

Mp3 Jim Gailloreto's Split Decision - Shadow Puppets



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A great new jazz standard for today's jazz audience; top Chicago jazz musicians. Laurence Hobgood-Rhodes Piano, Larry Kohut-Bass, Eric Monztko-Drums. Recorded live at Roosevelt University in Ganz Hall by Ken Christianson 14 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Traditional Jazz Combo, JAZZ: Free Jazz Details: In philosophy, art, psychology, sexuality - all the things that most make us human - you find the search for "the other." It's the strange or unfamiliar experience or relationship that will jolt us from our routine and (paradoxically) unlock the qualities than can truly define us, and it underlies such disparate subjects as Hegel's dialectic, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Tantric yin and yang, and The X-Files - to name a handful. The purposeful search for otherness motivates this project from the Chicago saxophonist Jim Gailloreto. He is neither the first jazzman, nor even the best known, to renounce the comfortable in order to sieze inspiration. But few musicians have so successfully moved outside their comfort zone. On Shadow Puppets, Gailloreto transports his music to an exotic, sometimes eerie realm where the light plays a little differently on the landscape, and the timbres of his horns play unexpectedly off the ear. It is a transformation both subtle and monumental. Gailloreto, known in Chicago for his sideman versatility (and elsewhere for his several solos on Kurt Elling's Grammy-nominated Man In The Air), offered a more representative example of his art on The Insider, his 2003 debut as a leader: his quintet, with keyboards and guitar, gave hefty support to his rich, smooth tone and his thought-provoking yet accessible improvisations. That album sounds well conceived, brilliantly executed, and immaculately produced, with compositions and arrangements that benefit from long hours of planning. Shadow Puppets - which builds upon the looser example of Gailloreto's pianoless trio, Split Decision - could hardly be more different. To break through to something other, Gailloreto conducted the musical equivalent of science's pure research. He got together with his longtime friend, the Chicago drummer Jeff Stitely, switched on a

minidisc recorder, and captured their completely unrehearsed (and in fact barely directed) improvising. He encouraged Stitely to experiment with some new rhythm ideas that the drummer had been working on, pushing Gailloreto's own playing into unplanned and unexpected areas. He then went through the recordings and transcribed the snippets that caught his ear; eventually, he nourished them into the full-fledged compositions that make up approximately half this album - songs strikingly removed from those on his previous album, lit from within by an almost unnerving quietude. In the process of writing these songs, Gailloreto quite naturally supplied harmonies, despite having designed them for a trio of non-chord instruments. "The melodies and arrangements were based on the idea that no chords would be heard per se," he explains. "Sometimes the bassist, or even the drummer, doubles the melody line; still, the harmonies are always implied. But with no piano or guitar, there's considerably more space." Along the way, however, Gailloreto made the decision to bring in pianist Laurence Hobgood, known for his work with Kurt Elling (and the author of his own solo disc on Naim Audio). Hobgood is also known for his ferocious technique, harmonic legerdemain, and often dense texturing - all of which would seem to go against what Gailloreto was trying to accomplish on *Shadow Puppets*. "Actually, I had decided that I wanted the color of the Rhodes [electric piano] for this project, and I love Laurence's musicality. But because of the different nature of the writing, I asked him to consider the Rhodes as a monophonic instrument - to play single-note lines, as a rule, and to use it as a color, rather than as a traditional tool for accompaniment. Basically, I asked him to tie one hand behind his back. And I was thrilled with what he came up with." In fact, nothing on this album symbolizes the lure and the rewards of "the other" more than as Hobgood's contributions. In all his previous recorded work, you hear an artist enraptured with the textural possibilities of the unamplified pianoforte, in love with the sound and complexity of the instrument. But here, constrained in both technique and timbre, Hobgood plays music that perhaps even he didn't know he knew. He plays with no little brio, and virtuosity in spite of himself; but it's not his first instrument, and it makes him think a little differently, like a gifted and successful French student who still thinks, a little bit, in English. And that slight but significant displacement is exactly what *Shadow Puppets* seeks to accomplish. Gailloreto also accomplishes this vital transformation, willing himself to find little-used corners of his own technique while exploring the hidden chambers of these compositions - a process made possible by the steady-state bass work of Larry Kohut, whose playing presents a beacon of focused tone and centered thought. As for Eric Montzka, the intrepid drummer on these tracks, Gailloreto says, "I kept

asking him to come up with something new, to avoid the usual patterns." For a case in point, turn to the title track, one of the several tunes that Gailloreto created during the process of recording this album. The angular, 5/4 melody arose from the chock-a-block drum motif (as well as the surprising Rhodes effects in the introduction), and before he'd completed the entire melody, Gailloreto had no idea where the harmonic impetus would lead. For comparison, consider "A Change In Heart," one of the tunes derived from the original session with Jeff Stitely, but which underwent a significant evolution. "The original tune has an especially exotic feel," he explains, "in the intervals of the lines and the phraseology of the melody. By the time we recorded it here, I had each soloist backed by a separate, motivic tone row unique to each of us, but permuted from the original." One tune here ("Velma Red At Sunset") was written by another longtime Gailloreto associate, bassist Ken Haebich, and in this rendition incorporates an ancient Victrola recording of Duke Ellington's "Harlem Echoes," featuring the trumpet great Cootie Williams; another comes straight from the Ellington band's songbook ("A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing"); and Gailloreto's "Fancy That" has a dreaminess found in such Ellington compositions as "Heaven" and "Transblucency." Together, they reflect Gailloreto's abiding love for the work of Ellington and his successor among jazz songwriters, Thelonious Monk. These songs not only fit the spirit of this project; they in fact define it - as does the album title, suggested by Gailloreto's son Coleman. It refers to the shadow puppets used in the wayang (storytelling theater) of Java. These puppets - ornately decorated, yet seen primarily in chiaroscuro - create ghostly figures, almost human, familiar but askew: slightly alien but all the more evocative and affecting. The wayang puppets are decidedly other; the music on this album comes from a similar source of focused imagination. You may never have heard the stories Jim Gailloreto tells here, but you already know them by heart. NEIL TESSER Host of Miles Ahead (Jazz From Chicago) milesaheadjazz.com

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