

Manfred Paul Weinberger Nonet In Presence of Kenny Wheeler

As a trumpet performer in the "Upper Austrian Jazz Orchestra", I had the privilege of playing several concerts with Kenny Wheeler in Europe from 1998 to 2006. These times gave me some very precious moments and insights into the sound world of this great artist of contemporary music with his unmistakable characteristics. Kenny Wheeler passed away in London on 18 September 2014. His life's work as a composer, bandleader, soloist and sideman provided a rich source of inspiration for artists of subsequent generations.

Lineup:

Manfred Paul Weinberger - Trumpet, flugelhorn
Christian Maurer - Soprano saxophone, clarinet
Andreas Lachberger - Tenor saxophone
Jürgen Haider - Baritone saxophone, bass clarinet
Peter Nickel - Trombone
Kurt Erlmoser - Electric guitar
Helmar Hill - Piano
Christian Wendt - Double bass
Ewald Zach - Drums

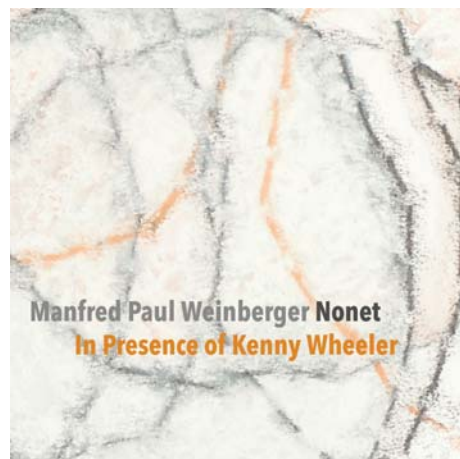


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Tracklisting

01. From the Other Apple (5:38)
02. Kenny Time Suite (14:20)
03. Gentle Torrent (5:50)
04. A Touch of Solvejg (7:03)
05. Geris Bounce (5:29)
06. T.W. for Both of You (8:27)
07. Birds Eye View (8:12)
08. Kassiopæia (8:15)
09. Greetings from Kenny (9:12)



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Manfred Paul Weinberger Nonet

In Presence of Kenny Wheeler

Linernotes:

This must be your Magnum Opus - In any jazz context, proverbial mention of a Nonet would assume such a line up as assembled here, and with the song title listing of nine pieces, maybe even a prediction of what's to be expected - but, no, not here! From an orchestral and instrumental point of view, these nine pieces - go through the gamut of solo, 2 part, 3 part etc to 9 part full ensemble, and also through an astonishingly inventive array of single to multi layered contrapuntal layers. I find the harmonic material very refreshing - new to my ears, and so presume that's the reason the players soloing is so refreshing too. After a few listenings - I was suddenly aware of the lack of the usual suspects (cliches) -though wouldn't have minded the odd one here or there - am friendly to a few, now and then. The ensemble playing is superb - crisp, and precise - especially on the more crunchy harmonic areas. The solos for individuals are always engaging and seemingly belong intrinsically to the structural format of the composition - thus enhancing the feeling of a collaborative conversation among the players. Overall, the listeners experience goes through a wide berth of emotions - My experience has been highly delightful, instructional - Kenny will love it too!

Michael Gibbs

April 2021

My first experience of hearing the music of Kenny Wheeler was the CD "Flutter By, Butterfly" from 1988. His work opened up a sound aesthetic of contemporary music that has been a part of me to this day. Wheeler's unique way of playing, including his phrasing, his shaping of the melody, the colouring of his tone and his interaction with the musical flow, reveal an artistic depth that strongly appeals to me. His improvised playing is characterized by allowing everything to develop from the interplay, waiting for opportunities and thus also taking risks. Kenny Wheeler draws on a wealth of experience that is difficult to define, stylistically. After studying the cornet and classical composition, the young Canadian worked in a wide variety of fields in London from the age of 22. He worked in swing dance bands, free jazz and jazz rock groups, in studios and as a sideman, he performed on advertising jingles and was involved in intercultural projects between chamber music formations and large orchestras. 30 CD productions have been released in his name in a wide variety of formations. Dave Holland, Joni Mitchell, Philly Joe Jones, Bill Frisell, Michael Gibbs, Steve Coleman, Anthony Braxton, Rabih Abou-Kalil and Norma Winston, to name but a few, all brought Kenny Wheeler on board as a soloist. In this context, his specific tonal language matured. Today it is perceived as being in a category of its own which goes beyond established concepts of aesthetics or stylistics - both in his roles as a composer and soloist.

I first met Kenny Wheeler in person in 1997 at the "Banff Centre For The Arts". He was part of the faculty for the '97 summer workshop in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, which I attended on a scholarship. His opening statement was short but characteristic of his modesty and tongue-in-cheek self-irony: "Usually I don't say so much, but if I do, I don't say so much". And indeed, he was not a man of many words but rather a charismatic aesthete of his own sound world. The titles of some of his compositions, however, reveal his pronounced pleasure in wordplay, such as "The Widow in the Window", "Double, Double You" or the aforementioned "Flutter By, Butterfly". As a trumpet performer in the "Upper Austrian Jazz Orchestra", I had the privilege of playing several concerts with him in Europe from 1998 to 2006. The times spent before and after concerts, and during rehearsals, long bus journeys and shared meals brought us musicians closer to his fascinating and unforgettable personality. These times gave me some very precious moments and insights into the sound world of this great artist of contemporary music with his unmistakable characteristics. Kenny Wheeler passed away in London on 18 September 2014. His life's work as a composer, bandleader, soloist and sideman provided a rich source of inspiration for artists of subsequent generations. When you feel a closeness to the works of specific artistic personalities, they themselves become important companions in one's own development. Therefore, it seems important to me to develop an awareness of the principles that can be traced from the music of fascinating idols into my individual work in order to remain true to myself in all my personal artistic pursuits.

The lessons learnt from Kenny Wheeler's work for me mean, among other things, being open to new concepts, allowing space for an ambience, pausing and waiting for meaningful moments, tracing outside influences with interest and, last but not least, being prepared to fail with an idea. Seen in this light, the compositions in this production are an exciting venture, undertaken with relish. This nonet creates soundscapes in a wide range of forms, from refined chamber music dialogues to energetic orchestral sounds. I am particularly pleased to be able to bring together esteemed colleagues from the Upper Austrian Jazz Orchestra in this project, with whom I share common experiences and the trust gained throughout the process. The Upper Austrian Jazz Orchestra experienced an intensive artistic collaboration with Kenny Wheeler, which has resulted in a very special bond with him. Intensive analysis of the compositions undertaken during the preparatory process for the recording session involved substantial input from my colleagues Christian, Andreas, Jürgen, Peter, Kurt, Helmar, Christian and Ewald. At a time when all venues have had to cease operation for many months and inspiring interaction between ensembles and audience is impossible due to the pandemic, they make it possible to transform these nine compositions into living stories.