

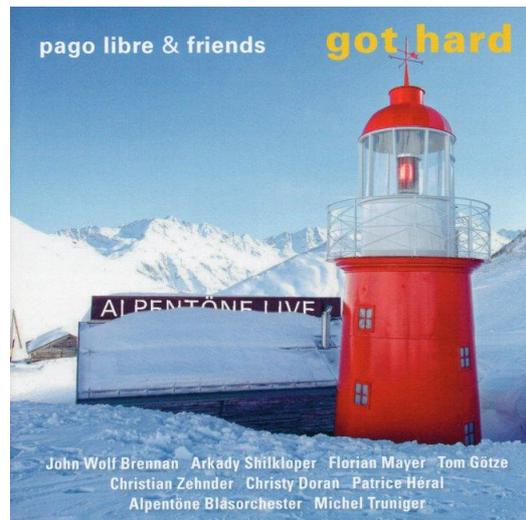


THE ART MUSIC LOUNGE



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GOT HARD / BRENNAN: *got hard* – *FunPhare for the Common Sense. Randulin Variaziuns. GruyAIR. Lai Nair. Tü-Da-Do. ¿Nana? Tam Lyn. Fake Five. SHILKLOPER-BRENNAN: Robin. BRENNAN-DORAN-HÉRAL: got hard – a ma/thema/gical fortspinnung.* / **Pago Libre** (Florian Mayer, *vln*; Arkady Shilkloper, *Fr-hn/Alphrn*; John Wolf Brennan, *pno*; Tom Götze, *bs*); **Alpentöne Bläserchester**; **Christian Zehnder, voc**; **Christy Doran, gtr**; **Patrice Héral, dm/perc** / **Leo Records CD LR 835 (live: August 19, 2017)**

This CD is a bit of a different flavor from the free-jazz music of Ivo Perelman, being a set of what can only be termed third stream compositions by **John Wolf Brennan**, written for his own quartet **Pago Libre**, a guest vocalist, guitarist and drummer, and the Lucerne-based **Alpentöne Bläserchester**. Its miracle is that the music was composed and performed in just three months with only three rehearsals. Brennan must be thanking his lucky stars that it turned out as good as it did.

The first number sounded much like experimental big-band jazz of the late 1960s-early '70s, with multiple rhythm changes and very complex writing for the ensemble, while the second, based on a very Middle Eastern folk song from the Engadine, according to the liner notes, "in the local Rhaetoromanic idiom called Vallader." But it has the kind of hypnotic sound of much Indian music focusing on long drones sung by Christian Zehnder in an overtone mode with "kyrgarah" deep sea diving voice: thrown in, violin, guitar and French horn. Eventually it moves from slow droning to a sort of loping, pseudo-R&B beat with fine solos from the principals.

By contrast, the Shilkloper-Brennan piece **Robin** is a variant on the old Bee Gees' disco hit *Stayin' Alive*, greatly improved by swinging it with a jazz beat and rewriting the melody line. Shilkloper plays the bridge melody while violinist Mayer swings behind him, then come solos by Doran and Mayer. We then get, as John Cleese used to say, "something completely different" in the outside jazz-classical composition **got hard – a ma/thema/gical fortspinnung**, which get a little wild to say the least yet somehow manages to hold together, featuring Doran, Brennan, and Patrice Héral. We then return to slow droning in the Celtic-inspired **GruyAIR**, which features what sounds like an accordion in addition to some interesting wind scoring. This piece got on my nerves with its incessant wordless yodeling against an accordion background, but the ensuing wind passage with violin was extremely interesting.

Lai Nair is a duet for Alphon and bass, and a very fine piece it is, too, with interesting tempo changes and a sort of loping beat that propels it gently but firmly. Sadly, **Tü-Da-Do** begins with some really awful screaming-yodeling. Leave it to rock people to ruin the sound of yodeling like they've ruined folk and classical singing, but if you mind can shut out the awful sound of Zehnder's voice there is some good music going on behind him. Well, at least the live audience thought it was hot poop.

¿Nana? begins with than noisy, inarticulate rapping by some noisy woman, moves into busy drumming with vocal interjections, then goes into a rock beat. Oh, how I hate rock music. You have absolutely NO idea how much I hate this crap...like the plague, and a plague it is in both the classical and jazz worlds. A pox on it. Yet there are some interesting interjections from Mayer, Shilkloper and Doran that perk up one's ears temporarily. Ah, but here comes our awful rock yodeler once more. A pox on him, too! Following this is some kind of Celtic piece with bagpipes, followed by a fiddle tune.

Apparently, Brennan is really big on the Celtic thing which, again, is not jazz, although the band does swing a little on the bridge. Happily the last piece, **Fake Five**, returns us to the true jazz world, with some interesting scoring and solos, though it closes out with some weird group yodeling.

The program, as noted above, is a bit uneven in quality but still mostly interesting, worth hearing for the outstanding compositions and arrangements it contains.