



Featured Artist: Amina Figarova

CD Title: Come Escape With Me

Year: 2005

Record Label: Munich Records

Style: Straight-Ahead / Classic

Musicians: Amina Figarova (piano), Marcel Reys (trumpet, flugelhorn), Bart Platteau (flute, Bb flute, wooden flutes), Tom Beek (alto & soprano saxophones), Kurt van Herck (tenor saxophone), Wiro Mahieu (bass), Chris Strik (drums)

Review: Amina Figarova has been recording her jazz septet in Holland for several years now, previously recording two CD and touring the world, including in her native country of Azerbaijan. Certainly one of the best-known, if not the only, jazz musician from Baku to make a career in jazz, Figarova, one would expect, might combine some of her native musical influences with the vocabulary of jazz she learned in her studies at Rotterdam Conservatory and Berklee. But no so. Instead, Figarova is solidly in the jazz tradition as it developed through the legendary piano trios and hard bop recordings of the last half century. And the members of her group as just as talented and consumed by the genre as Figarova.

Come Escape With Me starts with a crash, Figarova's own on piano, as the group enters into a fierce hard boppish 6/8 drive played at first in unison, separated by the tentative and softer bridge. But once tenor saxman Kurt van Herck enters, after the first minute of play—and particularly when Figarova's husband Bart Platteau comes in with a swirling flute solo—we know that these are top-shelf players and that the CD will be one that certainly has a lot of offer.

Figarova composed all of the pieces for her new CD, and wisely she presents a varied repertoire of music to showcase the versatility of her group. "Flight Of Fancy," for instance, allows Figarova to lead the group with her flowing, unhurried piano work as the horns color the background. And "Destiny" is entirely a piano trio presentation, complete with an empathetic bass solo by Wiro Maheiru and understated drumwork by Chris Strik, cymbals sizzling and tapped. Indeed, Strik's in-the-background work throughout the CD animates the sound as much as Figarova's three-part horn arrangements do. On "Buckshot Blues," the Dutch musicians adopt the street rhythms of New Orleans, largely due to the success of Strik's energy and dead-on capture of the style. As if in contrast, "Zealot" starts with Strik's softer work on tom-toms, where he sets the mood for an evocative melody effectively arranged in call-and-response fashion while two of the horns reflect the melody of the flute-led song. "Market Place" is as close to a world-music piece as Figarova allows as she and Platteau engage in intertwining rubato lines of introduce. But even that doesn't last, for Figarova quickly moves into another 6/8 movement creating a heightening of tension for final resolution before the bridge and the ending.

Come Escape With Me is an outstanding CD featuring an artist who normally would not achieve as much recognition for her talent without it. It certainly deserves a listen, for Figarova not only is an unselfish and spirited piano player, but she's also an effective leader and composer respectful of jazz tradition even as she personalizes it.

Tracks: Come Escape With Me, Hot On The Trail, Flight Of Fancy, Mr. T.M., Dancing In The Wind, Buckshot Blues, Zealot, Awakening, Blues For Wiro, Destiny, Market Place, Reaching Out To You

Record Label Website: <http://www.munichrecords.com>

Artist's Website: <http://www.aminafigarova.com>

Reviewed by: Don Williamson