



**Future Song (Live Reflections)**  
**Marilyn Mazur (Stunt)**  
*Drapery*  
**Laura Toxværd (ILK Music)**  
 by Mark Keresman

Percussionist Marilyn Mazur, born 66 years ago this month in New York and raised in Denmark, has established herself in the oft-overlapping zones of jazz, world music and improvised music. *Future Song (Live Reflections)* seems to summarize Mazur's artistic past while not giving in to any sort of nostalgia or retro-vibe. "Subway Groove" has a lilting melodious hook, then the lilt is supplanted by a dollop of sardonic menace courtesy of some good-naturedly lurching-forward rhythms and slightly dissonant ensemble riffs, including a guitar lead driven by some feverish sustain. The brief "Love Eruption" is, despite the seeming lack of a melodic line, a compelling free-verse sonic poem/interlude. The kaleidoscopic nearly-eight-minute "First Dream" brings to mind mid '70s Miles Davis via Nils Petter Molvaer's heated trumpet, bubbling keyboards, wordless vocals, percolating percussion, undulating wah-wah and roiling percussion waves; the effect is entrancing then evolves into an unsettling panorama, the various instruments and sounds poking from the background to the fore, trumpet crying with dignity and longing, a beacon fighting a fogbank to be seen.

Laura Toxværd (b. 1977) is a Danish alto saxophonist who paid those figurative/literal dues with Mazur, Raymond Strid and John Tchicai. She has a tart, mercury-fluid tone that evokes, surprisingly, few peers. Eerie ballad "Lament" finds her velvety yet gently harrowing alto negotiating through a choppy sea of Peter Friis Nielsen's rippling, steely electric bass, Mazur's heartbeat-like drumming and the surreal crackle of guitarist Gustaf Ljunggren's six (?) strings. The feeling both soothing and queasy, Toxværd subtly emotive, full of yearning yet never quite wearing her heart on her figurative sleeve. "Keys" finds her getting deep into her horn, driving into dark-ish, guttural expression, over-blowing but in a coolly deliberate, raspy-vocalized manner.

Both of these albums are sterling examples of the mutability of jazz and the continuing possibilities of fusion and are heartily recommended to cultural gatecrashers and anti-purists.

For more information, visit [sundance.dk](http://sundance.dk) and [ilkmusic.com](http://ilkmusic.com)



**Amalgam**  
**Ivo Perelman/Matthew Shipp (Mahakala Music)**  
*Garden of Jewels*  
**Ivo Perelman Trio (Tao Forms)**  
*Deep Resonance*  
**Ivo Perelman/Arcado String Trio (Fundacja Sluchaj!)**  
 by Steven Loewy

The last several years have witnessed an explosion of activity from Brazilian saxophonist Ivo Perelman, who turns 60 this month. His winning musicality, relentless efforts to expand the reach of the tenor and numerous recordings, often with his sometimes alter-ego, pianist Matthew Shipp, have catapulted him to the first ranks of the world's free improvisers. What makes this more impressive is that Perelman seems to enjoy an uncanny

ability to reinvent himself and, over the decades, has varied his style and approach remarkably, exploring and testing strategies and shifting and evolving from a fire-breather immersed in the extremes of the '60s to a subtle, sophisticated performer who combines a uniquely personal approach to his horn while absorbing and redirecting his formidable energy.

The recordings reviewed here are the latest in his continually growing discography, offering a glimpse at some new directions. Ultimately, the question must be asked: is Perelman a revolutionary, striking new chords that energize and even electrify an existing tradition, or is his approach one that conserves and expands? While these cannot be answered fully in the course of a review and perhaps are yet answerable, the trinity of approaches developed in these recordings offers a glimpse at some answers.

Shipp and Perelman have been performing together for decades, producing more than ten albums and generally receiving critical accolades for music in which the two developed an uncanny resonance. After pronouncements that the two of them had essentially accomplished all that they could accomplish together, they nonetheless have, reluctantly, continued to edge toward new ways of relating.

For *Amalgam*, the pace lessens somewhat, saxophone and piano look inward a bit, the strong sense of camaraderie still prevailing, and there remain the signature forays to the altissimo range and the subtle, sophisticated performances by Shipp, who focuses on repetition and deep listening, with an unmitigated independent streak that inspires Perelman masterfully. So, for example, on "Part One", you could think that the saxophonist's huge round sound qualifies him as a disciple of a modernized Coleman Hawkins while the following piece opens with quietly dense piano with breathy saxophone added, eventually exploding in dense piano chords, a squeaking horn, morphing to a lovely full-toned venture. There is great variety through all 12 pieces, intense piano and a horn that is clearly an extension of self.

