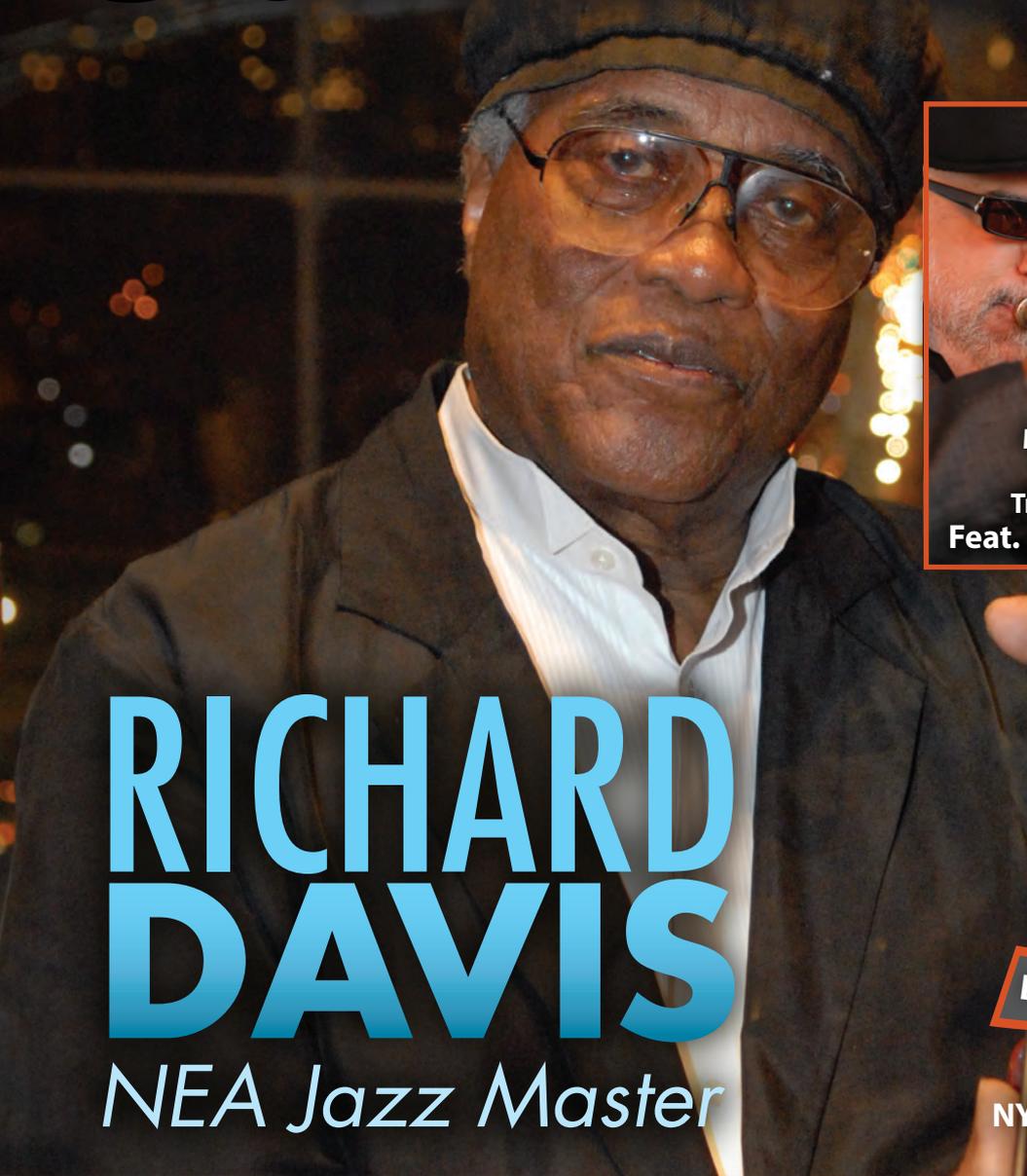


Eric Nemeyer's

Jazz Inside™

The Mind, Body & Spirit of Jazz In New York & Way Beyond

WWW.JAZZINSIDEMAGAZINE.COM
APRIL 2014



**RICHARD
DAVIS**
NEA Jazz Master



Made In NY Jazz Competition
Gala Concert • May 3 • 8PM
Tribeca Performing Arts Center
Feat. Randy Brecker & Lenny White

Interviews

- Cecil McBee
 - Rufus Reid
 - Bobby Sanabria
 - Leslie Pintchik
 - Lena Bloch
 - Misha Brovkin
- Made In NYC Competition*

Expanded CD Review Section!

