

Martin van de Ven and Brian Katz: *COLLECTED STORIES*

***"The audience was spellbound.. They 'play' the 'stars' down from heaven"* Dagblad van het Noorden, Holland**

Drawing their inspiration primarily from klezmer - the ecstatic music of Eastern European Jewry - clarinetist Martin van de Ven and guitarist/pianist Brian Katz continue their dynamic partnership that explores new approaches to klezmer...and now much more! After years of playing klezmer, they have now brought together a rich variety of other traditions and influences, culminating in their inaugural CD, *Collected Stories*. *Collected Stories*, the CD and concert, features fresh, vivid, renditions of klezmer and Yiddish theatre classics, and extends outwards to include Armenian, Bulgarian, Israeli and original compositions. Jazz, classical, new music, Middle-Eastern and African influences are integrated in ways that do not alter the integrity of a given composition but, rather, extend tradition and generate new understandings that speak to our time. With their superb breadth of musicianship, flair for performing, and expertise in teaching, the duo is making a name for themselves internationally.

Martin van de Ven: clarinets (all sizes and shapes!)

Born and raised in Amsterdam, clarinetist/composer/arranger Martin van de Ven has a background in classical, jazz, Jewish and new music. The son of a jazz bassist and guitarist, he grew up immersed in the sounds of traditional and modern jazz. His father also introduced him to the sounds of experimental music from the time he was very young. Martin began playing at the age of eight, studying classical clarinet formally and jazz, informally. His family moved to Canada in 1977 where he pursued a bachelor's degree in classical clarinet performance at Queen's University in Kingston.

After graduation, a specialized area of interest took him back to Europe: Martin received a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts to research and compose electro-acoustic music at the Institute for Sonology in Holland. In this period, Martin also became more deeply interested in "instant composition", an approach that he first encountered in his childhood. Instant composition is interactive; players instantly compose, that is, improvise music by either setting a few compositional parameters beforehand or by using visual cues such as pictures and dance.

Although quite preoccupied with experimental genres, Martin also began to develop a deep love for a music that is most definitely acoustic and traditional: Eastern European folk music. With such a wide range of musical interests, more composing seemed a logical place for Martin to integrate his various loves; so to further his craft he decided in 1983 to pursue a masters

degree in composition at the University of Toronto. It ended up being a wise decision and in 1985 Martin van de Ven won the Sir Ernest Macmillan Award for Orchestral music for his composition, *Conversation Piece*. At the University of Toronto, Martin also had the good fortune to study jazz performance with the "dean of Canadian Jazz" and Order of Canada recipient, clarinettist/composer/arranger, Phil Nimmons.

The eclectic Mr. van de Ven was also a founding board member of the Continuum New Music Concert series and musical director of the Dora Award winning Theatre Columbus production of the *Barber of Seville*.

Noted for his warm sound, stunning technique and ability to integrate his unique voice into an array of musical situations, it is no surprise that Martin has been in demand by some of Canada's leading ensembles and performers. The jazz-new music ensembles Hemispheres and NOJO have been excellent outlets for the clarinettist that thrives on crossing conventional boundaries; equally, Martin's fifteen years of performing and recording experience with sparkling fiddler, Anne Lederman, is testament to his deep love of unabashed tradition.

Another traditional fiddler plays a prominent role in Martin's career, and subsequently, in the career of the duo. She is Monique Lansdorp, Holland's queen of klezmer and Balkan violin, and Martin and Brian's special guest artist on *Collected Stories*. Martin met Monique in 1994 while playing with her in the Dutch Balkan group, Sultan, and in 1997 Martin, Brian and Monique began to perform in Europe together. They have now done four tours in Europe in addition to a yearly stint of teaching at the Osterlager klezmer camp in Switzerland.

Of an array of musical passions it is, indeed, klezmer music that has won a very special place in Martin van de Ven's heart, and he has performed it with a number of the genre's most outstanding exponents including Alan Bern and Michael Alpert of Brave Old World and David Krakauer of the Klezmatics. But Martin is perhaps best known for his work with the The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band, whom he recorded and toured internationally with from 1989 to 1996. Martin is also a member of the klezmer group, Beyond the Pale; and he regularly performs, along with Brian, with Yiddish diva, Theresa Tova.

A dedicated teacher of klezmer music, Martin has led the Toronto Community Klezmer Orchestra since 1990, and has conducted numerous workshops in North America and Europe. Martin has also taught composition for many years, both privately and in group settings. He was instrumental in an outreach program sponsored by the Toronto Symphony called Music For the Masses. In Music For the Masses, Martin taught Toronto Symphony subscribers with no musical training to compose a short work which was then played - to their amazement and delight - by members of the Toronto Symphony!

