

The TransAtlantic Reed-String Project (TARSP)
Benjamin Boone Soprano and Alto Saxophones
Stefan Poetzsch Violin/Viola/Electronics

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Stefan Poetzsch (Germany) and Benjamin Boone (USA) met in 1995 at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. There, they began to improvise together and immediately realized that between them, a unique channel of musical communication existed. These recordings are from those first sessions in 1995, as well as their first recording session at Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian National Radio) in 1998 and subsequent tours between 1998 and 2000. All recordings are direct to two-track, with no overdubbing. All effects (loops, delays, etc.) are live and controlled by the performers.

Some of these pieces border on jazz or world music while others border on classical, third stream or even avant-garde. But the music performed by TARSP defies any standard musical classification. "We are not interested in conforming to any set style," says Boone. "We have both played in a wide range of ensembles. Stefan plays in the Leipzig Baroque Orchestra and he has played with Cecil Taylor. I have played in jazz quartets and Latin bands in New York City as well as in 'The Stars of the Lawrence Welk Show.' We synthesize these diverse experiences into a music that is uniquely ours." As a music professor, Boone appreciates music on many levels. "I think it is important for performers to examine music from several perspectives, including the intellectual perspective. If players don't do that they miss out on a profound viewpoint. Thinking compositionally has dramatically changed the way I approach improvisation. I try not to just play notes, but to make each note have meaning - to make my gestures have a form and a real basis."

Stefan does not accept the rigid sound and technique most people associate with the violin. Instead, he approaches the violin as a source of new sounds. Of his collaboration with saxophonist Ben Boone, Poetzsch says: "In teaming up with Ben for this project, I am particularly enthusiastic about the intellectual connection we have, which I have rarely found with other musicians. In our rehearsals we don't talk about complexity; we create it. Our music is improvised music by musicians with very clear imaginations and minds for structure. I take genuine pleasure in the rich spectrum of ways Ben plays the saxophone. His approach to the saxophone is very much like my approach to the violin. His playing is not typical. He invents wonderful melodies and plays with an amazing sound. When we are in concert, we are two friends on stage who hear each other and are amazed along with the audience at the new dimensions we can explore."

"Inner Jungle" (1), "Quest I" (11) and "Quest II" (14) are examples from Stefan and Ben's very first impromptu midnight session in Florida. Stefan uses the violin and viola as percussion instruments in "Inner Jungle" and later in "After The Fall" (4).

In contrast, "Sista's Making Biscuits" (2) and "I Can't Get Started" (9) are TARSP's most recent pieces, recorded in December 2000, just before this CD was manufactured. These works display a new musical dimension, developed during TARSP's first tour of the new

millennium. "Sista's Making Biscuits" (based on a melody composed by Ben's wife Alice soon after they moved from Tennessee to Fresno, CA) was captured at a rehearsal in Erlangen, Germany. The inside story: Alice's cat is named Sista and the words to this comical tune are:

*Sista's making biscuits in the morning
Ben is doing yoga on the floor
Grandma's dead and watching us in heaven
and I don't want to live here any more.*

"Minimal Meets Jazz" (3), "After The Fall" (4) and "Peace After" (6) were recorded during the TARSP's first session for the Bayerischer Rundfunk in '98. Stefan had previously created the basic musical ideas for "Minimal Meets Jazz" and "Peace After" for the TARSP's first USA concert earlier in '98. In "Minimal," Stefan juxtaposed two musical styles he loves - American minimalism and American jazz. In "Peace After," Ben added saxophone multiphonics, mouthpiece calls and other colors to Stefan's peaceful melody. "After The Fall" is based on an idea composed in the first session in '95.

"Reed String Meeting I" (5) and "Reed String Meeting II" (13) are also from the first session in Florida. Movement I (5) was initially titled "Dangerous Scale: Fourth by Seconds" because of the two simultaneous whole tone scales in Ben's line. Movement II is a wild improvisation based on a musical idea that kept recurring during all of the Florida sessions.

"Wind And Wood" (7) is a structured free improvisation recorded at the Dvorak Museum in Prague, Czech Republic. This track demonstrates the use of noises (such as Stefan's transmitter pick-up or foot pedals being stomped) as music.

"Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's)" (8) and "After Dinner" (15) are two contrasting pieces, recorded after playing together in Florida for a few days. "HMO's" is an ode to the corporatization of healthcare in the USA, which constricts dedicated medical professionals and dehumanizes patients.

During the sessions at ACA, TARSP often tried to evoke some feeling or visual image with their music. An example of a work which was born out of this process is "In The Sun In Texas" (16).

"Trail Of Tears" (10) and "Almost Too Happy" (12) were recorded at a performance in Saarbruecken, Germany. "Trail of Tears" was performed with a Cherokee (Native American) flute. In 1838-39, the U.S military forced approximately 15,000 Cherokees to march 116 days from Georgia to Oklahoma on what is now called the "trail of tears". 4,000 died.

"Almost to Happy" was composed for the live sound track of silent movie, "Der Sonderling," by Karl Valentin. Is this tune "too happy" for TARSP, or for that matter, Germany? "We think not," says Ben. Then Stefan adds, "it is only almost to happy!"

All recordings direct to two track, no overdubbing. All effects are live.

Produced by Bayerischer Rundfunk - Studio Franken, Stefan Poetzsch and Benjamin Boone.

All pieces by Stefan Poetzsch (GEMA) and Benjamin Boone (ASCAP), except "Sista's Making Biscuits" by Alice Daniel, B. Boone and S. Poetzsch.

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