



BAROQUESWING VOL. 1

In 1999 I visited the beautiful village Ernen in the Alps of canton Wallis in Switzerland for the first time. I was selected to attend master classes by the world-renowned teacher and pianist György Sebök. He founded the master classes and an international music festival here. Little did I know that the weeks spent learning face to face with this master, practicing and watching him work with other pianists from all over the world would be my last chance. Sebök was diagnosed with cancer soon after that summer and passed away in Bloomington, Indiana where he was professor of piano for many years after leaving his native Hungary.

This great musician had a spirit that touched and inspired people wherever he went. I remember on our last day of the master classes the students got a final few minutes with him to ask questions or thank him if they wanted. I was in the queue because I was struggling with an important question. Sebök was sitting under the big tree in the middle of the town square having a cigarette. It was almost a holy moment as I sat down next to him – I guess like meeting the Queen or the Pope. “I can not decide if I should play classical music or jazz because I love both?” I asked. He smiled and as if he knew from my lessons in the previous weeks that this would be my question. He answered: “Music is music. As long as you love it and play it well.”

This has been my motto ever since and it has relieved me from the pigeon-hole syndrome that so many

musicians live with, where they are forced to choose only one stream of music.

Fast forward 14 years and I find myself back in the same picturesque village with my jazz trio mates Werner Spies and Hugo Radyn performing an all-Baroque programme as part of Festival Musikdorf Ernen. After Sebök's passing the reigns were handed over to Francesco Walter who has since made this festival into one of the most distinguished in the country. He has invited me back many times to perform and teach and this was a first for us performing during the Baroque week.

The crossover arrangements of Baroque works for jazz trio is nothing new, but that was my challenge: making something new and fresh. Different from what had been done in the past. For this reason I chose repertoire I felt comfortable with and music that would work in this setting and spoke to my heart. Thanks to the sensitive playing of Hugo and Werner in the extremely lively acoustics of the St. Georg church we are able to release the recording of that live concert in 2013.

I am proud to be associated with this remarkable festival and thank Francesco Walter and the audience members who have supported us here over the years. I dedicate this album to you: the audience of Musikdorf Ernen.

Charl du Plessis

PROGRAMME NOTES

There is a well-established tradition in recorded music of drawing from elements of so-called 'classical' music (melodic themes, chord progressions) and incorporating sections of improvisation, with the French jazz pianist Jacques Loussier and the US-based Modern Jazz Quartet of John Lewis and Milt Jackson probably the most well-known exponents of this practice. The first in Loussier's renowned 'Play Bach' series appeared in 1959, with source material derived from themes by J S Bach as its name suggests.

The American composer and critic Gunther Schuller coined the term 'Third Stream' to describe this practice, which could be characterized as an attempt at re-introducing improvisation into the field of 'art music,' from which the extemporizing impulse had been in retreat for some time. This retreat is somewhat ironic given that many of the masters (Bach, Chopin, and Liszt, to name a few) were adept at improvising and the lines between strictly respecting the composer's intentions (as conveyed through notation) and using material for its improvisatory potential were less clearly demarcated than is the case today.

The South African pianist Charl du Plessis adopts this approach on this new live recording from a concert in Ernen, Switzerland. Together with his long-term associates Werner Spies (bass) and Hugo Radyn (drums), du Plessis has recast familiar mate-

rial by Bach, Händel, Pachelbel, and Vivaldi for the jazz trio format. A technically gifted improviser, du Plessis also brings an imaginative approach to arranging to the table, so that Bach's famous 'Air' from the 3rd Orchestral Suite is recast with interludes which draw from *mbaqanga*, an indigenous South African popular music genre as well as quoting from Abdullah Ibrahim's iconic composition *Mannenberg*.

Du Plessis's version of Vivaldi's 'Winter' from *The Four Seasons* showcases the high level of interplay possible between improvising musicians who have become well-acquainted with one another's approaches over time, with the final *Allegro* movement exhibiting a decidedly Spanish flavour and plenty of room for individual contributions by Spies and Radyn, who provide sympathetic and thoughtful support throughout the proceedings. Technically adept and imaginatively arranged, du Plessis's latest offering rewards the listener with the sound and feel of a unique South African jazz trio at the top of their game, recorded in the company of an enthusiastic live audience.

