deeper: the pursuit of emotional possibility.

For more info visit biophilarecords.com. Oh and Aldana are at *Symphony Space* Nov. 20 (part of “Coltrane 100”). See *Calendar*.



Marchin’ On!
The Heath Brothers (Strata-East – Mack Avenue)
by Ken Dryden

The Heath Brothers (drummer Albert “Tootie”, woodwinds player Jimmy and bassist Percy) came from a musical family in Philadelphia and pursued successful individual careers. They debuted as a band

not long after the original breakup of the Modern Jazz Quartet in 1974 (of which Percy was a member) and made this album, their initial recording, the following year, adding pianist Stanley Cowell. The music heard on the 1975 session came together as the group woodshedded on trains during their European tour, drawing the attention of their fellow passengers, who were fascinated by the unique sounds they heard.

This is a remarkable first record for many reasons. Not only are the compositions of each member featured, but the instrumentation is often surprising, beginning with the gorgeous setting of Duke Ellington’s “Warm Valley”. Both Albert and Jimmy play flute, with Cowell providing rhythm on mbira (African thumb piano), buoyed by Percy’s arco baby bass, a novel approach to the Maestro’s timeless ballad. Albert contributes “Tafadhali”, a soft, light-hearted ditty with the same instrumentation. Percy’s “The Watergate Blues” is humorous and finds the musicians back on their primary instruments, with the bassist taking an extended solo, while Jimmy sits out. Cowell contributes “Maimoun”, a lush African-themed feature introduced by the two flutes, before Jimmy switches over to his soulful tenor saxophone playing. The pianist is rather reserved here, keeping his solo brief and maintaining an overall supportive role.

The remainder of the album showcases Jimmy’s four-part “Smilin’ Billy Suite” (dedicated to drummer Billy Higgins). “Part I” is introduced by Percy’s arco cello and Cowell’s strummed piano strings, segueing into a dreamy interlude with the quartet centering on Jimmy’s lyrical flute performance. They transition seamlessly into “Part II”, with Cowell returning to the mbira, leading the band into an easygoing groove. “Part III” introduces another twist, with Albert heard on an uncredited African double-reed instrument (a musette?) and Jimmy on soprano saxophone, playing a haunting march that gradually fades as the focus shifts to Albert’s drum solo. “Part IV” is a reprise of the initial theme, with a more straight-ahead instrumentation of tenor saxophone, piano, bass and drums.

The Heath Brothers remain an under-appreciated band, and *Marchin’ On* should be considered one of their essential albums. It is an especially welcome reissue in Jimmy Heath’s centenary year (Oct. 25 marked the 100th anniversary of his arrival day).

For more info visit mackavenue.com/collections/strata-east. Jimmy Heath centennial concerts are at *Dizzy’s Club* Nov. 2 (featuring the Jimmy Heath Big Band) and *Flushing Town Hall* Nov. 7 (featuring the Queens Jazz Orchestra with Antonio Hart). See *Calendar*.



Marches Rewound and Rewritten
Maria Faust Sacrum Facere (Stunt)
Morgenbarn
Tilo Weber, Matteo Paggi, Maria Faust (Malletmuse)
by Sarah “Flake” Grosser

Estonia-born, Copenhagen-based saxophonist Maria Faust has lately dispensed with the traditional jazz ensemble concept to focus on interplay between woodwinds and brass, with deconstructed percussion serving as mere accompaniment. With *Marches Rewound* and *Rewritten*, Faust subverts the military march into something somber and reflective rather than boisterous; *Morgenbarn*, conversely, is a trio with more openness and space for each musician to explore.

Marches Rewound and *Rewritten*, the third album from her excellent Sacrum Facere series, takes the

concept of war and reframes it to focus on the victims rather than the victorious. The nine marches here are numbered from 0 to 6.2, ignoring strict, linear order (“March Nr. 5” is the sixth track, while “March Nr. 0” is the seventh). Mechanical, regimented structures are given a chance to finally breathe and talk about how they feel, rather than being told to suck it up and not to cry. The album opens, appropriately enough, with the percussive sounds of the musicians stomping their feet, marching to the slow tempo. The omnipresent snare drum (Emanuele Maniscalco) is joined by bass drum, crotales and percussion (Peter Ole Jørgensen) and a horn ensemble led by Faust (alto), which includes Anders Banke (bass clarinet, baritone horn), Kasper Tranberg (trumpet), Mads Hyhne (trombone) and Jonatan Ahlbom (tuba). The sound is dry and immediate—as intimate and confrontational as being alone with the band in a small room. In “March Nr. 2” there is a moment of vulnerability, when fluttering horns, wailing saxophone and jazzy trumpet swell in ascension. A swirling space of beauty emerges and emotions seep in. *Marches Rewound* and *Rewritten* is a simple concept explored thoroughly and executed with focus and grace.

