

# The Jazz Mann (GB)

January 20, 2010

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## REVIEW

Thierry Lang  
**Lyoba Revisited**  
Matthieu Michel  
Heiri Känzig  
Cello Quartet

ACT

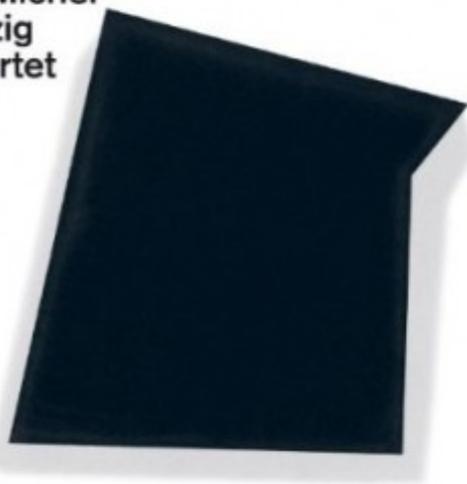
Lyoba Revisited

[Thierry Lang](#)

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

Reviewed by: Ian Mann

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Richly layered chamber jazz that draws on the classical and folk traditions of Switzerland

Swiss pianist Thierry Lang combines jazz, folk and classical influences on this, his recording début for ACT. This is defiantly Swiss [music](#) but as the album's liner notes explain label boss Siegfried Loch envisages this often beautiful music reaching out to a wider constituency.

The word "Lyoba" is a dialect word for "cow herder's chant" and comes from the Fribourg region in the West of Switzerland, the area from which Lang hails. The pianist had released two previous "Lyoba" [albums](#) locally before being discovered by Loch but the ACT deal has given him the opportunity to present his ideas to an international audience.

Lang takes as his main inspiration the compositions of his compatriot Joseph Bovet an early 20th Century composer who was also a priest. Bovet (1879-1951) wrote extensively for male choirs and this aspect of his writing has had a major influence on Lang's choice of instrumentation for this record.

Schooled in both jazz and classical music Lang uses his own [piano](#) plus the warm toned flugel horn of Matthieu Michel and the double bass of Heiri Känzig. Alongside this conventional jazz instrumentation he also uses an all male cello quartet (Daniel Pezzotti, Andi Plattner, Daniel Schaerer and Ambrosius Huber) to replicate the parts sung by the choirs in Bovet's compositions.

Bovet's pieces remain popular in Switzerland today and are still sung as a kind of folk music. In this way the three elements, jazz, classical and folk all come together in Lang's project. The bulk of the material covered by Lang and his unique grouping of musicians includes seven compositions by Bovet, two from his near contemporary Pierre Kaelin and two from Lang himself, these fully in keeping with the overall mood and ethos of the album.

The album commences with four consecutive Bovet pieces, all of them highly melodic. Lang's piano opens "Le Ranz Des Vaches", the original cattle calling [song](#), still hugely popular in Switzerland and almost a kind of non official [national anthem](#). Michel's velvety flugel horn and the leader's gorgeous

piano are the featured instruments with the cello quartet fading in and out to provide a lush, strategically placed backdrop.

The lengthy "L'Immortelle de Jean" begins with the rich sound of the cello quartet, the style here distinctly classical. Michel's beautifully articulated flugel then adds a jazz element, sympathetically supported by piano and bass. Lang subsequently takes over the melody with a typically flowing and unhurried piano passage tastefully backed by bass and almost subliminal cellos. The lead then passes to bassist Kanzig for a dexterous but highly expressive solo. The closing ensemble passages, led by piano and flugel are as beautiful as anything that has gone before.

Kanzig's insistent bass pulse adds an element of edginess to "Le Vieux Chalet" that has been absent thus far. Other than that it's pretty much business as usual as flugel and piano intertwine, although Lang does inject an extra urgency to his solo.

The bass also leads off "Rever" which features the cello quartet more prominently than hereto with the members playing variously arco and pizzicato. Sinuous flugel again features prominently and Lang's solo when it comes is his most "jazzy" thus far, an almost gospel feel offset by the counterpoint of plucked cellos and bass. Kanzig also adds a driving solo.

The two Pierre Kaelin pieces are next in the repertoire. "Chante En Mon Couer Pays Aime" is achingly romantic with Michel essaying a choked intensity on flugel followed by the fragile beauty of Lang's piano.

Melancholy solo cello opens "Adu Mon Bi Payi" but the piece takes an unusual turn when members of the ensemble, presumably Kanzig and perhaps some of the cellists, use the bodies of their instruments percussively to set up a steady rhythm that provides an effective backdrop for spooky bowings, ghostly muted flugel and delicately mercurial piano. This unusual twist is a delightful surprise and makes for a welcome change of mood, style and pace.

Lang's own "A Star To My Father" marks a return to lushly romantic territory as his elegiac piano melody is embellished by massed cellos and Michal's long, warm flugel lines. Also by Lang the following "NAN" explores broadly similar territory but with Michal's flugel sound now more open and strident.

The final three pieces come from the pen of Bovet. "Nouthra Dona di Maortse" opens with the cello quartet sounding almost hymnal, but the entry of the flugel springs a surprise as the cellos switch to a subtle tango rhythm that sounds perfectly natural. This forms the backdrop to a typically elegant solo from Lang with bassist Kanzig also featuring with some distinctive finger work in the upper register of his instrument.

"La Montagne" expands above a subtle but persistent rhythmic vamp that recalls the earlier Kaelin piece "Adu Mon Bi Payi". The closing "A Moleson", named after a Swiss peak, is a kind of folk [dance](#) that ends the album on a playful note.

"Lyoba Revisited" is a warm, beautifully crafted album that combines imaginative arrangements with some high quality, tightly controlled playing. It is often beautiful but taken as a whole the overall effect can be rather cloying. With a few notable exceptions most of the pieces are in the same style with little variation of mood and pace. A little more diversity and greater use of dynamics would have been welcome and for jazz listeners there is an absence of swing, and for all the control and beauty of the playing a distinct lack of "blue notes". Played in isolation most of these tracks make enjoyable listening and will probably sound great on "Late Junction" but taken all at once they are like a rich pudding, sweet but difficult to digest.

"Lyoba Revisited" will doubtless prove hugely popular in it's Alpine heartland and will introduce Lang to a wider audience, but not necessarily a hard core jazz one.