For his new recording, **Drago**, Barber departs from his recent focus on blending contemporary classical music and jazz to focus on electronic music, utilizing elements from both the classical and dancefloor models. A two-year long study of Logic music programming has led the fleet fingered string specialist to eschew the guitar for the most part to focus on composing pieces in a new and highly personal way.

**STEPHANIE NILLES**

I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG - THE WHITE FLAG

SSC 1506 - AVAILABLE 3/5/21

"Stephanie Nilles is possibly the most compelling jazz piano/lounge punk singer since Tom Waits started chain smoking and singing about sailors." — AudioSuede

The voices of African American militants continue to ring in the vanguard’s ears. One such musical example is the late, great bassist/composer Charles Mingus, whose music was vehemently charged with indignation concerning the rights of the downtrodden. His messages, both outright and nuanced, are touchstones for many musicians who choose to trodden. His messages, both outright and nuanced, are touchstones for many musicians who choose to.

**There aren’t many jazz venues open for performance, especially with the resurgence of COVID-19 cases, and many are opting to play it safe with home-based concerts. But there’s only so much musical mojo that can be cooked up in the privacy of one’s studio, so it’s surprising to hear guitarist Mike Moreno onstage at Bar Bayeux (Jan. 6th) with keyboardist Jon Cowherd, bassist Matt Penman and drummer Obed Calvaire.**

Unfortunately, safety precautions precluded a live audience, but the musicians’ shared chemistry was tangible, even over a live-stream broadcast. Moreno’s albums include many of his own tunes, so it wasn’t surprising to hear him try out a new piece, as yet untitled compositions: the sequentially melodic opener, which transitioned organically back to the head after a series of improvisations; a dreamy ballad with an arpeggiated theme; and a theme that morphed seamlessly into a parlando-like rendition of Beethoven’s "Colorations-Explorations". What was most enlightening was the large collective that energetically and masterfully played "Colorations-Explorations". This group was Dance Clarinets, the adult woodwind ensemble of Greenwich House Music School, led by faculty member and clarinetist, JD Parran. Beside the common B-flat clarinet, there were at least ten different kinds of clarinet, with sub-variations in pitch, keyboard and bore. Hearing many of these variants played in itself was completely mesmerizing and entralling. Add to that some creative touches by Warren Smith on vibraphone, percussion and gongs and the result, 34 minutes of sheer creativity, was truly inspiring.

**For those with a taste for the avant garde, seasoned musician/composer Joseph Daley’s “Colorations-Explorations” is quite the adventure. Daley has been firmly rooted in jazz, but his current effort is best described in the Minimalist tradition of Terry Riley, Steve Reich and others. The work was premiered in February 2020 live, but this iteration was recorded at the Capitol building in DC, underscored by his trio; this performance is not only a testament to Daley’s virtuosity, but also a celebration of the city itself.**

**Although Herbie Nichols only released four records, he left a legacy of fervent devotees, including fellow pianist Jason Moran, who, in celebration of Nichols’ 102nd birthday (Jan. 3rd), aired a rare 1962 interview on Nichols conducted by Mait Eady for the radio program The Scope of Jazz. Interlaced with cuts from Nichols’ Blue Note albums—“Double Exposure”, “Hangover Triangle”, “House Party Starting”, “Terpsichore”, adaptation of Mendelssohn’s “The Spinning Song”, “Wildflower”, “The Third World” and George Gershwin’s “Mine” —the program gave Moran’s 100+ Facebook guests an opportunity to make real-time responses to the music by leaving comments in the chat menu. Having transcribed a chunk of the music himself, Moran was outspoken and articulate, remarking on Nichols’ “register extremes” or praising his “melody forever and a day”. During an especially inspiring passage on “Wildflower”, however, even Moran seemed at a loss for words, but his response said it all: “Daaaaamn!!!” As with any master’s work, there is always something new to hear, so where one listener noticed an “Erroll Garner-ish” left hand, another praised the rhythm “bouche’, another the prevalence of hemolias. It was a further revelation to hear Nichols’ soft spoken but illuminating answers to Eady’s prompts, providing context for his music. His theme; and “Becker” (written for Walter Becker of Steely Dan), a subdued piece enhanced by Moreno’s proficient technique and vivid imagination, especially with the resurgence of COVID-19 cases, and many are opting to play it safe with home-based concerts. But there’s only so much musical mojo that can be cooked up in the privacy of one’s studio, so it’s surprising to hear him try out a new piece, as yet untitled compositions: the sequentially melodic opener, which transitioned organically back to the head after a series of improvisations; a dreamy ballad with an arpeggiated theme; and a theme that morphed seamlessly into a parlando-like rendition of Beethoven’s "Colorations-Explorations". What was most enlightening was the large collective that energetically and masterfully played "Colorations-Explorations". This group was Dance Clarinets, the adult woodwind ensemble of Greenwich House Music School, led by faculty member and clarinetist, JD Parran. Beside the common B-flat clarinet, there were at least ten different kinds of clarinet, with sub-variations in pitch, keyboard and bore. Hearing many of these variants played in itself was completely mesmerizing and entralling. Add to that some creative touches by Warren Smith on vibraphone, percussion and gongs and the result, 34 minutes of sheer creativity, was truly inspiring.

