

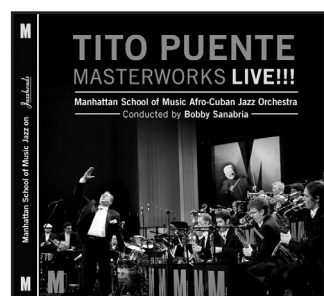
Waking Dreams
Chris Dingman (Between Worlds Music)
by Stuart Broomer

Vibraphonist Chris Dingman has already shown his improvisatory gifts and innate lyricism in Steve Lehman's quintet and octet and Harris Eisenstadt's Canada Day. His debut as a band leader, *Waking Dreams*, a suite, is a kind of continuous reverie in which densities shift and complexities arise to be ultimately resolved in washes of shimmering metallic overtones.

The fundamental band here is a sextet. There's a particularly strong affinity between Dingman and pianist Fabian Almazan, whose understated reading of the suite's "Prelude" sets the reflective tone of the CD and the two can interweave patterns with a keen sense of one another's impending steps. Ambrose Akinmusire is a signal presence, a bravura trumpeter in the mold of Freddie Hubbard who combines an exploratory bent with absolute technical command. That's just one connection with classic '60s Blue Note that emphasizes Dingman's predilections as composer and bandleader. The sparkling "Clear the Rain" and the Latin-tinged "Zaneta" develop a spaciousness that can suggest Herbie Hancock's first full flowering as a composer.

Dingman has a vibist's fondness for echoing dream-like soundscapes, including an unaccompanied "Reflection" and appending a timeless, echoing conclusion to the jagged "Jet Lag". The rest of the band - saxist Loren Stillman, bassist Joe Sanders and drummer Justin Brown - contribute to Dingman's focused, purposeful approach and there are also effective guest turns. Flutist Erica von Kleist contributes a gorgeous sound to one of the CD's highlights (and sole piece that Dingman didn't compose), Joe Chambers' "Nocturnal", originally recorded by fellow vibist Bobby Hutcherson on *Patterns* (Blue Note, 1968).

For more information, visit betweenworldsmusic.com. This group is at The Jazz Gallery Jun. 18th. See Calendar.



Tito Puente Masterworks Live!!!
Bobby Sanabria/Manhattan School of Music
Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra (Jazzheads)
by Alex Henderson

Salseros remember the Puerto Rican icon Tito Puente (who died in 2000) for vocal hits like "Ran Kan Kan", "Ban Ban Queré" and "Oye Como Va". But he was equally accomplished when it came to instrumental AfroCuban jazz. And Puente's jazz side is, for the most part, what Bobby Sanabria celebrates on *Tito Puente Masterworks Live!!!*. This 71-minute CD documents a 2008 concert at the Manhattan School of Music, where Sanabria joins forces with that institution's AfroCuban Jazz Orchestra. Sanabria wears a variety of hats here; in addition to serving as conductor and musical director, Sanabria plays vibes, marimba and different Latin percussion instruments.

This concert has its vocal-oriented moments.

Singer Rachel Kara Pérez has an enjoyable lead vocal on the bolero "Me Acuerdo de Ti" and some vocals are employed on "Ran Kan Kan" and "Alegre Cha-Cha-Cha". But this disc is mainly instrumental and the energy is palpable on hard-swinging performances of compositions that include "Yambeque", "Mambo Buddha", "Picadillo", "Cuban Nightmare" and "Elegua Changó". Not everything that Sanabria and the big band perform is by Puente; other highlights of the concert range from Oscar Pettiford's "Bohemia After Dark" to the standard "Autumn Leaves". But even on the selections that weren't actually written by Puente, the arrangements are clearly with him in mind.

During a 1988 interview, Puente complained to this journalist that while jazz musicians were good about honoring the memories of jazz icons, he wanted to see more AfroCuban players recording projects like his own tribute to Cuban bandleader Beny Moré. Failing to honor the memory of a Latin legend certainly isn't a problem on this album. Sanabria and the Manhattan School of Music AfroCuban Jazz Orchestra remember Puente with consistently exciting results.

For more information, visit jazzheads.com. Sanabria is at Apollo Theater Jun. 18th. See Calendar.



