

reviews 

## A Pianist In A Class By Himself

Exquisite jazz evening at Horsens New Theater

By Christian Rimestad

Horsens: Partly Nordic, partly African, partly Indian, but most of all: Jazz in a league of its own.

This is the conclusion after the concert last night at Horsens Ny Teater.

The visitors were Klüver's Big Band, the American saxophonist Dick Oatts and last, but not least the pianist and composer Soren Moller.

Not least Moller because he composed the music that made this more than two hours long concert a jazz experience out of the ordinary.

"Speeches" is the name of the work composed. A suite in six parts based on famous speeches. Speeches, that reflects on hope, a better world and the beautiful things humanity has to offer- all emotions that the music entirely delivered.

### Decency

Soren Moller, who now lives in New York, started this work due to the Iraq-War. A war that Denmark participated in as an ally of the USA even though the Danish politicians preferred to speak about increasing home values and tax cuts. A war that, in Soren Moller's own words, has made a lot of people forget about old fashioned humanity and decency.

The 33 years old musician started consulting humanity and decency in famous speeches by politicians. To begin with the project developed into a musical suite in three parts, which was premiered in 2007 by Klüver's Big Band. The feedback was successful and since then the suite has developed into six parts. The newest compositions were premiered last night at Horsens Ny Teater.

Here an exited audience received a work that holds serene beauty, pure yearning and great hope. In addition to this the music was challenging stimulating in a way that made the 16 musicians in the big band smile all the way through the concert.

## Among The Best

The speeches and their atmosphere which Soren Moller has tried to recreate are coming from a variety of personalities: Olof Palme, Vaclav Havel, Robert Kennedy, Desmond Tutu, Gandhi and the newly elected president of the USA Barack Obama. All politicians, that have brought the idealistic message of peace and hope to the world. They all represent different places in the world and this aspect too was reflected in the music of "Speeches".

Klüver's Big Band showed great joy in the music, helped by the playing of Dick Oatts.

The 55 years old American belongs among the best. He has, as expressed by the conductor Jens Klüver, played with the best big band in the world: The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. This makes his presence at last nights performance quite an endorsement of Soren Moller. At the same time his playing really pushed the suite "Speeches" to new heights with solos that beautifully interpreted the speeches and feelings.

## Soren's Evening

I should add to this that Klüver's Big Band also played up to its best and more than passed the test. The orchestra is in its own league and both alone and together with Dick Oatts the Aarhus musicians delivered a beautiful work.

But most of all this evening belonged to Soren Moller. He was the man behind not only the music to "Speeches" but also the last two compositions of the evening: The rocking composition "A.S. You See It" and the swinging "On A Day Like This". And then his fingers made sure that this evening the grand piano was a true and worthy team player.

In 2007 Soren Moller contacted Klüver's Big Band about performing his music and thankfully their answer was yes. "Speeches" holds many qualities and can easily develop into quite a classic. Not least, as Soren Moller hopes, if the suite becomes a record release.

## Geiger.dk- Review

Jakob Bækgaard, January 9, 2009

Soren Moller & Dick Oatts

The Clouds Above

(cd, Audial Records/ Gateway Music, 2008)

Two people meet. Communication. Music. A tone, an atmosphere establish itself. Something, that reaches beyond the usual. A special tone appears, like the language between two people who really knows each other. A meeting, between a Dane and an American, in a hectic metropole where everything is brewing and boiling, In the middle of all this there is the music. It floats quiet and easy. Every now and then with drama and glow it makes sudden turns. The music is elegant and intense.

The recording is called The Clouds Above and is the meeting between Danish jazz pianist Soren Moller, who has been based in New York for quite a while now and the virtuosic and sophisticated saxophonist Dick Oatts. The concept behind the recording is to create music, which assembles a journey through various landscapes. Like an airplane floating above the clouds. Moller writes in the recording's liner notes:

“Here you will hear compositions created with my many travels between Copenhagen and New York in mind. The clouds above are the clouds as seen from an airplane. A reflection on the view of open spaces and abstract shapes that makes flying such a beautiful experience”.

Here, when the journey as a metaphor emerges to sound, it happens in an alternating expression. It has elements of romanticism, French impressionism and minimalism, avant-garde as well as popular cultural references. All of which is solidly anchored in the tonal language of jazz. It is a music that in a perfect way reflects New York’s reputation as a melting pot where diverse cultures meet and amalgamates.