Comprehensive Directory of
NY Club Concert & Event Listings

The Jazz Music Dashboard — Smart Listening Experiences

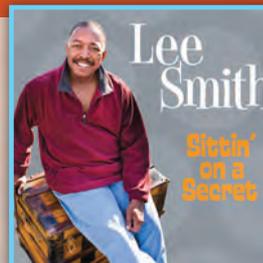
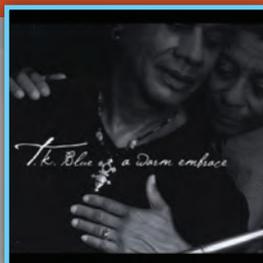
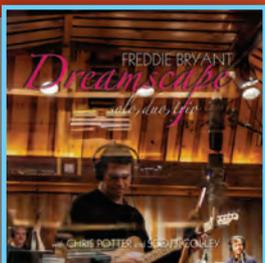
FreddieBryant.com

TKBlue.com

DaveSlonaker.com

LeeSmithMusic.com

MartinWind.com



Like Us facebook.com/JazzInsideMedia

Follow Us twitter.com/JazzInsideMag

Watch Us youtube.com/JazzInsideMedia

Kęstutis Vaiginis

LIGHTS OF DARKNESS

www.kestutisvaiginis.com. *Suffering in the City; Dust of Pain; Finding Amber; Still on My Mind; Lights of Darkness; Passions from Georgia; Traveler*

PERSONNEL: Kęstutis Vaiginis, tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone; Alex Sipiagin, trumpet, flugelhorn; David Berkman, acoustic piano, Ed Howard, acoustic bass; Ferit Odman, drums

By Alex Henderson

During the Cold War, jazz could be found in some East European countries if you knew where to look for it. There were fine jazz musicians in the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic), Hungary and elsewhere, but the restrictions of communism didn't make it easy for them. Jazz, however, thrived in a big way in many parts of Eastern Europe after the fall of communism in the late 1980s/early 1990s, and a lot of skillful improvisers can be found in that part of the world. Kęstutis Vaiginis, for example, is an expressive young tenor and soprano saxophonist from Lithuania, and *Lights of Darkness* finds him employing Russian trumpeter/flugelhornist Alex Sipiagin as a sideman in an acoustic quintet (the rhythm section consists of David Berkman—a Cleveland native who now lives in New York City—on acoustic piano, Ed Howard on upright bass and Istanbul, Turkey native Ferit Odman on drums). So on *Lights of Darkness*, one finds an international cast consisting of a Lithuanian, a Russian, a Turk and two Americans (Berkman and Washington, DC native Howard).

Vaiginis is a big-toned player whose direct or indirect influences include Wayne Shorter, John Coltrane, Joe Henderson and Pharoah Sanders, among others. On *Lights of Darkness*, one can hear their influence on both Vaiginis' playing and his composing. Vaiginis composed everything on this 55-minute CD, bringing a strong post-bop aesthetic to the probing, Coltrane-ish "Suffering in the City," the driving title track and the contemplative "Traveler" as well as the vibrant "Finding Amber." Most of Vaiginis' material is on the energetic side, although "Still in My Mind" is an introspective ballad. As much of a firebrand as Coltrane could be, he was also a sensitive ballad player: that fact was evident on his *Ballads* album of 1961/1962 and his famous 1963 encounter with romantic jazz vocalist Johnny Hartman. And that lesson is not lost on Vaiginis. The fact that Vaiginis swings hard and passionately on the uptempo material doesn't prevent him from turning around and making a meaningful ballad statement on "Still in My Mind."

Sipiagin is a definite asset on *Lights of Darkness*, serving Vaiginis well whether he is on trumpet or flugelhorn. Sipiagin, who grew up in Russia but has lived in the United States since 1991, is best known for his contributions to the Charles Mingus ghost band. Sipiagin's own albums, however, have not been terribly mindful of Mingus—and nor is *Lights of Darkness*. Stylistically, this disc (which was recorded in

Brooklyn in 2013) has a lot more in common with 1960s-era Wayne Shorter (before Shorter became a part of Weather Report) or Joe Henderson's albums on Blue Note Records or Milestone Records than it does with Mingus' output. Sipiagin sounds right at home in Vaiginis' company, and he has an appealing sound that combines a Miles Davis influence with a definite awareness of Freddie Hubbard. Davis and Hubbard were two very different trumpet players: Davis' trumpet playing was the essence of economy, restraint and subtlety, whereas Hubbard (who was influenced by Clifford Brown, Dizzy Gillespie and Fats Navarro) favored a big, fat, full-bodied tone. Yet one of Sipiagin's strengths as a soloist is his ability to unite elements of Davis with elements of Hubbard, and he does exactly that on this album. Vaiginis and Sipiagin enjoy one another's company a lot on *Lights of Darkness*.