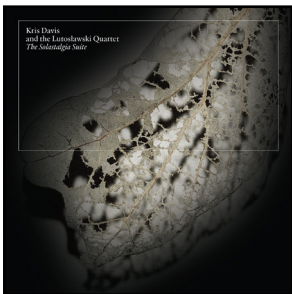
Morgenbarn is a tight collection of six pieces composed and performed by the trio of Faust (alto, electronics) with Italian Matteo Paggi (trombone, electronics) and German Tilo Weber (drums, percussion, vibraphone). This band also has an ear for room depth and here explores it masterfully in the *wetter* direction. Reverb effects and electronics provide rich, soaring tones up into the skies. Distant pads and even a faraway alto vocal create a vastness, which is handled delicately, especially alongside reverberant vibraphone. All three musicians contribute compositions to the album, but it’s not too difficult

R E C O M M E N D E D N E W R E L E A S E S

- JD Allen—*SÖWT (Savant)*
- Barcelona Art Orchestra/Miguel Zenón—*Expressions (Miel Music)*
- BFA Trio (Sam Bardfeld, Joe Fonda, Barry Altschul)—*Hurtling Between (Fundacja Sluchaj)*
- Ran Blake—*Voices (Tzadik)*
- Anthony Braxton/James Emery—*Articulations (Modern Sounds)*
- Jakob Bro, Larry Grenadier, Jorge Rossy (feat. Charles Lloyd)—*Bjerje, Strand (Loveland)*
- Cameron Brown and Dannie’s Calypso—*Remembrance (Sunnyside)*
- Greg Burk, Achille Succi, Silvia Bolognesi, Gerald Cleaver—*Purple Blues (Tonos)*
- Stephan Crump—*Passerine (Out Of Your Head)*
- Kayvon Gordon—*Blood Lines (Close Up)*
- Vanisha Gould—*What An Interesting Girl (Cellar Music)*
- John Hollenbeck & Hot Club Jazz Orchestra—*Peace and Justice (Flexatonic)*
- Jason Kao Hwang/Human Rites Trio—*Second Life (True Sound Recordings)*
- James Brandon Lewis Red Lily—*Calling Antonin (TAO Forms)*
- Francisco Mela—*Carnaval De Oriente (577 Records)*
- Irène Schweizer—*Piano Solo (Intakt)*
- Ayumi Tanaka, Thomas Morgan, Thomas Strönen—*Windflower (ECM)*
- Ziv Taubenfeld—*Song of the Weeds (Full Sun)*
- Alexander von Schlippenbach—*Main Lines/1967 (Corbett vs. Dempsey)*
- Amber Weekes—*To Oscar with Love (Amber Inn)*

to spot which pieces are written by Faust. She rarely embellishes her openings and errs on the side of restraint. “Short Child” takes a waltz, pulsing like a slow heartbeat, and adds an earnest, rising melody. There’s a stoic maturity to it, equal parts mechanical and emotional, that is reminiscent of *Marches Rewound* and *Rewritten*. “Firstborn” also begins with a very simple melody, but evokes a dreamier, more mysterious atmosphere. What ties the tracks of this album together is the understated, oftentimes dark, melodies. It’s a cohesive collection with a surface simplicity, but with plenty of substantial improvisations and underlying complexity, a fine balance—one only wishes there were a few more tracks to enjoy.

For more info visit mariafaust.bandcamp.com and tiloweber.de. Faust is at *Zürcher Gallery* Nov. 1 (with Kresten Osgood). See *Calendar*.



The Solastalgia Suite
Kris Davis and the Lutoslawski Quartet (Pyroclastic)
by Terrell K. Holmes

Glenn Albrecht, a philosopher and environmentalist, coined the term “solastalgia,” which he defines as “distress produced by environmental change impacting people while they are directly connected to their environment.” The acclaimed and constantly-evolving pianist-composer Kris Davis explores this concept via a Third Stream excursion on *The Solastalgia Suite*. Joining Davis is the Lutoslawski Quartet, comprising Roksana Kwaśnikowska (first violin), Marcin Markowicz (second violin), Artur Rozmysłowicz (viola) and Maciej Młodawski (cello).