*Garden of Jewels* adds drummer Whit Dickey to the duo. Although this trio has only recorded once before and despite the three of them performing, as usual, without any preparation, the three acquit themselves admirably.

The addition of Dickey gives the trio a new sound, more aggressive but also in some ways more fun to hear, with greater variety and more taking of chances. Perelman doubles down on his falsetto notes and on "Four", there is such great interaction among the three that they sound like a longstanding group. The unsung and modest Dickey splendidly powers the unit, with Perelman all over the horn and Shipp creating tension with pounding repetitions. This album is unabashedly entertaining, structurally focusing on odd syncopations and jagged short phrasing, each piece with its special moments.

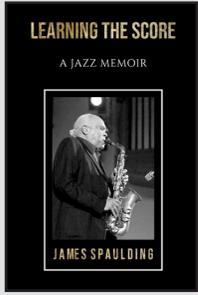
The last of the three recordings, *Deep Resonance*, is arguably the best, though simple comparisons are almost meaningless, considering the distinctly different strategies harboring deeply spun delights. Performing with the resurrected Arcado String Trio, which has not recorded together in decades, Perelman makes himself into a sort of cello, blending in to the swirls of energized machinations that explore myriad possibilities.

Perelman studied classical guitar, took up the cello and even "tried" violin, viola and bass as a child. The Arcado Trio has never sounded better and with Perelman sounding so natural, the trio easily becomes a magnificent string quartet, but when the strings are as talented as Mark Dresser on acoustic string bass, Hank Roberts on cello and Mark Feldman on violin, you know it will be something special and it is, particularly with the addition of Perelman's inspired playing. The results are magnificent, with all kinds of noises and sounds emanating, feeling at times like a

high pitched human voice on the opening track and at others a rich tapestry of striking cacophony. When all four go high, the striking dissonance is thrilling. The strings are just as effective when pursuing dense, slow tempos, as on the second track, or when they show off their shimmering beauty with sliding glissandos on the third. You could even say the heavens open, as there are stints of pizzicato, of squeaky high pitches and much, much more. The results are simply exquisite, making this a clear choice as one of the best recordings of 2020.

For more information, visit [mahakalamusic.com](http://mahakalamusic.com), [taoforms.bandcamp.com](http://taoforms.bandcamp.com) and [fsrecords.net](http://fsrecords.net)

## IN PRINT



**Learning the Score: A Jazz Memoir**  
**James Spaulding (Speetones Book Publishing)**  
 by Kevin Canfield

Many autobiographies are rife with boasts and score-settling. James Spaulding could have easily written such a book. His accomplishments are impressive and in more than five decades in jazz, the alto saxophonist/flutist has stared down numerous racists and scoundrels. His music, he writes, has given him a "unique understanding of the sufferings of my people." Yet Spaulding's memoir is a beneficent self-portrait of a resilient artist resolved to help younger musicians dodge the pitfalls of a hard-knock profession.

Well known for his versatile talents—he was part of both the Sun Ra Arkestra and played "straightahead bebop" alongside Freddie Hubbard and other stars—the 83-year-old was immersed in music from the start. His father, a jazz guitarist, bought five-year-old Spaulding a bugle. He formed a band at 11 and soon was playing alto and flute at teenage dances. After stints in the Army and music school, he secured a place in Sun Ra's band. "Sunny," he recalls, gave ample latitude: "Our only instruction was to not repeat the same idea twice." Spaulding played on several Sun Ra albums, but "received very little in salary"—a common theme in this candid book.

He was with the David Murray Octet for more than a decade, worked often as a sideman and recorded as a leader several times. In Japan with Murray, autograph-hungry fans made him "feel more at home and appreciated than I have ever felt here in America." Spaulding writes vividly about the stateside racism that forced him to "enter the white clubs through the back door." Once, when leading a band, he "felt we would get more work if the leader was white" and so he gave top billing to a white trombonist. Some fellow Black musicians were understandably upset. The painful episode helped push him to "the verge of a nervous breakdown."

Like many, Spaulding often worked for paltry pay and was deprived of his deserved royalties. Thus the closing section includes a detailed primer on contracts, copyright and artists' unions. "I have worked as a professional musician in the land of my birth under some tough, uncomfortable and undesirable conditions," he writes. This generous book exemplifies the grit required to make it in a demanding field.

For more information, visit [jamesrspaulding.com](http://jamesrspaulding.com)