



SCHWEIZER - FAVRE

LIVE IN ZÜRICH

Irène Schweizer Piano

Pierre Favre Drums, Percussion

Recorded live March 22 - 24, 2013, at Rote Fabrik, Zürich.
Engineer: Jean-Marc Fussat. Mixed by Jean-Marc Fussat, La Garenne-Colombes, France, July 2013. Cover art and graphic design: Jonas Schoder.
Photos: Francesca Pfeffer. Liner notes: Christian Broecking.

Intakt CD 228

Irène Schweizer - Pierre Favre: Live in Zürich

“We’ve never done anything like this before.” The well attended hall is flooded with an amazed jubilation as Irène Schweizer and Pierre Favre finish their first set. Favre feels a very special kind of energy, “somewhat disorganised at times”, a mixture of structures in one single piece, the large crowd, Irène’s ‘community’. “It came in waves and we just played it. I really enjoyed it, right from the first evening, this reunion, the new and the familiar. The second evening was quieter, more fluent in a way, clearer, beautiful, very smooth, yet more granular than the first evening.”

The first of those three spring days in Zurich had been sunny, the second one overcast, Favre thinks that this creates a different kind of feeling for the musicians and for the audience, as well, and that you can hear it in the music. “There was a nice flow, a bit more transparent maybe, but good. And then, on the third day, this feeling, what are we going to do now? A bit of synthesis and amazingly good energy.”

Schweizer has regularly worked with different drummers, with Mani Neumeier in the sixties, with Louis Moholo, Makaya Ntshoko and Baby Sommer in the seventies, with Andrew Cyrille and Han Bennink in the eighties, all of this has been documented. “Pierre was my first duo partner and it is difficult to say what the secret is, why and when something really works. Live, it turns me on, the audience, the space.” Favre raves about waves of energy which emerge at each encounter, again and again, “most of the time it’s just this strong feeling”. The last major duo performance before these recordings was one of the highlights of the Berlin JazzFest 2012, a jewel of a concert in the Academy of Arts at Hanseatenweg, exactly where Free Music Production once used to gather the people for the Total Music Meeting.

“Live in Zürich” is the third CD of this duo. Retrospectively, by way of an explanation: Schweizer doesn’t find the first duo CD, recorded in Bern in 1990, “too brilliant now”. She has always found concerts or studio time for recording purposes rather trying and this was also the major difference to the second duo CD “Ulrichsberg”. The decision to put out the recording from 2003 only came about after this fantastic concert. Unlike “Ulrichsberg”, “Live in Zürich” consists of a selection of twelve rather shorter pieces, recorded over three consecutive evenings of live concerts in March 2013 at the Rote Fabrik. Even though the duo neither rehearses nor makes any arrangements upfront, this was intentional, the shorter pieces in particular. From Favre’s point of view also as a concession to the CD audience, who seems to be listening to ‘shorter and shorter’ pieces. “One is no longer used to really getting into something and listening over a longer period of time – how it used to be. In those days, it was definitely like that, you could play very long pieces.” Now, they have kept it brief, with shorter tracks to catch and provoke attention. “We also said to ourselves, let’s make it shorter, like with a good meal, preferably a bit less, and what you take away is much greater, you wish for more. A bit too much and you tend to say, well, this is nice but now it’s enough’.”

Only those who have been devoted listeners over the years will have noticed it this time, will have experienced the changes. A gradual process, developed over time. Because ‘wild and free’ is a cliché that also for Schweizer is no longer appropriate. “I’ve been strongly influenced by the Blue Notes and I’ve been called a Free-Jazz-pianist even though I didn’t belong to the ‘Wuppertal Schule’. Even when I was playing radical Free Music in the seventies, I never had a problem with playing the occasional standard. I’ve been criticised for this at times, some even saw me as a kind of traitor because I didn’t follow the rules of Free Music. I just wanted to play what I felt like, my own pieces are melodic and harmonic, and the South African themes have also always been a part of my programme.”

