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**2012, 16 novembre – Schizzi Di Orlando Furioso (Neos, 2014)**

**MONDAY, JULY 28, 2014 *Schizzi Di Orlando Furioso (Neos, 2014)* \*\*\*\***

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**By Stef**

"Orlando Furioso" is an early sixteenth century epic poem about the knight Roland who tries to keep the invading Saracen hordes out of Europe, and is based on the "Chanson de Roland", which describes the battle of Roncevaux during Charlemagne's reign. The Italian epic is about war and love and with lots of fantasy (actually truckloads of them - see the drawing by Gustave Dore below to give you some idea). It is a poem that inspired many musicians, including Vivaldi.

Now we get some modern improvisers who give it a try, by playing solos, duos and trios, consisting of D.M. Visotzky on alto saxophone, Béatrice Zawodnik on oboe and English horn, Barry Guy on double bass, Brice Pauset on harpsichord and Leonardo García Alarcón on organ.

These are all classically trained musicians, well versed in new music, jazz or avant-garde to bring this to a good end. Barry Guy is the most prominent musician, opening and closing the album with solo pieces, and engaging in duets with the oboe, the saxophone and the harpsichord.

Like the poem, the music is full of drama, inherent tension and wild musical imagery. I have never heard an oboe like Béatrice Zawodnik makes it sound on this album, so raw, so harsh, so devastating. But then there is also the organ, like you are invited into a church, into the sacred, and how Garcia Alarcón manages to get glissandi and microtones out of a church organ is a mystery to me, and also that instrument sounds different, and despite the crushing power it emanates, it also trembles. And then imagine the use of the harpsichord in free improvisation, in duets with an alto saxophone, or with a plucked bass in accompaniment, it is unheard and by itself worth the listen.

The duet between the oboe and the organ is the highlight of the album, a painful sound of loneliness and despair hovers over the heavy and angry organ sounds.

The pieces are short, all twenty-four of them, all around three minutes long, just long enough to create some drama around the verses that inspire the improvisations, but not really long enough to expand and explore.

Not everything works, but the overall result is quite fascinating, and some of the interactions are truly superb.