



REVIEW: BEYOND CROSSOVER

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By Christina Scholtz



What is it about a musical artist's perception that makes listening to him both irrepressibly urgent and supernaturally humble? Perhaps it is in the ability to express a plentitude of things at the same time, far overreaching the more finite repertoire of words. Music is a part of survival, as I was soon to discover through two unique musicians who met in New York and whose mutual appreciation has since been inseparable.

David Krakauer is a far-reaching American clarinet virtuoso, praised for his astounding interplay of musical genres and a leading exponent in Klezmer music since the late 1980s. Recent years have seen him emerging as a distinctive soloist and his international performances amount to more than the pen can dare to emulate.

At his side was the profound pianist Kathleen Tagg, who recently performed her new joint project with Zanne Stapelberg in Durbanville just two weeks prior (read our review) and is currently in the process of weaving her talent into an exciting album.

It was a promising line-up that opened with the Allegro piece from Leos Janacek and rolled in elegant progression into Brahms's Sonata in F minor. The sensitivity and contrast employed by both musicians made for a flawless lead into lively tempo changes, during which Krakauer's silky caresses of his clarinet deserved an upper case pre- warning in the programme notes!

The solo piece of Messiaen's Abyss of the Birds is described by Krakauer as 'like having a great philosophical conversation with a great friend'. Said to pair human suffering and darkness with jubilation and light, Krakauer gave the clarinet both a moonlit and stormy character refined only by the precise movements he elicited.

New York Counterpoint held the element of surprise as the clarinetist stepped into a collaboration with himself. Alongside a recorded piece unravelling in the background, Krakauer gave a performance that resonated up- tempo jazz and magnified his brilliance. Lower jaws were practically on the floor at this

breath work. The audience, it seemed, was torn between holding in air to fully absorb the complete effect or breathing vicariously for him.

This was followed by a strong articulation of Debussy's Premier Rhapsody with Tagg which set the tone for an astounding closing – The Klezmer Set with the String Quartet – accompanied by Piet de Beer and Sarah Jane Frith on violin, violist Emile de Roubaix and cellist James Tagg.

There is nothing standard about the way Krakauer transports himself into his arranged Klezmer pieces. His animated movements are authoritative and his astute, reliable versatility cascades through the senses. Krakauer gives life to the unseen, the impalpable and the mystical. He is a musical Copperfield, composing and improvising illusionary journeys through past, present and future.

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