

Branford Marsalis Quartet – Metamorphosen (2009)

Written by bluesever

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01 *The Return Of The Jitney Man* 5:57 02 *The Blossom Of Parting* 8:53 03 *Jabberwocky* 5:16 04 *Abe Vigoda* 5:22 05 *Rhythm-a-Ning* 8:04 06 *Sphere* 6:15 07 *The Last Goodbye* 8:29 08 *And Then, He Was Gone* 3:17 09 *Samo* 10:01 The Quartet: Branford Marsalis (saxophones), Joey Calderazzo (piano), Eric Revis (bass), Jeff Tain Watts (drums).

The Branford Marsalis Quartet has been together in its current form for a decade, long enough to develop a common intuition and a strong collective voice: the elusive goal of any band in the ever-mutating postbop mainstream. Taking its lead from Mr. Marsalis, a saxophonist of obstinate candor, the band has become both looser and more imposingly self-assured. “Metamorphosen,” its new album, captures that dynamic almost perfectly.

The title may be a touch misleading, though, since transformation isn’t really the point here. What the music on “Metamorphosen” more readily suggests is a refinement of convictions, an incremental sort of progress. On the whole the album expands on ideas that have preoccupied Mr. Marsalis throughout his career: strong melody, tumultuous yet unambiguous rhythm, and a resiliently pragmatic relationship to the jazz tradition.

He contributes just one composition, “Jabberwocky,” but he makes it count, producing a theme with a corkscrew momentum and a style knowingly evocative of Lennie Tristano. (On it he plays alto saxophone rather than his usual tenor or soprano.) Then there are at least two songs by each of his band mates — the drummer Jeff (Tain) Watts, the bassist Eric Revis and the pianist Joey Calderazzo — along with Thelonious Monk’s “Rhythm-a-Ning.”

Though this repertory is eclectic, it isn’t remotely a grab bag. Mr. Calderazzo’s writing

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encourages a flowing, diaphanous lyricism from the ensemble; Mr. Watts strikes up a frankly exploratory intensity; Mr. Revis works with intervals in a way that yields a kind of dark intrigue. It all fits because every piece highlights a facet of the band — and because each musician, starting with Mr. Marsalis, commits himself fully throughout. ---Nat Chinen, nytimes.com

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