BE MY QUIET FRIEND MUSIC BY MORTEN OLSEN

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Irina-Kalina Goudeva: vocals

Karl Husum: trumpet

Morten Rasmussen: keyboards, percussion

Morten Olsen: guitars, basses, piano and percussion

Additional musicians

Frode Andersen: accordion on tracks 4 and 13 Helene Gjerris: additional vocals on track 11

1	Tree Song
2	I'll Make You Cry3:4
3	Interlude #1
4	Nanny 5:0
5	Wish You Were Here 5:3
6	Cold Reading Gently Stroke 6:4
7	Interlude #2
8	Lullaby
9	And She's All Alone In Heaven
10	Interlude #3
11	Mental Proposal5:3
12	Interlude #4
13	Ballistic Talent
14	Talk To Me

Total: 58:36



Morten Olsen's 'Be My Quiet Friend' is an album of paradoxes. It took more than ten years to produce, but it is based on moments. It makes use of improvisation and lets the musicians play "whatever occurs to them," but has been trimmed, edited and manipulated ad infinitum. Certain passages are entirely improvised, while others were written out in detail.

And the triumph is that it is in fact pointless to try to distinguish between the two.

For Morten Olsen 'Be My Quiet Friend' is a return to his youth as a fusion musician. But it is also a culmination of his work as a composer. As a reaction to the experience of a concert that was "campfire songs, arranged and complicated so they sounded like composition music," he decided to do the opposite.

It is over ten years since he decided to make a kind of music that finds its very DNA in the uncompromising and complex, but which then permits itself to be produced and recorded so it becomes seductive.

"I insist that music must seduce me," he says. No matter whether it is Miles Davis, György Ligeti or Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, their methods do not get in the way of the music. Their new departures and discoveries are in reality discoveries of their own musical personalities.

With 'Be My Quiet Friend' Morten Olsen has set out to find a musical stance that is not bound by any conventions. Music that can contain both complexity and sensitivity. Music that can do it all.

WHAT IS IT THAT WE HEAR?

From the first note it is clear that something is not as it usually is. That the language is different. That the pantheon that always watches over the birth of a new work is an alien one. That the group of musical gods and spirits that bless a continuation or renewal of the tradition is composed of personages quite different from the usual ones.

So what is 'normal' in this context? If what is called contemporary composition music has established anything in the course of the past seventy years, it is surely that the word

'normal' is undesirable. That the new departure, the fresh and innovative – rather than the normal – is always the guiding principle.

All the same, it is obvious that Morten Olsen's work 'Be My Quiet Friend' sounds different. By drawing as much on a musical language and an understanding of music that comes from jazz-rock, from fusion music and from avant-garde jazz as on the premises of composition music, the work puts us in the embarrassing situation of having to ask ourselves – as listeners – certain fundamental questions.

What kind of music are we listening to? On the face of it, it sounds like a jazz ensemble. Trumpet, drums, bass, keyboard and guitar. But Morten Olsen has earlier – in works like 'In a Silent Way', 'Kata' and 'Oryq' – moved within the relatively normal field of composition music. So is it jazz we are hearing now? Is this a decisive rupture for the composer?

The music sounds free, improvised – jammed. With the openness of jazz to cocreation by the instrumentalists. With the moment and the impulsive as the focus. Like a recording of a series of inspired moments where this jazz group found one another in an intense session of playing together. Has the composer dumped his historical role in the dustbin? Has Morten Olsen let go of the reins? And in that case in what sense is he a composer?

But then other structures begin to appear in the music. Electronic interventions, production details that clearly show that this is far from being the result of a moment's improvisation. In the mix and in the recording certain sounds and manipulations of the instruments recur. This is not a work that can be recreated one-to-one; it is not a work that can be read from a score and played. The recording *is* the work.

And this takes us to a world that is neither jazz nor composition music (and yes, these categories are too narrow, too old-fashioned and so on, but let us use them as a starting point, with a rhetorical function). The record as work is something we know from popular music, from rock and pop, from electronic music and heavy metal. It is the recorded music that is the final product, not documentation of something that should preferably be experienced live.

