

REVIEWS OF FLYING DREAMS

MATT JAWORSKI – Muzikreviews.com, April 4 2009

"As the old saying goes, "never judge a book by its cover." In this case, the album cover to Brigitte Beraha's *Flying Dreams* is adequately indicative of what listeners can expect: the lyrical, the seemingly abstract, and the beautiful. While trading between trio and quintet arrangements, Beraha presents a collection that is worthy of praising an artist in progress.

Pianist Ivo Neame's syncopated rhythm figure marks the album's opening and sets the foundation for a track that is anything but "So Simple." Using the voice as an instrument more so than as a lyrically narrative medium, (a common trend among jazz vocalists as of recently), Beraha possesses a vocal timbre that successfully communicates; despite minor intonation obstruction, her long phrases and floating syllables are poignant and effortlessly delivered.

"Déjà Vu, In A Dream" follows as an introduction to Beraha's lyrical dancing; rather than closely adhering to a tightly-woven form or remaining within the confines of a melodic box, she narrates a dream in which she experienced the sensation of flying – the weightlessness experienced by listeners is an accurate match for Beraha's depiction. "Moving On" showcases Beraha's ability to sonically mix with the mellow trumpet tone of Joe Auckland – they sound as one; a drum solo over top the final vamp proves for a smooth transition back into the melody.

"Sunlight On Your Face" commences with a gentle vocal melody backed by thick piano voicings. As the track progresses into Auckland's trumpet solo (again, with slight but noticeable intonation discrepancies), listeners are treated to a taste of Neame's Kenny Barron-esque and masterful rhythmic comping and sense of timing – check out Kenny Barron's accompaniment of "Night and Day" on Stan Getz's *People Time*. Beraha's open invitation for listeners to "Danse Avec Moi" features a playful and bawdy French-style intro that unravels into controlled chaos as the track draws to a close.

Is it apparent that while Beraha's evolution as a vocalist is in the middle stages of development, her creative inspiration and surrounding musical chemistry are assets to her future development. For listeners who seek more than classic jazz standard forms, bebop phrasing, and predictable twists, Brigitte Beraha will likely be on the forefront of the international jazz scene in years to come – think lyrical dance in musical form or better yet, don't think – let the music escort you to the friendly height of weightlessness and the abstract.

JOHN FORDHAM, THE GUARDIAN, 27TH FEBRUARY 2009 (3 STARS)

Brigitte Beraha is a young multilingual singer-songwriter (born in Italy, raised in Monaco, now living in east London) with alert jazz instincts and a lot of promise. Vocally, she has much of the pure-toned, wide-ranging, faintly inscrutable serenity of Norma Winstone, and a little of Flora Purim's cool athleticism, too. She is good enough to be able to surround herself with sharp partners. Her light and flexible vocal lines over excellent trumpeter and flugelhornist Joe Auckland's improvised counterpoint will remind many listeners of Winstone's lyrical dialogues with trumpeter Kenny Wheeler. A premier-league young London band, including pianist Ivo Neame and Gwilym Simcock's bassist, Phil Donkin, are given generous space to stretch out. Beraha often sounds as artlessly unconcerned as if you were overhearing her singing in the kitchen, and her own lyrics have something of an isn't-life-mysteriously-wonderful-but-also-sad flavour that makes the distance to the words of Joni Mitchell or Tom Waits feel pretty substantial. But she's a skilful writer of patiently curling, subtly resolved tunes such as the insistent, swerving, ostinato-driven So Simple, or the wordless Moving On.

Ian Mann-The Jazz Mann, 18th October 2008
(www.thejazzmann.com)

"Talented young vocalist with an album of quietly lyrical but subtly adventurous original material"

"Flying Dreams" is the new album from the outstanding young vocalist Brigitte Beraha.

The album appears on the new "F-ire Presents" imprint which promotes the work of friends of the Collective whilst allowing the individual artists to retain control of their rights. It is Beraha's second album, her début "Prelude To A Kiss" having been released in 2005 on the FMR label.

