

LA-JAZZ SCENE
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Resonance Big Band
Plays Tribute To Oscar
Peterson
(Resonance)

Shortly after Oscar Peterson's death, producer and record company owner George Klabin conceived of the idea of paying tribute to Peterson while utilizing a supportive big band comprised of some of Los Angeles' top players. The most difficult position to fill would of course be the pianist but Klabin already knew who he wanted. He called up Marian Petrescu, a Romanian who lives in Finland. Petrescu's main idol is Peterson (along with Art Tatum) and he has the ability to sound very close to O.P., not an easy task. A few performances of Petrescu are available on You Tube and show just how technically adept he is, and how compatible his style is with Peterson's.

With arrangements provided for the big band by Bill Cunliffe, Kuno Schmid and (on "Sally's Tomato") Claus Ogerman and two numbers ("Little Girl Blue" and "Greensleeves") adding a string quartet, Petrescu fits easily into the featured role. He performs six Peterson songs (including the ironically titled "A Little Jazz Exercise" which he takes as a stunning unaccompanied solo and "Hymn to Freedom") plus five numbers associated with the pianist, highlighted by a lengthy "West Side Story Medley." In some cases, the first part of the performance has Petrescu playing transcribed Peterson solos before getting a chance to improvise in his own similar style, an idea that works very well.

In addition to the CD, the package includes a DVD that has a 21-minute documentary about the background of the CD, with George Klabin and Bill Cunliffe discussing the project, short interviews with some bandmembers, and brief excerpts from the performances.

The overall performances are heartfelt and contain a fair amount of variety. Oscar Peterson would have loved this CD, which is available from www.resonancerecords.org

Scott Yanow