Brian Katz: guitar, piano

Guitarist, pianist, composer, Brian Katz brings to the duo his extensive experience as a classical, jazz and Jewish music artist. Katz grew up in Toronto in what he describes as a "music friendly household". He began to play guitar by ear at the age of eight and his father, an amateur harmonica player, was his first jam session partner! Those early jam sessions often included a wide variety of Jewish music that was regularly heard on the Katz household stereo: klezmer, Israeli and Yiddish songs. Over thirty years later he was to forge a musical partnership with Martin, and revisit the music that surrounded him in his childhood. Like Martin, he became interested in integrating various facets of his musical background into his exploration of Jewish music.

Brian has improvised since his early childhood, and became passionate about jazz in his early teens. He began his jazz guitar studies with Hank Monis, but mostly learned through "lifting" solos from records. At the age of sixteen, he fortuitously came in contact with the late Fred Stone, innovative jazz flugelhornist/teacher/composer, who saw great potential in the young eclectic musician. Stone, then just off the road from a two year tour with Duke Ellington, was beginning to teach and he delighted in taking Katz "under his wing", introducing him to improvisation in the context of classical and various world music's. Stone, who also played with Thelonius Monk and Charles Mingus, encouraged Brian to flesh out his traditional jazz education, and at his suggestion, Brian attended the jazz program at Humber College in Toronto. Brian also continued to expand on his improvisation skills at York University in Toronto where he studied with pianist/improvisation teacher Casey Sokol and South Indian drumming virtuoso, Trichy Sankaran.

At the age of nineteen Brian got an invitation from Fred Stone to become a member of his jazz/world music ensemble, which he gratefully accepted. He performed with Freddie Stone's band, and often in duet with him, for a period of eight years. Then in his mid-twenties, Brian went to New York to further his career, and to study with the esteemed jazz guitarist/pianist/composer, Ralph Towner. Towner's orchestral, "classical", approach to modern jazz guitar playing was highly influential in Brian's development.

Brian also studied traditional classical guitar at the University of Toronto with Norbert Kraft and Eli Kassner. At the Royal Conservatory of music in Toronto he studied classical piano with Leslie Kinton and classical composition with the revered Canadian teacher, Sam Dolin. He holds Bachelors and Masters degrees in music education from the University of Toronto, where he currently trains prospective music teachers as well as teaching guitar. Brian is also a certified teacher of Dalcroze Eurhythmics (Carnegie-Mellon University), an approach to music education that explores the intrinsic relationship between physical movement and musical comprehension. A celebrated teacher and

workshop facilitator, Brian has held teaching posts at York University, Toronto, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, and the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. In addition, he has extensive experience teaching elementary, middle and high school. His publications include several entries in the Royal Conservatory of Music Syllabus as well as his book, *Guitar Music of Brian Katz* (with accompanying essays on tonal improvisation) which details ways in which a non-improvising "classical" musician can methodically learn to improvise.

Modern jazz and classical musics remain Brian's major musical vehicles, a foundation to which he brings Jewish, South American, Folk, Middle Eastern and East Indian influences. On nylon-string guitar, he is noted for his wide use of tone colour, harmonic inventiveness, and extraordinary sensitivity to his instrument.

Highly regarded as a soloist and composer, Brian also collaborates widely. His stage partners have included grammy nominated saxophonist/flutist Jane Bunnett and saxophonist/bansuri flutist Ernie Tollar (KATZTOLLAR), classical flautist Barbara Ackerman, jazz oboist Paul McCandless, guitarists Mordy Ferber, Rob Piltch, William Beauvais, Tim Brady, pianist/composer, Bill Douglas and celebrated Yiddish singers, Michael Alpert, Dave Wall, Lenka Lichtenberg and Theresa Tova. Brian has performed at major festivals and venues in North America and abroad including the Toronto Centre for the Arts, the St. Lawrence Centre, the Toronto Internationals Jazz Festival, Ashkenaz, WOMAD and the Kristifore International Jewish festival in Holland. His recording projects are wide ranging and include *Bridges*, (with new music guitarist, William Beauvais), *City of Wood*, (with Bob Wiseman), *Agada* (with the Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band) and *Solana* (with Bob Becker, George Koller, Shelly Berger, Jonathan Goldsmith and Albert von Seegren). Of *Solana*, a CD for the prestigious German label, Bellaphon, the Belgian journal *Jazz in Time* wrote, "a recording of abundant intelligence."