

Oct, 2010

Review of Butterfly in the upcoming issue of Bass World!

Bass Instinct: butterfly Ernst Weissensteiner, Tim Dunin, Gina Schwarz, Gerhard Muthspiel, Peter Herbert, and Herbert Mayr, double basses Zappel Music ZM 0019

Vienna-based ensemble Bass Instinct is building an admirable discography (and catalogue of contemporary literature for six double basses) that includes three CDs and a live DVD. Their latest disc, *Bass Instinct: butterfly*, is an altogether very impressive collection of compositions, highlighting the exceptional technical prowess of these six musicians as well as the myriad musical styles with which they are conversant. Given the positions they hold in the Vienna music establishment - principals (current and past) of the Vienna Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony, The Vienna VolksOper, one of Vienna's leading Jazz bassists and one of Europe's foremost contemporary bassist/composers - it's perhaps hardly surprising that these six musicians create music at this level.

The group's search "for the borderline between traditional and new music styles, the search for the grey area between composition and improvisation. Percussive, orchestral, earthy, groovy and virtuosic" is ably realized on this recording. Here they have commissioned an array of different composers to write for the group.

The short opening track, *El Violagamista*, by Gina Schwarz is an amusing homage to the double bass's origins. Anyone familiar with Schwarz's recent solo releases, *Airbass* and *SchwarzMarkt*, would be familiar with her depth and diversity as a composer. It's a great track that probably would not out of place on an L'Orchestre de Contrebasses set. Track two, *Butterfly II*, by Joëlle Léandre is another soundscape altogether, more improvised and with some classic Léandre rhythmic effects.

Mark Dresser's beautiful *Lacytude* is in the form of an elegy for Steve Lacy. Barbara Bruckmüller's writing for big band certainly shows in the track *Bridesque*. *Elf* is a very effective series of looped patterns by Viennese composer Thomas Stempowski.

Mark Helias contributed two tracks to the CD. Apparently stemming from a large composition, they are among the most effective on the disc. Ex-Bass Instinct member Georg Breinschmid contributes two tracks: *5/4* is quite hypnotic and *Zorpner's Holiday*, which closes the set, is highly amusing. There are further tracks by Peter Herbert, young Czech bassist Jiri Slavik, Skuli Sverrisson, and two by Gina Schwarz, all of which exhibit further the range of musical styles and expression with which this group seems right at home.

The production on the disc is exceptional. The clarity and spatial imaging is optimized in such a way that, with the players arranged in a semicircle, it is very easy to hear each individual distinctly. The ground the group covers here really is new, the music on the CD fascinating, colorful, inspiring, and the performances prodigious. A great disc!

-Review by Robert Nairn



Homebass

Bass Instinct (Gina Schwarz, Ernst Weissensteiner, Gerhard Muthspeil, Herbert Mayr, Tim Dunin and Peter Herbert, double basses)
Aziza Music CSM Y1631-E35
www.azizamusic.com

This fourth recording by the Vienna double bass sextet, Bass Instinct, is full of the extraordinary ensemble playing, really intelligent arrangements, individual virtuosity, and humor that put their last three discs in a class of their own and achieved that rare thing: to make a double bass ensemble recording of obvious appeal beyond the bass community.

Erwin Schulhoff's *Tarantell*, the last of his *Five Pieces for String Quartet* which opens this program, is an effective arrangement by Muthspeil and Herbert. In loosening the breakneck tempo at which the original is sometimes performed, the sextet finds a nice balance of excellent ensemble playing and wit, creating nice solo space for Schwarz and Herbert.

Bass Instinct was formed in 2002 by Herbert and Muthspeil and in addition to the four CDs now in their discography, they have performed a huge number of concerts in Europe and in the U.S. and, in Herbert's own words, they have "created and instigated about 45 new works for acoustic bass sextet," essentially generating and enriching a genre.

Many of the works on this CD were written by bassists outside of the group: Jay Elfenbein, Simon Garcia, Jiri Slavik, Mark Dresser, Tom Knific, Larry Grenadier and George Breinschmid (originally a member of the group). These works collectively, and the three tunes by Schwartz (the funky *Orient Sun* and two shorter picturesque works) create a fascinating and varied program.

Jiri Slavik's highly atmospheric *Il Neige à Pontault* is gorgeous, and Garcia's *Der Fremde* is about as close as they get to anything that sounds a little like more 'standard' bass sextet work, that is until Schwartz and Herbert start improvising.

Tom Knific's *Home Bas'* is a great groove and provides an excellent platform for interplays between Mayr and Herbert then Weissensteiner and Schwartz.

