

Review of Musical CD



It should come as no surprise that so many of the great jazz standards were written by women. Jazz is the one venue where performers and listeners have truly not cared about the color of one's skin or their gender – it's the music that matters. While women's roles in the performance of jazz were traditionally confined to the piano and vocalist chairs in bands, jazz performers and aficionados know a good tune when they hear it. So it is perhaps in the arena of jazz composition that the music of women composers can best and most easily be celebrated for not only the lack of discrimination shown in the performing of their works but more especially for the mastery of their technique.

In an effort to bring to light some of the vast number of excellent jazz compositions penned by women, Hester Park has released this compact disc performance of 14 jazz classics. Brilliantly performed by Thomas F. George on piano and Michael Kaupa on trumpet, this disc will astound the casual listener with the number of familiar pieces included, especially if the listener is not familiar with the great contribution women have made in jazz writing, and thrill the professional with the mastery these two musicians have of their craft.

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Review of

CLOSE YOUR EYES: WOMEN JAZZ COMPOSERS

**Thomas F. George, piano
Michael Kaupa, trumpet/flügelhorn**

Hester Park CD 7701; 64:50

Pianist George is Provost and Academic Vice-President of Washington State University. Known throughout the academic community as one of the most highly regarded scholars in the field of laser physics, his pianistic ability and dexterity to handle so many different styles is absolutely exceptional. Easily sliding between different styles with exceptional skill and polish, George shows that perhaps it is not too late for him to consider a career change.

George seems to pay respect to the entire history of jazz pianists. This is most notable on Sadie Vimmerstedt's "I Wanna Be Around." George evokes shadings of Teddy Wilson with his quasi-stride lines while accompanying Kaupa, and then breaks into Brubeckesque meter-play during his all-too-brief solo. This tune also showcases the two artists' tight interplay in a battle royal similar in concept to the famous Louis Armstrong/Earl Hines pairing on "Weather Bird." They effortlessly push each other through their respective solos by trading ideas and pushing each other on to new heights.

Trumpeter/flügelhornist Michael Kaupa got his start in the highly acclaimed Fredonia State University Jazz Ensemble (NY). He first gained widespread notoriety as the featured trumpet soloist on Emil Palame's debut big band album *Make Room* (Mark Records MES51213). Kaupa's performance is as

stunning as George's for the number of different styles he deftly caresses and negotiates with ease, agility, and exceptional grace. On Dorothy Fields' "I'm in the Mood for Love," Kaupa's incredibly beautiful and poignant opening flügelhorn cadenza is remarkably reminiscent of Freddie Hubbard's work on "Portrait of Jenny" from the *Bundle of Joy* album (Columbia JC34902). But don't be mistaken, Kaupa is no slouch when it comes to driving hard, fast bop-tinged lines through his instrument when the call arises. Kaupa's performance of Bernice Petkere's "Close Your Eyes" is reminiscent of the fire and steel swing style of Roy Eldridge. Kaupa easily manages the rough and tumble clichés – all the while infusing his work with unexpected peaks and boisterous élan.

Together these two performers are a formidable pair. It is hard to imagine any interpretation of Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child" being more introspective. Kaupa's seductively smooth flügelhorn lines are aptly pitted against George's gently rolling harmonic canvas in such a way that one can only imagine Ms. Holiday bopping her head in appreciation in heaven each time this cut is played.

While these performers may be unknown to the general public, this may be the disc that gains them the recognition they deserve, as well as opening the minds of the general public to the rich heritage of jazz's first women of song.

Thomas Erdmann

Thomas Erdmann is currently the Director of Bands and Associate Professor of Music at Elon College in North Carolina. He holds degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign (D.M.A.) and Illinois State University (M.M.). Dr. Erdmann has performed as a trumpeter and pianist throughout the Eastern and Midwestern United States. He has also made a number of guest conducting appearances.