



indigo cd 235092
upc 705304471128
jazz

Release January 27, 2023

FREDERIK KÖSTER/ DIE VERWANDLUNG Stufen

Frederik Köster: trumpet, vocals
Sebastian Sternal: piano
Joscha Oetz: bass
Jonas Burgwinkel: drums

Frederik Köster/Die Verwandlung - Stufen

Frederik Köster's band *Die Verwandlung* [The Transformation] has been playing together for ten years, and with each album the award-winning musicians (various Jazz Echos, New German Jazz Prize, WDR Jazz Prize) surprise with new sound variation. In 2018 the quartet amazed listeners with their spectacular orchestra production *Homeward Bound Suite* and in 2020 on *Golden Age* they presented unique fusions of acoustic virtuosity and clever electronica aesthetics. The album was longlisted for the German Record Critics' Award and received a lot of media response. The magazine *Concerto* heard "modern jazz of very finest quality", *Stereoplay* praised "brilliant storytelling" and *Jazz Facts* on DLF [Broadcast Germany] found: "...one of Germany's outstanding jazz musicians. His brilliant trumpet playing masterfully commands the entire palette of the modern tradition - from Freddie Hubbard to Kenny Wheeler."

On the new album *Stufen* [Phases], Köster and his creative collaborators go into another direction once again, concentrating entirely on the acoustic possibilities of their instruments.

"I wanted a contrast to the previous album, and besides, all signs were already pointing towards nature during the composing process," Frederik Köster explains the current focus. "I wrote almost all the pieces during the first lockdown, when I spent a lot of time in the woods. So it became apparent early on that a kind of 'nature album' would emerge, characterized by the impressions and thoughts of these extensive walks."

The outstanding instrumental possibilities of the ensemble of soloists are thereby perhaps even more impressively displayed. Thanks to their nuanced tonal language and personal creative drive, the musical stylists are able to tie in historical aspects at times, while still maintaining their contemporary approach. Especially since Köster did not have icons of jazz in mind when composing. Instead, he was inspired by piano pieces from Impressionism and late Romanticism, the latter of which can be heard in the album's title track for example. Or by Steve Reich's minimalism, recognizable in the last part of "Until I Find You". Not only in "Rhyme Or Reason" Burgwinkel's sonorous-inciting drums, Oetz' calm yet powerful bass

foundations, Sternal's modern, at times lyrical, at other times emphatic piano fantasies fascinate and inspire Köster's brilliant playing, which seamlessly switches between elegance and expressiveness.

"The past two years have been extremely intense for me," Frederik Köster recapitulates, and describes emotional rollercoaster rides that, in addition to the Corona circumstances, also include fundamental private changes such as the end of a longtime relationship. Despite this, his new pieces are by no means dismal sounding. "Initially, many of us thought the pandemic would be over quickly and sometimes even perceived the tranquility during the forced break as an unexpected opportunity," Köster recalls about the crazy spring of 2020. "Generally I'm an optimist, so I'd rather have positive atmosphere on CD." The idea of viewing a crisis as an opportunity is familiar to the musician from Cologne, born in 1977. That's why he is always touched by Hermann Hesse's poem "Stufen", which "revolves around the beginning of something new, that needs time to develop though." Other tracks on the album are also more or less strongly influenced by poetic words or a literary spirit. For example "Until I Find You" inspired by John Irving and, of course, "Further In Summer", in which Köster dresses Emily Dickinson's text in an atmospheric song and sings it with skillful expressiveness. On the other hand, the vehemently forward-striving "Road Trip", with its agile, rapid staccato motifs and winding melodic lines, establishes a connection to the Arabic influences on *Golden Age*.

There is another striking difference to the quartet's earlier releases. "I had been planning to make a live album for a long time, because you just play differently in front of an audience than you do alone in the studio," Frederik Köster says. With the new sound orientation, it made sense to realize this project now. "Originally we had intended to play some warm-up gigs beforehand to get to know the tracks. After these shows were all cancelled, we consequently had to rehearse much more intensively to then record live in two concert evenings at the Loft."

From that material the pieces were selected that can now be heard on *Stufen* without any post-production. Only "Further In Summer" was recorded on an afternoon without an audience. "Although we had not performed together for a long time beforehand, the mutual understanding was back again right away in the first rehearsal," says Köster, describing the long-term memory of the band organism. The working principle in which he himself composes the framework of the pieces and the quartet develops the details regarding form and realization while playing together has proven successful over the past decade. "Of course, we have been extremely familiar with each other for a long time. Nevertheless, we are all still very attentive, try to keep surprising each other, to discover new facets, and this still works very well."

The cover photos visualize Frederik Köster's musical reflections on inner emotional spheres and events around you. "The new album is in some ways an introverted work that has to do mainly with myself," he states. There have been private references in his music before, just remember the *Homeward Bound Suite*, which is an acoustic homage to Köster's old home. Of course, *Stufen* does not sound like a diary set to music. The sometimes subtle, sometimes suspenseful music lives from Köster's power of abstraction and from the sensitive interaction of a dynamic band that knows how to purposefully work with transparency and density. With *Stufen* Frederik Köster / *Die Verwandlung* reinforce their status as a particularly variable and instrumentally outstanding working band of European jazz.

<http://www.frederikkoester.de>

Backkatalog:

Frederik Köster / *Die Verwandlung* - *Golden Age* (2020)

Frederik Köster / *Die Verwandlung* & Philharmonischer Orchester Hagen - *Homeward Bound Suite* (2018)

Frederik Köster / Sebastian Sternal - *Canada* (2015) (*ECHO Jazz 2017*)

Frederik Köster / *Die Verwandlung* - *Tension/Release* (2015)

Frederik Köster / *Die Verwandlung* - *Die Verwandlung* (2013)

Frederik Köster Quartett - *Momentaufnahme* (2011)

Frederik Köster Quartett - *Zeichen der Zeit* (2009) (*ECHO Jazz 2010*)