

saxophonist Neta Raanan – these artists have formed an elegant musical relationship.

Boudreau – a talent worth watching – goes for unforced clarity rather than the nth degree of excitement. It won't matter to you that his fresh, spacious and airy interpretation of this piano-driven repertoire lacks the kind of celebratory noise that many debutants go for on their first outing on disc.

**Raul da Gama**

## Jump

**Julietta Eugenio; Matt Dwonszyk; Jonathan Barber**

**Greenleaf Music GRE-CD-1092 (julietta-eugenio.com)**



► Many musicians today put out what may be called mixed compilation programs on their debut discs. It's almost as if they are testing the waters, so to speak; playing

in a variety of styles and personas. However, it is a healthy sign when the program makes intrinsic musical sense from start to finish, revealing not simply a mature program, but a near-fully formed musical voice. This is exactly the case with *Jump* by tenor saxophonist Julietta Eugenio.

The smoky syntax of Eugenio's music speaks to a rare kind of maturity that is rooted in a deeply reflective psyche. Her compositions seem made for a molten, meditative saxophone voice that tumbles out of the bell of her horn in parabolic glissandos forming profound melodic lines born of tender phrases ending with sensuously whispered vibrato.

Mostly original work by Eugenio fills this album – except for two standards – revealing a musician who mines her tenor for all the tonal purity that it can offer. Nothing is overly mannered; everything seems poised, balanced and intuitively right. *For You, Another Bliss, Tres*, and the exquisitely paced standard, *Crazy He Calls Me* are gleaming gems.

Finally, if trio music is an intimate conversation among friends, then Eugenio, bassist Matt Dwonszyk and drummer Jonathan Barber parlay with the familiarity of old friends. Yet their playing retains the gracious etiquette associated with musical *noblesse oblige*, which comes from being musicians of a thoroughbred sort.

**Raul da Gama**

## The Next Step

**Roberto Occhipinti; Adrean Farrugia; Larnell Lewis**  
**Modica Music (modicamusic.com)**



► The curiosity engrained in bassist Roberto Occhipinti's personality has allowed him to wear many hats in the music industry, all while avoiding the “master of

none” trap that often accompanies “jack of all trades.” Equally at home in a jazz quartet, perched on a stool in an orchestra or writing notes in the booth of a recording studio, the man does it all. This versatility kept Occhipinti busy through periods of the COVID-19 pandemic where even the most passionate of us were twiddling our thumbs. How? With his own recording studio, and Modica Music.

*The Next Step* was recorded there, released on Modica and features a who's who of Canadian musicians, although fewer than you might expect. Occhipinti opted for a piano trio on this release, consisting of Adrean Farrugia on piano and Larnell Lewis on drums, with the addition of vocalist Ilaria Crociani gracing the fifth track. This is the type of band one could expect to hear musical pyrotechnics from, but this recording comes off as cool and subdued instead.

“Subdued” certainly doesn't imply any lack of energy throughout the album, as the trio gives their all to even the slower and more introspective tracks. Jaco Pastorius' *Opus Pocus* and Occhipinti's *A Tynerish Swing* are both on the edgier side, the latter featuring a great bass solo after the catchy melody. The album is unified by overdubbed arco additions from Occhipinti, which makes it feel like a larger ensemble is present without taking away from the interplay of the trio.

**Sam Dickinson**

## are you here to help?

**Aaron Dolman; Sarah Rossy; Eugénie Jobin**  
**Independent (aaronadolman.com)**



► On the back cover of drummer/composer Aaron Dolman's *Are You Here to Help?* a set of brief poetic liner notes mentions “the gentle potency

of silence.” This resonated with me after several listens to the album. In the paired-down setting of vocals, drums and occasional vibraphone, artists are left with a choice to either try and fill every space, or to embrace the subtlety of the ensemble. The first option has potential for more showiness, but the second, which Dolman opts for, allows silence

and space to become a fourth member of the band.

Vocalists Sarah Rossy and Eugénie Jobin (Jobin contributes the vibraphone playing on tracks 2, 4 and 8) are not afraid of the avant-garde, but are always perfectly in tune and rhythmically confident when the music asks for it. This is no easy feat on an album largely devoid of harmonic accompaniment!

Dolman's drumming is not without its fair share of contrast to keep listeners entertained. The sections of his compositions with a steady groove are made even more poignant by the free and open improvisations that surround them. This is especially the case on the album's title track, which features a great deal of groove as a contrast to relatively abstract harmonic and melodic ideas. Juxtaposition might just be the theme of this album, as it contains enough abstraction to amuse tired ears and enough cohesion to pull in more conservative listeners. Something for everyone!

**Sam Dickinson**

## Night's Quietest Hour

**Gordon Grdina's Haram with Marc Ribot**  
**Attaboygirl Records ABG-3**

**Oddly Enough – The Music of Tim Berne**  
**Gordon Grdina**  
**Attaboygirl Records ABG-4**  
**(gordongrdinamusic.com)**



► Guitarist/composer Gordon Grdina leads several ensembles, from home-based Vancouver bands to various international collaborations, each

representing different aspects of his broad musical interests. These two CDs on his recent Attaboygirl label may be his brightest achievements so far, the first as a bandleader, the second as a guitarist.

Among his hometown groups, Haram, formed in 2008, focuses Grdina's interest in traditional and contemporary Middle Eastern music. There are ten other musicians in the band, including Grdina's frequent rhythm section of bassist Tommy Babin and drummer Kenton Loewen with an array of other distinguished Vancouverites, among them clarinetist François Houle, trumpeter JP Carter and violinists Josh and Jesse Zubot. Expatriate Syrian singer Emad Armouch is an essential and prominent component, bringing focus and a keening intensity to the melodies in the midst of tremendous rhythmic energy. Grdina plays oud here, bringing an idiomatic mastery to the Middle Eastern lute, while featuring guitarist Marc Ribot, whose distinctively sparse, edgy lines have marked collaborations from Tom Waits to John Zorn. The compound rhythms and essentially modal underpinnings support everything from delicate dialogues