CARSTEN DAHL

Tiger Music

Genius and experimentalist

Biography

Carsten Dahl b. 1967 in Copenhagen

Carsten Dahl began playing the drums at age 9. By 12 years old, he was already a professional drummer / studio musician and at 18 he entered the Rhythmic Music Conservatory. After two years of being taught by legendary jazz drummers Ed Thigpen and Alex Riel, he put drums aside in favour of the piano (an instrument he had never been taught in his life) and applied again to the conservatory - now as a pianist greatly influenced by Jørgen Nielsen and later, Butch Lacy, who had a significant influence on his musical identity both as a mentor, icon and spiritual teacher.

It was in the early 90's that he began to play with Embla and Niels Præstholm, Thomas Agergaard, Anders Hentze and Staffan Svensson. Their first and only CD "EMBLA" was a high point in Danish jazz and displays his freeplaying strongly - something that he would put aside for some years to go deep into the Be Bop tradition. During this time of busy collaboration, Carsten started to develop his unique style, and met (via saxophonist Agergaard) drummer Thomas Blachman and bassist Lennart Ginman. Dahl appears in various of Thomas Blachman's jazz / hip hop projects during the 90's, as well as records from the trio he formed with Ginman and drummer Frands Rifbjerg. Significant are the worldwide highly acclaimed two trio albums "Will you make my soup hot and silver" and "Message from Bud". This trio went on to record a series of albums for the Japanese label Marshmallow - "Blue Train and Be Boppish Rubbish Rabbit”. They also recorded a quartet CD with Bob Rockwell "A child is born".

Along with Thomas Blachman and Lennart Ginman he achieved great success in the trio GinmanBlachmanDahl, earning a reputation for fiery live performances. Somehow he found the time to reunite with his old teacher and drum mentor Ed Thigpen and his trio, including Joe Lovano. They made three recordings together. From the mid-90's and well into the 00's Carsten played with a great range of artists:

Eddie Gomez, Didier Lockwood, Johnny Griffin, Dave Liebman, Phillipe Cathrine, Bent Jædig, Håkon Broström, Richard Boone, Charlie Mariano, Billy Harper, Fredrik Lundin,  Jerry Bergonzi, Ludz Büchner, Ed Neumeister, Anders Berkrantz, The Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Midtvest, Reuben Rodgers, Gregory Hutchinson, Elliot Zigmund, Bob Rockwell, Arild Andersen, Jon Christensen, WDRBIGBAND, Palle Mikkelborg, Helen Davies, Michala Petri, Ulf Walkenius, NHØP, Hanne Boel, Lars Danielsen, Putte Wickman, Ted Curson, Joe Lovano, Nisse Sandström, Cæcilie Norby, Mads Vinding, Tomas Franck, Lars Moller, Phil Wilson, Jim Snidero, Tom Kirkpatrick, Thomas Hass, Niels Ryde, Richard Boone, Alex Riel, Wynton Marselis, Jesper Lundgaard, Jan Lundgren, Finn Ziegler, Jesper Thilo, Per Goldschmidt, Jens Winther,  Warren Wulf, Rodney Green, Chris Funn, Slide Hampton, Torhild Ostad, Tommy Smith, Paulo Vinnacio, Didier Lockwood,  Rifbjerg, Suzanne Brøgger, Chili Turéll and many, many more.

He appears on more than 300 CD's.

In 2007, Carsten Dahl associated with the classic Ensemble Midvest as artistic consultant, getting the ensemble to work with free improvisation. Among the many projects they worked on together was music for Fritz Lang's classic silent film Metropolis and Charlie Chaplin's CITY LIGHTS.  
Carsten Dahl has worked for several years with Bach's Goldberg Variations, arranged for prepared piano, with a release due in October 2014 alongside the Well-Tempered Clavier and Dahl's own 26 Chromatic Inventions - dedicated to Glenn Gould.  
In spring 2013 Carsten premiered his work The Fifth Dimension for symphony orchestra (dedicated to Per Nørgaard), with the DR vocal ensemble and the Copenhagen Boys Choir. On 31st October he premiered his first piano concerto, played by the Odense Symphony Orchestra with Marianna Shiviyuan as the soloist. The concert is dedicated to her.

From 1992, Carsten taught as a tenured professor at the Esbjerg conservatory, raising a generation of pianists and setting a new standard for didactic teaching of rhythm in music that became a benchmark within education. In 2011 he was appointed to a 5-year term as professor of rhythmic contemporary music at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen. He also works as an ambassador for Mental Health Fund, based on his own experiences, and regularly gives talks about anxiety depressions coupled with solo piano concerts. Solo piano is very important to Carsten Dahl, a challenge where he finds the greatest potential to work with space and time, to create music that relates to the moment. It's for his two solo albums that he's received the DMA Jazz Prize for Best Recording 2004 and 2011. Here he takes inspiration from both classical pianist Glenn Gould and jazz pianists like Keith Jarrett, Bill Evans, Cecil Taylor and Bud Powell; cultivating improvisation in extreme situations. There are also clear inspirations from contemporary music and different world regions and folk music - one of very few people able to bring together many global inspirations into one comprehensive personal expression with a clear artistic signature.

Carsten Dahl's career has in recent years been divided between solo piano and the Carsten Dahl Experience. With an uncompromising approach to jazz, he has created music that transcends boundaries and explores new territories. In 2011 Carsten Dahl even returned to his drumming roots with The Crazy Constellation Trio, with Hugo Rasmussen on bass and Søren Kristiansen on piano.

Prizes

Ben Webster Award 1997, Rodovre Music Prize 1997, Jasa Prize 2002, honoured by the Danish Music Council in 2003 for 'Moonwater' and in 2013 for 'DreamChild', DMA Jazz in 2004 for the piece 'Solo Piano', Django D'orPrize in 2006 'Master of Jazz', DMA Jazz in 2011 for the piece 'Effata', and Jazz Specials Prize for album of the year 2011 ‘Metamorphosis’. His new solo CD "Papillon" has just won the Carl Nielsen Prize 2014.

He has also been nominated for the Robert Music Prize for 'Charlie Butterfly', and received the prize of honor EWH with NHOP and Premie for 'DreamChild'. ‘DreamChild' was also nominated for a Grammy in 2013.  
The Goldberg Variations were in 2015 nominated as the Danish record of the year 2015.