



*Trio Joy*

Jasmine Choi/Joe Fonda/Harvey Sorgen (Klopotec)  
by Mark Keresman

Sometimes musicians can be hemmed in by reputation, by style, by their timeframe in the grand scheme of things. Some performers want to explore/express themselves in different media—actors want to sing, singers want to act, jazz musicians want to perform notated works. Take Jasmine Choi, a superstar of the classical music sphere, performing as soloist with the Philadelphia, Berlin and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras, adding to the abundant tradition of great Mozart concertos for flute. Acoustic bassist Joe Fonda has performed/recorded with Wadada Leo Smith, Billy Bang, Barry Altschul and Chico Hamilton. Drummer Harvey Sorgen has been known to mix it up with Ahmad Jamal and Dave Douglas as well as Paul Simon, veteran blues-rock band Hot Tuna and Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh. *Trio Joy* is where these three undertake group composition/free improvisation.

The opener “Moss” is a lovely soundscape. Choi plays slightly somber folk-like harmonious passages while Sorgen rumbles, sways and gently crashes like a windswept yet not-quite-stormy ocean surface and Fonda plucks and strums as if playing a giant lute. The result is modal jazz, Elizabethan-like lament and British Isles ancient song of the seas all at once. The surreal, mournful “Storyboard” finds Choi and Fonda using extended techniques, wrenching agonized, cathartic wails resembling the purposeful feedback of an electric guitar. Mildly frenzied “Frame Check” is perhaps the closest thing to ‘standard’ free jazz, played with a sense of forward motion and strong suggestion of swing; some points of reference would be the trios of Jimmy Giuffre and Sam Rivers. “A Feast of Pigs” contains a Choi solo that is almost painfully beautiful, sticking to the middle range of the flute as if trying to distill all the anguish in the world and make it soulful and uplifting.

This is music about exploration and expression. There is warmth and purpose here.

For more information, visit [klopotec.si](http://klopotec.si). Fonda and Sorgen are at *The Loft of Thomas Rochon* May 11th. See Calendar.



*Celebrating William Parker @65*

Bobby Zankel & The Wonderful Sound 6 (Not Two)  
by Stuart Broomer

A New York native, alto saxophonist Bobby Zankel began his career in the ‘70s playing in Cecil Taylor’s larger ensembles. Since settling in Philadelphia in 1975, he has become a significant presence in that city’s free jazz scene, leading small groups and a large ensemble, The Warriors of the Wonderful Sound. Zankel released several CDs in the ‘90s and early ‘00s on the Cadence and CIMP labels; *Human Flowers* with pianist Marilyn Crispell and drummer Newman Taylor Baker, from 1995, is particularly outstanding, the trio

format highlighting Zankel’s tart sound and fleet, brightly inflected, continuous lines.

As the title declares, this is a 65th birthday celebration of bassist William Parker, Zankel’s colleague for over 40 years. The suite is a loose collection of themes taken from Zankel’s compositions for big band and used as launching pads for extended improvisation welling up from the roots of free jazz. Two members of the sextet—pianist Dave Burrell and drummer Muhammad Ali—launched their careers in the ‘60s and the dense, powerful undercurrent they create with Parker’s foundational bass, a flux moving in every direction at once, keeps the music in a state of vital turbulence, feeding the other voices of Zankel, trombonist Steve Swell and violinist Diane Monroe, the latter two also members of Zankel’s large ensemble.

The third and longest segment includes a Zankel theme directly invoking Ornette Coleman, as close to the union of dance and laughter as one can get. Laughter seems like part of Parker’s extended arco solo as well and when Monroe launches her solo, interjecting an extended passage of “Wade in the Water”. Blues roots arise everywhere here, with the band sourcing them from West African string music to Coleman and Taylor. The entire performance is a wide-ranging, joyous exchange among musicians clearly familiar with one another, everyone contributing to the celebration.

For more information, visit [nottwo.com](http://nottwo.com). William Parker is at *Downtown Music Gallery* May 13th and *Roulette* May 23rd, 25th, 27th and 28th, the latter as part of *Vision Festival*. See Calendar.



*Bliss*

Lauren Sevian (Posi-Tone)  
by Phil Freeman

Baritone saxophonists don’t get to make their own albums very often. This is Lauren Sevian’s second release as a leader and comes nearly a full decade after her debut. The band is alto saxophonist Alexa Tarantino (with whom Sevian co-leads the wittily named group LSAT), pianist Robert Rodriguez, bassist Christian McBride and drummer E.J. Strickland. All the compositions are hers, save Tarantino’s “Square One”.

“Triple Water” kicks off the album in a bebop flurry. Sevian’s phrases—Tarantino is not heard here—have the intricacy and speed of John Coltrane on “Countdown” and the band keeps her flying high; McBride and Strickland are skipping along and Rodriguez dances across the keys, releasing rippling waves of notes. The mellower “Square One” follows, allowing the two saxophonists to harmonize. Tarantino plays around in the lower end of the alto’s range, with Sevian as her shadow, or her big sister, hovering protectively. McBride takes a forceful, string-popping solo. “Bluesishness” lives up to its title; it’s bluesy, but it’s also meandering and somewhat convoluted, a string of phrases that wind all over the place, barely anchored by the rhythm. McBride throws a maddeningly familiar quotation into his solo that does more to anchor the piece than anything from the leader’s pen. “Miss Lady” begins with another Coltrane-in-1959 opening fanfare, but at the 90-second mark a half-speed drum solo drains away all its momentum; when the band comes back in, they’re swinging in a loose and genial manner, but it feels like an entirely different piece.

The baritone is well suited to ballads and both the

title track and “Goldie’s Chance” are album highlights. Rodriguez displays a delicacy at the keys that perfectly balances Sevian’s slow, low swaying. But the almost manic “Lamb and Bunny”, on which Tarantino returns for another round with/against the leader, is astonishing. Rodriguez, McBride and Strickland set a racetrack tempo and the two women sprint through complex bebop phrases, tearing through the changes and trading off phrases like it’s 1945. Albums by baritone saxophonists may not be common, but *Bliss* makes a strong argument for more of them and soon.

For more information, visit [posi-tone.com](http://posi-tone.com). This project is at *Dizzy’s Club* May 16th. See Calendar.

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