One can easily feel that with Oatts and Moller we are talking “top cats” an international class act. The two of them are used to perform with and interact with most musicians out there. Because of this masterly skill I have previously had a reservation towards Moller. The reservation was a result of his exceptional ability. Moller is educated at the prestigious Manhattan School of Music and everything about his playing exhibits exceptional skill and virtuosity. I have always been impressed by his virtuosity when I have listened to him at various jazz festivals often times with an American star performer, but I have had trouble engaging in his playing emotionally. That is until now.

It seems like the format of the duo setting has forced the two musicians to reach for the core of their musicality: The source of their emotions. The recording exemplifies the perfect balance between the lyrical and the percussive and an continuously open dialogue. From the first track, the classical inspired “Prokofiev’s Balcony Scene” to the final crystal like composition “Butterfly”, where Oatts convincingly changes to flute, the musicians seem to master a musical sphere where emotion and form unite.

The limiting format of the duo seems to paradoxically be the generator of Moller’s talent and exhibit how great a pianist he truly is: An attentive artist with a skill for nuances and texture. If one should make a comparison between this duo and another successful duo it would be the cooperation of pianist George Cables and Art Pepper. Oatts has this special dry and warm sound in his horn and the effortless improvisational lightness that was the trademark of Pepper. One can think that is an unfair comparison, but when you hear this recording it all makes sense. With The Clouds Above we have a musical artwork ready to leave its nest. A listening experience which is a pure pleasure from beginning to end.

## Album Is Personal, Beautiful And Serene

Soren Moller and Dick Oatts communicate really well together on a new album with solid energy expressions and dry sparkling.

By Thomas Michelsen

The statements are simple and personal with room for space between the bright written lines. Pianist Soren Moller has blogged about his hometown New York City and the music that surrounds him here in Politikens online paper.

## On Tour

From today until November 25 he will travel all over Denmark to Folk Academies and venues large and small with

the soprano and alto saxophonist Dick Oatts to present their new cd.

The Clouds Above is a follow up to the duos outstanding debut cd Storytelling and again this time they pick their inspiration from the classical shelf. Here with the intro track Prokofiev's Balcony Scene.

## Energy and Sheer Brilliance

Soren Moller's touch is brilliant and serene. Both when he, as in the title track, throw himself into energy expressions and when he lets his glance wonder as in Wide Open Spaces. Energy and Sheer Brilliance are keywords.

Their drive can be easy or massive, but always without the keys being heavy and the two musicians communicates really well.

Dick Oatts masterfully controls both the dry sparkle and the, for a jazz flutist, quite unusual well sounding in the last water-color-like track Butterfly.

The twos national tour ends next Tuesday together with the big band from Fyn Tiptoe Big Band at Copenhagen JazzHouse.

Five Hearts (Out of six)

Translation: Berlingske Tidende

## Much More Than a Re-production

By Kjeld Frandsen

Tuesday, September 25 2007

Jazz: "A Tribute To Trane"

Concert: "The Coltrane Latin Tribute".

A Danish/ Mexican/ Swedish quartet is celebrating the legendary and influential American saxophonist John Coltrane. And these four musicians succeed in bringing their personal sound and energy to the project, both on the album and in concert.

It has been 40 years since the American tenor and soprano saxophonist John Coltrane died. His influence on jazz is still hard to overestimate. He has inspired many musicians in theory and practice, but only a few have been able to successfully recreate the sound, energy and spiritual expression.

Yet, it is not an impossible goal to reach if you just remember to add personality, expression and energy. The newly released CD "A Tribute To Trane", which includes Danish pianist Soren Moller and bass player Morten Ramsboel, the Mexican drummer Antonio Sanchez and the Swedish alto saxophonist Fredrik Kronkvist, confirms this.

This quartet is performing compositions from the Coltrane repertoire. Soren Moller contributes with the up-tempo compositions "Moller's Mode" and "Steps" and Fredrik Kronkvist adds the static Eternal Light. Here we have four extraordinary musicians that perform a beautiful, action-packed, enlightening music.

Still, the concert at Copenhagen JazzHouse Sunday night was completely different. It was much more than just a reproduction of a cd, which in its own right draws on inspirations from the past. With four musicians that were able to communicate and create, the stage was set for timeless contemporary jazz including an energetic beginning of the set with a few Coltrane classics: Satellite and Naima.