— **Marilyn Lester**

— **Tom Greenland**

— **Paul Jost**
A throbbing enthusiasm stood as a near entity unto itself as group interplay commanded the airwaves (Jan. 7th). Arts for Art’s On Line Salon series welcomed the Fay Victor Chamber Trio, an ensemble carving the path of vocal artistry’s role in contemporary music. Her voice is a rare instrument, matched only by her fortitude. Victor, alto saxophonist Darius Jones and cellist Marika Hughes tore through a set uniting free jazz, Anetha Franklin, spoken word, new music and postbop, swinging and grooving, sans drums and bass. And, as per usual, political action wasn’t far off: “I’d like to dedicate this next piece,” the vocalist stated, “to all of the Steptef Wedes and Steptford Husbands,” she said, introducing a work threading haunting alto, busy cello pizzicato and a modernist melody of slow leaps across the octave and beyond. Over the telling phrase, “I live in a dream state where all is perfect”, Victor’s larynx contortions teetered over the soprano summit before dragging haughtily across its sub-level, releasing guttural cries. Soon the three were engaging in three-part counterpoint and rapid call and response, drawing on the length of the jazz tradition. When not shaping the sound with warm arco, Hughes’ pizzicato turned into walking bass, driving the group further, offering pivot points for the flights of the others. Jones’ elegant vibrato, particularly in the opening segment of “Do Right Woman, Do Right Man”, was utterly classic, sending Victor into highly memorable rhythm-and-ballad mode, bringing it on home. —John Pietaro

WHAT’S NEWS

WBGO is one of five jazz radio stations to partner with the Doni Duke Charitable Foundation in the new Initiative Jazz Media Lab, receiving grants of up to $275,000 over three years to support “their involvement in the collective and supply them with core support and innovation capital… provide these stations with a peer network, support system and contracted resource team for exploring and advancing strategies to diversify their listening bases, invest in new media platforms, engage with venues and community organizations and establish meaningful relationships with jazz artists.” In related news, the documentary The WBGO Story…Bright Moments from Newark to the World premieres at the NJ Film Festival, Thomas Edison Black Maria Film Festival and Garden State Film Festival. For more information, visit wbgo.org.

Winter Jazzfest will take place virtually in 2021, including panel discussions “Fertile Grounds” and “Jazz, Gender and Black Feminism: What We Can Learn”, all streaming free to the public. For more information, visit winterjazzfest.com.

To celebrate Black History Month, Rhino Records is releasing a limited edition colored vinyl series of classic albums throughout the month. Included will be: George Benson - Breezin’; Ray Charles - The Best of Ray Charles; The Modern Jazz Quartet - Rahsaan Roland Kirk - The Case Of The Three Sided Dream; and Nina Simone - Folkyn Ninja + Blackbird. For more information, visit rhino.com.

Serbian trumpeter Dusko Goykovich received the Berklee Master of Global Jazz Award. For more information, visit berklee.edu/berklee-now/news/berklee-awards-dusko-goykovich-with-master-of-global-jazz-award.

Our own John Pietaro has inaugurated a bi-monthly radio show, Jazz Just After Dark, which will play music and feature interviews, airing at 6-8 pm on MakerParkRadio.NYC. This month’s dates are Feb. 12th and 26th.

Harlem Stage has announced Eric Oberstein as new Managing Director and Pat Cruz as Artistic Director and Chief Executive Officer.

The 2021 GlobalFest has named Drom’s Mehmet Dede and Serdar Ihan as recipients of its Impact Award. For more information, visit globalfest.org.

Catalytic Sound has announced Catalytic Soundtrack, an artist-owned and curated, subscription-based streaming service that seeks to pay musicians fairly. It is accessible via the $10 Streaming and $30 Full membership tiers at patreon.com/catalyticsound.

