



*I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles*  
Hailey Brinnel (Outside In Music)  
by Elliott Simon

The title track on this debut from vocalist/trombonist Hailey Brinnel was written over a century ago by John Kelleter. It fits Brinnel's youthfully expressive vocals perfectly due to its naiveté, which fronts for a mix of heartache and amusement. Her arrangements of this and seven other songs from her grandfather's generation are largely spot-on and work to feature her vocal chops and trombone prowess. Brinnel's voice sparkles during the changes and she deftly moves through pensive waltz, swing, Dixieland and back again. Pianist Silas Irvine, bassist Joe Plowman and drummer Dan Monaghan are a fine rhythm section dexterously navigating these vagaries. Brinnel is one of many women associated with drummer Sherrie Maricle, with half of these compositions recorded at Drummers, Maricle's Philadelphia based in-home studio/concert space.

The program opens with a stellar version of Milton Delugg-Willie Stein's "Orange Colored Sky", which includes lovely arco work from Plowman, who is very much at home in these environs and integral to the session. Cole Porter's usually sedate "Easy to Love" swings harder than it ever has with a clipped trumpet solo from Andrew Carson that does battle with Brinnel's potent scat.

Brinnel's trombone/vocal combination is at its best in the bigger band contexts and when clarinetist Sam Bishoff joins with Carson on a couple of cuts things really swing. However, a duet with guitarist Dariel Peniazek on J. Fred Coots-Haven Gillespie's "You Go to My Head" and with Plowman on Rube Bloom-Harry Ruby's "Give Me the Simple Life" showcase a sultry innocence. Busby Meyer's "What's the Use of Getting Sober" and Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust" do not fare as well vocally but on the whole Brinnel can blow the hell out of her trombone and *I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles* is a wonderful blend of leadership and Swing Era sensuality.

For more information, visit [outsideinmusic.com](http://outsideinmusic.com). Brinnel live-streams Mar. 13th at [facebook.com/haileybrinnelmusic](https://www.facebook.com/haileybrinnelmusic).



*Artlessly Falling*  
Mary Halvorson's Code Girl (Firehouse 12)  
by Marc Medwin

"You arrive with daggered hands," begins and ends "Walls and Roses", but, as with the music sliding in and out of focus and cognition on Code Girl's second album, are they really the same in the end? Lorraine Hansberry once spoke of the universal needing to be understood in its details, a lesson guitarist Mary Halvorson has learned well. In this revamped version of Code Girl, she has found the perfect vehicle for a vision shuttled between minutia and grandiosity, where each element arrives with the twin daggers of

intuition and cognition at the ready.

The first Code Girl album, Halvorson along with vocalist Amirtha Kidambi, bassist Michael Formanek and drummer Tomas Fujiwara, was a statement in and of itself, no mean compositional feat for artists whose multivalent careers have been rife with them. It was very good, but this one is a triumph due in no small part to the addition of saxophonist and vocalist Maria Grand and trumpeter Adam O'Farrill. The group has now taken on the intimacy, precision and unassuming grandeur of a chamber music ensemble, but one skilled in negotiating the spaces, somewhere between subtlety and sucker punch, that have always opened up in Halvorson's genre-bending compositions.

For the latter—and its title gives the heads-up—"Walls and Roses" alternately blasts and cajoles its distorted and crystalline way through the repetitions modified by perception and context, those destroyers of all cyclical and categorical tidiness. A similar but smaller series of disconnects opens the title track, whose deliciously accessible guitar harmonies jitter in dizzying blanket formations, dissolving the saltiness of old patterns, as Halvorson's lyrics suggest in Kidambi's gorgeous delivery. A middle ground is furrowed in "Bigger Flames", where Halvorson's ubiquitous pedal warpings never quite derail the liquid harmonies bolstering the exquisite horn interplay and succulent sustain, all melding perfectly with Robert Wyatt's beguiling intonations.

