

New Issues



MODERN ART ORCHESTRA PLAYS BELA BARTOK: 15 HUNGARIAN PEASANT SONGS

BMC 265

FOUR OLD TUNES:

RUBATO / ANDANTE

– POCO SOSTENUTO –

PIU ANDANTE (TEMPO

1) – POCO SOSTENUTO

– PIU ANDANTE / POCO

RUBATO – SOSTENUTO

/ ANDANTE / SCHERZO:

ALLEGRO – SOSTENUTO,

POCO RUBATO – TEMPO

1 / BALLAD (THEME WITH

VARIATIONS) : ANDANTE /

PIU ANDANTE / MAESTOSO

/ OLD DANCE TUNES:

ALLEGRO / ALLEGRETTO /

ALLEGRETTO / L'ISTESSO

TEMPO / ASSAI MODERATO

/ ALLEGRETTO / POCO

PIU VIVO – ALLEGRETTO /

ALLEGRO / ALLEGRO – PIU

ZVIVO – POCO PIU MENO

VIVO. TOTAL TIME: 68:38.

Kornel Fekete Kovacs –

conductor, tpt, flgh; David

Liebman – ts, ss, recorder;

My knowledge of Hungarian jazz history is not particularly deep. Part of the problem is that not a lot of the music was imported nor was it scouted by American labels. In the 1960s, guitarists Atilla Zoller and Gabor Szabo were the most prominent players to emerge from there. Pianist Gyorgy Szabados is considered the first Hungarian jazz player to invoke the spirit of free jazz but his albums were impossible to find. In the 1980s I stumbled across an excellent album by pianist Karoly Binder's quintet which featured John Tchicai. Since the turn of the century more and more of the music has been seeping out of the country. Particularly notable is the Eastern Boundary Quartet who have had several excellent recordings. They feature two veteran Americans: pianist Michael Jefry Stevens and bassist Joe Fonda with saxophonist Mihaly Borbely and drummer Balazs Bagyi. It's a group where all members contribute compositions and over the course of four albums have amassed a worthwhile discography. In all of the above examples, these players also blended in elements from Hungarian folk music and modern Hungarian composers (Bartok, Kodaly) into their concept. It's very distinctive, it's very seductive and it blends well with jazz rhythms and harmonies. The results are unique. Below are two recent releases that show Hungarian jazz musicians paying homage to arguably the country's greatest composer, Bela Bartok, mixing folk and classical elements with jazz improvisation

The Modern Art Orchestra, under the direction of Kornel Fekete-Kovacs perform Bartok's 15 Hungarian Peasant Songs. This was a piece Bartok wrote and arranged for solo piano based on Hungarian folk melodies that he had cataloged. The suite, originally composed in three different parts, was combined by Bartok for single piano performance. Fekete-Kovacs arranges it for a full jazz big band using himself and Janos Aved, Kristof Bacso and Gabor Subciz as arrangers. He also invited several guest musicians including American Dave Liebman (one of the most intrepid of American jazz players), and four Hungarian musicians: Mihaly Dresch (fuhun – a Hungarian flute), Miklosz Lukacs (cimbalom – a Hungarian dulcimer-like instrument), Laszlo Goz (bass trumpet) and singer Veronika Hoarcsa. Other members of the orchestra solo as well. Including Aved (ts), Balasz Scerto (tarogato), Gabor Cseke (piano). Here it is performed as a non-stop orchestral suite opened up for improvisation with each section nicely segueing into the next.

New Issues

Mihaly Dreach – fuhun;
Miklos Lukacs – cimbalom;
Laszlo Goz – b tpt; Veronika
Harcza – vcl; Kristof
Bacso – ss, as, flt; David
Ukei – as, clt; Janos Aved
– ts, flt; Balasz Cserta – ts,
tarogato, bagpipe, clt;
Mihaly Bajuszncacs – bars,
b clt; Adam Graf – tpt, flgh;
Zoltan Bacsa – tpt; flgh;
Gabor Subicz – tpt. Flgh;
Balasz Bukovinszki – tpt,
flgh; Zolran Varga – horn;
Balint Kepiro – horn; Attila
Korb – tbn; Gabor Barbinek
– tbn; Miklos Scathy – b tbn;
Peter Kovacs – tuba; Aron
Komajti – g; Gabor Cseke –
p; Adam Bagothy – b; Laszlo
Csizi – d. recorded
11/20-21/2017, Budapest,
Hungary.

PARNICZKY QUARTET BARTOK ELECTRIFIED BMC 260

BULGARIAN RHYTHM /
FRUSTRATION / MAJOR
SECONDS / VILLAGE JOKE
/ BOATING / FAST DANCE /
THE WHEAT WILL BE RIPE /
SYNCOPIATION / THUMBS
UNDER / BEAR DANCE.
TOTAL TIME: 48:00
Andras Parniczky – g; Peter
Bede – as, ss; Erno Hock
– b; Istvan Balo – d, perc.
recorded 6/19-20/2017,
12/10/2017. Budapest,
Hungary.

Each of the guest soloists brings his area of expertise to the music. Liebman's solos are solidly jazz derived but his improvisations (and he's featured at length on six of the 15 tracks) are faithful to the Hungarian-derived melodies and modes. On "Andante" Dresch solos at length on fuhun and Liebman's subsequent solo on soprano blends perfectly with the Hungarian flute. The ensemble voicings range from Bartokian (of course) to a Gil Evans style to standard big band. What is surprising about this disc is how all the various elements merge into a unique listening experience. And it demonstrates the relevance and adaptability of both Hungarian folk music and Bartok's music to the world at large. If the above answers the question of how Bartok's music would adapt to jazz contemporization, the Parniczky Quartet answers the question "what about Bartok Electrified"? It was a concept I eyed a with a bit of suspicion. But practically from the opening moments, guitarist Andras Parniczky and his quartet allayed any worries. The main soloists are Parniczky and saxophonist Peter Bede. But the backbone of this music is drummer Istvan Balo, who, ironically, was the drummer on that 1984 album by Karoly Binder I found. He's a player with a seemingly flawless sense of time as is demonstrated on the opener "Bulgarian Rhythm" (a piece from Bartok's Mikrokosmos). It's counted in 7/8 but the music flows with a direction and straightforwardness that belies its quirky (to Western oriented ears) rhythm. Saxophonist Brede floats above with the melody and with an improvisatory naturalness during his solo. But credit has to be given to Balo who maneuvers the metric complexity, inserting well-placed fills and cymbal splashes that serve the music with more than mere time-keeping. Guitarist Parniczky usually sports a jazz-toned clarity and his single line solos are never less than interesting. "Major Seconds" and "The Wheat Will Be Ripe" finds him adding a drenching feedback to his phrases that are effective. On the intro to the latter it blends nicely with bassist Erno Hock's arco basslines. Throughout, the ensembles are extremely tight but never stiff. Most of the tracks are brief (only two exceed the five-minute range) but pack a lot into their short-ish running time. All in all, another effective contemporization of Bartok's music. Both of these discs are well-worth hearing.

Robert Iannapolo