

Eva Klesse Quartett
creatures and states
Yellowbird/Enja Records
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Evgeny Ring: Saxophon
Philip Frischkorn: Piano
Stefan Schönegger: Double Bass
Eva Klesse: Drums

The Eva Klesse Quartet keeps a biennial release rhythm with its fourth album, *creatures & states*. It is the follow-up to *Miniatures - Ten Songs For Chamber Jazz Quartet*, released at the end of October 2018 to critical acclaim. Many praised the intuitive and confident interactions of the band and the characteristic, variable language of sound: "There is hardly a bar as one would expect it to be in the tunes of this album. No cliché. No celebration of effects. But rather the pleasure of instrumental conversation," BR-Klassik (Bayerischer Rundfunk) stated. Matthias Wegner confirms in radio Deutschlandfunk Kultur: "...a wonderful overall sound: unagitated, but still full of depth." Ulrich Steinmetzger noted in the newspaper Leipziger Volkszeitung: "The continuous development of the band, which focuses on fine details and mild moods rather than superficial surprise, is highly fascinating."

The next chapter of the group's artistic success story is *creatures & states*. Once again, the contemplative quartet, which was awarded the renown German Jazz-Echo in 2015, makes its focus clear: the telling of stories that draw from their experiences and feed from emotions. The group's guidelines were simple: strategic considerations are of no importance. What is crucial, however, is a jointly developed sound, which deliberately avoids short-lived trends - what is hip today may be old news tomorrow.

creatures & states tells stories about living beings and the states they can get into. The band intentionally blurs reality, dream and fiction in its colorful pieces, taking listeners on a journey through different moods. "Our music is becoming more and more precise and profound", Evgeny Ring explains, "The compositions gain even more importance. This project is first and foremost an ensemble record, which does not focus on overflowing solos. And for each piece we have a clear visual idea and share the same images in our minds". The quartet describes ideas or backgrounds of the individual titles in the booklet.

Eva Klesse's opener "*Brushing Hippopotami*" takes us into a dream world. A small, enticing melody peels out of a quiet, shapelessly suggestive introduction, underscored by an irritatingly offset rhythmic pattern. The saxophone takes the lead, but remains restrained, as does the following short bass solo. Then Philip Frischkorn's grand piano solo takes on unexpectedly powerful traits. The swelling dynamics let Ring modulate more expressively, while Klesse distributes powerful blows to the drums. And as unexpectedly as the energy breaks loose, it ebbs away in a short fade - or the inevitable awakening from the composer's happy dream, as she says.

The following "*Minotaur's Labyrinth*" reflects Frischkorn's penchant for Greek mythology; his three-part suite "*Hal Incandenza*" refers to the "mighty cosmos" of the writer David Foster Wallace and the eponymous character from his novel Infinite Jest, who seems to be from another world. Musically, pianist Frischkorn has always had close ties to both classical and classic modernist music, yet he has never before written such a complex, far-reaching piece for the quartet. The same applies to Ring's "*La Vie*", not only because he plays the clarinet on this rare occasion. "It differs from all my previous compositions because the inspiration and the language used here came from a source that was completely new to me. The composition evolved from my studies of Olivier Messiaen's *Modes of Limited Transposition*. The sounds I discovered opened a door to the world of Impressionists for me." At the same time, he showed deep interest in Pablo Picasso. "His painting *La Vie* met the mood of my composition perfectly. The tune '*La Vie*' takes you to a state which I usually enjoy being in: an intense, meditative reflection without any clearly shaped thoughts."

Besides personal experiences and inspirations, shared moments by the band also morphed into compositions. "Mr. Liu", for example, describes a bumpy cultural exchange with a Chinese. "Mr. Liu put us in a weird state of loss of control for four days during our China tour," explains composer Ring. "We went from a relaxed 'go with the flow' to an astonished 'ah, interesting...' to an abrupt 'we need to talk!'. The piece consists of a light and playful melody, which develops into a fiery tug of war."

The musical landscape is wide on *creatures & states*. Introspective, conceptual and sometimes melancholic moments mark one end of an emotional range, for example in Klesse's "*Choral For P*" (inspired by Arvo Pärt's *Tintinnabuli*) and "*Einsiedlerkrebs*". The latter "simply draws from times in the life of a musician: there are those necessary moments of solitude. And then there are those moments on tour when one feels like a nomad, like a snail with its own house on the back." The other, nervously exuberant side of emotion is marked by "*Flirr!*", also from Klesse's pen. "It is about the state of mind, in which one is overwhelmed by too many thoughts and wants too many different things at once. One loses oversight at some point. It can work well, when you organize, compose, when you're on tour or when you're in love. But it can also turn into a negative, if you want too much." The moments of energetic free play in "*Flirr!*" seem to have reached a new dimension for this band.

Additional news information: Stefan Schönenegg joined on double bass. Besides Ring, this is another Cologne-by-choice player who has long enjoyed nationwide attention. It took exactly one joint concert to start working together, Klesse says. "Stefan's spirit fits right in, and he introduces an individual voice. Among other things, he studied classical double bass and is a master of his instrument including the bow. He also works in the New Music genre, makes a lot of freely improvised music and often composes in a rather reduced and subtle way. That's very exciting."

"We have a wonderful new bassist, survived the seven-year itch and went through ups and downs together", says Eva Klesse joyfully. "There were crazy times when we were on tour intensively", she remembers journeys in Europe, Turkey, eight countries in Central and South America, Malaysia and Egypt, where the quartet performed at festivals in Buenos Aires, Cairo, Mexico City, Santiago de Chile, among others. And then suddenly we had to face times of corona with extensive restrictions. "We get to know each other better on a human and musical level every day. On the other hand, we still manage to keep surprising each other with new pieces and compositions, and inspire and challenge each other on stage."

creatures & states again manifests the international status of the quartet. Like its three predecessors, the album was recorded together in a room at Loft-Studio in Cologne. The intimacy and intensity of the sessions can be felt at all times. The energy in dynamic peaks seems to have grown noticeably once again, spurred on by the sometimes sensitive or whirlingly powerful playing by Klesse. The band confidently leaves traditions behind; their innovative power is evident in their cross-stylistic thinking, clever details and fine nuances. The music of the Eva Klesse Quartet impresses with substance and depth, elegance and individuality, verve and esprit.

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