Has Morten Olsen become a 'recording artist'? Has he abandoned the concert?

SOLAR SYSTEM WITHOUT SUN

And so on. The essence of 'Be My Quiet Friend' cannot be found in the existing vocabulary. For the essence is precisely this uncertainty. Like a solar system with planets but no sun. For there in the middle where you normally find the star that not only lights up the elements but also holds them together in an ordered, meaningful, logical system, there is this void instead. This openness.

Take the disconnected fragmentation of the text, for example. Mainly written by Morten Skovgaard Danielsen, who before his death sent hundreds of texts to Morten Olsen, who then picked a line here, two lines there, and put them together. Precisely with the aim of not letting them point to any single meaning. And precisely in the clear awareness that as soon as the composer himself began to sense a narrative or a point, then he had to turn the other way.

Take the illusion of the jazz ensemble, for example. It doesn't exist. The jazz drummer is in reality a computer program, loaded with drum sounds and then manipulated by Morten Rasmussen and Morten Olsen. The illusion is complete, and you sense the drummer's grace, adroit craftsmanship and musical feeling. Only, he isn't there. The closest we get to the drummer is the small pieces moved around in the MIDI interface on the computer. Each piece a hi-hat beat with whiskers, a bass drum beat, a roll with the sticks.

Take the singer's personal jazz sound, It's a self-assured, expressive artist who sings the odd textual fragments – you can hear that clearly. And Irina-Kalina Goudeva is an established artist – but in reality as a classical double-bassist. She came to Denmark when she was engaged by the Royal Danish Orchestra as a solo bassist in 1997, and today she plays concerts all over the world.

Morten Olsen himself plays acoustic and electric guitar, percussion, double-bass, electric bass and keyboards on the record, and among these only the double-bass is his own main instrument. The approach here was that the lack of technique was an advantage; that you hold an instrument less respectfully if you haven't spent five hours a day for thirty years holding it properly.

In the process of deliberately removing the easily understood intention, the system and the conventional, the trumpeter Karl Husum was asked to improvise to sketches

or drafts that Morten Olsen had made. Then the sketch was removed, thrown out, and what had just been recorded instead became the core to which the rest of the music was to react.

Throughout the work Morten Olsen's partner Morten Rasmussen, who also plays keyboards and programs on the record, has been an indispensable collaborator. The two share a sound studio and have been making music together for so long that it "feels as if our brains are connected by MIDI cables," as Morten Olsen says. Without Rasmussen the soundscape would be unthinkable, Olsen says.

THE SWEET SPOT

The legacy of the producer and composer Brian Eno and his concept of music that is liberated from personal narrative or interpretable emotion is not far off. Music which instead has the void as its character. Room for the listener as a whole human being, in sensual but non-decodable music.

It is in the encounter between Eno's intellectual approach to a genuine sensitivity and Miles Davis' radical approach to structure and improvisation that we find an aesthetic approach to 'Be My Quiet Friend'. In both cases we are talking about artists who have searched for the "sweet spot" that exists between intellect and ignorance. Where our rules no longer apply, and we have to listen anew. As new people.

And although Miles Davis' work with improvisation resulted in impulsive masterpieces like 'Bitches Brew' and 'Liveevil', the truth is that after these sessions they cut and pasted a few minutes out of many hours of material. That is, the moment was tempered by subsequent reflection.

Brian Eno works with generative music which he cannot control, which arises from systems, coincidences or outside musicians' improvisations. But at the same time he invests many hours in the work with the systems and algorithms, and it is always easy to recognize his music. In Eno's music the choices are made in the work, up to the very moment when the reins are dropped.

It is in this perspective that Morten Olsen's 'Be My Quiet Friend' should be understood. As a voyage of exploration out into music that situates itself outside the

categories. Which tries to bring along virtues from composition music's rejection of the normal, from fusion music's search for the sublime in the moment and from artrock's focus on the record as an audio artwork in its own right.

That is why the record sounds as though it comes from a new place. And the gods that stand around it and bless the work are a motley and rarely united crew. They come from different points of the compass, and they must look profoundly different. But one thing is certain: they really have something to talk about.

