



## Cloud Ludum “Free to Play”

In improvisational music, the challenge (or really demand) is to play the truth of who you are. Cloud Ludum does that with a sense of fearless exploration. The line between what is written and what is improvised is not obvious. That is a wonderful success. In my many years of teaching, I always made the point that improvising is composing in real time and that composing is improvising but not in time. I would say that this music reflects this point of view very dramatically. The written passages are superbly crafted and the performers extend the created moods with inventive thematic dialogues that establish a very focused and cohesive ensemble expression. The full ensemble plays only in selected moments and in contrast to those passages featuring various “smaller” alignments (duets, trios, etc.). This gives a sense of variety that keeps the listener’s attention engaged. It demands great skill from all the performers and these players rise to the occasion with a remarkable sense of artistic dedication to the “collective” good.

I am reluctant to emphasize any one member of the group because they are all of exceptional caliber. Instrumental skills are of the highest order as is the ability to listen and respond as the ensemble statements evolve. The sense of punctuation and employment of “breathing” space results in a very coherent conversation. The players make the music happen. That said, I must point out the extremely inventive arrangements and compositions of Olga Karaseva. They are the integral components that create the fundamental character of the ensemble. This music does not fit neatly into a clear category. There are jazzy moments but it’s mostly classical. My advice is to give up the need for having a category and simply enjoy the musical expression. Laurie Anderson used to have a very humorous verbal introduction to some of her pieces when she would categorize what the listener was about to hear as “difficult” music. She was trying to prepare them for a more daring experience. I would say that Cloud Ludum is not a “difficult” listening experience. But, it is music that deserves your full attention. Sit down, close your eyes, and enjoy it!

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