"Prelude" was more or less an album of standards interspersed with the occasional original. However "Flying Dreams" sees Beraha honing her songwriting skills in a programme comprised of wholly original material from Beraha and the members of her group. All the lyrics and the majority of the music are by the singer herself with pianist Ivo Neame and drummer George Hart also making musical contributions.

Born in Milan to British/Turkish parents Beraha was subsequently brought up in Monaco. She moved to London in 1996 to study music at Goldsmiths College before moving on to the Guildhall School of Music where she met Neame, Hart and bassist Phil Donkin. All are involved on "Flying Dreams"

with the line up being completed by Joe Auckland on trumpet and flugelhorn. The instrumentation on "Flying Dreams" alternates between the full quintet and a pared down trio of Beraha, Auckland and Neame that evokes memories of the old Azimuth line up with vocalist Norma Winstone, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler and pianist John Taylor. Delivered with a high degree of technical accomplishment much of it is chamber jazz in the best sense of the phrase.

Beraha is blessed with a clear, pure, well enunciated voice that suits her material well. Her lyrics are positive and life affirming if not particularly profound and the interplay with her fellow musicians is highly impressive.

Beraha clearly sees her voice as just one component in a democratic ensemble. The musicians are given room to stretch out with Donkin soloing on the opening "So Simple". Auckland and Neame are particularly impressive throughout the album, indeed this is some of the best sounding piano Neame has ever recorded. Julian Jackson's pinpoint mix captures the whole group brilliantly.

The trio pieces have a high level of interaction between the three protagonists and a pastoral, but never bland, atmosphere. The quintet items are inevitably more forceful, propelled by Hart's crisp, intelligent drumming but a relaxed, unified mood predominates throughout.

Picking out highlights is difficult in the context of such an homogeneous album. "May Chill" is achingly lovely with "Camaleon", co-written with Neame probably the most adventurous item.

"Sunlight On Your Face" is reprised in trio format from her previous album and "Danse Avec Moi" reveals her capacity to sing in French. "Feeling High" features wordless vocals from the Winstone school as Beraha shares the limelight equally with Auckland and Neame who both solo extensively.

Beraha's quietly lyrical but subtly adventurous approach makes a pleasant change from all the identikit standards dominated vocal albums out there.

The Beraha/Auckland/Neame Trio is currently touring to promote the album with guest artists such as Hart, Paul Clarvis (percussion) and Mick Hutton (bass) appearing on selected dates. See <http://www.britteberaha.com> and <http://www.myspace.com/britteberaha> for further details. Reliable sources inform me that the trio is well worth seeing.

JAZZWISE REVIEW-NOVEMBER 2008, PETER QUINN (3 stars)

Following her standards based debut album *Prelude to a Kiss*, Brigitte Beraha returns with an 11-track collection consisting of entirely original material. The singer's first musical encounter with band mates Neame, Donkin and Hart dates back to her final recital at the Guildhall School of music and drama in 2002. Now, six years on and with a year's worth of concerts behind them, the chemistry between the quintet- she met Auckland while guesting with the group Oboto- is one of the collection's strongest points. Rich imagery, harmonic surprises and subtly crafted arrangements can all be found in *Flying Dreams*. Within her song structures, Beraha switches seamlessly between text and wordless vocalisation, effectively becoming a fifth instrumentalist often acting in unison or counterpoint with Auckland. Standouts include the floating reveries of 'Deja Vu, In a Dream', the gorgeous melodic sensibility of 'Sunlight on Your Face' (reprised from the debut) and the leftfield 'Danse Avec Moi' (growing up in Monaco, the daughter of Turkish and British parents, the singer's French is impeccable).

REVIEW OF FLYING DREAMS- Chris Parker, Vortex, 29th September 2008

Comprised of eleven originals five performed by a trio (Beraha with trumpeter Joe Auckland and pianist Ivo Neame) and six by a quintet (the above with bassist Phil Donkin and drummer George Hart) singer/composer Brigitte Beraha's second album (her debut, *Prelude to a Kiss* was on FMR) is a much more homogeneous, confident recording than her first.

