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## September Suite

Amina Figarova | Munich Records

By [Dan McClenaghan](#)

Taking life-affirming inspiration from one of America's darkest days, pianist/composer/arranger Amina Figarova has crafted one of the finest jazz sets of the year with *September Suite*. Composed in memory of the victims of 9/11--and as a homage to those suffering grief in any situation--the work delves deeply into the emotions that evolve in times of great loss.

On a very good jazz set from earlier this year, [Come Escape With Me](#), Figarova proved herself an outstanding writer/arranger for jazz sextet, the same ensemble she employs on *September Suite*--a piano/bass/drums rhythm section with a front line of trumpet, tenor saxophone, and flute. In a review of the former disc, I noted the "silkeness" the flute added to the harmonies. With *September Suite* I'm struck by the seeming contradiction of a deep, airy density that it brings to the sound, infusing it with a light yet rich classical undertone to the music we call "jazz."

Based in Rotterdam, Netherlands, Figarova was in New York when the two airplanes flew into the World Trade Center. Her impressions of the aftermath are here. Her solo piano intro to "Numb" has her left hand describing, in dark and forelorn tones, the black cloud rising over ground zero, as the three horns loom in to paint a foreboding and eerie picture of the scene, until Kurt Van Herck's saxophone pushes itself to the front for a searingly emotive interlude, representing either anguish or a manifestation of the evil behind the event--let the listener be the judge--while Figarova's right hand struggles for hope and brightness.

"Emptyness" [sic] explores inner desolation and Nick Schepers' trumpet solo is tinged with torment, a voice cracking with the weight of despair. "When the Lights Go Down" showcases Figarova's classically informed piano work on a piece that is as sad and beautifully poignant as a piece of music can be, leading into a gentle brightening on "Dawn" with the hopeful breath of Bart Platteau's flute.

*September Suite* has a layered, lush sound that seems as if it could be a vehicle for a symphony orchestra; but composed and arranged by Figarova for her sextet, it's music that couldn't be improved upon. Magnificent!

A top ten disc for sure.



**Track Listing:** Numb; Emptyness; Denial; Phot Album; Rage; Trying to Focus; When the Lights Go Down; Dawn; For Laura; Numb (bonus track).

**Personnel:** Amina Figarova: piano; Bart Platteau: flute; Nico Schepers: trumpet; Kurt Van Herck: tenor saxophone; Wiro Mahieu: bass; Chris Strik: drums.

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