Poland’s Jazztopad Festival, in partnership with the Polish Cultural Institute New York, will present the following live-streaming concerts in February: Radek Nowicki Quartet (Feb. 13th at 2 pm) and Maniucha & Ksawery (Feb. 19th at 4 pm) in partnership with the Polish Cultural Institute New York, will present the following live-streaming concerts in February: Radek Nowicki Quartet (Feb. 13th at 2 pm) and Maniucha & Ksawery (Feb. 19th at 4 pm) in partnership with the Polish Cultural Institute New York, will present the following live-streaming concerts in February: Radek Nowicki Quartet (Feb. 13th at 2 pm) and Maniucha & Ksawery (Feb. 19th at 4 pm). For more information, visit jazztopad.pl.

Queens Jazz OverGround will present its Spring Jazz Festival streaming live from the waterfront in Long Island City on Tuesday evenings in February: Feb. 9th (Adam Hutcherson Quartet and Sharif Kales Quintet); Feb. 16th (Eugenia Choe Trio and Juan Felix Mayorga Quartet); and Feb. 23rd (Hashem Assadullahi Quartet, Jennifer Wharton’s Bonegasm). For more information, visit culturelablic.org/qjog.

Brooklyn Conservatory of Music has announced an inaugural fellowship for students interested in jazz studies programs; Amy Winehouse Jazz Explorers; Jazz Travelers; and Creative Music Ensemble. For more information, visit bkcm.org.

Volume 40 of Live From Emmet’s Place had Emmet Cohen celebrating Martin Luther King Day (Jan. 18th) with a piano summit dedicated to the late activist Cedar Walton, commemorating his previous day’s birthday. The pianist-host kicked things off playing “Cedar’s Blues”, stretching out on the jazzy melody before giving way to Russell Hall’s lyrical bass solo and rhythmic four-bar exchanges with drummer Kyle Poole. Walton cohort Joe Farnsworth came in on drums for Sam Jones’ “Something In Common”, Cohen hitting hard over walking bass and crisp snare accents. Julius Rodriguez took over at the piano for John Coltrane’s “Naima”, opening phasedly then grooving on the Latin-ish arrangement. Poole was back for Walton’s pretty “Martha’s Prize”, after which pianist Mathis Picard came in for a bluesy medley of Burt Bacharach-Hal David’s “This Guy’s In Love With You” and Walton’s “Groundwork”. Cohen and Farnsworth returned for Harold Arlen-Yip Harburg’s “Somewhere Over The Rainbow”, dedicating it to the recently departed Junior Mance and Sammy Nestico. On a fire marshaled by “Firm Hand and Hindsight” craftsmanship at a blazing tempo, escalating as Rodriguez and Picard and Farnsworth and Poole took turns, climaxing with all the pianists at the keyboard. Cohen dedicated “The Maestro” to Walton’s widow Martha and Rodriguez played Lew Brown-Sammy Fain’s “That Old Feeling”. Then all were back to finish swinging hard on “The Theme”. —Russ Musto

The closure of traditional performance venues due to pandemic restrictions has resulted in musicians taking matters into their own hands, establishing alternative settings in which they can reach audiences. The Underexposed live-streamed concert series hosted by bassist Desmond White in his Brooklyn basement has been doing just that. The 16th (Jan. 11th) edition of the Monday night sets had vibraphonist Joel Ross throwing down with his trio of bassist Ben Tiberio and drummer Craig Weinrib. The music began dramatically with an extended solo bass improvisation, which flowed into the familiar loping cadence of John Coltrane’s “Equinox”, Ross stretching out with deliberate melodicism. This segued into a swinging rendition of Thelonious Monk’s “Evidence”, tagging it with a coda dubbed “Dence”, vibraphone laying down a rhythmic vamp over a martial drum beat. Impressionistic solo vibraphone prefaced the fittingly titled Ross original “Haunting”, the composer’s sustained notes evincing an ominous atmosphere on top of rumbling bass and drums. The mood brightened with the vibraphonist’s melodically appealing “The Nurturer”, a soulfully swinging outing, which was followed by his “Minor Joy”, a rhythmic tour de force featuring Weinrib. Ross played the opening chorus of “Round Midnight” alone, before his partners joined in for a stirring version of the Monk standard. They then ended with a spirited blues referencing Bobby Timmons’ classic “Moanin”. —Russ Musto

Joel Ross

Fay Victor