She has found a distinctive sound a pleasantly wafting, slightly dreamy lyricism well suited to her unpretentiously philosophical, life-affirming lyrics and the musicians to play it: Auckland in particular interacts extremely effectively with her throughout, his trumpet/flugelhorn occasionally playing in unison with her wordless vocal introductions, more often providing striking obbligati to her swooping, soaring voice as it negotiates the twists and turns of her adventurous but attractive melodies.

Her pure, agile soprano addresses lyrics and imaginative scatting with equal aplomb, and both her close rapport with her band which has been performing regularly together for the past year and her democratic allocation of soloing time to Auckland et al. mark her out as a jazz musician whose voice just happens to be her instrument rather than as a singer plus accompaniment. A wholly enjoyable and original album from a fast-improving talent.

ROB ADAMS, THE HERALD (EDINBURGH), JUNE 18 2007

Brigitte Beraha Trio, Jazz Bar, Edinburgh- LIVE REVIEW

Despite the similarity in their names and the fact that both are trios, Azymuth and Azimuth are very different. The former, one of Brazil's biggest exports, are samba party animals; the latter represent the best in English chamber jazz refinement.

Yet, by an odd coincidence, London-based singer Brigitte Beraha's trio manages to call both of these to mind. Her group shares the same vocals, trumpet and piano line-up as Azimuth and although not in the same creative league, when their singing and playing flow they achieve a quality of sound that puts them in the same ball park.

Beraha, born in Italy and brought up in Monaco, sings clearly in several languages. Her own songs, in English, lack the poetic mastery of the jazz standards that she also favours, but her melodies and the wordless *Moving On* show a composer of promise.

Jerome Kern's *In Love In Vain* found the group beginning to spark, with Joe Auckland contributing a lyrical flugelhorn solo, and a composition by the group's resourceful pianist, Ivo Neame, perhaps pointed the way forward with its slowly unfolding dramatic development and improvisations from all three musicians.

Beraha sang bossa nova master Tom Jobim's *Talking About Love* in impressive Portuguese. If this and Hermeto Pascoal's *Joyce* didn't pack the sensuality of a *Flora Purim*, say, they did bring some Brazilian warmth to a far from flaming June evening in the capital.

REVIEWS OF PRELUDE TO A KISS

Alan Joyce in Nottingham Evening Post / 11th March 2005

****** =Very Good**

Another entry into the current trend for jazz orientated female vocalists, but Brigitte Beraha's approach is particularly agreeable claiming to base her style on such as Flora Purim, Anita O'Day and Norma Winstone. Her Material here is a superb mix, which includes a couple of originals and well rehearsed and re-worked standards. She is aided by an excellent quartet, with German-born saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock and pianist Barry Green making admirable contributions. On the opener, *Got No Blues* inspired blowing by Laubrock follows Brigitte's vocal. She sings in Portuguese on Jobim's *Retrato em Branco e Preto* and caresses the title track, Ellington's *Prelude to a Kiss*. *Twisted*, one of the CD's highlights, swings like mad with Brigitte improvising magnificently over the superb bass of Phil Donkin.

BARRY BOYCE, CHICHESTER JAZZ CLUB- LIVE REVIEW

"Still Greater Expectations - 16 December 2005 - Brigitte Beraha Quintet" - Chichester Jazz Club December 2005

I expect that my reader must be getting tired of all these variations on 'expectations'. It is very appropriate for this review, however. My high expectations of the **Brigitte Beraha Quintet** were founded on repeated hearings of their album *Prelude To A Kiss* and hearing them perform live at their album launch. Theirs was clearly music of originality, influenced but not constrained by the past, performed with great confidence and technical assurance. High praise from such as Cleo Laine and John Dankworth, Humphrey Lyttleton, Lee Gibson, and Kenny Wheeler convinced me that I was on the right track. I also found a review in *Jazz Review* magazine that identifies **Brigitte Beraha's** predominant qualities: 'one of those singers who primarily emphasises the jazz elements of her craft'. Selecting from the review, 'her scattling; her lively and spontaneous interaction with the band; and her adventurous choices of route through the melodies of standards; her excellent composing and arranging skills. She concentrates on the music's core values: imagination, individuality, and improvisation. The voice may not be the most flexible or dynamically varied instrument but it's undeniably powerful and enviably clear'. I wish I'd written all that!

