

BOOKS, DISCS and VIDEOS

Stephanie TRICK “Hear That Rhythm!” www.stephanietrick.com

This CD recorded in 2008 contains 13 pieces that we can separate into two categories:

- The ragtimes of Robin Frost, Scott Joplin, Novacek, Matthews very prettily played from beautiful melodies written by those prolific composers, but where the swing is bridled; I put aside “Bethena” which sounds like Chopin at times, and “The Finger-breaker” played like Morton as it should.
- The classics of piano stride: “Handful of Keys”, “Viper’s Drag”, “Honeysuckle Rose”, “Ain’t Misbehavin’”; and also “Echoes Of Spring” and “Sweet Lorraine.”

I said in our issue #63 the happy surprise which waited for me with the discovery of this new pianist who can play so well the stride in a feminine way, and in a way that reminds me of certain solos of Mary Lou Williams in the 30’s. This CD shows well her principal qualities: softness of touch, roundness of the bass, the measured power of the chords, stability of tempo, sensitivity, and sure swing. It’s class! “Handful of Keys” notably is topnotch, not only she plays it exactly, but also and particularly with the nuances desired and with a rare flexibility: her left hand in particular (and this is where the difficulty is) dances and rebounds in a way that excludes all monotony or systematism, and her basses are poised and not struck, which gives a comfortable support to her accompaniment. At last, as with the critic Jack Rummel, I admire “her delicate and sure touch” and “her unique and typically feminine accent.” “Carolina Shout” is another *chef d’oeuvre* of stride, and I know very few recent versions as successful as this one. The tempo is ideal, neither too fast (the plague of this kind of jazz), nor too slow, the play stays relaxed, the swing powerful, and the chords slash when and as needed. The first chorus of “Honeysuckle Rose” reminds me curiously of the perfect imitation of Fats that Earl Hines realized in his recording in 1949 in Paris for Royal Jazz! The rest shows at what point she is totally implicated in the music of Fats: she does not imitate, she expresses herself in its idiom. Same thing for “Ain’t Misbehavin’” and “Viper’s Drag.” Again a success, in another way, “Sweet Lorraine” on which hovers the shadow of Art Tatum, and more than a shadow, since she worked on a transcription of one of his recordings.

But, however, this interpretation sounds in a way very personal, as if she made his style her own, and replayed it her way! Surprising.

The ragtimes (“Space Shuffle,” “Intoxication,” “Pastime Rag No. 4,” “Greased Limelight,” “Bethena” are very prettily played, with sensitivity and liveliness, and never mechanically as certain persons who think that doing so is more *authentic*. My favorite is “Pastime Rag” which overflows with freshness and delicacy, and also “Bethena,” already talked about above.

I highly recommend this CD – and be assured that it is not because of her photo, but by listening to her music that I wrote this enthusiastic chronicle!

Jacques Pescheux