

Helen Sung,
Sungbird after Albeniz

Sunnyside Records

By George W. Harris, All About Jazz.

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Get your credit cards out for buying this one, it's a real winner. Very rarely has the combination of jazz and classical genre's worked out. Miles' "Sketches of Spain" and MJQ's "Blues on Bach" just about covers it, and it's understandable if you're skittish about trying it again.

Pianist Helen Sung has done it right, intertwining solo piano works in the Romantic vein with mixtures of band pieces that imbibe influences from Coltrane to Jamal. Six of the compositions are from the 19th century composer Isaac Albeniz, yet Sung brings them up to date in a stirringly remarkable fashion. Compositions like "Prelude", "Tango" and "Capticho Catalan" are exquisite, intimate and fluorescent pieces that conjure up images of Basque countryside. Meanwhile, Sung's own "Preamble", is reminiscent of Coltrane's "Crescent", and "Shall We Tango?" harkens back to Pershing Room Ahmad Jamal. Marcus Strickland gives off some remarkably restrained sax work on the session, being able to show feeling and emotion without breaking the desired atmosphere, no small feat.

The rhythm section of Samuel Torres (percussion), Nasheet Waits (d) and Reuben Robers (b) is sympathetic without being overly deferential. They know they are onto something important on this recording. I personally guarantee you will be as fascinated by this disc on the 20th listening as on the first. Find it now!