So how was it for me? It was the ideal end to a happy day – corny but true! I was very surprised by the progress that the band had made from an already high level, playing with even more assurance and cohesion. The repertoire was wider and richer than before with surely enough standards for any jazz fan – and every single number arranged by Brigitte herself. For

originality and creativity this was certainly my favourite gig of the season so far – I'm sure it wasn't the favourite of some members of CJC who want the old stuff played the old way by the same old musicians. In case anyone thinks this is a direct dig at the bands that have performed at CJC in the past, just read my (guaranteed 99% honest!) reviews.

Let's talk about the live music! A selection of some of the more delightful numbers: East Of The Sun: a standard to start, with a typically distinctive arrangement, was followed by a haunting version of Moon And Sand - an Alec Wilder composition recorded by veteran guitarist Kenny Burrell – that featured **Phil Donkin**, surely one of the most creative and solid bassists anywhere. An energetic version of Porter's You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To gave solo space to everyone except Phil. **Barry Green** showed that he is moving steadily higher from his rising piano star status and **Ingrid Laubrock** was amazing and brought creative composure to her tenor solo – drawing on her work in the avant garde arena but never frightening the natives! **George Hart** on drums played a nice, relevant short solo to complement his excellent ensemble work, which was more convincing than when I heard him before. The mood switched again to two of Brigitte's own compositions: the abstract Elephants On Wheels. This number was another chance for Ingrid to revel in the dark and imaginative musical world in which she so excels. Ingrid was also prominent on the compelling Got No Blues, for which Brigitte has written a new arrangement since the album, making it more of a vehicle for the band's solo skills. Both Kenny Wheeler and I are so impressed by Brigitte's writing!

There followed two standards by two Rodgers and Hart tunes. The first was I Didn't Know What Time It Was, the recorded up tempo arrangement with excellent long solos from Barry and Phil, a nice drum break from George, and Ingrid sitting out - very nicely. The second was a duo version by Brigitte and Barry of It Never Entered My Mind, which Brigitte introduced as 'my current favourite'. This was a fine performance that demonstrated Brigitte's ability to convey emotion without diva-like histrionics and Barry's ability to create spare eloquence. What a great song!

Next a performance without drums of Sometimes I'm Happy - a light version, excellently sung, with witty interplay throughout, especially between Barry and Ingrid – followed by Jobim's Retrato Em Branco to close the first half, with Brigitte demonstrating her 'vocal technique which is quite superb' (to quote Lee Gibson).

After a mince pie, a coffee, and a talk to these fine musicians there was a further hour of the same calibre of music, still nicely varied, including my favourite from the album, Love In Vain; Love For Sale, a 'Wheeler-approved' arrangement; Autumn Leaves, mainly in French; 'On The Street Where I Live' by Lerner and Loewe; and a particularly lively version of Jobim's Desafinado.

This was a fine evening's music by some of the best young musicians around – real teamwork, no showboating, and a delight to deal with. They're all working on their 'projects', which sound great and worth hearing - but they all seem to be working on 'stuff that probably wouldn't be right for here'! Sounds like music I love.'

Tony Hall in *Jazzwise* / April 2005

****** (= EXCELLENT)**

This is the only vocal record I have ever written about in *Jazzwise*. But Milan-born Ms Beraha has made an album that really stands out of the crowd. Much credit must go to the musicians supporting her, whose sound has been captured beautifully by engineer Justin Underhill, with special mention for the sympathetic comping and swinging solos by Barry Green, whose playing is outstanding.

I probably like Brigitte's voice so much because, spurred on by this outstanding rhythm section, she swings considerably more than her contemporaries. The liner notes make comparisons with Norma Winstone, Flora Purim and Annie Ross (Wardell Gray's 'Twisted' is included), but already there's plenty of evidence of an individual sound and style. There are some outstanding treatments of standards, which bring the even more hackneyed ones back to life. 'Prelude to a Kiss' (with just bass and Ingrid Laubrock's soulful, expressive tenor at its most evocative), 'I Loves You Porgy' (just with Green), Jobim's 'Retrato Em Branco', 'Over the Rainbow', an unusual reharmonised version of 'Love for Sale'... almost every track is excellent.