The pianist Soren Moller was through his strong harmonic chords and vital melodic lines an anchor in the music. The bassist Morten Ramsboel turned out to be yet another Danish bass champion who is not only a master of his instrument, but also adds emotional and organic depth to the music. Antonio Sanchez' drumming was impressively vivid and colored and never presumptuous. And then the band had their front figure in saxophonist Fredrik Kronkvist. He played the role as Coltrane. And yet again, that was not really, what he did.

First of all, the alto saxophone has a different sound from Coltrane's tenor or soprano saxophones and then second of all Kronkvist was his own man. Here we had a massive expression on the alto saxophone's natural sound and register. In addition to that there was spellbinding and inventive tone rows that could be both logic and surprising.

All four musicians added to the quartets repertoire of the evening. An exceptional version of the Coltrane composition "Lonnie's Lament" brought the numerous and curious audience to a culmination of unmixed joy.

Jazz from the past was not words that came to mind.

Concert: Five out of six stars

Album: Four out of six stars

anmeldelser 

## Pianist i særklasse

Horsens Folkeblad

Torsdag den 19 marts 2009

Fornem jazz-aften på Horsens Ny Teater

Anmeldelse:

Chr. Rimestad

Foto: Morten Marboe

Horsens- Lidt nordisk, lidt afrikansk, lidt indisk, men først og fremmest jazz i særklasse.

Cirka sådan må facit lyde efter i aftes på Horsens Ny Teater.

På besøg var Klüvers Big Band, den amerikanske saxofonist Dick Oatts og sidst, men ikke mindst pianisten og komponisten Søren Møller.

Ikke mindst hr. Møller, fordi han leverede musikken, der gjorde den lidt mere end to timer lange koncert til en jazzoplevelse ud over det vanlige.

“Speeches” hedder hovedværket. En suite i seks dele baseret på berømte taler. Taler om håb, om en bedre verden, om det bedste i mennesker- følelser, som den smukke musik rummede til fulde.

## Anstændigheden

Søren Møller, som i dag er bosat i New York, blev sat i gang af Irak-krigen. En krig, Danmark deltager i, selv om politikerne hellere taler om friværdis og skattelettelser. En krig der, mener han, har fået mange til at glemme almindelig anstændighed.

Den 33-årige musiker gik derfor på jagt efter anstændigheden i berømte statsmænds taler. I første omgang udviklede det sig til en suite i tre dele, som han i 2007 opførte sammen med århusianske Klüvers Big Band- med så god respons, at suiten over det seneste år er blevet udvidet til de seks dele, der i aften havde premiere på Horsens Ny Teater.

Her tog et begejstret publikum imod et værk, der rummer stor skønhed, stor længsel og masser af håb. Plus så mange musikalske udfordringer, at de 16 musikere i bigbandet stort set smilede hele vejen gennem koncerten.

## Blandt de bedste

Ordene, hvis stemning Søren Møller har prøvet at genskabe, er hentet hos vidt forskellige folk: Olof Palme, Vaclav Havel, Robert Kennedy, Desmond Tutu, Gandhi og USA's nyvalgte præsident Barack Obama. Alle politikere, der har talt om idealer og forhåbninger- og som kommer fra forskellige verdensdele, hvis musikalske traditioner får lov til at spille med i “Speeches” .

Klüvers Big Band kastede sig over opgaven med stor spilleglæde, godt hjulpet på vej af Dick Oatts.

Den 55 årige amerikaner hører til blandt de bedste. Han har som kapelmester Jens Klüver bemærkede, bl.a. spillet med i “verdens bedste bigband” The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. Så hans tilstedeværelse i aften er lidt af et skulderklap til Søren Møller, samtidig med at han musikalsk virkelig skubbede på “Speeches” med nogle soli, der fornemt tolkede taler og følelser.

## Sørens aften

Hvorefter det skyndsomt skal tilføjes at Klüvers Big Band skam også mere end stod distancen. Orkestret er i en klasse for sig, og såvel på egne ben som sammen med Dick Oatts leverede århusianerne fornemt arbejde.

