

Takeshi Asai – *Trio Vol. VI*
Fono Bono Records, 2022

New York jazz pianist, educator (with his own music school - Steinway & Sons Educational Partner) and owner of a New York recording studio, Takeshi Asai, after last year's continuation of his electronic project, which was very well received in Europe and overseas, returns this year with an album recorded in the convention of a jazz piano trio. The gap of several years which separates this year's album from the last acoustic project (*French Trio Vol. IV*), allows us to observe the incredible development of the pianist, both in terms of composition (which, however, have always been the strong point of Takeshi Asai, gifted with phenomenal sensitivity and untamed imagination) and piano technique. This technique, despite the fact that from the very beginning of the artist's career it attracted attention with finesse and elegance, exuding indescribable charm, has evolved so much that in terms of technique, the pianist deserves the unrivalled title of the greatest magician of sound!

The album, impeccable in terms of production and realization (which Takeshi Asai undertook himself), with fantastic spatial sound of excellent quality, contains 9 compositions of the pianist and the closing arrangement of the well-known James Taylor's piece (1. *Will* 2. *Yonder* 3. *(I didn't know that it was) Bacon* 4. *Lotus* 5. *Air on the White Keys* 6. *Ave Maria* 7. *Mes Demoiselles* 8. *Blue Brain* 9. *C♯/D♭* 10. *Fire and Rain*). Full of allure and charm, the compositions flow with a fabulously colorful stream of beauty, in a sensual way bowing and winking at the great composers of classical music, figures associated with art, as well as jazz giants. Each of them has a powerful effect on the mind sensitive to the beauty of sound as well as on the imagination, giving clear evidence of the artist's maturity and sensitivity to the poetic range and lyricism of the free thinkers.

The undeniable elegance of the highest order and the playful nature of the composer's pen provide plenty of opportunities for emotion, delight and a smile. The pianist's graceful movement between styles or his exceptionally skilful and masterful solutions of varying metre bring to mind a sensual dance in a feast of sounds, sprinkled with an unimaginable wealth of improvisation. The attention is also drawn by the incredibly high level of performance and the excellent cooperation between the members of the trio: both Bob Gingery, a bassist gifted with great sensitivity, subtlety and the ability to operate with chiaroscuro, and the percussionist Brian Woodruff, characterised by outstanding agility and technique, not only accompany the pianist, but with their commitment they make a significant contribution to the development of the compositions. The result is an album recorded with unbounded respect for sound, where each member of the trio can not only give the best of himself, but also - listen to the sound of the other musicians, giving a phenomenal, coherent story, dazzling with climate and palette of colors.

In addition to the excellent technique, collaboration, sound quality, elegance and high level of composition and performance, one cannot help but notice the grace with which the pianist treats the keys of the piano (nota bene, the Yamaha C7, which has a wonderful history!), touching them with enchanting delicacy, but, when necessary, provoking the piano to produce a momentous, monumental sound of boundless power.

Although the music is extremely pleasant and communicative for the listener, the album contains plenty of ambitious solutions, bringing both the compositions and the level of performance to the highest heights, in full splendor and at the same time - with great majesty. The music, with its breath naturally aligns with the pulse of the listener, penetrates deep into him and allows you to see broader horizons and higher peaks. Here - every note is in its place, every sound - important and captivatingly beautiful! Thus, the mission of the label founded by the pianist with a very telling name - Fono Bono - is completely fulfilled.

Małgorzata Górską