Kristian Leth is a musician and writer. As a music journalist, he has worked with both radio and TV at the Danish National Broadcasting Corporation (DR) and Radio 24syv. He is the songwriter and lead singer in the band The William Blakes.

PARADOKSER af Kristian Leth

Morten Olsens 'Be My Quiet Friend' er en plade af paradokser. Den tog over ti år at frembringe, men er baseret på øjeblikke. Den benytter sig af improvisation og lader musikerne spille det "der falder dem ind," men er klippet, redigeret og bearbejdet i én uendelighed. Visse passager er fuldstændig improviserede, mens andre er skrevet udførligt.

Og triumfen består i at det for så vidt er omsonst at forsøge at skelne mellem de to. 'Be My Quiet Friend' er for Morten Olsen en tilbagevenden til sin ungdom som fusionsmusiker. Men den er også en kulmination af hans arbejde som komponist. Som en reaktion på en oplevelse af en koncert, der var "lejrbålssange, arrangeret og kompliceret så de lød som kompositionsmusik," besluttede han sig for at gøre det modsatte.

Det er over ti år siden, at han bestemte sig for at lave en musik, der fandt selve sin DNA i det kompromisløse og komplekse, men som derefter tillader sig at blive produceret og indspillet, så det forfører.

"Jeg insisterer på at musikken skal forføre mig," siger han. Ligegyldig om det er Miles Davis, György Ligeti eller Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen, så træder deres metode ikke i vejen for musikken. Deres nybrud og opdagelser er i virkeligheden opdagelser af deres egen musikalske personlighed.

Med 'Be My Quiet Friend' har Morten Olsen sat sig for at finde et musikalsk ståsted, der ikke er bundet af nogen konventioner. En musik, der kan indeholde både kompleksitet og følsomhed.

En musik der kan alt.

HVAD ER DET VI HØRER?

Fra første tone er det klart, at noget ikke er, som det plejer. At sproget er anderledes. At det pantheon, der altid våger over et nyt værks fødsel, er fremmed. At den gruppe af musikalske guder og ånder, der velsigner en forlængelse eller en fornyelse af traditionen, er sammensat af helt andre personager end normalt.

Hvad er "normalt" så i denne sammenhæng? Hvis det man kalder ny kompositionsmusik har slået noget fast i løbet af de sidste halvfjerds år, så er det vel at ordet "normalt" er uønsket. At selve nybruddet og det friske og fornyende altid er rettesnoren, frem for det gængse.

Men alligevel er det indlysende at Morten Olsens værk 'Be Me Quiet Friend' lyder anderledes. Ved at trække lige så meget på et musikalsk sprog og en musikforståelse, der stammer fra fra jazzrocken, fra fusionsmusikken og avantgarde-jazzen, som på kompositionsmusikkens præmisser, stiller værket os i den penible situation, at vi er nødt til – som lyttere – at stille os selv nogle fundamentale spørgsmål.

Hvad er det for en musik vi hører? Det lyder umiddelbart som et jazzorkester. Trompet, trommer, bas, keyboard og guitar. Men Morten Olsen har før – i værker som 'In a Silent Way', 'Kata' og 'Oryq' – bevæget sig inden for kompositionsmusikkens relative normal. Er det så jazz vi hører nu? Er det et markant brud for komponisten?

Musikken lyder fri, improviseret og jammet. Med jazz-musikkens åbenhed for instrumentalisternes medskabelse. Med øjeblikket og det impulsive som fokus. Som en optagelse af en serie inspirerede momenter, hvor denne jazz-gruppe fandt hinanden i en intens sammenspillet session. Har komponisten kastet sin historiske rolle i skraldespanden? Har Morten Olsen sluppet tøjlerne? Og hvordan er han så komponist?

Men derefter begynder der at vise sig andre strukturer i musikken. Elektroniske greb, produktionsdetaljer, der tydeligt viser at dette langt fra er resultatet af et øjebliks improvisation. I mixet og i indspilningen er lyde og manipulationen af instrumenterne gennemgående. Dette er ikke et værk der kan genskabes en til en, det er ikke et værk, der kan læses fra et partitur og spilles. Pladen er værket.

