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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