



*Seldom*

Alessandro Lanzoni (CAM Jazz)

*Brooklyn Beat!*

Domenico Sanna (Via Veneto Jazz / Jandomusic)

*This Is The Day*

Giovanni Guidi Trio (ECM)

by Fred Bouchard

Italian pianists have been branding jazz with strong national and regional characteristics and singular stamps of individualistic artistry for decades. Alessandro Lanzoni, Domenico Sanna and Giovanni Guidi bring classical training and technical facility to the keyboard, rootedness in the jazz vernacular, conscious inclusion of Italian pop, folksong and opera, respectful stretching of established repertory and distinctive, evolving approaches to composition.

Lanzoni, a wunderkind mature beyond his 24 years, debuted sassy and bouncing with a playful taste for Thelonious Monk on *Dark Flavour*. He showed similar relaxed, witty panache in an outdoor duo tapping all eras from ragtime to postbop with reed whiz Nico Gori at Sardinia's Time In Jazz last summer. *Seldom* evinces more complexity with veteran American trumpeter Ralph Alessi, whose regal gravitas complicates and enriches the group dynamic and dimensional intrigue, bassist Matteo Bortone and drummer Enrico Morello. "Wine and Blood" and "Horizonte" evolve as dramatic narratives while the lengthy "Composition", with its commanding central ppp>fff crescendo, leads to an ebullient song. "Yuca"

plants its semi-funky insistent earworm and "Blue Tale" is a snappy, jaunty narrative. "Zapoteca", the dashing trio-only closer, suggests the tightly coiled arabesques of Oaxacan ruins, its spicy mole sauces and its textiles' dazzling indigo and cochineal hues.

Domenico Sanna's trio with bassist Ameen Saleem and drummer Dana Hawkins prances with fluid generosity on *Brooklyn Beat!* in constant ruminative improvisation, balancing piano with Rhodes, sometimes overdubbed, as on the amply adventurous "Miracle Fishing". Now 31, Sanna unleashes sidewise, slanting themes (if occasionally tedious vamping) on the aforementioned "Miracle Fishing" but slyly surreptitious ring-tones on "Cow Bells". Nodding to tradition, the Gaeta native salutes composer Jaki Byard's "DDJL" with bright staccato postbop and effortless lock-hand glides. Tuneful variations on a fluid and nimble "Body and Soul" wax rhapsodic yet tightly wound. But he most impresses with an edgy yen for experimentation: "A New Joy", a hymnic piano incantation, showcases slowed-down cymbal hits and a hidden bonus track speeds back to normal with a peppy, funky Rhodes/cymbal duo and fade, capping a session that balances subtle wit and whimsy with savvy sophistication.

Giovanni Guidi, 30, caught the ear of trumpet guru Enrico Rava, who pressed him for his band. Leading his own quintet at Saalfelden in 2012, he showed superb poise and finely wrought, porcelain-delicate pieces, whose unison swags of melancholic incantation also show up in this arch, unflappable trio. *This Is The Day*, Guidi's second ECM session, sweeps in as an attenuated, swooning sigh, cast vaguely in the Keith Jarrett mold of hushed sustains and well-pedaled ballads ("I'm Through With Love" being a direct homage). All unfolds in quiet calm, with heady, transporting anthems, Guidi rapt in an embrace with the hushed Charlie Haden-deep solemnity of bassist Thomas Morgan and sympathetic rustlings of drummer João Lobo. Matters peak towards the middle with Lobo's restless "Baiiii" [sic] and a jostling, unfolding "Debate", then subsides into "Where They'd Lived", rhapsodic as a Chopin nocturne with a somber trance-like refrain on the coda, and a poised "Quizas, Quizas", stately as a preening peacock.

For more information, visit [camjazz.com](http://camjazz.com), [jandomusic.com](http://jandomusic.com) and [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com). These three pianists are at Roulette Jun. 1st. See Calendar.



*The Thompson Fields*  
Maria Schneider Orchestra (ArtistShare)  
by David R. Adler

The Maria Schneider Orchestra (MSO) has logged a fair amount of bandstand time since the release of *Sky Blue* in 2007. Hard to believe, then, that *The Thompson Fields* is the group's first release since. "Making a recording like this is becoming increasingly difficult," writes Schneider in her program notes, thanking nearly two dozen ArtistShare fans for their pivotal funding support.

The effort was clearly monumental: beyond the eight demanding compositions, there are stunning photographs and vintage illustrations throughout the booklet. There are quotations, poems and paeans to the beauty of Schneider's childhood home in southwestern Minnesota. Her background notes to each track move effortlessly between personal narrative and deeper reflection on music—its connection to the natural

world, its effect on the soul.

In one panoramic photo, Schneider walks on a sandy gravel road, looking out over the sprawling native prairie (the "Thompson Fields" of the title) near her hometown of Windom. Her music captures the extraordinary peace but also the volatility of the place. Steve Wilson's alto saxophone feature on "Nimbus", a minor-key epic inspired by Schneider's close encounter with a funnel cloud, brings out some of the band's most intense moments. "Walking by Flashlight", the leadoff track, finds Scott Robinson on the surpassingly beautiful alto clarinet, spilling pure melody, evoking the poetry of Ted Koeser ("Cloudy, dark and windy. Walking by flashlight / at six in the morning...").

One can only marvel at the intricacy and rigor of Schneider's orchestrations, the textural blend of the ensemble, the way it handles dynamics and subtle fluctuations in tempo (particularly on the closing "Lembrança"). The soloists give everything they have: standouts include guitarist Lage Lund on the title track; tenor saxophonist Rich Perry on the plaintive "Home"; fellow tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin on "Arbiters of Evolution"; and accordionist Gary Versace on "A Potter's Song" (dedicated, as is the entire album, to the late MSO trumpeter Laurie Frink).

Schneider's music has always had a strong emotional impact, whether it's introspective or full of tumult, simple or complex. Beyond the searching solos and high virtuosity both on and off the paper, it's the love poured into *The Thompson Fields* that flows back out of the speakers and makes it such an unusually moving work of art. It captures Schneider's artistic vision unlike anything else in her catalogue.

For more information, visit [artistshare.com](http://artistshare.com). This project is at Birdland Jun. 2nd-6th. See Calendar.

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