

Uwe Oberg

Work

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Claudio Sanna

Ammentos

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Uwe Oberg's latest solo disc includes pieces by Monk, Ornette, Coltrane, Mingus and Robert Wyatt, plus a number of his own compositions. By email, he comments that "the music of Monk and Coltrane and these other composers means so much to me... I love interfaces, the transition from one to another. Playing these traditional pieces is like a flowing in time and history, questioning the material for today." Oberg has worked with players such as Tony Oxley, Axel Dörner, Frank Gratkowski and Evan Parker, and performs in theatrical, dance and silent film contexts – but this recording, from Sommermusik Saarbrücken 2008, is a reminder of his mastery as pianist and improviser.

It covers the gamut of piano styles. I could spend the entire review on the intricacies and delights of the rare solo piano version of "Fables Of Faubus" – Charles Mingus's protest against racist governor Orval Faubus. Oberg comments that "I love to work with its different moods and structures, it's a good starting point to go in more free spaces". He gradually sidles into the theme, setting up a delicious rhythmic tension between the hands in the stride passages, including an unusual move to a tinkly high-register. Also rare is a solo piano "Crescent", one of Coltrane's most inspired, ecstatic creations – if anything, a tougher pianistic assignment than "Fables".

Oberg makes a bold opening with his haunting, acidulous "Hill", written after Andrew Hill's death in 2007. As moving as Lennie Tristano's "Requiem" for Charlie

Parker, it's a lamentation devoid of sentimentality, with an emphasis on the interval of a 2nd. After Monk's "Pannonica" is the tintinabular inside/prepared piano of "Olo Olo", its title a play on words and sound, which segues into a plangent interpretation of Robert Wyatt's "Muddy Mouse". The album ends with one of Monk's trickiest compositions, "Work".

Ammentos is Sardinian pianist Claudio Sanna's recording debut. Born in 1985, Sanna studied with classical master Lazar Berman, and he performs classical and modern repertoire, and his own compositions and free improvisations. *Ammentos* is *Memories* in Sardinian dialect, and Sanna compares it with Fellini's *Amarcord*, inspired by childhood events.

"Sa Rocco Entosa" and "Zisca" absorb the nostalgically yearning soundworld of Enrico Pieranunzi's *Con Infinite Voci*, with its Italian lyrical take on Bill Evans. Sanna cites Brahms and Schubert, but Ravel is a more obvious classical influence, especially on the perpetual motion free improvisation "Marroculus" ("Spinning Tops"). The elegiac "Mariposas" ("Butterfly") is a white key study, like Ligeti's "White On White". There's a sense of multiple influences attractively decorated, in an improvising style unusually imbued with Western classical tradition – as that music might have sounded if improvisation hadn't been eliminated from it by imperious composers.

Andy Hamilton