Og derved er vi ovre i en verden, der hverken er jazz eller kompositionsmusik (og ja, disse kategorier er både for trange, for gammeldags og så videre, men lad os bruge dem som udgangspunkt, som retorisk funktion). Pladen som værk er noget vi kender fra populærmusikken, fra rocken og poppen, fra elektronisk musik og heavy metal. Det er den indspillede musik som det endelige, ikke som en dokumentation af noget, der helst skal opleves live.

Er Morten Olsen blevet "pladekunstner"? Har han forladt koncerten?

SOLSYSTEM UDEN SOL

Og så videre. Essensen af 'Be My Quiet Friend' er ikke til at finde i det eksisterende ordforråd. For essensen er netop denne uvished. Som et solsystem med planeter men ingen sol. For inde i midten, der hvor man normalt finder stjernen, der ikke bare belyser elementerne, men også holder dem sammen i en ordnet, meningsfyldt og logisk orden, der er dette tomrum istedet. Denne åbenhed.

Tag for eksempel teksternes frakoblede fragmentering. For det meste skrevet af Morten Skovgaard Danielsen, der før sin død sendte mange hundrede tekster til Morten Olsen, der så plukkede en linje her, to linjer her, og satte dem sammen. Netop med det formål at de ikke måtte pege på en entydig mening. Og netop med en klar bevidsthed om, at så snart komponisten selv begyndte at fornemme en fortælling eller en pointe, så skulle han vende den anden vej.

Tag for eksempel illusionen om jazz-orkestret. Det findes ikke. Jazz-trommeslageren er i virkeligheden et computer-program, ladet med trommelyde og derefter manipuleret af Morten Rasmussen og Morten Olsen. Illusionen er komplet, og man fornemmer trommeslagerens ynde, ferme håndværk og musikalske feeling. Han er der bare ikke. Det nærmeste vi kommer trommeslageren, er de små brikker man flytter rundt på i midi-interfacet på computeren. Hver brik et hihat-slag med whiskers, et storetrommeslag, en hvirvel med stikker.

Tag bare sangerindens personlige jazz-tone. Det er en selvsikker og udtryksfuld kunstner der synger de mærkelige tekstbrud, det er tydeligt at høre. Og Irina-Kalina Goudeva er en etableret kunstner, det er bare i virkeligheden som klassisk kontrabassist. Hun kom til Danmark da hun blev ansat ved Det Kgl. Kapel som solo kontrabassist i 1997, og spiller i dag koncerter over hele verden.

Morten Olsen spiller selv akustisk og elektrisk guitar, percussion, kontrabas, elbas og keyboards på pladen, hvoraf kun kontrabassen er hans hovedinstrument. Her var tilgangen, at den manglende teknik var en fordel. At man griber mere respektløst om et instrument man ikke har brugt fem timer hver dag i tredive år på at holde rigtigt.

I arbejdet med målrettet at fjerne den letforståelige intention, systemet og det konventionelle, blev trompetisten Karl Husum undervejs bedt om at improvisere til skitser

eller udkast Morten Olsen havde lavet. Derefter blev skitsen fjernet, smidt ud, og det nyligt indspillede blev i stedet grundstammen, som resten af musikken skulle reagere på.

Under hele arbejdet har Morten Olsens partner Morten Rasmussen, der også spiller keyboards og programmerer på pladen, været en uvurderlig samarbejdspartner. De to deler lydstudie og har lavet musik sammen så længe, at det "føles som om vores hjerner er forbundet med MIDI-kabler," som Morten Olsen siger. Uden Rasmussen ville lydbilledet være utænkeligt, fortæller Olsen.

THE SWEET SPOT

Arven fra produceren og komponisten Brian Eno og dennes begreb om en musik, der er befriet fra et personligt narrativ eller en tolkelig følelse, ligger lige for. En musik, der i stedet har tomrummet som sin karakter. Pladsen til lytteren som helt menneske, i en sanselig, men ikke-dekodelig musik.

