

# Open Opus - All About Jazz CD Review

Soren Kjaergaard / Ben Street / Andrew Cyrille (Ilk Music)

By Jakob Baekgaard

While it may be easy to be daunted by the sheer pyrotechnics of musicians flexing their instrumental muscles, it is sometimes forgotten that the greatest ability of musical art is to let the listener in to be part of the process; in the best of all worlds, pure admiration is replaced by participation. Danish pianist Soren Kjaergaard is one such musician, who is able to navigate safely in the waters of virtuosity while still leaving room for the listener's imagination.

The musical journey of Kjaergaard has seen him travelling across a wide spectrum of genres and sounds, encompassing jazz tradition as well as classical music and the avant-garde. While Kjaergaard's work for solo piano has seen him creating a jazz parallel to Bach's well-tempered clavier, an encyclopedia of pianistic sounds carried out with technical bravura, his American group--with bassist Ben Street and legendary drummer Andrew Cyrille--has explored the democratic territory of group interplay, creating sounds of utter beauty.

The group's first effort, *Optics*, saw them balancing between silence and chaos, creating lyrical free jazz where Kjaergaard's playing merged touches of Cecil Taylor with Bill Evans-like sensitivity. *Open Opus* moves further into a subdued aesthetics which gives plenty of room for the players' melodic and rhythmic complexities. The epic "Places Birds Fly From" is a highlight of poetic communication, where Cyrille lets his drums speak with several melodic voices, creating complex patterns of time, while Kjaergaard unfolds a fluorescent melody whose ethereal beauty is underlined by Street's floating pulse.

Elsewhere, Kjaergaard's classical influence shines through on the humorously titled "Abrahms' Paraphrase," deconstructing Brahms' romantic universe with dissonant swing. A more lyrical take on the classical sound is found on the lieder-like "Fatha," with Cyrille providing delicate percussive textures. *Open Opus* is a world of sound and melodies whose complexities reveal themselves with each subsequent listen. No one plays lead on the album; instead, a lyrical, organic sound emerges as the effort of these three open-minded musicians. Breaking new boundaries in the aesthetics of the trio, *Open Opus* is a true work of art.

Track Listing: Like A Motherless Sun (For Sun Ra); Floating World (Ukiyo); Kanon-I-Ka; Open Opus 3; Places Birds Fly From; Open Opus 5; Fatha; Abrahms' Paraphrase; Naya.

Personnel: Soren Kjaergaard: piano; Ben Street: bass; Andrew Cyrill: drums.

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