Marc Duby
Research Professor in Musicology
University of South Africa

CHARL DU PLESSIS TRIO

The Charl du Plessis Trio is one of the most versatile and respected South African crossover ensembles. The diverse style of music this trio performs ranges from Baroque, Latin, Swing, Classical to Funk and sets them apart from other instrumental groups. The trio consists of Steinway Artist Charl du Plessis (piano), Werner Spies (bass) and Hugo Radyn (drums).

The Charl du Plessis Trio was founded in 2006 to further the enjoyment of jazz music and prove that classic music lovers can enjoy jazz too. This unit has recorded 6 albums and regularly perform in Europe and the Far East. They have won major music awards including a South African Music Award ("SA Grammy"), Ghoema Award for Best Instrumental Album and Fiësta Award for Best Music Production. Baroqueswing Vol. 1 is the latest addition to the Baroqueswing series by the Charl du Plessis Trio, published by Claves Records.

Charl du Plessis is a prolific pianist and Steinway Artist with an extensive performing schedule who holds a Doctorate of music from the University of Pretoria under Joseph Stanford. He has performed on 4 continents with repertoire ranging from concertos with leading

symphony orchestras to jazz and pop appearing on the stage of the Berlin Philharmonie for a performance with Chick Corea in 2015. He has recorded 6 albums on his own independent label before becoming a Claves Recording Artist in 2016. He is a piano lecturer at the University of Pretoria and has been the collaborative pianist with South African star singer/songwriter Nataniël since 2000, performing in more than 120 stage productions per year. In 2017 he became the first pianist in the world to perform on Table Mountain.

Werner Spies studied jazz at the Tshwane University of Technology and is a free-lance bass player and teacher. He has toured extensively in South Africa and Europe with various South African singers. Branching out, he is a successful entrepreneur co-owning the Haloa Coffee company in Pretoria, South Africa.

Hugo Radyn is a specialist jazz drummer who studied jazz at the Tshwane University of Technology. He is a sought after drum teacher and was until recently the head of drums at Cornwall Hill College. He has made CD and DVD recordings for various bands and projects in South Africa.



Hugo Radyn, drums



Werner Spies, Bass

All arrangements by Charl du Plessis

Recorded live at the Festival Musikdorf Ernen Kirche St. Georg, Ernen, Switzerland, 28 July 2013

PRODUCER, MUSICAL CONCEPT & ARRANGEMENTS

Charl du Plessis

BALANCE ENGINEER, MASTERING, EDITING

Jean Claude Gaberel

PIANO TECHNICIAN: URS BACHMANN

Jean Baumat, Hug Musique

PIANO

Steinway Model D-274

PHOTOGRAPH

Raphael Hadad

DESIGN

Amethys

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Claves Records, Patrick Peikert

In association with Festival Musikdorf Ernen

Commissioned by Francesco Walter – Director Festival Musikdorf Ernen

**MUSIKDORF
ERNEN***

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**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH 1685-1750/
ALEXANDER SILOTI 1863-1945**

1 Präludium in C minor 5:41

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

2 Prelude & Fugue in C minor WTC I no. 2 5:44

GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL 1685-1759

3 Lascia ch'io pianga from «Rinaldo» HWV 7 3:18

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

4 Fantasia in C minor BWV 906 4:42

5 Air on a G-string 6:44

ANTONIO VIVALDI 1678-1741

**Le quattro stagioni, Concerto No. 1
in E major RV 269 «Winter»**

6 Allegro non molto 3:51

7 Largo 5:29

8 Allegro 5:24

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Partita 3 for Violin in E major BWV 1006

9 Prelude 2:36

10 Gavotte 2:59

11 Gigue 3:29

JOHANN PACHELBEL 1653-1706

12 Canon in D Major P 37 3:50

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

13 Capriccio from Partita BWV 826 6:07

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH 1685-1750/
GAVIN SUTHERLAND *1951**

14 Präludium für Sigi 4:29

All arrangements by Charl du Plessis

claves