I mødet mellem Enos intellektuelle tilgang til en oprigtig følsomhed og Miles Davis' radikale tilgang til struktur og improvisation finder vi en æstetisk tilgang til 'Be My Quiet Friend'. I begge tilfælde taler vi om kunstnere, der ledte efter det "sweet spot", der findes mellem intellekt og ignorance. Der hvor vores regler ikke duer mere, og vi er nødt til at lytte på ny. Som nye mennesker.

Og selv om Miles Davis' arbejde med improvisation resulterede i impulsive mesterværker som 'Bitches Brew' og 'Liveevil', så er sandheden at de efter disse sessions klippede og klistrede få minutter ud af mange timers materiale. Altså blev øjeblikket tempereret af eftertanken.

Brian Eno arbejder med generativ musik, som han ikke kan styre, som opstår ud fra systemer, tilfældigheder eller fremmede musikeres improvisationer. Men samtidig lægger han mange timer i arbejdet med de systemer og algoritmer, og det er altid let at genkende hans musik. I Enos musik bliver valgene taget i arbejdet op til selve øjeblikket, hvor tøjlerne så bliver sluppet.

Det er i den optik Morten Olsens 'Be My Quiet Friend' skal forstås. Som en opdagelsesrejse ud i en musik, der placerer sig uden for kategorierne. Som forsøger at tage dyderne med fra kompositionsmusikkens forkastelse af det normale, fra fusionsmu-

sikkens søgen efter det sublime i momentet og fra art-rockens fokus på pladen som et lydmæssigt kunstværk i sig selv.

Derfor lyder pladen som om den kommer fra et nyt sted. Og de guder der står omkring den og velsigner værket, er en broget og kun sjældent samlet flok. De kommer fra forskellige verdenshjørner og må se dybt forskellige ud. Men én ting er sikker: De har virkelig meget at tale om.

Kristian Leth er musiker og forfatter. Han har arbejdet som musikjournalist for DR1, P1, P2, P3 og Radio 24syv. Han er sangskriver og forsanger i bandet The William Blakes.

13

1 Tree Song

(Morten Olsen)

Why don't you join me for tea in my tree we can watch the birds fly by and watch the cars and yellow fish.

Join me in my tree.

While birds wings their way I'll whisper poems in your ear by me or Poe and M.S.D. 'bout birds and bees and everything anything. In my tree.

And the wind blows And the wind blows In my tree.

It's a fine day for solitaire and tea I could dream about the ocean or learn a book by heart.

So please join me in my tree.

Why don't you join me for tea in my tree we could just let time go by and dream and wait and sleep and dream.

Could I stay here? Would I be your turbot in butter? Or any other fish don't just walk by my tree. Why don't you join me for tea in my tree we can watch the birds fly by and watch the cars and yellow fish.

Join me in my tree.

I'll Make You Cry

(Morten Skovgaard Danielsen)

I'll make you cry

Bursting for the smile of it...

Forward your pity I'll make you shitty

Burst for the smile of it

I'll make you cry

Forward your pity
I'll make you shitty

I'll make you cry

For a while. Curse the host. Be my quiet friend.

4 Nanny

(Morten Skovgaard Danielsen)

Like an Airport your Hastings whatever comes next... Like a train station your Verdun whatever comes next...

Like a shoebox carpets spoke of tranquillizers I can't remember to ever have been part of this.

Like a shoebox
I do not recall my part in this script
I do not recall

I can't remember to ever have been part of this.

In a well-trained position to tell you no. Cannes makes me think Cannes wasn't easy on us. Glass wouldn't fit your eyes. Much more pretty on your own.

As you wear me like a sorry ballet so sweet it wears all in

Nanny Nanny

Whatever comes next airports train stations whatever comes next... airports train stations

NannyWhispersNannySays

Nanny Nanny

5 Wish You Were Here (Morten Olsen)

I am not in the mood to go for a walk I am not in the mood to sing you a song.

Tried to remember: What did we do? I am not in the mood to remember at all.

Was it November in a mirror? Was it days full of rain? Was it days full of rain?

Whatever brings us back, the moon has a fever it's yellow, you know or maybe a little bit blue.

