

Jazzista

Gina Schwarz is a marvelous bassist, a composer extraordinaire, and, of course, a jazzista who lives in Vienna, Austria, where she performs with the talented group of musicians heard on this CD, *Jazzista*.

In this, her third CD and her first on the Unit Records label, Gina composed and arranged all the music, a veritable tour de force that musically explains and demonstrates why she is emerging as one of the bright new stars in the Austrian jazz community.

Jazzista, indeed, bassist-composer Gina Schwarz is a relatively new name to the jazz public but with the 2013 release of *Jazzista*, it won't be too long before folks start asking about her, wondering where she's been and when they can check her out. This new CD features her working band comprised of Vienna-based musicians whose grasp of her music and ability to translate and transform it is little short of breath taking.

And one thing that is overwhelmingly clear is that these musicians are having fun with this music: they know it's good, they strive to make it better, and they succeed in superlative fashion.

If there is one aspect of this CD that stands out from all else it is unquestionably the music, itself. There is a breadth, depth, and scope to these compositions – all composed and arranged by Gina Schwarz – that defy casual description and invite repeated listening. One's first assumption is that they are the product of multiple composers such is the unique character of each song. That all sprang from the same source is hard to believe.

One hears humor, pathos, and bold unconventionality in *Jazzista* and at times even the faint echoes of Carla Bley and Charles Mingus, for this is unquestionably ensemble music, written for musical interpreters who are not afraid to take chances and to venture outside the safe zone.

Notwithstanding all the deserved emphasis on the compositional skill of Gina Schwarz, for all those who like me are absolutely seduced and enchanted by the rapturous sound of the acoustic bass, there are numerous occasions in this music where Gina's bass is liberally featured. Whether playing pizzicato or arco, Gina Schwarz never fails to complement the music beautifully and invariably causes the listener to marvel at the sheer splendor of the sound she gets from her instrument.

I will resist the temptation to analyze and dissect each tune for that is the job and the fun for you, the listener. But I hope that you will be as delighted and as intrigued as I have been listening to the way the bandoneon gives the music an old-world elegance and even a sense of nobility. I have no doubt that you will be as impressed as I have been with the way the trombone, trumpet, and guitar lines so often reflect the inherent humor and abandon of the music. And given the idiosyncratic character of every one of these songs, each a gem in its own right, perhaps you will wonder as I have how one drummer – or even one band – could so adeptly and convincingly cover all this music and how effortlessly the saxophonist and pianist help convey the shifting moods of this collection of wonder songs. These are all musicians who can execute with precision and yet explore, embellish, and improvise with a joyful abandon. There is so much here to listen to, and so much to enjoy.

The bonus of *Jazzista* is that it puts a spotlight on the city of Vienna, revealing the incalculable wealth of creative musicians there and most of all announcing in no uncertain terms that *Jazzista* Gina Schwarz is a new musical force to be appreciated, enjoyed, and reckoned with.

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