

Interview Jazzarium.pl Marta Jundzill with Joris Teepe, Nov 3, 2015

1. Many of the greatest jazzman have started their career in New York City.

What's so special and fascinating about this place? What brought you there?

I was living in Amsterdam in the 80's and whenever musicians from New York came to perform in Amsterdam, their concerts were always so much more powerful and meaningful than the local bands. So I decided to go to New York and check it out. That was a great move, because I felt at home from the first day. Finally I found people who think the same way about jazz as how I think about it. It felt like a kid in a candy store, or you might say like a fish in the water and I never moved back. I've been living in New York for 23 years now. Recently I decided to also have a home in Amsterdam for practical reasons.

2. Is there a difference between European and American approach to improvisation?

In general you can say that in American Jazz you can always hear a direct line from the Afro-American jazz tradition (New Orleans swing feel and African rhythms), but European Jazz is looking for its own values, which are not rooted in that tradition. I grew up in Europe, but for musical reasons I've lived for half of my life in America and became an American Citizen. I think you can hear this in my music.

3. How have you started your cooperation with Piotr Wojtasik?

I've met Piotr Wojtasik in 2007 or 2008 when we both taught a jazz summer camp in Slovenia. From the first moment we shared a similar taste and vision about music. At that time I was working with drummer Rashied Ali (who was mostly known for his work with Coltrane). I stayed with Rashied for 9 years until his death in 2009 and I was heavily influenced by him. Piotr could feel this energy, we stayed in contact but couldn't find a way to cooperate until he asked me in 2013 to join one of his projects.

4. 12.11.2015 Piotr Wojtasik Quintet starts a European tour. What should we expect during this tour?

I know the music will be powerful, spontaneous and emotional. Piotr is a great leader who can push the most out of his musicians. He doesn't need many words, he communicates to us and the audience just with his trumpet.

5. Are you planning a longer cooperation with Piotr Wojtasik? Some recordings? It's up to him because he is leading here, but whenever I have a

chance to play with him I take it, because I love the guy and his music. I hope we will plan to record soon.

6. **You are as well sideman, as a leader. Which role is more comfortable for you?** *When working with Piotr as a sideman I can feel very safe. I trust him and when he leads everything will be okay, whatever happens it's contributing to great music. Piotr is listening to the musicians in the group so there is freedom to express myself. When I'm leading my own groups its for a different purpose. I'm always composing and arranging and I need to find opportunities to perform my own music and share with the world. I'm leading small groups, but also have my own Big Band in New York, which plays only my music. I've also written 5 large jazz pieces for Symphony Orchestra.*
7. **The title of your last CD is *Workaholic*- Are you one of them? Beside music, is there a place for anything else in your life?** *"Workaholic" is my 11th CD as a leader and recently the 12th CD "Evidence" was released The group is called the Intercontinental Jazz Trio and I'm co-leader with American saxophonist Tim Armacost and Japanese drummer Shingo Okudaira. It is running for a Grammy this year, so if any of your readers is a Grammy voter, please vote for this CD...! You can find all about my CD's on my website and I hope your readers will get interested in my story and will check out some of these 12 CD's, I'm proud of all of them. I do not see myself as a workaholic, I just love to play music, to teach music and to share music with the audience. Yes there is a place for other things in my life. I believe that being an artist makes me a happy and contributes to a socially healthy life with many friends and a nice family.*
8. **Recording with legends, touring the whole world, invitations to various musical projects – you've already managed it. What is your definition of fulfillment?** *Performing with legends like Benny Golson, Lee Konitz, Sonny Fortune and Rashied Ali is a great opportunity to learn about myself. But in general I feel blessed everytime when I have the bass in my hands and can play for people. I also feel blessed to be able to compose and to teach and to be creative. To keep this going is both my practical and spritual goal. It's the only way I know to keep learning and developing.*