

Chico Freeman Heiri Känzig DUO

Transatlantik Dialogue

If jazz is „the sound of surprise“ (Whitney Balliet), the duo is its most essential test arrangement. Within the dialogue of the duo something proves particularly clear that is valid for all music. We have become used to summing up under the four-letter word “jazz”, that listening is as important as playing one’s self; that spontaneous interaction often depends on economy. Chico Freeman, saxophonist, clarinetist, flutist, and composer from Chicago, an eminent improviser, whether “in ‘n out”, “free” or bound to guidelines (or both simultaneously), puts it simply: “it’s a tightrope walk. If you play too much, you take away the notes reserved for others and if you don’t play enough, your full potential is not achieved. If everyone in a group can find the balance between the two, then the magic appears, a sense of truth.”

Heiri Känzig, the New York born Swiss double bass virtuoso malgré lui (i.e. a virtuoso, who never acts out his virtuosity as fast finger artistry as an end in itself, but rather puts it under the bushel for the benefit of the context for emotional depth), formulates his credo of musical understatement no less simply: “What one doesn’t play, is sometimes more important than what one does play”. Now this duo unites these two, who initially found each other within the framework of the “Chico Freeman Fourtet”, in a stretto. There is this magic.

Heiri Känzig shares the passion for the gravitational center of the jazz tradition with Chico Freeman. Under the premise of its convertibility, and despite all of the ability for strong grooves, his preference is melodic. “I can play something else. But what I love is melody. That’s something most important. A good bass line is always a good melody. Otherwise it doesn’t groove. If you groove like hell and there’s no melody, it makes no sense“.

We can understand „The Arrival“, which is what the first CD of this duo is called, as an arrival in an intimate interior space, but also as an arrival in the center of jazz, something that is called „no nonsense music“ in the jargon of musicians such as Cedar Walton, Kenny Barron and George Cables. No avant-garde jazz, no traditional jazz, jazz in the present tense. To express it with a Freeman title: Tradition in Transition. In the transatlantic dialogue Freeman and Känzig mainly deal with each other via respective original compositions and shared findings. After long careers both of them have reached a point where they don’t have to prove anything to anyone anymore. Their joint venture displays a lovely sense of freedom and giving. These stimulate this music beyond all fashions and trends at every moment. There is plenty of space and plenty of breath for both of the partners as well as the listeners.