

Lucid Culture

JAZZ, CLASSICAL MUSIC AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

Intense, Epic Grandeur from Pablo Ziegler with the Metropole Orkest

Pablo Ziegler & Metropole Orkest "Amsterdam meets New Tango" (Zoho ZM 201307) Pablo Ziegler piano Quique Sinesi guitar Walter Castro bandoneon with guest Quintino Cinalli percussion, cahon Metropole Orkest conducted by Jules Buckley

Review by Alan Young

Longtime Astor Piazzolla sideman Pablo Ziegler's new album with the Metropole Orkest, *Amsterdam Meets New Tango* is lush, towering, majestically symphonic and not infrequently noir. There's typically more adventure and lyricism in Ziegler's piano than there is on this album and that's because his role here is as a soloist: the orchestra gets to color the compositions. For those who like Ziegler in a more central role, he'll be leading his quartet at Birdland from July 30 through August 3. This is a chance to hear Ziegler's ambitious, no-nonsense compositions in a live concert recording with a heft and bulk that would make Piazzolla proud.

The opening cut, Buenos Aires Report, a pulsing jetliner theme, gets a big, bustling Mingus-esque arrangement, building off Ziegler's growling, introductory piano riff with crescendoing solos for muted trumpet and bandoneon. Quique Sinesi, the featured soloist on guitar, gets to lead a very direct version of his Hermeto Pascoal homage, Milonga Para Hermeto, moving matter-of-factly from moody atmospherics to a spiky, Romany-tinged guitar solo with lively variations on a bright central theme. The guitar also opens the distantly suspenseful, ominous Blues Porteno with a brooding, skeletal quality before the misty, portentous sweep gets underway. Desperate Dance builds toward creepy, carnivalesque allusions over an acrobatic 7/4 rhythm lit up by bandoneon and trombone solos, after which the entire orchestra gets in on the Lynchian romp.

Murga Del Amenacer is the most traditionally-oriented tango here, catchy and purposeful with the hint of an inner pop song, Ziegler finally taking it into shadowy noir terrain with a flourish as it winds up. Places – which sounds like the Piazzolla classic Ciudades as Carl Nielsen might have orchestrated it – runs suspenseful permutations on a slightly funky piano hook, again reaching memorably for a noir ambience as it winds down. By contrast, Pajaro Angel, a tv theme, is the most stripped-down number here, a vehicle for gently lyrical guitar and piano solos.

True to its title, Buenos Aires Dark reflects the desperation and uncertainty of the 2001 political crisis during which Ziegler wrote it, a rising and falling tour de force that offers hope and then snatches it away in a second – the ending, with the percussion section going full tilt and foreshadowing disaster, is an absolutely knockout. The final track, Que Lo Pario – a homage to Argentinian author and comic strip writer Roberto "El Negro" Fontanarrosa – blends unexpected elements like a circular African folk riff on the vibraphone with big ominous orchestral swells, haunted fairground percussion and Wes Montgomery-style guitar. Whatever you want to call this album – classical music, jazz or, if you want to be like the Argentinians and forget about those distinctions and just call it tango – it makes you wish you were there that winter night in Amsterdam in 2009 when this concert was recorded.