

Carsten Dahl

Solo Piano 1, 2, 3

“Album of the Year” at Danish Music Awards 2004

Pianist Carsten Dahl is not only multidimensional, he is also wide-ranging. His enormous talent makes it impossible to put a label on him. One day he is the super-swinging and inventive sideman with American drummer Ed Thigpen - matching any international instrumentalist. As heard, for example, with tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano on Ed Thigpen's Rhythm Features. He is also the sensitive pianist behind the popular singer Cæcilie Norby, and he has just been in London to record a live cd with her for Blue Note. He is a much sought-after accompanist and guest soloist with Danish big bands. Recently he was nominated for a prestigious Danish film award - a “Robert” - in the category “best soundtrack” for his music for the film “Charlie Butterfly”. Carsten Dahl has also created several short pieces used by Danish television between programmes. And he is the man and the heart behind an original and creative trio with two of Europe's finest instrumentalists, Norwegian bass player Arild Andersen and French percussionist Patrice Heral, whose recording and concerts are received with enthusiasm everywhere.

No, the reactionary will not like Carsten Dahl. He cannot be categorized. And being a great, intuitive world-class piano talent he insists on being himself. Which he shows in what may be the most challenging and vulnerable discipline of them all: as a solo pianist. With confidence and abandonment, alone with his instrument, he has no possibility of “taking cover” behind other musicians. Here every single note stands naked and becomes one with the artist.

But what should Carsten Dahl focus on? Standards or his own free improvisations? He did not know and suggested to the record company a live recording with a little of everything. Stunt Records did not feel that this was enough. It wanted to show all aspects of his talent, and thus Carsten Dahl's new solo release had to be a three cd box, each cd having its own theme. The listener will find his own favourite. “Carsten Dahl, Solo Piano” is pure luxury, its wrapping and contents unequalled in Danish jazz.

CD1: “Moments”

12 pieces, all of them free melodic improvisations coming from a spiritually adventurous and colourful universe, where Dahl, so to speak, plays “from the heavens”, like a beauty-seeking medium for the higher powers, and lets the music and his fingers live a life of their own, creating small, perfect spontaneous compositions.

CD2: “Standards”

Carsten Dahl is also a true master of the well-known repertoire. When interpreting standards the musician must force himself to play within a given framework, to examine and turn upside down melodies and songs already known, to unearth new aspects and hidden qualities. In addition to jazz standards and melodies from the great American songbook, the cd ends with Danish Benny Andersen's *Årstiderne*, which sets the stage in an optimistic way for the last cd.

CD3: “Live”

From the very first note the listener senses Carsten Dahl's gift for captivating an audience. The recording was made at Copenhagen JazzHouse and contains two long, free passages and a breathtakingly beautiful version of *Blame It On My Youth*.

“...The music is abstract and says only what it wants to and what the intermediary can make it. And in the case of Carsten Dahl, that is quite a lot, because he apparently has free access to his sensuality and dares abandon himself to it without many reservations - but indeed also without sliding into the muddy ditch of self-indulgence or sentimentality.

Carsten Dahl can do more with a grand piano than most. If we can do a little more by listening to his music depends on the talent of the listener. He doesn't play down, he plays to you, still it doesn't harm to be on your toes and tune your ears in as best you can. The reward is there for the taking if you are inclined towards nuances and perhaps think more with your heart than with your brain.”

From *Klaus Rifbjerg's* notes in the cd booklet.

Painter Erik Rasmussen has made three characteristic portraits of Carsten Dahl - each with its own colour scheme - especially for this release.