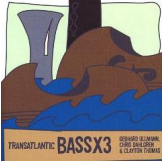


BassX3 - Gebhard Ullmann, Chris Dahlgren, Clayton Thomas - Transatlantic (2012)



1 *Transatlantic (Part One)* 8:28 2 *The Thing* 4:10 3 *The No Piece* 4:52 4 *The Epic* 11:42 5 *Transatlantic (Part Two)* 4:45 6 *Ornette's Closet* 2:38 7 *Berlin Is Full Of Lonely People (Part One)* 3:53 8 *Berlin Is Full Of Lonely People (Part Two)* 2:30 9 *Transatlantic (Part Three)* 19:43 Gebhard Ullmann - Bass Clarinet, Flute [Bass] Chris Dahlgren, Clayton Thomas - Double Bass, Performer [Objects]

Leaving aside his other ensembles, it is a credit to Gebhard Ullmann that The Clarinet Trio and BassX3 can be so different and so successful.

Transatlantic, the second release by BassX3, after their eponymous debut on Drimala in 2005, retains Ullmann as leader, now playing bass flute in addition to bass clarinet, plus Chris Dahlgren on double bass, but compared to that debut, Clayton Thomas replaces Peter Herbert as the second double bassist. The trio retains its unique instrumentation and focus, with low-end frequencies dominating the album.

"Transatlantic" itself is a composition in three parts which are located at the beginning, middle and end of the album, forming its spine and giving it a common theme. On all three, Dahlgren and Thomas maintain a sustained bowed drone, creating a dark brooding mood and laying down a solid foundation. Over this, Ullmann blows a selection of breathy sounds as well as soaring melodic phrases, his bass clarinet sounding high-toned in contrast to the ominous backdrop. The total effect is mesmerizing.

"The Epic" is the album's second longest track at nearly twelve minutes. Appropriately named, it is an episodic musical voyage that integrates diverse elements into a satisfying whole. Towards

its end, rather than matching each other, the basses play independent lines and interweave in a stunning duo that promises much but ends too soon. "The Epic" could be expanded into an album in its own right.

The focus of the album remains on the ensemble, with Ullmann integrated into it instead of being its front man. On "The No Piece," he plays bass flute and, instead of soloing, engages in a call-and-response dialogue with the basses. In addition to their basses, Dahlgren says their instruments are very often prepared with an assortment of common household items to create very unusual sounds which can surprise the listener; this is borne out by occasional percussive rattlings and vibrations that can derive from no other source.

Transatlantic is an album on which every track is almost perfect, making it difficult to talk of any one being "best." Nevertheless, the two-part "Berlin is Full of Lonely People" has a mournfully affecting theme and atmosphere that make it the most beautiful track of a beautiful album.

---John Eyles, allaboutjazz.com

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