

Wasilewski, Kurkiewicz, Miskiewicz - Trio (2005)



01. *Trio Conversation (Introduction)* (2:38)
02. *Hyperballad* (5:52)
03. *Roxana's Song* (4:20)
04. *K.T.C.* (6:11)
05. *Plaza Real* (5:51)
06. *Shine* (6:00)
07. *Green Sky* (6:47)
08. *Sister's Song* (5:57)
09. *Drum Kick* (1:41)
10. *Free-Bop* (4:29)
11. *Free Combinations For Three Instruments* (4:51)
12. *Entropy* (5:53)
13. *Trio Conversation (The End)* (2:01)

Marcin Wasilewski (piano)
Slawomir Kurkiewicz (double bass)
Michal Miskiewicz (drums)

Pianist Marcin Wasilewski, double-bassist Slawomir Kurkiewicz, and drummer Michal Miskiewicz are best known as the young Polish musicians who have collaborated with trumpet legend Tomasz Stanko in recent years, in particular on *Soul of Things* and *Suspended Night*. But while Stanko has been a mentor since '93, first calling Wasilewski when he was only sixteen looking for a trio to support him when his regular rhythm section was unavailable, the three have also maintained a separate musical existence, releasing a number of acclaimed records in Poland as Simple Acoustic Trio. Now, with their first international release, they demonstrate lessons learned from Stanko, the kind of empathic interplay that only comes from a long-standing relationship, and, while clearly rooted in tradition, an unmistakable penchant for modernity.

Their youthful age and treatment of Bjork's "Hyberballad," which manages to evoke both the icy cool of the composer's native Iceland and a warmer melancholy, might lead some to place this trio in the same musical space as Esbjorn Svensson's Trio (E.S.T.) and The Bad Plus, but that would be a mistake. They might share a certain melodic bent with E.S.T. but are completely free of any pop sensibility and demonstrate a far less rigid approach, while their finesse and delicate subtlety makes them no companions of TBP. And while both of these groups run the risk of being so fashionable as to inherently date themselves, the music of Trio is rich and timeless.

Book-ending compositions by Bjork, Wayne Shorter, Stanko, and others are four free improvisations that are surprising in their implicit form. Abstract yet never without a sense of focus, these can only be performed by musicians who have played with each other for so long as to be completely confident in each others' instincts, with the ability to trust that whatever risk one takes, the others will be there with complete and unerring support.

Elsewhere the trio shows a remarkable ability to get inside a composition and find its true essence. Shorter's "Plaza Real" may have been a piece of brooding fusion when first released on Weather Report's Procession , but here the trio goes straight to its core, with a treatment that is light and lyrical. Stanko's "Green Sky," from Matka Joanna , retains the rubato freedom of the original yet feels altogether more optimistic. Wasilewski's own "Free-bop" is rooted in Paul Bley by way of Keith Jarrett, yet is more pensive; while "Sister's Song," co-written with Ewa Wasilewska, is possibly the most direct piece on the record, with a romanticism that evokes Lyle Mays' work but without the explicit virtuosity.

That's not to say Wasilewski, Kurkiewicz, and Miskiewicz aren't in possession of formidable technique; it's just that they never place style before substance, a quality that they must inherently possess but which has been nurtured through their association with Stanko. Trio is a refined, confident and mature recording from a group whose members are still in their mid-twenties. It's almost frightening to imagine where they'll be ten years from now. ---John Kelman, allaboutjazz.com

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