And she can write, too, as witnessed by the strong opener, 'Got No Blues' and the Purim-esque samba, 'Sunlight On Your Face'. Kenny Wheeler, Cleo Laine and bassist Rufus Reid are already fans. Add me to the list.

Chris Parker in Jazz Review/ February 2005

If jazz singers are divided into those who privilege the song (Ella Fitzgerald, Stacey Kent), those who emote affectingly (Billy Holiday, Barb Jungr) and those who primarily emphasise the jazz elements of their craft (categories not, of course, mutually exclusive), Brigitte Beraha probably fits most readily into the third group. Her frequent recourse to scatting, her lively and spontaneous interaction with a sparky band, and her adventurous choices as regards routes through the melodies of standards such as "Over the Rainbow" and "I Didn't Know What Time it Was" all lead to this conclusion. Her responsiveness to piano ("Lucky to Be Me"), or bass (a version of Annie Ross's "Twisted" which, while showing off her chops, lacks the infectuous exuberance and sheer fun of Joni Mitchell's *Court And Spark*) and a stripped-down band ("Prelude to a Kiss") is impressive. She also composes intelligently ("Got No Blues", "Sunlight on Your Face"). As to whether or not she'll take her place with this debut beside the Norma Winstones and Claire Martins of this world, this depends on how many people can tear themselves away from the skilfully produced pop-jazz that currently dominates the genre's vocal market to give their attention to someone who concentrates on the music's core values: imagination, individuality, improvisation. The voice may not be the most flexible or dynamically varied instrument on the contemporary scene, but it's undeniably powerful and enviably clear, and this CD should certainly whet appetites for Beraha's live appearances.

Jazz Notes- Evening Press, York, Ron Burnett, 01/2005

The first new CD of 2005 to drop onto the Jazz Notes desk is the debut album by vocalist Brigitte Beraha, *Prelude To A Kiss* (FMR Records). As well as writing a couple of her own originals, Brigitte has arranged refreshing new takes on jazz standards such as the album title track and *Love For Sale*. Applause too, for her choice of a lesser-heard Jobim song, *Retrato Em Branco E Preto*, and *Lucky To Be Me*, a gem by Bernstein, Comden & Green.

Ms Beraha gives generous solo space to other members of her virtuoso band, with Ingrid Laubrock, usually heard on alto saxophone with Monica Vasconcelos, particularly appealing on tenor.

Not all singers are successful when venturing into the land of Ooblie (scat singing), but Brigitte employs it well with semi-improvised words on her own *Got No Blues*. Although there is perhaps too much on Annie Ross's *Twisted*, she essays just enough on the Beurke/Van Heusen tune, *It Could Happen To You*. All in all a four star album, highly recommended.

Stephen Latessa in Jazz Review.com/February 2005

"*Got No Blues*," the striking first track on vocalist Brigitte Beraha's debut album *Prelude to a Kiss* conjures a shifting and shadowy noir world of lovers who discover they may be happier lying to each other than opening their eyes to the truth. Her band, prodded by sympathetic support from pianist Barry Green, surveys an ambiguous, misty landscape. Penned by Beraha, the tune is unsettling and seductive.

Aside from another original composition, "*Sunlight on Your Face*," the rest of *Prelude to a Kiss* is comprised mostly of standards and charts safer territory. After the ethereality of the opener, Beraha's arrangement of "*I Didn't Know What Time It Was*" barrels ahead with headlong momentum, adding witty emphasis to Lorenz Hart's ode to the disorientation of love. Elsewhere, Beraha's light and lovely take on "*Retrato Em Branco E Preto*" escorts the listener on a leisurely stroll by the Brazilian coast.

Prelude to a Kiss is a promising debut from the London-based Beraha. Possessed of a fine voice, her compositions are an additional asset. It would be interesting to see what avenues her own writing might take her down on future efforts.