Men først og fremmest tilhørte aftenen Søren Møller. Han var manden bag ikke kun “Speeches” men også de to afsluttende numre, den rockende “A.S. You See It” og den swingende “On A Day Like This”. Og så sørgede hans fingre

for, at flyglet i aftes blev en værdig medspiller.

I 2007 henvendte han sig forsigtigt til Klüvers Big Band om et samarbejde, og heldigvis lød svaret på ja. For "Speeches" kan med sine mange kvaliteter sagtens udvikle sig til lidt af en klassiker, ikke mindst hvis det, som Søren Møller håber, lykkes at få fastholdt suiten på en cd-udgivelse.

## Geiger.dk-Anmeldelse

Jakob Bækgaard, 9. Januar 2009

Søren Møller & Dick Oatts

The Clouds Above

(cd, Audial Records/ Gateway Music, 2008)

To mennesker mødes. Kommunikation. Musik. En tone, en stemning etableres. Noget, der rækker udover det sædvanlige. Et specielt sprog mellem to, der kender hinanden. Et møde mellem en dansker og en amerikaner i en hektisk metropol, hvor alting koger og syder. Midt i det hele er musikken, der svæver stille og roligt af sted for pludseligt af foretage forskellige krumspring med dramatik og glød. Det er elegant og intenst.

Albummet hedder The Clouds Above og er mødet mellem den danske jazzpianist Søren Møller, der nu i noget tid har boet i New York, og den virtuose saxofonelegantier Dick Oatts. Konceptet bag albummet har været at skabe en musik, der svarer til en rejse gennem forskellige landskaber. Som et fly, der svæver henover skyerne. Møller skriver således i de medfølgende linernotes:

"Here you will hear compositions created with my many travels between Copenhagen and New York in mind. The clouds above are the clouds as seen from an airplane. A reflection on the view of open spaces and abstract shapes that makes flying such a beautiful experience".

Når rejsen som metafor forvandles til lyd, sker det i et afvekslende udtryk, der indarbejder elementer af romantik, fransk impressionisme og minimalistisk avantgarde såvel som populærkulturelle referencer. Alt sammen solidt forankret i jazzens tonesprog. Det er en musik, der svarer godt til New Yorks ry som en smeltning pot, hvor forskellige kulturer smelter sammen.

Man kan også tydeligt mærke, at der med Oatts og Møller er tale om cats af international klasse. Det er to folk, der har været vant til at spille med og mod de fleste. Faktisk har jeg tidligere haft en reservation overfor Møller, der netop gik på hans dygtighed. Møller er uddannet på det præstige fyldte Manhattan School of Music, og alt ved hans spil udstråler dygtighed og virtuositet. Når jeg set ham spille på forskellige jazzfestivaler, ofte medbringende en amerikansk stjerne, så har jeg altid været imponeret af hans spillemæssige dygtighed, men følelsesmæssigt er jeg aldrig rigtig blevet berørt af hans musik. Indtil nu.

Det er som om duoens format har fremtvunget, at der bliver skåret ind til kernen af den musikalske kunnen: følelsernes udspring. På albummet opnås den perfekte balance mellem det lyriske og perkussive og altid i en åben dialog med medspilleren Dick Oatts. Fra det klassiske inspirerede "Prokofiev's Balcony Scene" til afslutningnummeret, den

krystallinske komposition "Butterfly", hvor Oatts overbevisende skifter fra saxofon til fløjte, mestres der et musikalsk spektrum, hvor følelse og form forenes.

På *The Clouds Above* er det begrænsende format (duoen) på paradoksal vis med til at folde Møllers talent fuldt ud og vise, hvor stor en pianist han i virkeligheden er. En lyttende kunstner med sans for nuancer og tekstur. Skulle man drage en sammenligning med en anden lignende succesfuld duo, så kommer jeg til at tænke på samarbejdet mellem George Cables og Art Pepper. Oatts har netop den på en gang tørre og varme tone i sit horn og den ubesværede improvisatoriske lethed, som var kendetegnet for Pepper. Det kan synes som et stort navn at nævne i denne sammenhæng, men når man hører albummet giver det mening. For her er tale om et flyvefærdigt musikalsk kunstværk. En fornøjelse fra først til sidst.

## Album er personligt, flot og klart

Søren Møller og Dick Oatts kommunikerer i nyt album virkelig godt sammen med solide energiudladninger og tør sprudlen.

