



IRENE SCHWEIZER JÜRIG WICKIHALDER

SPRING

Jürg Wickihalder: Tenor- and Soprano Saxophones
Irène Schweizer: Piano

Recorded February 6, 7, 2014, at Loft Köln by Christian Heck. Mixed in May 2014 at Tonart Studio by Jürg Wickihalder and Christian Heck. Mastered by Andreas Kolinski, jazzmastering.de. Cover art and design: Jonas Schoder. Liner notes: Bert Noglik

Intakt CD 234 / 2014

Liner Notes by Bert Noglik

A soft conversation – two people seeking, then finding each other, then branching out. One story, told together, with the same energy but from different perspectives. Reacting to each other in a split second, thinking ahead and back before starting to dance in the stream of notes. What we experience of it, after the event, is light, fleet-footed and relaxed – a mode of existence which clearly doesn't come from nowhere, requiring years, a lifetime even, of learning about sound, rhythm and improvisation.

Irène Schweizer, the *grande dame* of new European jazz, and Jürg Wickihalder, a generation younger, found their first shared point of departure in the music of Thelonious Monk. We all know that the ingenious sophistication of Monk's compositions, the interplay and interrelationship between simplicity and complexity, can be highly addictive. It is amazing what lies under the surface, once you start investigating. The soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, who made this investigation, is also the focus of a shared fascination for Irène Schweizer and Jürg Wickihalder. Their playing reaches beyond the traditional into the contemporary however, and alongside their own compositions and Monk's it sometimes soars into the free. The loft with the big windows in Cologne proved to be a very conducive, lucid location for the recordings, which were made both in the evenings, in front of an attentive audience, and afternoons, alone in the room suffused with light.

Jürg Wickihalder first fell in love with the music of Monk as a teenager. *Reflections*, the record on which Steve Lacy plays tunes solely by Monk, was a key musical experience for the boy from rural Glarus; later it was *Clangs*, the joint album by Andrea Centazzo and Steve Lacy. Back in the early 1990s, Jürg Wickihalder was determined to meet Steve Lacy in person. He repeatedly called Lacy's Paris number, which Urs Leimgruber, his saxophone teacher at the time, had given him. When he finally got through, he got straight on the night train. But no-one answered the apartment door; Lacy had been detained elsewhere. They finally got to meet a few times, and played Monk tunes together, Steve Lacy on the piano, the young Jürg Wickihalder at his side on the soprano sax. They also went for walks. Steve Lacy placed great importance on the little things, the details of playing and composing. At the same time he emphasised, over and again, that music was a matter of life and death. These summer walks with Steve Lacy through Paris left a lasting impression on Jürg Wickihalder. Perhaps equally lasting, if very different, were Irène Schweizer's encounters with exiled South African musicians in the Zürich café Africana around three decades earlier.

Jürg Wickihalder first met Irène Schweizer when he returned to Switzerland after finishing his degree at Berklee College of Music in Boston. As part of umverkehR, an event calling for a new traffic strategy for Zürich, Irène Schweizer was performing with the singer La Lupa, and Jürg Wickihalder was playing solo works by Monk. A cross-generational affinity and a shared appreciation of Monk's music brought the two together: a young saxophonist, and the pianist who grew up with the history of modern jazz and became one of the pioneers of European free jazz. Initially they never planned to play their own compositions or to improvise freely; this only came about later. Jürg Wickihalder remembers one exquisite episode: they once played in the dine-in-the-dark restaurant Blinde Kuh in Zürich and as it's impossible to read notes there they were more or less forced to improvise. The freedom the duo have won over the years has done them good in every sense. The colours in their timbre spectrum have also been enhanced. Alongside soprano, Jürg Wickihalder now also plays tenor sax in his dialogue with Irène Schweizer, who herself also sometimes plucks the piano strings. The basic thrust remains intact; music with a strong jazz feeling, which can no longer be taken for granted everywhere in the improvised music scene today. Firm rhythm and decisive statements.

