

Michael Mantler Concertos

Michael Mantler: trumpet; **Bjarne Roupé:** guitar; **Bob Rockwell:** saxophone;
Pedro Carneiro: marimba, vibraphone; **Roswell Rudd:** trombone; **Majella Stockhausen:**
piano; **Nick Mason:** percussion

Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin
Roland Kluttig, conductor

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“Combining musical materials and characters – interrelating, juxtaposing and condensing them into a complex whole – always implies, whether deliberately or not, drawing up something akin to a picture of the world. A reflection, a counter-image, a draft, a vision ... How does one view this world when, like Michael Mantler, one was born in Vienna, grew up there with classical and modern music, moved to New York at the age of 19, found oneself suddenly plunged into America's jazz avant-garde and inscribed a large circle by returning to Europe? Mantler is truly nowhere at home, a drifter seasoned in the role of creative outsider, uniting the perspective of two continents and two cultures. He views music from the twin vantage points of the elaborated European tradition and the American rebellion in jazz – a rebellion that sought to topple every convention applicable to date.”

- Bert Noglik, from the liner notes

“Concertos” is a powerful release from Michael Mantler, the first album of new material from the trumpeter/composer in seven years (since “Hide & Seek” - recorded 2000 and released in 2001). In the interim, in 2006, ECM issued “Review”, an anthology of Mantler recordings made between 1968 and 2000. “Concertos”, in a different way, also picks up some threads from the past: “These concertos represent a return to as well as a re-thinking of the original concept of my work with the Jazz Composer's Orchestra, the soloists now from contemporary new music (non-improvising) as well as from new jazz and rock (improvising/ freely interpreting), supported by a classical, though musically flexible, chamber ensemble.”

The bracing trumpet concerto which introduces the album marks a very welcome return for Mantler as improviser. He is a unique player, and his performance here triggers memories of great solos past, in contexts stretching back to the Jazz Realities band of the mid 60s via Mantler's own “Alien” and “Something There” albums (for instance).

Swedish guitarist Bjarne Roupé has contributed thoughtful electric guitar to all of Mantler's recordings since 1994's “Cercu un paese innocente” and is a member of his Chamber Music & Songs ensemble. His solo feature here is characteristically elegant.

Bob Rockwell was born in Oklahoma but has lived since the early 1980s in Copenhagen (where Mantler himself is now partly-based). Rockwell's lean tenor sound, more often applied to hard-bop terrain, proves highly adaptable to the abstract climate of Michael Mantler's sound-world.

The presence of Roswell Rudd amongst the soloists is exciting news for long time followers of Mantler's music. The trombone innovator had played a key role on the silver Jazz Composer's Orchestra album of 1968 – as well as on shared musical adventures with Carla Bley, from “Escalator Over The Hill” to “Musique Mécanique”, and his “exquisite low horn” is as idiosyncratic as ever on “Concertos”, still singing obliquely of the blues, with real emotional power, inside Mantler's finely-sculpted modern soundscapes.

Mantler's broad view across new music and jazz, however, blurs distinctions between the idioms. In the Concertos, the frames supplied by his compositions help shape and guide the improvised component of the music but also give to the purely written solos some of the freshness of improvisation: see the concertos for marimba and piano, played here by Pedro Carneiro and Majella Stockhausen. Whatever the ratio of notation to improvisation, a consistent musical language prevails, and it is unmistakably Mantler's..

Portuguese mallet percussion specialist Pedro Carneiro was last heard on ECM playing the marimba concerto of Erkki-Sven Tüür, with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra under Olari Elts. Pianist Majella Stockhausen grew up playing the music of her father, new music giant Karlheinz Stockhausen, but from the mid 1970s has been active as a soloist and chamber musician working in a wide a variety of contexts. She has collaborated closely with many composers, including Henze, Ligeti and Pintscher.

Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason has worked with Mantler in diverse contexts since the mid-70s, first with a cameo on “The Hapless Child”, then playing on “Something There” and “Live”. His background is rock, rather than jazz, but his improvisational intuition has allowed him to function well inside this music, as the percussion concerto again confirms.

Credit for the success of the project goes also to the committed performances of Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin and conductor Roland Kluttig. Kluttig, born 1968 in Dresden, is recognized as one of the most gifted conductors of his generation. His 2003 recording of Schoenberg's Moses & Aron with the Stuttgart Opera was widely praised. Chief conductor of the KNMB from 1993-99, he continues to work with the ensemble on special projects, including programmes on composers Varese, Xenakis and Hanns Eisler.

Kluttig conducted the Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin in a performance of the Concertos at JazzFest Berlin in 2007, after which the music was recorded at Berlin's rbb Radio Studio 2. Additional recording took place in Pernes-les-Fontaines and in Union City, New Jersey, in January and February 2008.

CD package includes 24-page German-English booklet with an introduction by Michael Mantler, notes by Bert Noglik, and session photos by Patrick Hinely.