This release doesn't pretend to be groundbreaking. But while Vaiginis is derivative, he is enjoyably derivative. And on *Lights of Darkness*, his talents as both a saxophonist and a composer yield solid results.



Martin Wind

TURN OUT THE STARS—What If? Music. Web: martinwind.com, whatifmusic.net. *Turn Out the Stars; My Foolish Heart; Days of Wine and Roses; Jeremy; Memory of Scotty; Kind of Bill; Blue in Green; Twelve Tone Tune Two; Goodbye, Mr. Evans*

PERSONNEL: Martin Wind, acoustic bass; Scott Robinson, tenor saxophone, C melody saxophone; Bill Cunliffe, acoustic piano; Massimo Morganti, conductor

By Alex Henderson

The distinctive acoustic pianist Bill Evans, who died in 1980 at the age of 51, has been the subject of many tributes in the jazz world—and deservedly so. Evans was a giant, influencing Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock, Alan Broadbent, Fred Hersch, Michel Petrucciani, Eliane Elias, Marian McPartland and countless others. Most albums by Evans, who left behind a huge catalogue, were small-group recordings—during the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, he often thrived in intimate piano trio settings—and many of the Evans tributes that have come out over the years have come from small groups. But on *Turn Out the Stars*, acoustic bassist Martin Wind salutes Evans in an orchestral fashion.

This live recording finds Wind's working quartet—Wind on upright bass, Scott Robinson on tenor saxophone and C melody saxophone, Bill Cunliffe on acoustic piano and Joe LaBarbera on drums—joined by Italy's 36-piece Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana (conducted by

Massimo Morganti). And LaBarbera is certainly an appropriate participant in light of the fact that he was Evans' drummer during the last few years of his life. Together, Wind's quartet and the Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana pay homage to Evans at the Rossini Theater (or Teatro Rossini *in italiano*) in Pesano, Italy, where they perform material from Evans' repertoire as well as some material of their own.

Evans, for all his intellect and complexity, could be delightfully romantic—and his romantic side is celebrated with lush performances of Evans' "Turn Out the Stars" (one of his most famous compositions), Miles Davis' "Blue in Green" (which Evans first performed on Davis' groundbreaking *Kind of Blue* session of 1959) and the Victor Young/Ned Washington standard "My Foolish Heart." Equally memorable is a performance of Henry Mancini's theme from the great 1962 movie *Days of Wine and Roses*, which starred Jack Lemmon and Lee Remick as an alcoholic couple (the fact that Lemmon and Remick's characters were so likable made their battle with alcoholism all the more disturbing). LaBarbera played that standard with Evans when he was the drummer for Evans' final trio, and he has a similar rhythmic attack on this album even though he is operating in an orchestral setting rather than a trio setting.

Both Wind's quartet and the Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana bring a strong Euro-classical influence to their Evans tribute whether they are embracing songs that Evans played when he was alive or songs that were written in memory of him such as Phil Woods' sweetly melancholy "Goodbye, Mr. Evans" and LaBarbera's "Kind of Bill" (whose title is a play on *Kind of Blue*). And that Euro-classical influence makes perfect sense when one considers that Evans himself was influenced by European classical music. Evans was very much an improviser, but the European classical tradition clearly affected his acoustic pianism and did so with positive results. Evans' knowledge of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Chopin didn't make him any less improvisatory or any less swinging.

Some Evans admirers might nitpick about the songs that Wind's quartet and the Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana don't play on this album. They don't play "Waltz for Debby," "Very Early," "Time Remembered" or "Funkallero," all of which are Evans gems that became standards and would have worked well in this orchestral environment. But *Turn Out the Stars* is not meant to offer the listener a really in-depth study of Evans' many accomplishments. Given the fact that Evans recorded his first album as a leader, *New Jazz Conceptions*, for Riverside Records in 1956 and continued to record frequently up until his death 24 years later in 1980, there's no way that a single concert could do anything more than scratch the surface. But it's a highly appealing surface, and both Wind's quartet and the Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana do their part to make this concert a winner.



Visit www.JazzMusicDeals.com