

## IRENE SCHWEIZER - PIERRE FAVRE Ulrichsberg

Intakt Records CD 084



Irène Schweizer: Piano  
Pierre Favre: Drums

The concert of Irène Schweizer (piano) and Pierre Favre (drums) on the festival stage in Ulrichsberg 2003 was a magical event: «In Ulrichsberg, there was a rare energy,» Favre said after the concert. «The trajectory of the music is compelling. Everything forms a single whole.»

The CD Irène Schweizer-Pierre Favre «Ulrichsberg» (Intakt CD 084) documents the entire live set of the Ulrichsberg concerts from May 2, 2003. Not one sound was too much.

The recording is a document of a strong rhythmically formed art of improvisation, a beaming joy of playing and a great musical masterwork after working together for a good 40 years.

«Over the years, a friendship has developed that, beyond the music, connects us in many ways. We've been able to maintain a difficult balance between nearness and distance in our work,» says Irène Schweizer in a comprehensive interview in the CD booklet. And Pierre Favre complements her: «That helps keep our encounters and our concerts fresh, and we're constantly surprised. Without risk, there isn't any living communication.»

### **One of the albums of the year**

Two free-improv titans at work – and both Swiss. Percussionist Favre has been a huge presence in Europe since the 1960s, and his relationship with pianist Schweizer goes back to 1966. A hard-hitting pianist who also brings delicacy and shape to unstructured music, Schweizer ripples seamlessly throughout. She lets Favre fill shrewdly scattered open spaces, powers into jazzy pulses, disappears into quiet meditations, broods in booming chords, and delivers as dazzling a display as any in her field. Favre unleashes a percussion showcase of earthquake rumbles and chattering stick work on a dedication to the bassist Peter Kowald. Unwritten Messages is an investigation of under-the-lid pluckings. Nomades and Waltz for Joyce get close to free-jazz Bill Evans. The kind of free jazz that makes the idiom new friends, and likely to be one of the albums of the year.

***John Fordham, The Guardian, England, Febr. 04***

### **Just enjoy**

Ms. Schweizer has long been one of guiding lights of European avant-jazz piano since early recordings from the late sixties. She has five amazing duos with a number of the best improvising drummers from around the globe, Louis Moholo, Han Bennink, Gunter Sommer, Andrew Cyrille and now her second duo recording with the wonderful Swiss percussionist/drummer Pierre Favre. Irene and Pierre first played in a trio together as far back as 1966 and soon worked with Peter Kowald, Peter Brotzmann and Evan Parker! Irene and Pierre first played as a duo in the early seventies and have continued to do duos sporadically ever since. There is an extraordinary balance here of two strong, well matched

musicians, a mature and well seasoned integration of focused free spirits. Pierre Favre is also one of Europe's finest percussionists and composers, with some half dozen great releases on Intakt and ECM. The first piece, "Twin Dialogue", moves effortlessly through a variety of connected genres, from some more melodic freer regions to a rich and refined bluesy second half, later inventing song-like structures from different connected streams. Incredibly well recorded, it was impossible to tell that this was live (from May of this year) until I heard the applause. "It's About Time" shows a more minimal, yet still enchanting side, which evolves through dynamic, yet controlled eruptions. There are a number of powerful and intense sections, yet they can end with some wonderfully peaceful conclusions. On "Unwritten Messages", Irene plays some incredibly nimble and magical sounds from inside the piano as Pierre also elegantly weaves ultra-subtle percussive spice in the cracks. They occasionally break into some surprising, yet endearing song-like sections, forgetting just who I was listening to. A Ramsey Lewis meets Ahmad Jamal gospelish thang, maybe?!? Forget I said that, just enjoy.

***Bruce Gallanter, Downtown Music Gallery, New York, January 2004.***

### **Feverishly recommended**

Pianist Irene Schweizer and drummer Pierre Favre's accomplishments within the European modern jazz/improvising scene are well documented. Besides, this outstanding release proves that notion beyond a glimmer of doubt. Recorded live in front of an appreciative audience, the duo fares rather well sans a bassist. In fact, they often perpetuate a sound and demeanor that is quite deceptive. As Ms Schweizer's busy and effective left-hand chord voicings often serve as an additional rhythmic component. But it's the duo's intuitiveness or second guessing mechanisms that provide a glowing aura to the body of these six pieces. On this outing, the listener will be treated to Ms Schweizer's flailing arpeggios and Favre's polyrhythmic attack, underscored with contrapuntal exercises amid a quasi, structured-free approach. They activate an element of controlled turbulence via an assortment of surprising contrasts built upon mini-motifs often enacted as sub-themes amid variances in meter. At times, the musicians mimic each other, while countering notions and reengineering frantic movements into toe-tapping grooves. And in other instances, the artists surge onward with the energy of a rumbling freight train. To that end, this impeccably recorded CD, duly captures the musicians' wit, technical veracity, and insightful communion of the musical spirits. (Feverishly recommended)

***Glenn Astarita, JazzReview.com., Mai 2004***