

GLOBE UNITY



TALES
Fabian Neubauer/Duy Luong/Pablo Liebhaber (Leo)
Sol Expression
River People (Chap-Chap)
Resonance
Megumi Yonezawa (Sunnyside)
 by Tyran Grillo

The albums gathered here are strikingly different, linked by a freedom of expression needed more than ever in a wounded world. And while each connects dots to regional affiliations in the South/East China Sea, their reach is ultimately global and loving.

First is *TALES*, which documents a series of collective improvisations by Fabian Neubauer (piano, Wurlitzer, electronics), Vietnamese Duy Luong (bass, electronics) and Pablo Liebhaber (drums). Between the exploratory gestures of "Faces" in three parts and the softer focus of "Metamorphoses/Reprise", the trio maps its journey in real time with tasteful rapport. Key moments include the electronic hum of "Tides of Time" and the title track's free-floating Wurlitzer, arco bass and shuffling brushes. Despite being the most open, the latter is one of the more forthright expressions, even against the engaging abrasions of "Scirocco". Grooves peek above the surface now and then, but are never the point. Like crocodiles in the water, they bare their teeth only when necessary.

Alongside this is *Sol Expression*, another freely rendered set with Filipino bassist Tetsuro Hori, guitarist Jonny Alegre, drummer Christian Bucher and saxophonist Rick Countryman. The opening title track sets the stage for an album moving patiently and with reverence. Like the Forest Spirit in *Princess Mononoke*, it leaves behind blooms of vegetation that quickly wilt as the musicians move onward. Such ephemerality is most evident in the more visceral moments, as in "Melting Point 4⁰⁰" and "River Rain", both of which evoke Naked City-era John Zorn. Like the seemingly post-facto titles, moods and measures could be switched around at any moment yet still feel the same.

Finally, we have *Resonance*, the second leader effort from Japanese pianist Megumi Yonezawa, whose *A Result of the Colors* introduced listeners to a distinct voice. While Yonezawa has always had a rich sound, she takes her compositional voice to new heights this time around and we are all the more fortunate for its rewards. Joined by bassist Mike McGuirk and drummer Mark Ferber, she offers a set of mostly originals, of which "Before the Wind" introduces a glistening and welcoming world (beautifully recorded to boot). Yonezawa's artful pianism skims the waters along her rhythm section's crisp shorelines, McGuirk adding the deepest footprints in the sand across tracks like "The Radiance" and "It's All That Matters". Highlights include the balladic masterstroke "Yet Again at Will" and Cole Porter's "Everything I Love" among a handful of standards noteworthy for Ferber's attention to detail. It takes an immense talent to carry so much emotional cargo while making it feel weightless from start to finish. Combined with Yonezawa's classic yet forward-leaning sound, the result is one of the most uplifting trio records you are likely to encounter all year.

For more information, visit leorecords.com, chapchap-music.com and sunnysiderecords.com



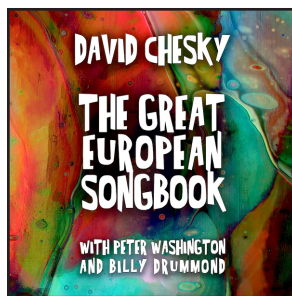
Root Perspectives
Whit Dickey Quartet (TAO Forms)
 by John Sharpe

If one of the most important choices, especially in improvised music, is selecting the lineup, then drummer Whit Dickey has pulled off a masterstroke on *Root Perspectives*. Thus alongside enduring partner pianist Matthew Shipp and more recent accomplice bassist Brandon Lopez, he has recruited saxophone gun-for-hire Tony Malaby, his first time recording with any of the others. And it is Malaby who is the defining presence on the four cuts in this 50-minute studio session. His effortlessly inventive tenor, full of emotionally freighted distortions and an occasional oblique lyricism, constantly grabs the ear in what is essentially collective communion.

Credited with direction on the sleeve, it is often Dickey who establishes the tempo, but never so rigidly as to inhibit his crew. On the opening "Supernova", a slow hi-hat beat concurrent with a rapid pulsing ride cymbal offers multiple options and at the same time leaves space in the bottom end, amply filled by throbbing bass and a pounding right hand on the piano. And with Shipp persistently pushing Malaby, whose strangulated tones twist and fray in response, it can even seem as if Dickey needs to chase to catch up.

Shipp's fondness for hammered motifs and reiterated rhythmic figures suggests structural markers throughout the set, a predilection shared by Malaby, and excitement levels peak when the pair snag on a repeated phrase in the latter stages of the sometime martial "Doomsday Equation". Their continual exchanges enliven the following "Swamp Petals" as well, one particularly engaging passage ensuing as Malaby's choked slurs surf over a song-like progression from the pianist, then blend in mournful anguish with arco bass hum. The piece closes following another burning climax, Malaby extemporizing a melodic tag, which almost serves as a head to cap the preceding unbridled interplay. It is just another example of the way in which form-seeking improvisers can elevate such dates beyond the ordinary into the outstanding.

For more information, visit taoforms.com. This project is at 411 Kent Dec. 3rd. See Calendar.



The Great European Songbook
David Chesky (The Audiophile Society)
 by Franz Matzner

Pianist David Chesky's *The Great European Songbook* is another of his forays into diverse musical approaches. In this case, Chesky, joined by bassist Peter Washington and drummer Billy Drummond, look to reconfigure some of the most recognized compositions in the Western European classical canon.

Recorded in The Audiophile Society's Mega-Dimensional Sound system, a form of 3D audio, the album is pleasantly listenable. The music's consistent

warmth, often difficult to capture, is present throughout and the quality allows the trio's light touch to be discernible. For example, the subtleties of Drummond's brushwork come through clearly, which ultimately proves one of the material's most enticing elements.

Bach is prominent and the overall album relies heavily on establishing a blues feel or inserting Latin rhythms. These reformulations act as launching pads for improvisation and demonstrate jazz' ability to mine even what some would label musically sacrosanct.

Chesky is surely aware of European classical music previously used in similar ways: as a platform; integrated into jazz standards; or as part of original compositions. This suggests his focus is more on the how than the why, as well as the specific pieces chosen.

The most inviting aspects of the album are its consistent delicacy and the insouciance permeating the whole. The trio avoids the temptation to bury the original pieces with overly ornate or brash excursions, leaving them unrecognizable. The most successful are those that bridge blues to the original, like the opening "Second Prelude" and "Wachet Auf". Less so are those that merge Latin rhythms, like Chopin's "Prelude no. 4 in E minor", which sound forced.

Opinions are likely to differ on the success of each piece. One may speculate that this is part of Chesky's "why". To challenge listeners' willingness to think differently about compositions to which they have attachment or certain perspectives; at the very least, the *The Great European Songbook* offers this opportunity. Moreover, regardless of listeners' evaluation of individual tunes, it is a quite listenable album to turn to when something warm, inviting and well executed is needed.

For more information, visit theaudiophilesociety.com. This project is at Dizzy's Club Dec. 6th. See Calendar.



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