

Experimental Music: Copernicus, Opsvik & Jennings



COPERNICUS: disappearance (CD on Nevermore/ [Moonjune Records](#))

This release from 2009 offers 71 minutes of dense recitations accompanied by progressive improvisations.

Copernicus is Joseph Smalkowski. He is joined on this release by a host of musicians who provide improvised music for his freeform poetry. They are: Pierce Turner (musical director, on organ, piano, and percussion), Larry Kirwan (on guitar), Mike Fazio (on guitar), Bob Hoffnar (on steel guitar), Raimundo Penaforte (on viola, guitar, cavaquinho, and percussion), Cesar Aragundi (on guitar), Fred Parcels (on trombone), Rob Thomas (on violin), Matty Fillou (on saxophone and percussion), Marvin Wright (on bass, guitar, and percussion), George Rush (on tuba, contrabass, and bass), Thomas Hamlin (on drums and percussion), and Mark Brotter (on drums and percussion).

Wordplay is the keynote here, as Copernicus weaves wisdom for the modern man, comparing society's decay to particle physics. His wordage flows with an appealing cohesion, delivering jarring concepts in liquid vocabulary. His voice, rich with a gravely timbre, demands attention.

The music is almost incidental, pursuing fanciful melodies that mirror the speaker's urgency and lulls. Seemingly chaotic instrumentation flows into a freeform sonic presence. Keyboards and horns converge to produce a pleasant drone. Plucked and strummed guitars strive to coexist in a turgid pool of squeals. Melodies and rhythms rise into hegemony and sink into cinematic tension.

While Copernicus accuses mankind of creating itself, blind to the quantum reality existing around it, the music strives to counter these social imbalances by achieving a wobbly unity born of chaos.

The CD comes with a 20 page booklet that provides all of the verses utilized in this recording.



OPSVIK & JENNINGS: A Dream I Used to Remember (CD on [Loyal Label](#))

This CD from 2009 features 45 minutes of eccentric music.

Eivind Opsvik plays upright bass, electric bas, drums, percussion, lap steel guitar, piano, pump organ, keyboards, glass, vocals, and software. Aaron Jennings plays electric and acoustic guitars, banjo, vocals, electronics, and software. Joining them on various tracks on this record are: members of the Nova Chamber Choir (Mathilde F. Blichfeldt, Lillian Fjell Hassel, Karianne Jaeger, Karoline Ormasen, Maria Sandve, and Hege Kristin Ulvin) on vocals, Brian Drye (on trombone), Rich Johnson (on trumpet), Rob Jost (on French horn), R.J. Miller (on drums), Peter Opsvik (on flute), and Michelle Arcila (on additional vocals).

This tuneage is quite quirky, blending aspects of contemporary electronics with classical music and filtering the morass through a very experimental lens.

In one instance, a strident piano duels with disturbed horns and buoyant guitar while cacophonous percussion comes and goes. In another case, the instruments jostle for dominance over a pleasantly strummed guitar while lilting chorales urge on the dispute. Elsewhere, contrasting guitars and keyboards indulge in a disjointed parade. Meanwhile, in another track melodies clash between keyboards, banjo and clicking sounds. Elsewhere, uncertain guitar notes attempt to find solace in a churning pool of unmetric percussion.

These compositions are eccentric and pursue oddball expressions of cerebral content. Their appeal lies in their unconventional nature. Their beauty arises from unexpected solidarity between contrasting elements. The diverse instrumentation is put to full use in accomplishing a charming discord that manages to assert melody from chaos.