Given the very distinguished and international careers these six bass players have enjoyed, it's hardly surprising that collectively they are able to produce work of this level, but it goes well beyond that: they create something quite awe-inspiring and magical. Very highly recommended.

— Review by Rob Nairn

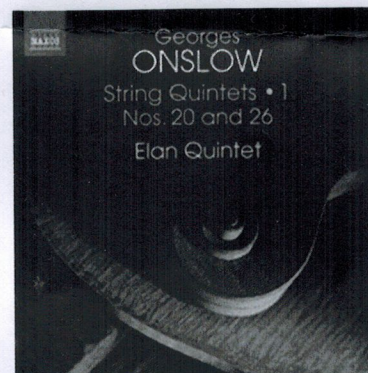
Solace

JPMB (John Pickup, piano; Matt Baker, double bass)
Snibor Records
snbr 012
<http://www.sniborrecords.com>
<http://www.bakerbass.com>



George Onslow String Quintets Vol. 1 (Nos. 20 and 26)

The Elan Quintet
Benjamin Scherer Quesada (violin),
Lelia Iancovici (violin), Julia Chu-Ying Hu (viola),
Dmitri Tsirin (cello), and Matthew Baker (double bass)
Naxos 8.573600
<http://www.elanquintet.com/#intro>
<https://www.naxos.com>



These two CD's feature the diverse, unique, and extraordinary talent of Matthew Baker. Born in America, Baker studied in the U.K. (his teachers include Gary Karr, James VanDemark, Corin Long, Duncan McTier, Jiri Hudec, and Rodney Slatford) and is now based in Spain, working with the Orquesta de Comunidad de Valencia de Palau de les Arts. His bio is as impressive as it is diverse, having performed with such Orchestras as the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, the Philharmonia, BBC Philharmonic, and Halle Orchestras, with jazz legends like Bob Mintzer, Mike Mainieri, Jorge Pardo, Dave Samuels, Mike Mossman, Steve Brown, and Clark Terry and with some of the biggest names in Celtic music.

Baker has a number of current projects, two of which are featured here. JPMB is his duo with established jazz pianist and film score composer John Pickup; the two met while students in Manchester, so their history together is long. *Solace* is their debut release and features original compositions and music from various films, in colorful arrangements that draw on the professional spheres they have moved in.

Tracks like *threadbare* are gorgeous, both players weaving long melodic lines, their interplay symbiotic. Baker's arco work on *Fahrenheit 451* is rich and full, adding another dimension to the CD. Ryuichi Sakamoto's central theme

Sechs zartbesaitete Riesen

■ „Bass Instinct“:
erstklassige Unterhaltung in der Vorarlberger Landesbibliothek

SILVIA THURNER

Bregenz (VN) Die Faszination des Kontrabasses brachten die Musikerin und die fünf Musiker des Ensembles „Bass Instinct“ mit all seiner Klangfarbenpracht zur Geltung. Rund um Peter Herbert formierten sich Gina Schwarz, Timothy Dunin, Herbert Mayr,

Gerhard Muthspiel und Ernst Weissensteiner zu einem Kontrabass-Ensemble, das wohl ein Unikum im reichhaltigen Musikangebot darstellt. Alle Ensemblemitglieder sind hervorragende Musiker, die unter anderem bei den Wiener Philharmonikern, den Wiener Symphonikern, dem Klangforum Wien oder dem Volksoperenorchester Wien wirken.

Verstärkt wurde die Konzertatmosphäre durch das Ambiente und die für diese Besetzung günstige Akustik im Kuppelsaal der Landesbiblio-

thek. Nicht nur die vielgestaltigen Klangfarben begeisterten die Konzertbesucher, sondern auch die unterschiedlichen musikalischen Stile.

Weite Reise . . .

Ohne Klischees zu bedienen, führte die Reise von „Neige Grave“, einem Werk, das von afrikanischen Rhythmen inspiriert ist, über den arabischen Raum bis nach Island und endete bei einem alpenländischen „sechsfach geklöppelten Zwiefachen“. Vor allem „Taqasim“ von Marcel Khalife



Kontrabass-Ensemble „Bass Instinct“.
(Foto: Thurner)

entfaltete aufbauend auf einer arabischen Skala eine mitreißende Wirkung. Daneben bestachen die minimalistisch geformten Klanggemälde von Skuli Sverrisson, weil die sechs Kontrabassisten exakt ineinander verzahnt und mit viel Kontakt zueinander musizierten.

den Sie die Besprechung
s zu Max Riccabona C13

W. Saustop, 27.01.07