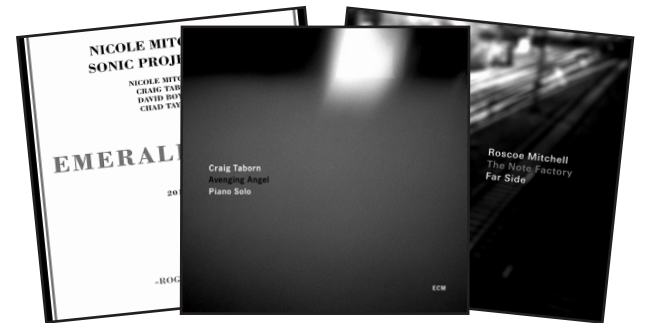
Les Nuages En France
Marco Cappelli Acoustic Trio (Mode)
by Wilbur MacKenzie

Guitarist Marco Cappelli's relationship with Mode Records is multifaceted to say the least. Following two discs from longstanding Italian new music collective Ensemble Dissonanzen and Cappelli's own Extreme Guitar project, the debut release of Cappelli's own compositions for jazz trio brings a whole new element to the fruitful collaboration. *Les Nuages En France* also bears the fruit of the many years the trio has worked together: joined by bassist Ken Filiano and drummer Satoshi Takeishi, the guitarist has created a rich assemblage of works that breathe deeply, struggle with determination and revel in beauty, often all at once.

Off-kilter grooves mesh with skittery clouds of clicking noises on "La Femme Policier" and "La Bien Aimée Du Nuage D'à Côté", Filiano's robust pizzicato darting in between Takeishi's nuanced brushwork. "Oncle Et Neveu" features a vast array of acoustic textures, the sympathetic strings of Cappelli's bizarre mutant guitar and the various bowed and plucked sounds of Filiano's bass floating in and out of each other atop a driving pulse from Takeishi.

Live at Drom last month, Cappelli's trio produced a similarly varied sound, though incorporating effects pedals to create an even more diverse texture. Cappelli's mastery of the classical guitar and ability to express melodic beauty and fragmented abstraction in the same moment was unparalleled. The masterful integration of form, texture and groove formed the core of what made the trio so compelling. A melodic gesture would take a left turn into a driving repetitive rhythm just at the last second, setting up a whole new direction, as the ensemble dynamic shifted radically, but with a complete sense of organic trajectory.

For more information, visit moderecords.com. Cappelli is at Cabrini Green Urban Meadow Jun. 12th as part of Red Hook Jazz Festival, University of the Streets Jun. 21st with Brad Farberman and Cubana Social Jun. 26th as part of Undead Jazz Festival. See Calendar.



Emerald Hills
Nicole Mitchell's Sonic Projections (Rogue Art)
Far Side Roscoe Mitchell The Note Factory (ECM)
Avenging Angel Craig Taborn (ECM)
by Marc Medwin

There's a winning precision in Craig Taborn's pianism. This does not imply that emotion and freedom are lacking. It's just that each note seems logically placed, framing the next as it in turn frames what follows. Beyond this, Taborn goes past simply playing the piano. He works the timbres of each instrument and the room in which the music is being made.

The two ensembles under discussion make excellent use of these traits with music that blurs the boundaries, if anyone still believes that they exist in anything but verbiage and paper, between composition and improvisation. Flutist Nicole Mitchell goes from strength to strength on *Emerald Hills* and this ensemble of long-time collaborators is entirely sympathetic to her complex vision. She makes use of all possible group combinations, allowing Taborn's unique approach to soloing and comping ample space. He is given a prominent solo in the opening track and it typifies his aesthetic as he repeats several notes in the piano's extreme upper register, hammering at the highest A and revelling in its echoing decay. Then there's his comping on the wildly diverse "Ritual and Rebellion", a study in rhythmic intensity juxtaposed with delicacy and simplicity. It's also marvelous to hear him playing in stark unison with the leader's flute as the complexities of her "Chocolate Chips" unfold.

Roscoe Mitchell's The Note Factory works on similar principles as the above ensemble. There is a fair amount of space and pointillism on *Far Side*, but also plenty of room to stretch out. Here, Taborn and Vijay Iyer share piano duties and their compatibility is amazing. They function as one instrument on "Quintet 2007 A for Eight" and only stereo separation gives the game away. When they solo, it is difficult to tell who is who. The pair encircle the bassists and drummers, forming a glorious rhythm section capable of seemingly superhuman precision. Much of their playing conjures shades of Mitchell's earlier *Nonaah's* darkly Weberian slant while Mitchell and trumpeter Corey Wilkes emote between the razor-sharp declamations, all forming a uniquely powerful group sound in keeping with the quality of other recent Mitchell projects.

Of a totally different character is Taborn's solo disc *Avenging Angel*. It is his first and it may be the most original statement on offer here. Again, Taborn is playing the acoustics of a wonderful piano and a fine space. His intent is clear from the muted sonorities opening "Broad Day King", delicate reverb encircling each note and chord. Beyond that, the precision with which he accents important tones is matched by a rhythmic intricacy of which Stravinsky and Ligeti would have been proud; both are invoked on the fiendishly difficult "Glossolalia". Taborn's hugely varied articulations render his playing orchestral and if the slow-building crescendo becomes a bit formulaic throughout, it is a small price to pay for such excellent music making.

For more information, visit roguart.com and ecmrecords.com. Taborn is at Village Vanguard Jun. 14th-19th with Chris Potter and solo at Rubin Museum Jun. 17th. See Calendar.