I am not in the mood to go for a walk, but I wish you were here you could stay and watch the wall with me it's yellow, you know or maybe a little bit green.

The snail offers coffee and we will accept cup after cup after cup.

I wish you were here you could dance with my shadow and sing me a song about nothing at all.
I am not in the mood.
Wish you were here.

The snail offers coffee and I will go back to the house all by myself.

14

It's days full of rain and nights full of sound.

Come and watch me explode.

6 Cold Reading Gently Stroke

(Morten Skovgaard Danielsen)

It's sad just sad

cause you spoke so many funny words whispered and sang –

thereby hangs a tale.

You once were here you once were back on a stamp as it as it wants us

how it needs to be tendered.

Asked for this prayed for that written words well-spoken proverbs why do we rise?

It's sad just sad so sad it keeps me awake just sad.

Don't think I'll ever smile don't know what to say. Let go my prey. Tuning a harp?
... and flowers to join you.
Join you soon.
You.
Don't settle. Do.
Don't.
Do not.
Don't.

Did you think I didn't know you? Did you laugh away the day as if no one would suspect you?

It's sad just sad.

Don't know what to say. Let me go pray.

8 Lullaby

(Morten Olsen)

Please let me sleep like a rock in a dessert with apples and moonshine and no one to hold.

Please let me sleep like a pea in it's pod tangerines and limousines just a breath away.

Let me sleep like a spoon in a drawer a phone out of order with apples and no one on hold. Can I be weightless?
Or just light as a feather?
Can I write poems
in ten different tongues?
Should I wear white or yellow?
Should I let my hair grow?
Or paint my fingernails green?

Please let me sleep. Please let me sleep.

Please don't let me fall off the planet while I am trying to sleep.

Please don't, please don't let me fall off the planet.

I need to dream about marbles and seashells cherries and stars,

dream about wine and shimmering fish. Apples and sand.

I can do without twinkling stars and strings without sheets of satin and silk. Just please let me sleep.

9 And She's All Alone In Heaven (Morten Skovgaard Danielsen)

Let's build that city of amour letting someone else get rid of it. Aqua green. Let's build that city of amour letting someone else get rid of it. Pale? Let's taste it. Aqua green aqua blue and she's all alone in heaven.

You never had enough of rage.
Pale...
Tasting right or
letting someone else get rid of it.

Did you ever pay the bill?

Sky-high awkward green tribute aqua yellow.

Hosting a lost key. Glancing at Alice. Dancing and sleeping as she's all alone in heaven.

11 Mental Proposal

(Morten Skovgaard Danielsen)

As you showed the moon didn't light up the day. As you walked every fear went down the drain. Walking with me in the rain, losers don't win they say bastard kings can't write plays like this.

as you showed

16

As you showed the moon didn't light up the day. As you walked walking with me in the rain, losers don't win they say bastard kings can't glide the waves like this.

As you showed as you walked the moon didn't light up the day.

13 Ballistic Talent

(Morten Skovgaard Danielsen)

Do I need to lick your humble nails at this hour? As if the nightfall isn't pink green enough. Go as far as to mail me a T shirt sweat and fear strength and doughnuts.

I'm on your side even if we don't love the snow anymore.

Do I need to lick your humble nails at this hour? As if the daylight isn't pink screen enough they watch the absurd monument of airborne trying

do I really need to harvest your self-confident restlessness

like a fruitcake sea-shaped legend.

I'm on your side even if we don't like the snow anymore.

Laugh! Or even better.
Laugh! Or even better.
Laugh! Or even better.
Mumble! Or even Heather
Stumble. Cutting a minor sound. Over.
Even better.
Over – just restore – over...

Over – just restore – over... just do that funny trick... Or even better.

14 Talk To Me

(Morten Olsen/Irina-Kalina Goudeva)

Be my quiet friend. Since you won't talk to me I'll sing for you.

Sing a tune 'bout birds.

Be my quiet friend.

Please don't cry any more I'll make you smile and you'll know what to do.

Be my quiet friend.

I cannot fool you every day by playing restless waltzes full of light or pretend that we could dance.

DDD

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