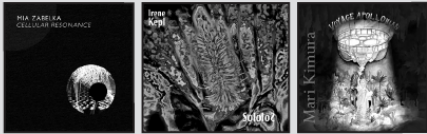


GLOBE UNITY



Cellular Resonance
Mia Zabelka (LCR)
Sololo2
Irene Kepl (Fou)
Voyage Apollonian
Mari Kimura (Innova)
by Tom Greenland

Violin techniques have come a long way since Stuff Smith, Joe Venuti and others adapted classical music's quintessential instrument to the heterodox demands of jazz. Three recent solo albums show just how far.

Viennese violinist Mia Zabelka has, with *Cellular Resonance*, produced one of her most panoramic soundscapes to date, a miasmic, tactile, kinesthetic, cautiously exuberant voyage to far-off and far-out sonic spaces. Of the three CDs reviewed here, hers is the least 'violinistic', with fewer obvious references to signature timbres. Rather, she favors all manner of electronic processing (assisted by Lydia Lunch on half the tracks), generating a mélange of ambiguous yet highly evocative textures: a sputtering factory engine spewing coolant; rubber-booted footfalls echoing away down a long cement tunnel; a stylus scratching vinyl on a decelerating turntable; braying elephant; bull-roarer; theremin; gas-burner flames squelched by a boiling teakettle; moths close-buzzing a lantern. Impressions of the biosphere: close, visceral, immersive, visual.

Irene Kepl, also from Vienna, takes a contrasting approach on *Sololo2*, her suite of ruminative improvisations all recorded in a single day. Like Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin, Kepl's improvisations unwind in endless streams of notes, finding their variety and interest in the counterpoint between simultaneous independent themes voiced in the low, middle and upper registers. At times she presses double-stopped strings into triples, wrings falsetto howls from reluctant pitches, working the recording space's natural acoustics for maximum reverb. Her *pianissimi* are like small mammals skulking at night, bow chops like birdcalls, pizzicatos tinkling kotos, glissandi drifting sirens. On "Forget-Me-Not", the most compelling track, pressure builds from skidding samisen tones to panning Doppler whistles to distorted explosions, resolving into a slowly ripping string noise.

And just when you think you've heard all a solo violin can do, hear again. Mari Kimura's *Voyage Apollonian* is the latest progress report in the Japanese violinist's development of human-computer interactive improvisation. Wearing a custom WiFi motion detector on her right hand that transmutes physical gestures into digital algorithms, she configures string quartets (creating low cello tones with her trademark subharmonic technique), canons, harmonizing choirs and other ultimately unclassifiable virtual realities. Imagine HAL, the irreplaceable supercomputer in Stanley Kubrick's *2001*, in a free-fall free improv with astronaut Dave Bowman and you'll get a sense of it. Three covers by Brazilian composers are less effective, the virtual piano comping an acquired taste at best, the transcriptions imitative rather than generative, but cuts like the title track, "Eigenspace", "Canon Élastique" and "Breuer Vivant" show a degree of invention and independence only possible in a Kimura-ian space-time continuum.

For more information, visit littlecrackdrabbit.co.uk, fourrecords.com and innova.mu



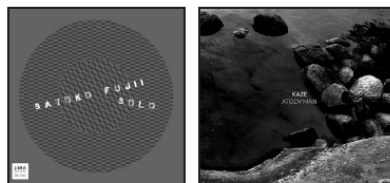
Momentum
Muriel Grossmann (Dreamland)
by Elliott Simon

The spiritual connection on *Momentum* is immediately obvious. Saxophonist Muriel Grossmann has long histories with guitarist Radomir Milojkovic, bassist Gina Schwarz and drummer Uros Stamenkovic, developed through many performances and recordings. Grossmann is clearly in control as she uses tenor, alto and soprano to lead band and listener on a journey that takes off like a missile, passes through meditation, reaches nirvana and ends with thanksgiving.

Grossmann's intense solo supplication and powerful jousting with Milojkovic begins the session as "Elevation" rises into a sanctified setting. The comparison to Coltrane is clear but the quartet finds its own supreme space through the title track's initial introspection, gorgeous tenor phrasing and penetrating guitar soloing. Schwarz and Stamenkovic buttress the melodies with unceasing rhythm and shifting augmentation. The latter is a beautifully emotive player and ensures that the excursion remains smooth and on course. "Chant" cleverly gives her space, allowing a pizzicato solo to define a mantra answered by the melismatic saxophone/guitar pairing on "Sacred".

"Horizon" is a glimpse of enlightenment, soprano painting a free landscape before "Rising" snakecharms its way to a penultimate peaceful groove driven by percussive decoration. "Gratitude" appropriately closes the session with a graceful benediction, highlighting Grossmann's improvisational skills. Known primarily for her exceptional work on alto and soprano, Grossmann uncovers new spiritual spaces on *Momentum* by skillfully incorporating the expanded tonal and textural palette of her tenor in the context of a compatible quartet.

For more information, visit murielgrossmann.com



Solo
Satoko Fujii (Libra)
Atody Man
KAZE (Circum/Libra)
by Marc Medwin

Stockhausen's landmark *Telemusik* exhibits a quality of simultaneous speed and stasis and the same could be said of pianist Satoko Fujii. The lack of a steady pulse is certainly a variable, but her music is imbued with space, thick connective tissues it would be incomplete to label silences. These first two discs in her 60th birthday year celebration speak to that stasis and to the many contrasts in mood and dynamic arising from them.

Solo is a fortuitously recorded recital in which an absolutely exquisite room acoustic becomes as much a musical element as the stunningly tuned instrument. A piece such as "Spring Storm", originally for trio, takes on new life and dimension, despite its fairly traditional free jazz arc. Multi-timbral explorations of the piano's outside and innards bring a small ensemble quality, each opening event punctuated by a pause and the echoes of chords in the room adding a layer of

harmony rather than being simple extensions. The same is true of chorale-like "Gen Himmel", though the reflectively triadic melody doesn't appear until this long version is more than half over. Low-register octaves are dizzyingly rife with overtones and so crystalline are the *pianissimi* it can be difficult to tell if the string is plucked or struck. This is now the best solo disc in a catalogue containing many.

Atody Man is from longtime quartet Kaze with trumpeters Natsuki Tamura and Christian Pruvost and drummer Peter Orins. Fujii's "Morning Glow" moves from a deliciously modal atmosphere, slowly infiltrated by a repeating melodic figure, which then becomes grist for the group mill of groove and vamp. Her other contribution, "Moving", inhabits a space fairly far afield from traditional notions of New Thing form. Its driving force, at least initially, is superbly recorded drums, setting up something approaching multiple pulses only to eschew them. Then, there is Orins' "Hypnotique Sympathie", which involves trumpets slowly wringing the beats out of gradually detuned unisons, a technique that would doubtless make Alvin Lucier smile. That unison is actually the seed from which the rest of the piece grows, which says nothing of the square pop-tune vibe Fujii and Orins eventually lay down and which the trumpets do everything in their power to subvert. Indeed, it is the trumpeters who continually shake things up, especially on Tamura's "Inspiration", where they employ an encyclopedia of timbre and technique. These discs speak as much to evolution as to backward glances and to the restlessly creative spirits that fostered their creation. Fujii plans to release a disc per month in 2018 and if these first two offerings indicate what's to come, a top-drawer series is in the offing.

For more information, visit librarecords.com

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