



Lucia Cadotsch *Speak Low*

YELLOWBIRD/ENJA 7761

★★★★★

Speak Low Renditions

YELLOWBIRD/ENJA 77614

★★★★★

So ingenious is the way vocalist Lucia Cadotsch reimagines the canon of standards that the songs feel fully in the here and now, with zero hint of faded lounge-act nostalgia. The singer, a 33-year-old Zurich native living in Berlin, has accomplished this in a deeply integrated part-

nership with two free-jazz players, Otis Sandsjö on tenor saxophone and Petter Eldh on bass. The subtly intense swirl of the instrumentalists—Sandsjö’s multiphonic effects, Eldh’s visceral thrum—helps reinvest such songs as “Don’t Explain” and “Strange Fruit” with tension and truth.

For all its Northern European cool, Cadotsch’s singing has an intensity of its own. Her tone is deceptively neutral, with lightly accented English, but she cuts to the heart of these songs from another angle, with an almost classical purity of intonation and a serene sense of rhythm. She has internalized the jazz message of vintage Billie Holiday—the hand-in-glove fit with her players, an artful sense of the bittersweet—without aping timbre or phrasing. And Cadotsch reinvents “Willow Weep For Me” beautifully, embroidering fresh melody into a new intro and coda.

The title track has the air of real life to it, with Cadotsch’s fetching vocal interrupted by a saxophone solo that fumes and subsides like a lover’s spat. The typically striking arrangement of “Moon River” gives the song as much grit as glow, a sweet tune turned into a tone poem. And for those who know Henry Mancini’s “Slow, Hot Wind” via Sarah Vaughan or Johnny Hartman, Cadotsch and company deliver a different experience, sultry but also dramatic. Sandsjö’s circular breathing sounds like a sum-

mer squall on the way, as Cadotsch makes the most of the alluring melody.

The companion release *Speak Low Renditions* presents the recordings as digitally sliced and diced by various remixer, setting the original performances among beats and atmospheres. The new mix of “Some Other Spring” adds the skittering live drums of Tilo Weber, while other tracks are recast as floating grooves or glitchy abstractions; some sound as if the original record were coming through a static-laced, in-and-out shortwave broadcast, a pleasantly disorienting effect.

Such is the spell that Cadotsch, Sandsjö and Eldh cast on these albums that it can make one feel that this is the only way age-old standards should be approached: not slavishly but fearlessly, with an unfettered imagination approaching that of the songs’ originators.

—Bradley Bamberger

Speak Low: Slow, Hot Wind; Speak Low; Strange Fruit; Ain’t Got No, I Got Life; Don’t Explain; Deep Song; Some Other Spring; Willow Weep For Me; Gloomy Sunday; Moon River. (46:00)

Personnel: Lucia Cadotsch, vocals; Otis Sandsjö, tenor saxophone; Petter Eldh, bass.

Speak Low Renditions: Some Other Spring feat. Tilo Weber (Frans Petter Remix); Don’t Explain (Julian Sartorius Remix); Strange Fruit (Marc Lohr Remix); Deep Song (Dan Nicholls Remix); Slow, Hot Wind (Evelinn Trouble Remix); Speak Low featuring Julian Sartorius (Frans Petter Remix); Don’t Explain (Colin Vallon Remix); Willow Weep For Me (Joy Frempong Remix); Ain’t Got No (Trummerschlink Remix); Moon River (Marc Neyen Remix); Moon River (Don Philippe Remix). (53:00)

Personnel: Lucia Cadotsch, vocals; Otis Sandsjö, tenor saxophone; Petter Eldh, bass; Tilo Weber, drums; Julian Sartorius, percussion.

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