

Wasilewski/Kurkiewicz/Miskiewicz TRIO

Marcin Wasilewski: piano; **Slawomir Kurkiewicz:** double-bass; **Michal Miskiewicz:** drums

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Marcin Wasilewski, Slawomir Kurkiewicz, and Michal Miskiewicz have toured Europe and America with Tomasz Stanko and appeared on his highly successful "Soul of Things" and "Suspended Night" albums (recorded in 2001 and 2003, respectively), and much has been written about the young musicians, all still under 30, who have provided a fresh new context for the great trumpeter's darkly Slavic soliloquies. They have helped him and he, certainly, has helped them.

Stanko argues that "In the entire history of Polish jazz, we've never had a band like this one. I'm surprised by these musicians every day. They just keep getting better and better." But the pianist, bassist and drummer are much more than Stanko's 'backing band'.

In Poland, Wasilewski, Kurkiewicz and Miskiewicz have a strong reputation as an autonomous group in their own right, as well as a playing history that goes back to the early 1990s. As the Simple Acoustic Trio, they have won many awards, and released five albums for small independent labels. "Trio" is the first of their recordings to be released internationally: still acoustic but no longer as "simple", this is piano trio music of some real depth. The album was recorded in Oslo in March 2004.

Marcin Wasilewski and Slawomir Kurkiewicz began playing together in 1990 when both were 15 year old students at the High School of Music in Koszalin. The first edition of their trio was launched the following year. In 1993 Michal Miskiewicz joined them on drums and the trio's line-up has been stable ever since. Since 1994 they have been working both with and without Tomasz Stanko. Individually, members of the trio have also played with international improvisers including Jan Garbarek, Gianluigi Trovesi, John Surman, Louis Sclavis, Arthur Blythe, Joe Lovano, Bernt Rosengren, Dino Saluzzi, Bobo Stenson, Anders Jormin, Manu Kathe and Jon Christensen, and with leading exponents of Polish jazz such as Tomasz Szukalski, Piotr Wojtasik, Michal Urbaniak, Janusz Muniak and Zbigniew Namyslowski.

Most of the material on "Trio", the album, is either self-penned, with Marcin Wasilewski as principal composer, or improvised by the trio, but there are also some inspired cover versions. The trio play Wayne Shorter's "Plaza Real", acoustically restating a piece that Shorter followers know from late-period Weather Report. They play Stanko's "Green Sky", which can be heard in a very different version on "Matka Joanna". And there are two choices that may seem more surprising, pop singer Björk's "Hyperballad" and composer Karol Szymanowski's "Roxane's Song" from the opera "King Roger" (1920-24).

Although there's a long tradition of jazz musicians making art out of pop (that's how so-called "standards" were born) the trio's adoption of the Björk song has no such ambitions. Marcin Wasilewski has long been intrigued by Björk's singular creative world, and was drawn, spontaneously, to try the pretty "Hyperballad" with the trio. It worked instantly and has remained in the programme. Drummer Michal Miskiewicz brought in the Szymanowski tune with similar lack of conceptual intent, and that too found its way into the repertoire. Michal: "We just liked both pieces very much and found them inspiring, with beautiful melodies and a spirit we felt we could bring into our music."

The trio is very much a group, and as Don Heckman observed, reviewing them with Stanko for the Los Angeles Times, "Their years together have resulted in an ensemble with an utterly symbiotic creative flow, solos darting through collective passages as the music streamed fluidly from one selection into another. Kurkiewicz and Miskiewicz play with a fertile combination of swing and subtlety...Wasilewski's piano soloing displayed a coalescing talent, a potentially emerging jazz star in his own right."

The release concert will take place at the Rozmaitosci Theatre in Poland on March 1st. The members of the Trio tour the USA from coast to coast with Tomasz Stanko also in March, with dates including a residency at New York's Birdland club.