



PJEV / Kit Downes / Hayden Chishom

Medna Roso

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Witness Medna Roso, a testament to transcendent musical communion. This particular recording features BBC Jazz Award-winning and Mercury nominated solo artist Kit Downes on organ, New Zealand saxophonist Hayden Chisholm—known for his distinct microtonal tuning system—contributing on alto saxophone, shruti box, analogue synthesizer, throat singing, and vocals from PJEV, a female a cappella vocal quintet from Zagreb that preserves and cherishes traditional vocal music from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The stars began to align when PJEV's director Jovana Lukic fittingly first crossed paths with Chisholm, who now calls Zagreb home, at a kafana—a restaurant with smoking and live music—in Dorcol, an old part of Belgrade, Serbia, for which the Turkish name of Dort-yol translates to crossroad. "You don't meet people like him everyday, especially in Belgrade. He is a true artist and lover of life, so I embraced and appreciated this, and I was truly inspired by this encounter, too," explains Lukic.

capella singing that he became enchanted by when moving to Belgrade in 2016. Soon after PJEV and Chisholm began experimenting, by adding saxophone as he gradually began to learn more about the songs and styles of performance.

"The first qualities which caught me were the emotional directness, close harmonies, pure intervals, and the raw physicality of the sound," he says. "Then began the journey of learning more about the meaning of the lyrics, where and how the songs are sung, and how the tradition has been gradually fading away from cultural prominence in the last decades."

The eight traditional songs here represent different regions of the Balkans, reflecting the distinct vocal styles that have developed over the passing centuries. Included in the recording are extensive notes with titles, lyrics and translations of the songs to guide the curious listener through the wondrous music.

"Even to this day I am not sure what happened there in Cologne. During the rehearsal we were struggling with the church acoustics and didn't quite understand how we would fit into the concept," admits Lukic. But the next day when the concert began they just flew off the ground. "It felt from the very first moment that we'd suddenly received big wide stork wings. Their strong and deep music gave us so much support and powerful wind in our backs, so we just had to carefully surf on it. The exciting feeling of flickering and daring organ harmonies of Kit and the image of church space filled with many colorful butterflies of Hayden's unique improvisations are something to remember."

As Downes attests, the night captured on this recording was not only magical, but a really beautiful example of what can happen when strong musical personalities from different worlds embrace the adventure of improvising together. For Downes, one of the newer musical encounters was the grand 3-manual Rieger Organ, that he describes as “a large instrument with a very generous acoustic to play in, booming 32' reeds in the pedals, twinkling Cymbelstern, glass-like Nazard and Tierce partials and soft ascending strings on the swell.”

The combination of sounds echoed mightily and timelessly in the ancient acoustic of the Agneskirche in Cologne, where the ensemble performed this spellbinding concert for a sold-out concert at the Cologne Jazz Week Festival in September 2021, which lives on now thanks to this pristine live recording issuing on Red Hook Records.

Featured artist

Hayden Chishom
Kit Downes

Band member

Hayden Chisholm	alto saxophone, shruti box, analogue synthesizer, throat sing
Kit Downes	organ
PJEV	choir

Tracklist

1.	Introduction	02:02
2.	Listaj goro ne žali be'ara	02:49
3.	Interlude I	02:05
4.	Ova brda i puste doline	05:15
5.	Interlude II	01:58
6.	Što si setna, nevesela	02:41
7.	Oj djevojko, janje umiljato	02:40
8.	Interlude III	02:45
9.	Medna roso, gdje si zimovala	02:54
10.	Interlude IV	02:15
11.	Od kad seke nismo zapjevale	02:18
12.	Interlude V	01:04
13.	Službu služi Viden dobar junak	03:36
14.	Interlude VI	02:35
15.	Licki ojkan	03:51