

and music ranging from “romantic elegy to raging fury” characterized the work of this trio. While Wolf Kampmann goes on to say that “Ganelin may be less missionary and pugnacious” with his new cohorts, the earlier statements could easily apply to this trio as well. Two very long pieces, clocking in between thirty and forty minutes each, and a significantly shorter closing piece comprise this DVD. Ganelin, who plays piano and percussion, is joined by Petras Vysniauskas on saxophones and Klaus Kugel on drums and percussion. The concert, recorded live at the Lithuanian National Philharmony Vilnius in 2005, begins with a piece called “Conversation I.” Ganelin’s new age-meets-ECM lines open and close the piece while a plethora of other ideas occur in between. Kugel backs Ganelin at the start and conclusion with lots of metallic percussion, like cymbals, bowls and finger cymbals. After a few minutes, Vysniauskas enters with his soprano saxophone and things start to build in intensity and volume. Ganelin goes through some fast, rippling runs down the piano near the ten-minute mark and things get rather cacophonous over the following minutes. Just when the tension seems to be unbearable, the saxophone and drums depart and leave Ganelin to cast some darkness over the music with some dreary synthesizer and piano work. Vysniauskas switches to alto saxophone and the trio begins to build, once again, toward a peak in tension, volume, emotion and dissonance. Brief bits of beauty emerge with a few minutes remaining in this piece, things get stormy one last time, and the original motif returns to close the first piece.

Choosing to release a live performance on DVD is, likely, a sign that the artist values the visual aspect of the performance as being of great importance. This performance was filmed with many different camera angles and, while the constant movement back and forth can be bothersome at times during the first piece, it seems to really work well during the last two pieces. “Conversation II” begins with a drum and percussion dialogue from Ganelin and Kugel. After three minutes of bombastic percussive work, Ganelin moves to piano and Kugel lays down a slightly irregular swing pulse. Things move in a more lyrical direction near the ten-minute mark on this piece and a steady rhythmic pattern, and a constant emphasis on half-step motion, leads into the next section of music. The most extreme musical moments of the DVD occur when Ganelin starts playing the strings on the inside of the piano and starts using small drums at the same time. Vysniauskas joins the fray with some fog-horn-like bellows from his soprano saxophone. Things briefly move in a swing direction after twenty minutes and then, momentarily, get Monk-ish several minutes later. Over the course of ten more minutes we’re treated to some great soprano saxophone work with gentle piano comping underneath, a return to the percussive dialogue between Ganelin and Kugel, and a slightly demented, circus-like synthesizer line toward the end of the piece. “Homage To Friends” begins and ends with some great, Wayne Shorter-like soprano saxophone statements from Vysniauskas and features some slightly creepy sounding music in the center of the piece. On the whole, melodically, musically and structurally, this piece is the highlight of the concert. The Ganelin Trio Priority, with this live DVD, has produced some eye-opening, surprising and challenging music for the adventurous listening public. ■

DVD Review



Ganelin Trio

LIVE AT THE LITHUANIAN NATIONAL PHILHARMONY VILNIUS 2005 DVD — Nemu Records. www.nemu-records.com. *Conversation I; Conversation II; Homage To Friends*.

PERSONNEL: Vyacheslav Ganelin, piano/synthesizer/percussion; Petras Vysniauskas, alto saxophone/soprano saxophone; Klaus Kugel, drums/percussion.

By Dan Bilawsky

Anybody with an aversion to free jazz and long, open-ended musical improvisational developments need not read on. If you are still with us, the Ganelin Trio Priority’s new DVD might be up your alley. Vyacheslav Ganelin, the leader of the group, had a trio with the same instrumentation, piano, saxophone and drums, in the 1970’s. “Eruptions,” “open structures,”