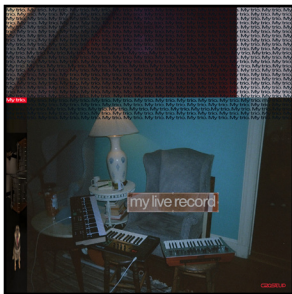
The opening piece, “Interlude”, announces that this is not your standard button-down classical chamber quintet. Davis’ stark block chords complement the staccato dynamism of the strings. Amidst the aggressive pizzicato and Davis’ musings, the music swings. “An Invitation to Disappear” is as close as the quintet gets to the “canonical” tradition, with its nuanced balance of depth and texture. When the cello opens a path for a reflective Davis, her single-note voicing is so soft that it sounds reticent. The modulated, high-pitched strings on the haunting “Towards No Earthly Pole” evoke an empty swing in a backyard swaying in the wind. Davis’ intermittent single notes on prepared piano sound like distant wind chimes, enhancing the desolation.

The pianist’s manic glissandos and trills complement the pulsating strings that drive the astonishing “The Known End”. The quintet engages in call-and-response centered around a spirited eight-note motif, similar to the five-note blues approach in Muddy Waters’ “Mannish Boy”. The strings make an abrupt shift into a cacophony that sounds like an avian quarrel that crescendoes, then flows into a lovely moment of oceanic calmness—think of a meeting between Keith Jarrett and John Luther Adams. The somber “Ghost Reefs” sounds like the part of the shoreline where ocean waves crash. The quintet draws on a palette of sonic urgency on the frenetic “Pressure and Yield”—the biting dialogue between the shrieking arco and strident tremolo would be a challenge for any ensemble to match. Davis’ block chords, metronomic strings, intermittent pizzicato, the rhythm of the prepared piano and the imposing voice of the cello, embody the passing of time perfectly on “Life on Venus”. Album closer “Degrees of Separation”

brilliantly encapsulates all of the musicality and emotions that have preceded it.

The Solastalgia Suite is a stunning achievement of imagination, creativity and execution by Kris Davis and the Lutoslawski Quartet. Davis has recorded numerous excellent albums, and this one belongs right at the top.

For more info visit pyroclasticrecords.com. Davis is at *Miller Theatre* Nov. 7 (with *Paradoxical Frog*). See *Calendar*.



my live record
My trio (Close Up)
by Jason Gross

Yvonne Rogers is an in-demand, award-winning pianist-composer and commissioned artist whose debut on record was the dreamy, minimalist solo album *Seeds* (2023). She’s now transitioned to a very different place, with a new group featuring Tim Watson (guitar) and Jon Starks (drums). My trio’s (note the small “t” in the group’s name) brief debut album from earlier this year, *Oh Horror!*, presented a challenging, invigorating mash-up of avant jazz, progressive rock, fusion, collage and noise. They have followed it up with *my live record*, an eight-song mostly-improvised album, recorded last year at (and released by) the small artist-driven Lower East Side club Close Up. It’s even more of an aural rollercoaster ride, featuring Rogers on synthesizers with MIDI patches (pre-set sounds) designed by Watson.

“Voice Instrument” starts with the grandeur of Rogers’ keyboards, then breaks into a fast-paced, rumbling march that keeps shifting slightly in tempo and sonic focus, occasionally letting Watson’s guitar glide before transforming into glitchy video game sonics with a flurry of accompanying drum rolls and toy piano sounds. “Give em Heaven” has a calmer, elegiac atmosphere at first, soaring on bass-driven synth and guitar flourishes, leading to scraping noises and crashes, then ending with fluttering effects over calming electronics for contrast. “Servo Panic Sack” starts with chainsaw buzzes and clanking alongside random keyboards. The sampled sounds get louder and more chaotic, then mellow before revving up into a harried march. “Dust Monster Return to Dust” has sputtering rhythms that gain oomph with guitar wails and then turn spacy; light, choppy synths and echoey guitar dominate before reverting back to wailing, sputtering effects.

A thorny barrage of drum crashes, stately synths and formal guitar riffing announces “Shuffle”, which becomes increasingly abstract then slows into bouncy keyboards before dreamily fading off. “Debra” features another rhythmic attack alongside Watson’s Santana-like guitar cries. The carnivalesque, brief “I’m TV” has yet another drum attack and more guitar shredding, which pulls back and decelerates before drifting away. “Divine Bug” ends the album with Rogers’ reflective keyboard playing, and plaintive guitar from Watson, over Starks’ drum rolls and sound sample blasts: calm and chaos tugging at each other.

Free jazz fans who already appreciate note flurries, sonic onslaughts and elastic time signatures will find this a welcome, adventurous destination.

For more info visit closeup154orchard.bandcamp.com. The album release concert is at *Close Up* Nov. 2. See *Calendar*.

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