For Schweizer, Free Jazz today tells of a different time. “Back then we really wanted a revolution and were against a whole load of different issues. We were up in arms the whole time, politically and socially. And now, when you’ve reached 70 or beyond, you take all of this in a much more relaxed way.” The concern about political injustices has not gone away, it is just not that urgent, that con-

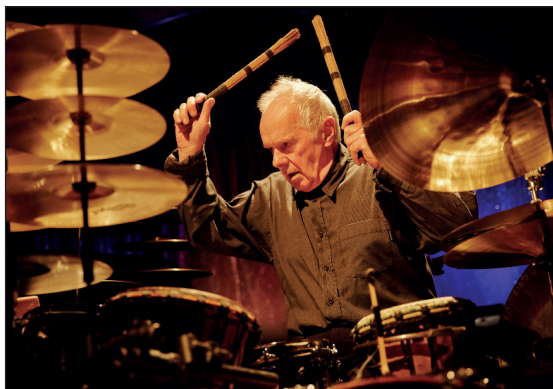


Foto: Francesca Pfeffer

crete anymore. A matter of interpretation? Yes, “but no babble, no just pretty aesthetics, but something played with power.” It all began 45 years ago, they worked together at ‚Paiste‘, he as head of drummer’s service, she as his secretary, and they played together. “There were various drum sets about and sometimes I just played duos with Pierre. After we’d rehearsed, at the end I said, I want to play the drums, as well, and that’s how it started. You can actually hear that I love the drums, I have quite a percussive way of playing the piano.”

For Favre, the rhythm, “that strange way of expressing yourself rhythmically, comes from Bebop. As Albert Mangelsdorff put it quite correctly, ‘all those who never played it are still very influenced by marching music and they end up marching rather than dancing’. Then I discovered my European way of breathing – much to my own amazement. Taking long, extended breaths, almost like in Asian cultures, they take long breaths and take their time. You breathe out and this way you also experience more space between one stroke and the next. It is a different way of phrasing and creating sounds from one drum to the other. There it was inside of me and suddenly, like a flash of awareness or confirmation, you realise, yes this is me and this is how I play.”

In their duo concerts, Favre notices the tendency to follow Schweizer. This is not always easy for the solo artist, because it is “less independent”. On the other hand it is also the drummer’s role to support and anticipate what is coming. “In the duo, the piano determines how you are supposed to follow rhythmically, it is about making the melody sound good. That is the rule. And I also enjoy doing just that – with a Blues I am completely tuned in to what Irène is playing. With the Blues, you climb for twelve bars and then you rest and then take another run at it, a new set of steps. Those are the structures and they are present when you are playing because you have experienced them. Maybe it has something of the power of a good conductor. I’m talking about where you want to go. It is always like that, you talk about where you want to go. When I play solo, it is actually like a different world. My energy flows in sweeping arcs. Playing solo, I play all the voices, in duo, however, I only play one half, maybe a third, I put in what is missing. You just don’t have to play all the time. It is also about perception, being a bit more relaxed, a bit more mature. And when the music then really flows, you can go in between and play very free. As George Lewis says: ‘That’s the incredible thing with you, sometimes you have three, four different kinds of rhythms at the same time and you can play wherever you like and it’s always right.’ It’s those beautiful lines, movements and waves which well up in between, and the whole thing takes off.”

Christian Broecking, September 2013. Translation: Isabel Seeberg + Paul Lytton

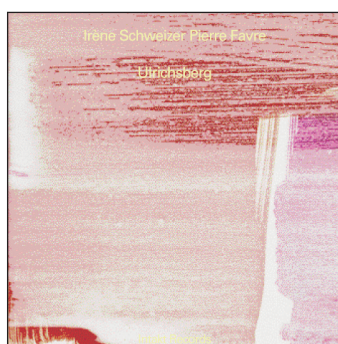
Irène Schweizer - Pierre Favre bei Intakt Records www.intaktrec.ch



SCHWEIZER - FAVRE

Irène Schweizer: Piano
Pierre Favre: Drums

Intakt CD 009 / 1991



SCHWEIZER - FAVRE

ULRICHSBERG

Irène Schweizer: Piano
Pierre Favre: Drums

Intakt CD 084 / 2004