

Lovingly crafted arrangements

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Lovingly crafted arrangements and performances from recorder, saxophone and percussion trio, Alpha on a new release from Dacapo of music by Poul Ruders, Per Nørgård, Hans Abrahamsen and Bent Sørensen...

In the first part of Poul Ruders' *Star Prelude and Love Fugue* (1990) arr. Alpha, the *Prelude* has a repeated percussion motif before the recorder slowly joins, followed by the saxophone in this unashamedly minimalist piece. As it builds, crashing percussion point up the drama and texture so that there is no lack of interest. The saxophone opens *Love Fugue*, soon joined by percussion with the recorder subtly adding to the sound. This is a rhythmic piece, quiet raunchy at times and full of interest.

These players bring a strange but intoxicating combination to these cleverly arranged pieces.

Per Nørgård's *Heyday's Night* (1981, rev.1982) arr. Alpha opens with xylophone and saxophone before the recorder soon joins in this rhythmically shifting piece where the harmony between the recorder and saxophone is really attractive. Both Bolette Roed and Peter Navarro-Alonso produce some great textures with brilliant percussion playing from David Hildebrandt. This is a highly attractive work from a composer that can always be relied on to produce a work of substance and interest. As the music progresses there are lovely sonorities and a riotous coda in this finely arranged work.

Hans Abrahamsen's – *Flowersongs* (1973) arr. Alpha also opens with a repeated motif for the players featuring xylophone, with the recorder and saxophone, before a flourish from them that builds to a pitch, higher and higher, as though depicting birds. Suddenly the music drops to a Japanese style repeated motif that is allowed to develop, albeit slowly. There are subtle rhythmic variations and development of texture. A sudden outburst on the saxophone and recorder heralds a descending theme before a passage with strange percussion sounds with recorder and saxophone in a rather static, mesmeric passage. The music becomes rather spiky and abrasive towards the end with a rising motif and sharp penetrating sounds that lead to a sudden end.

This is a fascinating work, brilliantly played.

Hans Abrahamsen – *Schnee, Canon 2A: Lustig Spielend, aber nicht zu lustig, immer ein bißchen melancholisch* (2008) arr. Alpha has a rhythmic opening with recorder and hand drums creating some unusual sounds. Short saxophone interventions subtly appear in the texture as the motif is repeated with breathy staccato notes. The rhythms vary occasionally, but a repetitive nature is continued, interrupted by the occasional quiet, short interlude. Several whistle blows occur part way through but the repetitive rhythms continue to the end. I am not sure that the subtle shifts of colour and rhythm are enough to lift this music from its merely repetitive nature.

Recorder and saxophone open Bent Sørensen's *Looking on Darkness* (2000) arr. Peter Navarro-Alonso in a bright flowing theme that dances around before changing to a slower section when the vibraphone enters in a haunting passage with strange sounds from the recorder and saxophone. Brief outbursts, rich and ripe sounding, from the saxophone occur as

the music tends towards a jazzy nature with xylophone and vibraphone adding a texture. A quiet section for recorder and saxophone has mournful theme before a livelier section arrives that peters out to end.

Poul Ruders' *Carnival* (1980) arr. Alpha has a rhythmic opening with strange saxophone sounds using staccato breaths with percussion, then sharp recorder notes in this oddly chugging music that in a way creates the sound and hissing of a steam locomotive. There are some amazing effects from both wind instruments with occasional rhythmic changes, though the basic rhythm returns before a strange hushed coda.

Alpha return to Per Nørgård to end this disc with his *Isternia* (1979) arr. Peter Navarro-Alonso. It opens quietly with marimba before the saxophone enters in a lovely melody. The recorder joins in this haunting theme, slightly oriental in flavour. There are some lovely delicate percussion sounds before the music livens up in a rhythmic, jazzy section before slowing and returning to quieter music.

This is an intoxicating and enchanting piece in this arrangement by Alpha member Peter Navarro-Alonso.

I'd love to hear these players live. Peter Navarro-Alonso and Alpha should be applauded for these lovingly crafted arrangements and performances that are nicely recorded. The booklet notes are a little brief but this is an engaging release.