



Tessa Souter *Shadows And Silence: The Erik Satie Project*

NOANARA
★★★★

Kurt Rosenwinkel & Jean-Paul Brodbeck *The Brahms Project*

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The tradition of mixing jazz with classical music has tended to take two forms: the one that became known as Third Stream music in the 1950s, and the more direct approach, which is not to assimilate or borrow elements of classical music into an altogether new form but to focus primarily on received material, usually from one composer, usually of some vintage. The latter type is demonstrated on these two recent recordings, both of which take strikingly different, interpretative approaches and both of which offer strikingly different results.

On Kurt Rosenwinkel and Jean-Paul Brodbeck's *The Brahms Project*, the noteworthy guitarist and pianist (respectively) dig mightily into the music of composer Johannes Brahms across 10 pieces — pieces that for someone unfamiliar with the composer would likely come away hearing a fairly conventional jazz recording, the music filled with much improvisation but also resonant to the melodies of

Brahms. There's an assuredness to each selection, all named according to the titles Brahms himself gave. That may be your only clue, apart from the album's signature, that this isn't your typical jazz release (whatever that may suggest).

The selections range from just under four minutes ("Symphony No. 4-III Allegro giocoso") to well over eight ("Symphony No. 3-III Poco allegretto"), each number involving highly arranged treatments with Rosenwinkel and Brodbeck's careful guidance and interactions very determinative, guiding bassist Lukas Traxel and drummer Jorge Rossy's every move, or so it seems. Reminiscent, in parts, to Claude Bolling's overtures to the mixing of genres, *The Brahms Project* expresses a fanciful delight in a never-ending romance between two musical worlds.

The same could be said for *Shadows And Silence: The Erik Satie Project*, vocalist Tessa Souter's idiosyncratic approaches to the music of Erik Satie. Because we're now talking about a singer, the introduction of lyrics becomes a key ingredient, given that Satie's music was primarily, if not exclusively, instrumental. Satie, more so than Brahms, has been a periodic source of inspiration for jazz musicians. Souter's voice works naturally within this milieu, her butterscotch timbres gliding smoothly from track to track. Her crew here includes the highly sympathetic drummer Billy Drummond, along with bassist Yasushi Nakamura, trumpeter Nadjie Noordhuis, sopranoist Steve Wilson and pianist Luis Perdomo.

While you can trace the lines of perhaps Satie's most famous composition ("Gnossienne No.1"), "A Song For You," the relaxed interpretation this group gives makes you forget it's a "cover." This is just one example of what Souter explains of "the mysterious, amorphous fluidity of Satie's melodies, [which] invited the lyrics." The words she sings are her own throughout (excepting "Never Broken" with lyrics from Cassandra Wilson that Souter returns to by way of Wayne Shorter's "E.S.P.," and the final selection). A favorite Ron Carter composition originally played by the bassist as "Doom" and subsequently by him with Miles Davis as "Mood" fits perfectly as a kind of end-around Satie, given its simple, eloquent repetitive lines, the tune played true to its origins.

—John Ephland

Shadows And Silence: The Erik Satie Project: A Song For You (Gnossienne No. 1); Mood (Musica Universalis); Holding On To Beauty (Gnossienne No. 3); Peace (Gnossienne No. 2); Avec le Temps; D'Ou Venons-Nous (Gymnopedie No. 3); I Kiss Your Heart/Vexations; Never Broken (ESP); Rayga's Song (Gymnopedie No. 1); If You Go Away/Ne Me Quitte Pas.

Personnel: Tessa Souter, vocals; Luis Perdomo, piano, percussion (1); Yasushi Nakamura, bass; Billy Drummond, drums, cymbals; Nadjie Noordhuis, trumpet, flugelhorn (2, 8); Steve Wilson, soprano saxophone (2, 6, 9); Pascal Borderies, spoken word (7).

Ordering info: tessasouter.com

The Brahms Project: Hungarian Dance No. 1; Intermezzo, Op. 117, No. 2; Intermezzo, Op. 118, No. 2; Rhapsody, Op. 79, No. 1; Wiegenslied; Intermezzo, Op. 116, No. 6; Symphony No. 3—III. Poco allegretto; Hungarian Dance No. 5; Ballade, Op. 10, No. 4; Symphony No. 4—III. Allegro giocoso.

Personnel: Kurt Rosenwinkel, guitar; Jean-Paul Brodbeck, piano; Lukas Traxel, acoustic bass; Jorge Rossy, drums.

Ordering info: heartcore-records.com

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