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FLORIAN FAVRE TRIO

On A Smiling Gust Of Wind

Florian Favre: piano

Manu Hagmann: bass

Arthur Alard: drums

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file under: jazz/piano trio

„Ein echter Hochkaräter der nicht nur Spass macht, sondern auch jede Menge Überraschungen bietet.“

Jazz Podium

„Zeitgemäßer Jazz, der etwas von der Impulsivität des e.s.t. hat, der aber auch aus dem Fundus des Impressionismus und des Rock schöpft. Eine Feier des Unvorhersehbaren, wundervoll.“

Concerto, 03/2016

Gewinner des B-Jazz International Contest 2016

FLORIAN FAVRE TRIO - On A Smiling Gust Of Wind

Right from the start the press in both Switzerland and Germany was in agreement: pianist Florian Favre is inventive and charming, highly talented and artistically willful. Born and raised in Fribourg in western Switzerland, Favre first studied piano and then composition in Bern, where he also founded his trio in 2011. In 2013 bassist Manu Hagmann joined the group and on drums there was another change prior to the latest album - but more on that later. As the sole composer, Favre, now 31 years old, carries the greatest part of artistic responsibility, even though he always leaves a lot of space for his partners. Favre's pieces have thus far been characterized by "colorful harmonies" (*Jazz Thing*) and an open mind, their melodies often charged with rhythmic sophistication and spontaneous interactions that increase the intensity even more. Various awards, like the 1st prize at the *International Jazzhaus Piano Competition 2012* in Freiburg im Breisgau, attest Florian Favre's quality. Colleagues value him as a brilliant and equally pleasant fellow player.

A lot has happened since the widely acclaimed album *Ur*, which was released in April 2016. The trio celebrated great successes at festivals (including Amersfoort Jazz (Netherlands), Jazz à Vienne (France), Palatia Jazz and Ethno Jazz Festival Dushanbe (Tajikistan)), they can enjoy priority sponsorship by Pro Helvetia until 2019 and they won the *B-Jazz International Contest* as part of the Leuven Jazz Festival in Belgium. Favre himself was honored with a scholarship, which will bring him to New Orleans and New York to compose a piece for jazz trio and orchestra.

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But before, Florian Favre presents the next work of his sophisticated trio, without any guest features or electronic flavor enhancers. The title *On a Smiling Gust of Wind* already signalizes airy, positive moods. "I have the feeling, the band was truly flying during this recording," Favre explains, "and that we played in an easy, relaxed and sincere manner; just as if a gust was giving us tailwind."

Already on the previous album *Ur*, there was an understated easiness, but it is even more present and catchy now. Besides Favre's radiant playing, inspired also by European Classical music, a deliberate, compositional clarity is the second pervasive characteristic. In comparison to earlier productions, he placed greater value on spontaneous inspirations, Favre says, and accepting emotions and simple ideas without abstracting them too strongly. To him it's about an unpretentious beauty that he himself hears and feels in soulful and uplifting music. Not designed as a counter model to intellectually loaded constructs, but rather as a consciously alive expression. The trust in his own instinct might also have to do with Favre's personal happiness. Why should only pop musicians be allowed to express the euphoria of new love in elevating songs?

Humor is part of Favre's nature anyway, just like a subtle way of playing around with different influences. The awareness for sound of Ravel and Stravinsky fascinates him just as much as the vigorous emphasis of rock bands and electronic sounds. Favre only employs the latter in other projects; in this respect he explicitly separates. What he doesn't like at all is the artistic ivory tower. Communication within the band and with the audience is important to Favre. On stage he always appears responsive to both and avoids bold gestures or even superficial borrowing. That's also why Favre's music seems so focused - now probably more than ever before.

At the age of 8 Florian Favre began taking Classical piano lessons; four years later he discovered blues scales and soon after, jazz music. At the conservatory in Fribourg he graduated with 21 and everything else developed in Bern. In 2008 he founded the quartet Help!, in 2012 he was on the road with the song-poet Stephan Eicher and the spoken poetry artist and author Kutti MC, alias Jürg Halter. After completing his piano masters degree (studying with Django Bates among others) Favre stayed in New York for a while. His skill impressed even prominent colleagues. Joshua Redman once asked Favre on stage after the Swiss had opened a show for the saxophone star. Redman's announcement: "He has something really, really special that blew us all away."

Bassist Manu Hagmann also studied in Bern and already has a multifarious musical history. In 2007 he won the contest *Tremplin Lémanique* of the Montreux Jazz Festival with his quartet the time, Red Planet. Further awards followed, for example with the Jean-Lou Treboux Group at the *Stanser Musiktage 2011* [Stans Music Days] and with the band Orioxy, with the harpist Julie Campiche. In 2013 Orioxy was awarded the "Grand Prix" of the Avignon International Jazz Competition. With both projects Hagmann recorded two albums each, played at festivals and in many European countries.

Now we can present the new drummer of the band: Arthur Alard, 28 years old, from Paris. They met at the aforementioned *B-Jazz Contest*, where Alard performed with Laurent Coulondre. "There was a jam session after the contest, where Manu and Arthur played together for the first time. This worked out great right away. Later we needed a drummer for a Belgium tour and I asked Arthur, without ever having played with him myself. He came and had learned all the pieces by heart from the record and in the first concert already, he understood at any time where I want to go." Favre downright raves about the new third man: Alard masters many styles, is well versed in various genres, serves the music and melts together with the band sound. How perfectly the communication works within the band is revealed in one example. "I wrote the piece 'Nanomélie' in the night before the last studio day. When we had finished recording everything, I put down the sheet music in front of the guys and we only played four takes." Favre is glad that this piece also made it onto the record, because in his eyes it is symbolic for simplicity and "hopeful music".

"The new album sounds like me more than ever," Florian Favre sums up. "It reflects character traits that my friends know of me, but others may not." Furthermore, the pianist finds that the pieces have a strong relation to each other. Indeed, *On a Smiling Gust of Wind* appears cohesive and round, accessible and entertaining in a subtle way: jazz with its finger on the pulse of time, with a strong personal note and a great potential of making many friends, also outside of the jazz circle.

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