

Tara Davidson: Duets (2014)

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By [DAN BILAWSKY](#), Published: October 26, 2014 | [1,057 views](#)

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Saxophonist Tara Davidson has continually expanded the size of her band to suit each of her recording projects. Until now, that is. After working with a quartet, a quintet, and a nonet on record, Davidson has gone the other way, trimming things back and releasing a collection of artful duets that pair her with some of her favorite musician friends.



Four of Davidson's six duet partners—tenor saxophonist [Mike Murley](#), pianist [David Braid](#), tenor saxophonist [Trevor Hogg](#), and bassist [Andrew Downing](#)—have appeared on other Davidson releases. The remaining two—pianist [Laila Biali](#) and guitarist [David Occhipinti](#)—have developed strong connections to Davidson, having each worked with her in various settings over the years. Davidson remains the constant here, and it's fascinating to hear how her outlook changes depending on who she's paired with.

There's a sense of formal beauty behind Davidson's first meeting with Downing ("Kontrbas Semaisi"), cheer to be heard during a railway journey with Hogg ("Train To Tarrytown"), and some bop-influenced back-and-forth to behold during an encounter with Murley ("130 E. 39th Street"). Pensive beauty comes to the fore when Biali's piano and Davidson's soprano join together ("For Glenda"), cloistered (post-)modernism makes an appearance when Occhipinti and Davidson team up for a trip across the ice ("Silver Skate"), and Braid works two sides of the same coin, helping Davidson to create an odd-metered groove number at first, then switching to a streamlined-turned-feisty direction ("Lele's Tune Part 1" and "Lele's Tune Part 2"). Each of those numbers find Davidson changing her gait a bit while working in different spaces, but she still manages to maintain her sense of self throughout.

Other encounters with these figures help to further broaden the scope of the

project. Occhipinti, for example, takes more of a rhythmic approach the second time around ("Murphy's Law"), there's a bit more mystery at work when Downing returns ("The Halcyonian Years"), and things are a bit sunnier when Biali's back on the bench ("The Good Earth"). Through it all, Davidson proves to be an artist with a wide emotional range, big ears, and strong communicative skills. Plenty of duet recordings are boring as can be, but this one is brimming with life.

Track Listing: Lele's Tune Part 1; Lele's Tune Part 2; Silver Skates; Train To Tarrytown; Kontrbas Semaisi; 130 E. 39th Street; For Glenda; Murphy's Law; Sheep Walking; The Halcyonian Years; The Good Earth; The Neigh-Sayers; Colebourn M.D.

Personnel: Tara Davidson: alto saxophone, soprano saxophone; Mike Murley: tenor saxophone (6, 9); Trevor Hogg: tenor saxophone (4, 12); Andrew Downing: acoustic bass (10), cello (5); Laila Biali: piano (7, 11); David Braid: piano (1, 2, 13); David Occhipinti: guitar (3, 8).

Record Label: [Addo Records](#)