Af Thomas Michelsen

Formuleringerne er enkle og personlige med plads til luft mellem de klart skrevne linjer. Fra sin bopæl i New York har pianisten Søren Møller længe blogget om byen og musikken med meget mere på Politikens hjemmeside.

### På turné

Fra i dag til 25. november rejser han sammen med sopran-og altsaxofonisten Dick Oatts Danmark tyndt på turne til højskoler og andre store og mindre spillesteder for at præsentere deres nye cd.

"The Clouds Above" følger op på duoens fremragende cd-debut "Storytelling", og igen hentes der inspiration på den klassiske hylde. Her med den indledende "Prokofiev's Balcony Scene".

### Energi og firskåren klarhed

Søren Møllers anslag er flot og klart, både når han, som i titelnummeret, kaster sig ud i solide energiudladninger, og når han lader blikket vandre som i "Wide Open Spaces". Energi og firskåren klarhed er nøgleord.

Drivet kan være let eller massivt, men uden at tangenterne tynges, og de to musikere kommunikerer virkelig godt sammen.

Dick Oatts mestrer både det tørt sprudlende og det for en jazzfløjtenist usædvanligt velklingende i den afsluttende, akvarelagtige "Butterfly".

De tos landsturne afsluttes på næste tirsdag sammen med det fynske Tiptoe Big Band i Copenhagen JazzHouse.



# Meget mere end reproduktion

Af Kjeld Frandsen

Tirsdag den 25. september 2007

Jazz: "A Tribute To Trane"

Koncert: "The Coltrane Latin Tribute".

En dansk/mexicansk/svensk kvartet hylder den legendariske og indflydelsesrige amerikanske saxofonist John Coltrane. Og både på plade og scene formår musikerne at tilføje deres egen personlighed, lyd og energi.

Det er 40 år siden, den amerikanske tenor- og sopransaxofonist John Coltrane døde, og hans indflydelse på jazzen er fortsat vanskelig at overvurdere. Utallige musikere har lagt sig i slipstrømmen – i teori og i praksis – men få har for alvor kunnet genskabe lyden, energien og det spirituelle udtryk. Det er dog langt fra nogen håbløs opgave at tage tråden op fra John Coltrane, hvis man da lige husker at tilføje sin egen personlighed, lyd og energi.

Det bekræfter en netop udsendt CD med de to danske musikere, pianisten Søren Møller og bassisten Morten Ramsbøl, den mexicanske trommeslager Antonio Sanchez og den svenske altsaxofonist Fredrik Kronkvist. Kvartetten har hentet værker fra Coltranes repertoire, Søren Møller supplerer med uptempo-numrene "Moller's Mode" og "Steps", og Fredrik Kronkvist står for den statiske "Eternal Light". Og her er bare fire fremragende musikere, der leverer flot, handlingsmættet og opløftende musik.

Alligevel var koncertversionen søndag aften en ganske anden sag. I hvert fald meget mere end en reproduktion af en plade, som igen er inspireret af noget fortidigt. Med kick-start i et par Coltrane-klassikere, "Satellite" og "Naima", blev der lagt an til tidløs her-og-nu-musik fra fire musikere, der bare kunne kommunikere og skabe.

Pianisten Søren Møller var med sine stærke akkorder og vitale løb en slags ankermand, og Morten Ramsbøl viste sig som endnu en af disse danske bas-mestre, der ikke blot kan spille, men også tilføje musikken en organisk og emotionel dybde. Antonio Sanchez' trommespil var utroligt levende og nuanceret, men sjældent anmassende, og så indtog Fredrik Kronkvist frontpositionen. Altså rollen som John Coltrane. Og det gjorde han så alligevel slet ikke.

For det første gav altsaxofonen klart sagt en lidt anden lyd end Coltranes tenor eller sopran, og så var Kronkvist i den grad sin egen herre. Her var et meget massivt spil på saxofonens naturlige klang og register, og dertil medrivende og opfindsomme – på én gang dybt logiske og dybt overrumplende – tonerækker.

Alle fire musikere bidrog til aftenens repertoire, og – til udelt glæde for det talstærke og nysgerrige publikum – bragte de deres musik et godt stykke videre med kulmination i en forrygende udgave af Coltranes "Lonnie's Lament". Museumsjazz var ikke et ord, der lå lige for.