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Šalter Ensemble

Štiri Dela

Sploh ZAX CD 09

Organized by Swiss accordionist Jonas Kocher, the 12-member Šalter Ensemble is another excellent argument for inter-EU cooperation. An electro-acoustic ensemble consisting of musicians from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Switzerland, the band moves seamlessly between composed and improvised music while sliding swiftly from minimalist timbres to maximalist crescendos. Certainly the appropriately titled “Common Ground” offers dramatic confirmation of the group’s goal. During the track’s nearly 11 minute length comprehensive tones from all players are layered into cumulative intensity so that the forceful sequence quivers as if from a single instrument.

Other tracks offer more expressive solo and group work. “Pet sponinov/Five Memories” for instance is based around harsh electronic drones steadily accelerating, interrupted at points by Bertrand Denzler’s saxophone honks and split tone extrusions, Kocher’s accordion sweeps, Irena Tomažin Zagoričnik’s vocal cries and vibrating pulsation from bassist Tomaž Grom and electric bassist Roko Crnić. The scene-setting “Ubiquité” offers more expansive textural scope as undulating voltage and flanges from Robert Roža’s electronic hiss creates a metronomic ostinato as reed flutters, squeeze box slurs, verbal onomatopoeia and Marina Džukljevič’s keyboard clips combine into a droning crescendo which voice distension, piano glissandi and percussion pings build the sound edifice up in speed, volume and pitch. All of this culminates in a mélange of intertwined oscillated crackles and intense slaps, rattles and gyrations from the vocalist and acoustic instruments. Coda and introduction to the remainder of the program are double bass slaps and singular piano clinks.

Non-hierarchical and with compositional and sonic contributions from all concerned, the affirmative quality of the Šalter Ensemble’s program could serve as a paradigm for more international partnerships.

—Ken Waxman

Track Listing: 1. Ubiquité 2. The Šalter 3. Common Ground 4. Pet sponinov/Five Memories

Personnel: Bertrand Denzler (tenor saxophone); Jonas Kocher (accordion); Tena Novak Vincek (violin); Srdjan Muc (guitar); Marina Džukljevič (piano); Samo Kutin (hurdy-gurdy); Tomaž Grom (bass, electronics); Roko Crnić (electric bass); Lionel Friedli, Nenad Kovačić (percussion), Robert Roža (electronics), Irena Tomažin Zagoričnik (voice)

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