

WIGMORE HALL

Saturday 23 April 2022 7.30pm

My Iris Album Launch - A View with a Room

Trish Clowes - My Iris

Trish Clowes saxophone

Chris Montague guitar

Ross Stanley piano

James Maddren drums

CLASSIC *f*M

Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

Trish Clowes (b.1984)

A View with a Room

The Ness

Time

Ayana

No Idea

Abbott & Costello

Interval

Marcel Dupré (1886-1971)

Prelude in G minor Op. 7 No. 3 *arranged by Ross Stanley*

Trish Clowes

I.F.

Almost

Amber

Morning Song

Free to Fall

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Anything Seemed Possible

Our vocabulary has inevitably changed in the past few years. The terms 'live streamed' and 'in-person concert' reflect the adaptation of culture to the pandemic as well as a tentative emergence from it. Talk of the post-Covid era may be premature, and the still precarious nature of the world has given artists and audiences much to process. Who knows how *safe* we are now.

Saxophonist and composer **Trish Clowes** captures the sense of disorientation on her new album, *A View with a Room*, which she launches tonight. 'It's a play on the title of a fairly well-known novel, of course,' she explains. 'But it just absolutely sums up the feeling of the times for me...strange view points, perspectives ...but it can mean whatever you want it to mean!'

The invitation for listeners to interpret original work is entirely germane to improvising musicians such as Clowes, yet at the same time she is vocal about what she feels are important subjects for society to address in this day and age. Hence the songs she and her band My Iris will perform have several revealing sources of inspiration and references. *The Ness* is a response to images and sounds captured by filmmaker Rose Hendry along the East Neuk (or 'corner') of Fife coastline in Scotland. *Amber* is dedicated to Amber Bauer, CEO of the forRefugees charity, of which Clowes is an ambassador, and *Ayana* pays tribute to Dr Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, the writer, marine biologist and policy expert respected for her constructive views on climate change.

Very different yet nonetheless linked, these songs have allowed Clowes to show the full range of her creativity as both composer and improviser. The airy, willowy sound she draws from the tenor saxophone brings an undeniable poise to many of her themes but there is also a considerable drive, a kind of jaunty rhythmic undercurrent in her phrasing that lends to the music a vitality if not an urgency. This wide spectrum of colours and sensations is potently framed by the smart lattice of lines created by guitarist Chris Montague and drummer James Maddren, particularly when the former plays wiry single note riffs and the latter stinging rimshots that produce pleasingly high, piercing timbres that mark a contrast to some of the softer strains of the horn.

As for pianist-keyboard player Ross Stanley, he provides an impressive array of voicings to galvanise the sprightly uptempo pieces and dignify the lyrical ballads, lightening or bulking up the ensemble sound when appropriate. The strong identity of My Iris was evident on its eponymous 2016 debut, and the 2019 follow-up *Ninety Degrees Gravity* showed steady but notable evolution.

While the new material will no doubt make for interesting listening this evening, the inclusion in the programme of a classical piece, **Marcel Dupré's** Prelude In G Minor Op. 7 No 3, should also

catch the ear. 'The Dupré is one of Ross's favourites...and he showed it to me years ago when I was asking for organ music recommendations, when we were first working together,' says Clowes, a former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist and adventurous curator who launched the Emulsion festival in 2012 to reflect her eclectic outlook. 'Over time, we adapted it to work for piano and sax, improvising off the form too, and we've played it a few times at Emulsion events. (We actually recorded this last year at Wigmore too, for a duo album to be released at some point down the line). As I was looking at the prelude myself, I became fascinated with certain aspects of the harmony, and I started writing some music in response. A little while after this, I included these ideas in some of the experimental workshops I did with Emulsion in 2018, and it eventually got reworked into *I.F.*, the track from *Ninety Degrees Gravity*. Ross and I were playing a duo concert recently (with our Dupré arrangement), and we thought it could be a great idea to show the connection between the Dupré and *I.F.*'

Several of Clowes's musical role models have also liberally crossed the line between jazz and many other genres of music, above all the legendary American saxophonist Wayne Shorter, whose love of classical and folksongs from around the world has led him to produce landmark works over the last six decades. As for one of his longstanding collaborators, the equally iconic pianist Herbie Hancock has brought the spirits of George Gershwin, WC Handy and Ravel, among many others, into his creations. These sound barrier-breakers have been hugely instructive to Clowes over the years. 'Anything seemed possible to me through these artists' ears,' she comments.

Since her arrival on the jazz scene over a decade ago the saxophonist has emphatically pursued that ideal, and her collaborations with the BBC Concert Orchestra and British-Armenian harpist Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayan are key achievements to date. Also interesting has been Clowes's work with Orchestra Of The Swan, which similarly reflects a desire to broach new musical territories and move out of any would-be comfort zones.

Having said that, My Iris stands as a kind of creative 'motherhood' for Clowes insofar as the band has its own specific vocabulary, a sound that can be alternately vigorous and contemplative, which enables her, as both leader and composer, to share her thoughts and feelings as she sees fit. *A View with a Room* is music that gives a stimulating chronicle of a historic period that has provided her with much food for thought, as Clowes is all too happy to make clear: 'It is a deeply personal response to the past two years of my life.'

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