Myra Melford's Be Bread - The Whole Tree Gone (2010)



1.Through the Same Gate 06:29 2.Moon Bird 11:02 3.Night 08:41 4.The Whole Tree Gone 08:39 5.A Generation Comes and Another Goes 08:34 6.I See a Horizon 06:14 7.On The Lip Of Insanity 07:28 8.Knocking from the Inside 08:20 Myra Melford - piano Cuong Vu - trumpet Ben Goldberg - clarinet and contra-alto clarinet Brandon Ross - guitar and soprano guitar Stomu Takeishi - acoustic bass guitar Matt Wilson – drums

Firehouse 12 Records welcomes esteemed pianist/composer Myra Melford to its roster with the release of The Whole Tree Gone, her first recording as a bandleader since 2006. Recorded in the label's own state-of-the-art studio, this is Ms. Melford's second release featuring her eclectic ensemble, Be Bread, a longstanding collection of frequent collaborators that currently performs as an all-acoustic sextet. The Whole Tree Gone documents the latest evolution of eight original compositions she has been performing with this ensemble, and others, for the past five years.

"Most of the music on this record came from a suite titled The Whole Place Goes Up, written in the fall of 2004 with the support of a Chamber Music America grant, Ms. Melford explains in the liner notes. 'Moon Bird' was written for a concert at the MOMA Sculpture Garden (NYC) in July 2005. Though originally written for Be Bread, I've enjoyed performing this music over the past few years with many wonderful musicians in several configurations, including the multimedia project Knock on the Sky and my duo with Marty Ehrlich. My heartfelt gratitude to the musicians who've given a part of themselves to bring this music to life." --- firehouse12records.com

Myra Melford's pithy, candid, creative, quiet fire music is best heard in concert, but her studio

recordings give you a very good helping of what's she's capable of in a shorter form. The sextet dubbed Be Bread has evolved over a handful of years, mixing and matching instruments and timbres that favor the lithe, playful, and at times craggy piano style of Melford. With clarinetist Ben Goldberg, trumpeter Cuong Vu, and guitarist Brandon Ross, Melford has set yet another new standard of excellence in the modern progressive world of jazz. It's also admirable that drummer Matt Wilson is on yet another world-class project as a sideman alongside the still underappreciated acoustic bass guitarist Stomu Takeishi. While these compositions comprise, in part, older material, some taken from the suite "The Whole Place Goes Up," she continues to massage and morph this music with startling originality and purpose. Goldberg's clarinet -- taking over for predecessor Marty Ehrlich -- sports an unforced, simpler feeling like the noble, ebony colored wood it is made from. With the more demonstrative Vu, they come to terms Melford's rambling, bluesy piano with quick unison lines and spiky accents on "Moon Bird," breeze along in the modified tango "Through the Same Gate," or create high drama in combustible modal freedom for the 5/4 beat of the title selection. Melford's balanced music is a marvelous combination of composed and spontaneously improvised approaches, best heard on "A Generation Comes & Another Goes," much like a Carla Bley mix of spooky seriousness and dancing whimsy. Ross, a far too talented player to continue flying under the radar, gets a sweet, plucky feature during "On the Lip Of Insanity," where the band is careful being careful. At times you hear funky or Eastern Indian inferences, while overall, the music is not so complicated as it is elegant and parabolic. Happily, it is another triumph for Melford in that her hot streak of extraordinarily original projects keeps rolling on and upping the ante. ---Michael G. Nastos, Rovi

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