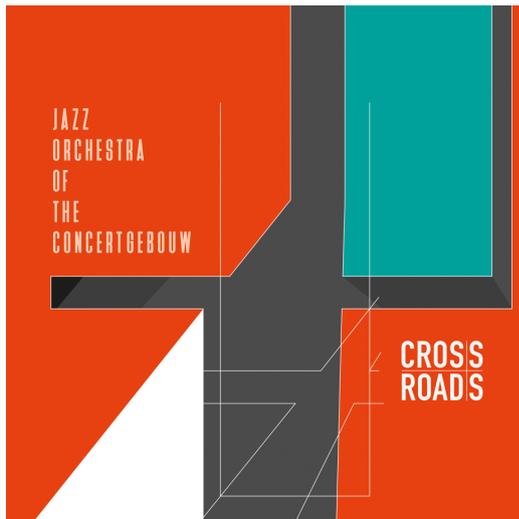


Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw

Crossroads

'It's a breakthrough. Along with their future-oriented American colleagues of the Maria Schneider and Darcy James Argue orchestras, the JOC marks a new century in the development of the jazz big band.'



The Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw is extending its limits, in more ways than one. The band found its identity in the late 1990s, with the bi-weekly concerts at the Amsterdam Bimhuis under the leadership of Henk Meutgeert. Since then the JOC has literally conquered the world, not only touring all over Europe but also playing in Latin America, South Africa, Indonesia, Japan and China. The tracks of this new CD, for instance, were premiered in the spring of 2015 at the JZ Club in Shanghai, and again performed that fall at the Shanghai and Shenzhen Concert Halls.

Musically, too, the band is still evolving. The starting point was the classic 1950s idiom of Count Basie and Neal Hefti, but from the beginning, Henk Meutgeert wanted the orchestra to be challenged by guest soloists and composers from every style in jazz. To mention just a few: Chick Corea, Benny Golson, Lee Konitz, George Duke, Richard Galliano, Joe Lovano, Joe Henderson, Jimmy Heath, Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg.

With the album *Crossroads* the JOC takes another step forward. Conducted by Dennis Mackrel (Henk Meutgeert's American successor since November 2015) and Rob Horsting (who has been arranging for the group practically from the start), the orchestra presents nine compositions by band members Martijn van Iterson, Joris Roelofs, Ilja Reijngoud, Simon Rigter and Jorg Kaaij, and one by Rob Horsting. The tunes were arranged by Dennis Mackrel, Rob Horsting, Henk Meutgeert and three prominent international arrangers: the Americans Michael Abene and Ed Partyka, and Vellu Halkosami from Finland.

The composers Ilja Reijngoud (*English Heart*) and Martijn van Iterson (*Shortcut*, *Sixmas*, *Swarms*) prove convincingly that the JOC has moved beyond the mainstream 20th century big band repertoire. Both harmonically and rhythmically, they are consciously seeking risks that will stimulate creativity. That goes for their own soloing, but also for the solo contributions of Sjoerd Dijkhuizen, Simon Rigter and Jorg Kaaij on saxophones, and Jan van Duikeren on trumpet. And the orchestra as a whole, driven by the strong axis of lead trumpeter Jelle Schouten and Martijn Vink or Marcel Serierse on drums, shows itself able, in the immortal words of crime writer Raymond Chandler, 'to acquire delicacy without losing power.'

The three Joris Roelofs compositions (*Para Poli*, *Ataraxia* and *The Ninth Planet*) deserve special mention. His masterful bass clarinet playing alone is enough to elevate these

performances to the highest level of international excellence. But he also enters new territory as a jazz composer, with pensive, impressionistic sounds that transcend mere prettiness and never lose coherence.

In 2012 I wrote the liner notes for the JOC album *Scribblin'*. I predicted that it 'will give as much joy to lovers of traditional big band jazz as to forward-looking young listeners. This CD leaves no doubt: big bands have definitely come back.'

Six years later I want to amend this. It's more than a come-back, it's a breakthrough. Along with their future-oriented American colleagues of the Maria Schneider and Darcy James Argue orchestras, with this CD the JOC marks a new century in the development of the jazz big band.

BERT VUIJSJE

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