



***POTSA LOTSA XL
SILK SONGS
FOR SPACE DOGS***

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Silke Eberhard *alto saxophone*

Jürgen Kupke *clarinet*

Patrick Braun *tenor saxophone, clarinet*

Nikolaus Neuser *trumpet*

Gerhard Gschlöbl *trombone*

Johannes Fink *cello*

Taiko Saito *vibraphone*

Antonis Anissegos *piano*

Igor Spallati *bass*

Kay Lübke *drums*





Making music has long been a path of discovery for reedist Silke Eberhard, a musician who lets her innate curiosity transport her to new places and open new avenues of expression. Recently an engagement with traditional Asian music led her to pick up the gayageum, a Korean zither-like instrument that she first encountered during an artist residency in upstate New York, that she eventually envisions incorporating into her own projects. But few inspirations have been greater for her than the work of Eric Dolphy, the singular American winds master whose aesthetic and sound remain instantly recognizable more than five decades after his tragic death in 1964. This debut recording from her stunning new tentet is comprised solely of original compositions, but as she admits, “The ghost of Dolphy is still around in this music.”

Indeed, his music has haunted Eberhard since she first encountered it in the early 1990s, planting a seed that eventually germinated into her ambitious Potsa Lotsa project—named for the alternate name of his tune “Number Eight”—in 2010, where she audaciously arranged all 26 then-extant Dolphy compositions for a peculiar wind quartet with trumpeter Nikolaus Neuser, trombonist Gerhard Gschlößl, and tenor saxophonist Patrick Braun. When she learned of an unpublished and unfinished suite Dolphy had been working on before his death—written a woodwind quintet, rhythm section, French horn, and himself as the soloist—she reached out to Gunther Schuller, the late scholar, composer, and arranger who had worked closely with Dolphy in an effort to acquire the score. He supplied her with the first of Dolphy’s three proposed movements and she took it upon herself to construct the final two, arranging the suite for an enlarged

version of the band she dubbed *Potsa Lotsa Plus*—with Antonis Anissegos (electronics), Jürgen Kupke (clarinet), and Marc Unternährer (tuba) joining the original quartet—for the 2015 album *Plays Love Suite by Eric Dolphy*. Later, while conducting research into Dolphy at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. she found two untitled sketches in his papers that she recognized as belonging to “Love Suite.” “I checked them against what I did, and I think what I wrote was pretty close,” she says with a smile.

The seeds for *Potsa Lotsa XL* were planted during a 2017 residency in Chicago as part of Elastic’s *Exposure Series*, for which she wrote and arranged octet music with local players including trumpeter Joshua Berman, bass clarinetist Jason Stein, and bassist Jason Roebke. She titled the album’s briskly swinging opener “Max Bialystock” after a character from the comedy *The Producers* because the hallway behind the performance space reminded her of the film. “I got great inspiration from the musicians and I thought why shouldn’t I move on with that, because it was fun to do,” says Eberhard. Later that year the notion was revisited when she was commissioned by the Sydney International Womens Jazz Festival in Australia to compose music for a tentet, a project which motivated her to put together a tentet in Berlin—where she lives, and where Dolphy perished. In some ways working with so many horns sends her back to her childhood in Bavaria, where her clarinetist father conducted the village brass band. “Maybe this is my chance to work with the same sound!”

Eberhard wrote new music for this superb ensemble—with the bulk of *Potsa Lotsa* intact—hinking specifically about each voice in the band. “Fünfer, or Higher you Animals” was composed with vibist Taiko Saito in

mind, but it's context goes deeper. The first word in the title is German for the tune's time—in five—but it also refers to the five-meter diving board. "I never jumped, it was too high," she laughs. That sense of tension is masterfully transmitted in the music, which opens with cycling minimalist vibraphone and piano lines—something new for Eberhard. The ghost of Dolphy haunts some of the other new pieces like "Skeletons and Silhouettes" and "Ecstasy on Your Feet," which reflect the composer's ongoing engagement with the Third Stream Music advocated by Schuller. She professes a continued ardor for the 1960 album **Jazz Abstractions**, which featured superb contributions by Dolphy.

Eberhard also turned to her past for material, boldly reworking tunes that she's recorded with her fantastic trio with bassist Jan Roder and drummer Kay Lübke and her duo with bassist Maïke Hilbig: "Miniatür," remade as "One for Laika," "8915," rechristened "Song in Orange," and "Schirm," which retains its title. "The three pieces that I have already recorded with the trio seemed to have developed their own life—and called to me for a bigger ensemble sound," she says. "And I wanted to make those aspects of their character visible. The sound of all the musicians of the tentet came immediately to my mind. I made new versions of these pieces, added additional voices and formed new parts. I examined the pieces carefully and tried to find out which parts were suitable and which were not, and to find different perspectives. In the past, I have never taken up older material for new contexts. Only in the last two or three years have I done so. I have enjoyed taking up old and already proven pieces and letting them appear in a new light. Maybe I transferred my 'Potsa Lotsa' way of working—rear-

ranging pieces by Eric Dolphy and performing them with a completely different instrumentation, to explore the core of the compositions and to let them appear in a new light at the same time—to my own compositions. When composing for this project, I was also interested in those different approaches—for instance, making a tentet piece out of a trio piece, or to start the compositional process directly for the large instrumentation, looking at the body of sound with all its possibilities."

What emerges is Eberhard's strength and imagination as an arranger, complementing her talents as a top-flight improviser. Her charts are both lush and variegated, allowing for plenty of flexibility and space for her group, whether it's the way individual threads beautifully coalesce into a jaunty groove on "Max Bialystock," the use of wide intervals à la Dolphy on "One for Laika" transmit surprise, or how unusual timbres—like the blend of Saito's vibraphone and Johannes Fink's cello on the opening of "Skeletons and Silhouettes"—utterly transform her older tunes. Eberhard has discovered a new world of sound, and it's thrilling to hear say, "This is just the start, and I have lots of new ideas."

Peter Margasak
December, 2019



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- 1 Max Bialystock** 8:13
- 2 Crossing Colours** 5:58
- 3 Skeletons and Silhouettes** 5:44
- 4 Fünfer, or Higher you Animals** 5:54
- 5 Ecstasy on Your Feet** 7:57
- 6 Schirm** 6:24
- 7 One for Laika** 4:57
- 8 Song in Orange** 6:44

Total 51:54

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