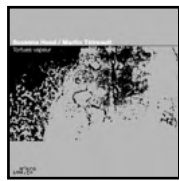


ALBUM REVIEWS



Songs from the Harp
Julia Cunningham (s/r)
Tortues vapeur

Susanna Hood/Martin Tétreault (Mikroclimat)
A Cheerful Little Earful
Diana Panton (Hamilton)
by Pierre Giroux

These three releases are interesting examples of what some Canadian jazz and contemporary music artists are up to these days. They are a mélange of English and French-Canadian cultures (with a tinge of avant-gard edginess) fitting nicely in the country's duality (Happy Canada Day – Jul. 1st).

"Recording *Songs from the Harp* was by far the most fun I've had making a record and a long held dream." So says Victoria B.C.-based harpist/singer Julia Cunningham. Starting with a prestigious musical education studying classical harp and several years touring jazz and blues festivals with Solomon Burke, followed by a half-dozen self-released instrumental recordings, Cunningham delivers a stellar vocal recital of compositions from the standards songbook. One has to wonder what took her so long to get to this place.

Throughout this 14-track release, produced by Joby Baker, Cunningham stays in her comfort zone as she delivers delightful turns on "There's A Small Hotel", "God Bless The Child" and the uptempo "On The Sunny Side Of The Street". Not forgetting her harp antecedents, she features a gorgeous instrumental rendition of the Consuelo Velázquez bolero "Bésame Mucho". With this debut vocal release, Cunningham has laid down a marker that this could be the kick-off of something important.

Tortues vapeur (Steamed Turtles) is a digital release from Montréalers Susanna Hood and Martin Tétreault, who really are performance artists more than musicians. The sounds they produce are primarily of electroacoustic provenance. Although the six tracks are given titles, they provide no guidance to their content. Each is an amalgam of noise, rhythms, textures, voice and snippets of previously recorded material, creating a sound-garden to be tilled or left fallow as the listener chooses. So regardless of how this process is described, it's certainly not for the faint of heart.

When Diana Panton started out to record *A Cheerful Little Earful*, it may have been originally directed towards a younger listening audience. However, the end result certainly has an adult construct with the musical support of two Canadian jazz stalwarts: guitarist Reg Schwager and the multi-talented Don Thompson. Both have great reputations in Canada, but also gained broader recognition as members of the final iteration of the George Shearing Quintet.

Using material from the Great American Songbook, along with melodies that popped up in films and Broadway musicals, Panton's expressive satiny voice weaves a little magic into these compositions. The acquaintance with the songs as well as their joyful presentation is never discourteous to the composers' intentions, as for example the opening track "Happy Talk", which is delivered with direct simplicity. The title track has, thanks to some over-dubbing, a Shearing Quintet feeling (not unsurprisingly) and Panton revels in the accompaniment. Following Panton's lovely acappella opening to "Look To The Rainbow", both Schwager and Thompson on piano provide sympathetic support as Panton smoothly searches the lyrics in her amiable style. Regardless of the composition, Panton approaches the lyrics with sense of delight and wonderment, which fits perfectly with her exuberant vocal style.

For more information, visit soulharp.com, mikroclimat.bandcamp.com and dianapanton.com



Paisaje
Sebastián Greschuk (ears&eyes)
El Contorno Del Espacio

SLD Trio (Fundacja Słuchaj!)
New Improvised Music from Buenos Aires
Various Artists (ESP-Disk')
by Tom Greenland

Buenos Aires, Argentina has long supported creative impulses, including music from classical to tango to free improvisation. Three releases—two recent, the third a sampler of the previous eight years—show several directions these impulses have taken (Happy Día de la Independencia – Jul. 9th).

Trumpeter Sebastián Greschuk's *Paisaje* swims in the mainstream tradition of postbop, adapting its vocabulary and mannerisms with a certain personal flair. The music on this evenly paced set is both relaxed and urgent, the melodies drawn from the serpentine architecture of bop and peppered with flat-five intervals, all prodded along with gentle syncopation. "La Aspera", rendered on buttery flugelhorn, is an affecting tune, the solo showing Greschuk's penchant for sequenced ideas and gently squeezed grace notes. Avoiding the highest register, he prefers to speak in the warmer, gruffer tones available to the lower regions of the horn. Pianist Nicolas Boccanera trades between acoustic and electric instruments, like Greschuk showing a penchant for patterned lines, yet equally fond of fluid, textural gestures. Bassist Matías Crouzeilles is something of a sleeper here, making his strongest moves later in the game: a persuasive soliloquy of sliding double-stops introducing "Boomerang"; then a swinging solo over the tune, adeptly complemented by drummer Sebastián de Urquiza (just before Boccanera joins them for an interactive threesome); and finally a third turn on the impressionistic closer "Moñongo-Cherry".

The SLD Trio, an acronym for pianist Paula Shocron, bassist Germán Lamonega and drummer Pablo Díaz, has been active in Buenos Aires' free improv scene for five years. *El Contorno Del Espacio*, their third disc, recorded in the studio, is a relatively structured effort, with three compositions by each member and a cover of Duke Ellington's "Melancholia". Like a successful television sit-com, where the ensemble chemistry makes (or breaks) the show, here the mutual chemistry is immediate and persuasive, from the understated tension of the title track, to the collective climax and spun-out release of "Jiwasa", continuing through a gamut of mutual motions both dense and spacious, spattered and smooth, until the impressive denouement to Shocron's intense outpouring on "Máquina Verde"—an effortless yet immaculate deconstruction of the 'groove'. The last piece, "Caída Libre", shows Shocron's proficiency in permuting and through-thinking a motive (this one reminiscent of the *Mission: Impossible* TV theme) in the manner of Beethoven, John Coltrane or Thelonious Monk.

New Improvised Music from Buenos Aires is an anthology of (mostly) studio pieces featuring a rotating cast. The SLD Trio is here, three-fifths of a quintet with cornet player Enrique Norris and tenor saxophonist Pablo Moser on "Improvisation on Graphic Score", which transitions from bangings and tinklings to rock/swing and back. Shocron duets with Norris on the pretty "La Puerta R", but plays alone on a highly contrapuntal piano improv beginning with rapid, scampering lines, which, for all their speed, never lose clarity, settling into a more stately and rhapsodic mood towards the end. Díaz reappears on "Improvisation 0681", a short, forceful trio piece with tenor saxophonist Miguel Crozzoli and bassist Juan Bayon; and on "La Playa Pequeña", a fast freebop number with Norris

(employing an Ellington-esque growl tone) and bassist Maximiliano Kirsznér. Other cast members of note include reedplayer Luis Conde, who pairs with pianist Fabiana Galante on three short vignettes ("Relámpagos I-III") and whose booming bass saxophone makes an indelible impression on "Primer Jugo Bovino", a duo with guitarist Ramiro Molina; on "18:18", a duo with clarinetist/synthesizer player Jorge Chikiar; and on "Transición", the final track with Galante, flutist José María D'Angelo and bandoneón player Eliseo Tapia, who pumps with the power of a runaway train.

For more information, visit earsandeyesrecords.com, fsrecords.net and espdisk.com

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