



Típico
Miguel Zenón (Miel Music)
by David R. Adler

Alto saxophonist Miguel Zenón has maintained one of jazz' steadiest working units for well over a decade. But although he keeps pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Hans Glawischnig and drummer Henry Cole at the center of his endeavors, he has led the lineup through collaborations with string quartet, plena percussion ensemble, wind ensemble and big band. *Típico* is the first quartet-only release since *Jibaro* in 2005.

While the quartet is back down to its core, it has never sounded so huge. The music rushes forth in a near-blizzard of rhythmic detail and yet conveys looseness and breath—in a word, *alma* (soul). The infectious asymmetric groove patterns and precise unison lines of opener “Academia” suggest right away that the band has reached yet a new level of expressive urgency and technical accomplishment. “Cantor” and “Sangre de Mi Sangre”, dedicated to Guillermo Klein and Zenón’s daughter, respectively, have a mellow feel, but moments of utter surprise and intensity lurk.

Zenón’s compositional approach still leaves everyone a lot of room to stretch. His alto is supple and warm but can also scream, as on the title track and elsewhere. Perdomo is on fire as a soloist while mastering the dual role of the pianist as both a frontline melodic voice and a rhythmic anchor. Glawischnig and Cole sound all the more razor-sharp thanks to Perdomo’s spot-on execution of every metrical shift, every daunting written passage.

Zenón dedicates a piece to each of his mates. “Corteza”, for Glawischnig, is a riot of polyphony and formal intricacy, with a root melody that could be a nod to “Parker’s Mood”. “Entre Las Raíces”, for Perdomo, occasions some of the freest improvisation but also the tightest unison lines and overall cohesion. “Las Ramas”, for Cole, begins with plaintive whistling, then works up to a rousing finale steeped in Zenón’s language: galloping rhythmic twists; gorgeous modern harmony; and relentlessly difficult ensemble writing that somehow always sounds unruffled.

For more information, visit miguelzenon.com. This project is at Village Vanguard Feb. 14th-19th. See Calendar.



Symphony No. 106
Musica Elettronica Viva (Victo)
by Stuart Broomer

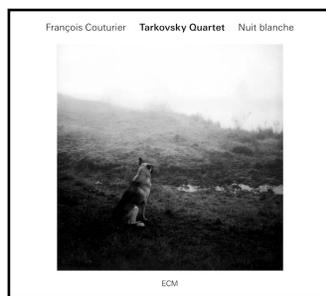
Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV), founded in Rome in 1966, is a collective devoted to the live creation of electronic music. Its personnel eventually became fixed with the trio of composer/performers Alvin Curran, Frederic Rzewski and Richard Teitelbaum, but through the years it has collaborated with Steve Lacy, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell and AMM. This performance recording from the 2016 FIMAV festival in Victoriaville, Quebec, commemorates the band’s 50th anniversary.

Any improvising band of great duration develops strategies for interaction and MEV’s include layering, collage and direct response. Its history is also one of technological change, early contact mics and primitive synthesizers giving way to sampling and computers as well as Rzewski’s grand piano and Curran’s shofar and its history also includes specific social protest and commentary. All of these elements are apparent in the Victoriaville performance, a single hour-long piece now dubbed *Symphony No. 106*.

It opens with isolated piano tones and electronic twitterings, some reflecting the natural world of crickets and birds, others not; gradually a piano melody arises and the electronics become more continuous, some in apparent sympathy to the piano, some seemingly unrelated. Sometimes the parts are related only by the fact that they take place in the same environment; at other times, patterns seem evident, though where meaning and relationships are being constructed is subject to constant listening and hypothesizing.

Rzewski begins to speak. He mentions “1914”, there’s the sonic simulation of a bomb falling, Curran begins speaking rapidly, Rzewski gives up his address. The work builds through sonic blocks, Rzewski’s piano improvisations, created with a melodic fluidity suggestive of Robert Schumann, arising intermittently, moving through the denser layers of electronic material, industrial rhythm and steam whistle organ tones. Near the conclusion, Rzewski begins his 1914 story again. It’s about his father’s father being seized by Cossacks and carried back to Russia, focusing on themes of displacement and ultimately contributes a narrative dimension to a work that is already capacious, a symphony created and performed by three musicians.

For more information, visit victo.qc.ca. Richard Teitelbaum is at Roulette Feb. 16th with Andrew Cyrille. See Calendar.



Nuit blanche
Tarkovsky Quartet (ECM)
by Tom Greenland

Andrei Tarkovsky was a filmmaker’s filmmaker, renowned for the spectral imagery, extended takes, nonlinear narratives and, above all, transcendental impulses of his pictures. French pianist François Couturier has over the last decade recorded a solo album and three more with a quartet named for and inspired by (but not necessarily imitative of) the Soviet director. Joined by longtime collaborators—cellist Anja Lechner, soprano saxophonist Jean-Marc Larché and accordion player Jean-Louis Matinier—the latest recording continues the established format of improvised pieces mingled with formal compositions. The title track, referring to the surreal quality of an undarkening, sleepless night and many others (“Rêve I-II”, “Dream III-IV”, “Daydream”, “Nightdream”, “Traum V-VI”, “Vertigo”) all allude to the liminal quality of dream-like experiences: between sleep and wakefulness, between night and day, where human consciousness becomes more permeable, more susceptible to sensuality.

The album contains seven Couturier originals—one co-written with Larché, one based on Toru Takemitsu’s *Nostalghia* (itself a tribute to Tarkovsky)—plus covers of “Quant ien congneu a ma pensee” (an anonymous piece from the early Renaissance) and Vivaldi’s “Cum dederit delectis suis somnum” (a setting of Psalm 127, vs. 2-3). Interlaced with these are ten short, group-improvised vignettes, subtle,

unforced ventures that balance the acoustic signatures of each instrumentalist: lyric pulsing of the piano; thick, overtone-rich timbre of bowed cello; birdlike ‘calls’ of curved soprano horn; and shimmering sustain of accordion. Throughout the record there are dialogues, ‘tri’-alogues and two memorable solo piano tracks (“Daydream” and “Nightdream”), but even the busiest sections retain a certain lightness and penetrability, like sun-rays filtered through a Tarkovskian forest scene.

For more information, visit ecmrecords.com. François Couturier and Anja Lechner are at Greenwich House Music School Feb. 18th. See Calendar.

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