



Vijay Iyer

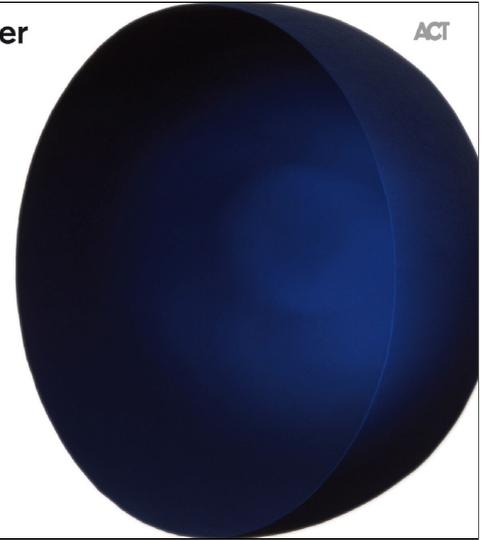
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solo

ACT

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ACT 9497-2

(LC) 07644



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Vijay Iyer is the face of modern jazz. Hardly any other musician of this genre has been more acclaimed in the media recently, or received more important prizes, than the 38-year-old. Iyer graced the headlines of numerous leading specialist magazines worldwide: *Downbeat* in the USA, *Jazzwise* in England, *Jazzthetik* and *Jazzpodium* in Germany, *Concerto* in Austria, and *Musica Jazz* in Italy. His ACT debut, "Historicity" which came out in autumn 2009 – Iyer's first full album in the classic piano trio format and, at the same time, a profound redefinition of this genre – was named "Jazz Album of the Year" in the most important American daily newspapers: the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Detroit Metro Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as on *National Public Radio* and *PopMatters.com*. The *All Music Guide* described "an unbelievable CD," and it also triumphed in three important international critics polls: "Historicity" was named number one in the *Downbeat* poll, number two in the *Jazz Times* Poll after Joe Lovano, and number one in the *Village Voice Jazz Critics* Poll, beating Lovano and other American jazz stars such as Keith Jarrett. Recently, Iyer has also won Germany's most important music prize – the *ECHO Jazz* for the "best international ensemble". And finally he has received the prestigious American Jazz Journalists Association Jazz Award 2010 as "Musician Of The Year".

The most surprising thing about this unrivalled success story is that Iyer didn't make any compromises along the way. The New York pianist and composer concentrates fully on his own musical value system, and any rapprochement to pop or world music appears utterly on his own specific terms. The music of this autodidact pianist-composer has an unrivalled complexity and distinctiveness about it. It baffles, captivates and entices with its highly rigorous yet also seemingly effortless incorporation of very different influences into its sound world. This achievement also reveals a man of great musical wisdom. His academic background does not yield overly scholastic-sounding music; rather, his work displays great breadth, depth, and feeling.

This is impressively revealed anew in his second ACT album, simply called "Solo", with which Iyer now enters the supreme discipline of jazz piano. It is his first solo album and, fittingly, he dedicates himself to serious reflection. After contemplating temporal and cultural contexts with "Historicity", with "Solo" he now focuses on the self. "Autoscopy refers to a certain type of 'out-of-body experience' in which you perceive your actions from outside of (usually above) your body. Playing music occasionally offers that experience. In a different sense, so does making a solo album." Gesture, character, and disposition come together in this impression of one's own actions (Iyer uses the term "Hexis," which means disposition or stance) which conveys, visibly and audibly, the intent which precedes the action.

The disposition, Iyer's expression, can not only be heard on every piece on the album but, in a magical way, can also be felt. As on "Historicity", his playing is permeated by the jazz tradition, the technique, disposition and colours as purported beyond the musical notes by Thelonious Monk, Andrew Hill, Randy Weston, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra (who Iyer also names in his liner notes). Yet these carefully observed influences are only the palette from which Iyer mixes his own new colours. He succeeds in doing this in a fascinating way right at the beginning – in an acknowledgement of one of his first pop influences, "Human Nature", the Michael Jackson song composed by Steve Porcaro, is harmonically and rhythmically reinterpreted by Iyer. Two Ellington adaptations are also phenomenal: Iyer revives "Black and Tan Fantasy" from the early Cotton Club period with Bubba Miley's typical jungle sound almost in the original form in stride and ragtime guise before catapulting it to the modern day. In contrast, the late work "Fleurette Africaine", provides the dazzling and historic key material for a musical study on origin, foreignness and identity, about mourning and pride – topics which Vijay Iyer, who is of Indian descent, has often examined.



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Photo by ACT / Jimmy Katz

The almost rapturous, nostalgically lingering embrace of standards ("Darn That Dream" is also on the album) perfectly complement Iyer's own pieces, which are bursting with ideas and colours. Iyer's spectrum ranges from lyrical to hard-driving (particularly "One For Blount"), from minimalistic to opulent, from consonant to atonal (dominant in "Autoscopy") and all this is wondrously brought together into a harmonious relationship. "Solo" is the most striking evidence: the most exciting, pioneering and intelligent sounds to currently come from the piano keys in jazz are associated with the name Vijay Iyer.

The CD:

Vijay Iyer – Solo – ACT 9497-2 – LC 07644

Line Up:

Vijay Iyer / piano

Tracks:

- 01 Human Nature (Steve Porcaro / John Bettis) 6:07
- 02 Epistrophe (Thelonious Monk / Kenny Clarke) 4:56
- 03 Darn That Dream (Jimmy Van Heusen / Eddie DeLange) 4:14
- 04 Black & Tan Fantasy (Bubber Miley / Edward K. "Duke" Ellington) 4:50
- 05 Prelude: Heartpiece (Vijay Iyer) 2:06
- 06 Autoscopy (Vijay Iyer) 6:38
- 07 Patterns (Vijay Iyer) 8:29
- 08 Desiring (Vijay Iyer) 4:50
- 09 Games (Steve Coleman) 3:37
- 10 Fleurette Africaine (Edward K. "Duke" Ellington) 7:56
- 11 One For Blount (Vijay Iyer) 3:03

Total time 57:04

Produced & arranged by Vijay Iyer / Co-produced by Cookie Marenco / Recorded May 16-17, 2010 and mixed May 18, 2010 at OTR studios, Belmont, California, Engineer: Cookie Marenco

ACT - The Art in Music:

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Vijay Iyer on ACT:

Vijay Iyer Trio „Historicity“ (ACTCD 9489-2 / ACTLP 9489-1)

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