Steve Lacy likes to quote a line from Thelonious Monk: "Let's lift the bandstand." Irène Schweizer raves about the tone Wickihalder achieves on the soprano sax; he calls her "his favourite drummer on the piano" – a fine compliment to a pianist who has demonstrated her affinity with percussionists in a series of duo recordings with drummers. The pieces Jürg Wickihalder has composed for the duo are perfect for Schweizer. He knows exactly what suits her when. The entire history of jazz plays a role:



Irène Schweizer, Jürg Wickihalder, 2014. Foto: Timo Ullman

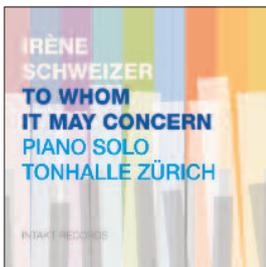
Lacy, Rollins and Coltrane, Monk, Dollar Brand, Horace Silver and Mal Waldron, even a few particles of Harlem Stride Piano – but all of it filtered, not as direct quotations; they have made it their own: *Reflections*. Irène Schweizer, who also plays piano in Jürg Wickihalder's European Quartet, is a very sympathetic partner for the saxophonist. Right from the start he had to earn his keep and prove himself; it was not about scoring points. The two have rehearsed together a lot. The fact that we don't always notice this is proof of their mastery. What we do notice is their immense trust in each other. While they hone their craft on Monk, it's always in the knowledge that the crucial spark does not light up *in* the notes but between them.

Bert Noglik, Translation: Steph Morris

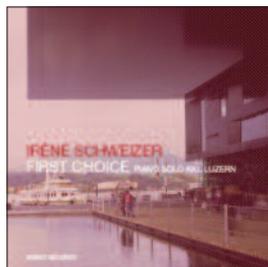
CD-Vernissage

1. 11. 2014 Zürich, jazznojazz, Gessnerallee, 17 Uhr

IRENE SCHWEIZER, JÜRIG WICKIHALDER BEI INTAKT RECORDS



IRENE SCHWEIZER
To Whom It May Concern
Piano Solo Tonhalle Zürich
Intakt CD 200



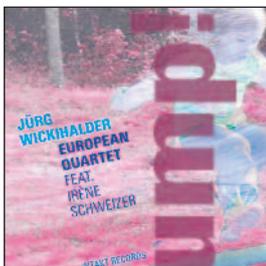
IRENE SCHWEIZER
First Choice
Piano Solo KKL Lucerne
Intakt CD 108



TRIO 3 + IRENE SCHWEIZER
Berne Concert
Irène Schweizer, Piano
Reggie Workman, Bass
Oliver Lake, Alto Saxophone
Andrew Cyrille, Drums
Intakt CD 150



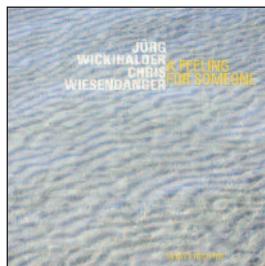
IRENE SCHWEIZER - PIERRE FAVRE
Live in Zürich
Irène Schweizer, Piano
Pierre Favre, Drums
Intakt CD 228



JÜRIG WICKIHALDER
EUROPEAN QUARTET
FEAT. IRENE SCHWEIZER
Jump
Jürg Wickihalder: ss,
Irène Schweizer, p,
Fabian Giesler, b
Michael Griener, dr
Intakt CD 194



JÜRIG WICKIHALDER
OVERSEAS QUARTET
Furioso
Jürg Wickihalder: ss,
Achille Succi: bcl, as
Mark Zubek: b, Kevin Zubek: dr
Intakt CD 153



JÜRIG WICKIHALDER
CHRIS WIESENDANGER
A Feeling for Someone
Intakt CD 134



JÜRIG WICKIHALDER ORCHESTRA
Narziss und Echo
Tim Krohn: Narrator, Text / Jeannine Hirzel: Soprano
Sonoe Kato: Mezzosoprano / Mia Lindblom: Violin
Frantz Lorient: Viola / Seth Woods: Cello
Jürg Wickihalder: Comp., Sax / Florian Egli: Sax
Michael Jaeger: Sax / Damian Zangger: Trumpet
Bernhard Bamert: Trombone / Manuel Perovic: Arr
Chris Wiesendanger: Piano / Daniel Studer: Bass
Intakt CD 209