



Canons

Lina Allemano

Lumo Records

Pipe Dream, **Lina Allemano's** first album of 2023, opens with a tune called "Banana Canon." A see-saw motif is passed around her quartet, imitation giving way to variation as the piece progresses. As one musician begins to improvise more freely, another restates the thematic material, creating a delightful tension between open and fixed form. Allemano began writing canons as "a fun and challenging compositional game" and with her latest release, she gives us the motherlode: nine canons written for trumpet and five different chamber ensembles, all incorporating improvised sections alongside the composed material. If a whole album of canons sounds a bit much, fear not: the trumpeter and her collaborators rise to the challenge with a characteristically witty and resourceful application of melodic and rhythmic invention, extended techniques and electronic processing.

The release of *Canons* marks the 20th anniversary of Allemano's label, Lumo Records. Documenting her various projects, including the acoustic Four, the electro-acoustic duo **BLOOP** and a set of remixes from the likes of **Nick Dunston** and **Karen Ng**, Lumo reflects a creative life split between Toronto and Berlin. *Canons* embodies that transatlantic scope. Allemano's collaborators include fellow Canadians **Brodie West** on clarinet, **Mike Smith** on electronics and, fresh from **Darius Jones'** brilliant *fLuXkit Vancouver*, cellist **Peggy Lee**. Representing the German scene is trombonist **Matthias Müller**, whose duet with Allemano is an album highlight.

Allemano opens the album with "3 Trumpet Canon," overdubbing her parts to create a virtual trio, spatialised across the stereo field. It's fun to enter into the spirit of the game and follow the development of the canon form, as the opening passage is taken up by a second trumpet and then a third. These overlapping parts soon diverge, as Allemano introduces further pre-composed material and improvisation. Legato lines gradually disassemble into staccato motifs, clearing the way for the first trumpet to explore a range of extended techniques. The other trumpets soon fall in behind, creating a three-way dialogue of plosives and

fricatives.

Featuring Lee and West, "Bobby's Canon" underlines how elegant and flexible the canon form can be. There's a fine balance of light and shade to its chamber music triplet melody, which the individual musicians explore further in their improvisations. An unaccompanied cello solo follows the first cycle, with Lee finding her way back to the melody via a series of glancing strokes, glisses and tremolo flourishes. This time, the counterpoint is freer, allowing for a more spacious texture that brings out the loveliness of the thematic material. A conversation opens up between Allemano's trumpet and West's clarinet, interrupted by Lee's inquisitive cello trio. The resulting interplay has the playful bustle of birds gathering around a pool of water.

On the **BLOOP** canons, Mike Smith layers, spatialises and processes Allemano's playing in real time, creating a hall of mirrors effect that becomes more distorted over time. In "Shadows," high pass filters transform Allemano's well-rounded tone into a trebly fizzle, prompting her to reach into her collection of extended techniques. "Wilds" has Smith fashion the acoustic signal into degraded beams of tone that echo and swirl behind Allemano's percussive effects, while on "Moons" he stacks legato tones into organ-like chords, before rendering it all off-kilter by modulating the pitch.

"Butterscenes" reunites Allemano with two members of **Titanium Riot**: bassist **Rob Clutton** and synth player **Ryan Driver**. **Tim Posgate's** crisp guitar holds the chamber music and post-rock elements together, and there's a nod towards minimalist procedure in the staccato figure that is passed between the musicians. The imitative aspects of canon form are freely applied in the improvised section, with Posgate's stubby abstractions mirrored obliquely by Allemano's squawking and purring trumpet. Driver's whirrs, hums and pink noise are answered by a chirruping ring modulated guitar. Once again, Allemano's compositional gambits result in playful, sophisticated music.

STEWART SMITH