Unexpectedly, the thankfully irrepressible Wyatt lends his magical vocal arts to three of the album's tracks. What a joy it is to hear him in contexts so expertly shaped for him by someone who knows so intimately the nature of his instrument! The expertly timed overdubs, on strategic lines of the wistful "Lemon Trees" just to cite one example, evoke his solo work while placing a new frame around that instantly recognizable vocabulary. His vocal transparency, underpinned by the deepest humanity, remains the hallmark of his art. Is it Kidambi or Grand, a kind of vocal soulmate for Wyatt's ethereality, singing the stunningly understated background as Halvorson, Formanek and Fujiwara anchor each chordal plateau to O'Farrill's filigree? Even that brief pastorality is rendered moot as the track builds, slowly but inexorably, toward Fujiwara's solo, a model of color and raw energy.

To speak of band interplay in such a Protean environment would be akin to the parabled blind man describing the elephant, no job for one writer. The process by which angst-ridden pointillistic group improv—with Formanek in particularly fine form—merges with the tendrils of sonority and Kidambi-sneered-and-supplanted vocal lines in "Last-Minute Smears" is just one point of the music's fluid definition; there are many. Here again, like the elevated points of distorted precision of "Walls and Roses", the music moves gracefully but only toward what it is while continually discarding what it was, just as Halvorson's solos on that track dive headlong into a blues feeling while completely eschewing its syntax.

The parts are surpassed only by the whole. Like Carla Bley, Halvorson's forms depend on their structures to solidify and obliterate them and like Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*, the poetic forms she explores are operators behind the scenes, foregrounding various shades of reference. What Paul Haines devotee wouldn't get a kick out of the seriocomic malevolence of hiccupping cops?

*Artlessly Falling* is Code Girl's coming of age. That it arrived to mark the end of Halvorson's 40th year surely demonstrates a similar trajectory for the composer. Her music was always very good, but now it's great and she has become a forceful poetic and musical voice with which to be reckoned.

For more information, visit [firehouse12records.com](http://firehouse12records.com). Halvorson live-streams Mar. 21st at [alternativeguitarsummit.com](https://www.alternativeguitarsummit.com).

## GLOBE UNITY



*Dream Disobedience*  
Elisabeth Harnik/Michael Zerang (Not Two)  
*Beyond*  
Futari (Satoko Fujii/Taiko Saito) (Libra)  
*Kleine Trompetenmusik*  
Birgit Ulher/Franz Hautzinger (Relative Pitch)  
by Tom Greenland

Conversation is an art form, reliant on an ability to 'speak' clearly and, most importantly, listen closely. Three duo outings reveal how different and yet how equally enlightening such conversations can be.

Austrian pianist Elisabeth Harnik seems to thrive in duo settings. Michael Zerang, a Chicago-based drummer, is with her on *Dream Disobedience*, a live recording made at Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2019. The conversation, unabated for 35 minutes, is rather subdued, Harnik usually initiating each new topic, alternating traditional approaches with more unusual in-the-box techniques while Zerang eschews straight timekeeping for a more reactive role, adding the musical equivalents of 'Hmm!' or 'Uh huh!' and other encouragements to keep things flowing. The episodic narrative progresses through short lulls followed by bursts of energy, as if small squalls were blowing through, a grand tempest arriving near the end, one final cloudburst before irenic frog croaks and bird songs return, the pond at peace.

Futari (Japanese for "two people") is pianist Satoko Fujii, well known for her prolific output and international collaborations, and vibraphonist Taiko Saito (also Japanese, but based in Germany), who, though a generation younger, shares many of Fujii's aesthetic sensibilities. Their 15-year friendship finally blossomed into *Beyond*, recorded in Japan after the third gig of their first tour. As such it has a quality of fresh discovery—people figuring out how to play together. Although Fujii can be extremely assertive, here even in her most ecstatic moments—as when she crowds the bass register with dense twining lines and chords—she never overpowers Saito, whose light shimmering tones in the upper register maintain a strong presence. The pieces, mostly Fujii's, include honed melodies ("Ame No Ato", "Mobius Strip"), short motives with improvised elaboration, through-composed pieces and textural sketches, a nice balance of freedom and control.

*Kleine Trompetenmusik*, by German trumpeters Birgit Ulher and Franz Hautzinger, was recorded in the former's flat in May 2018, but sounds as if could have been made this winter by two people cooped up inside by COVID-19 quarantine. Foregoing traditional trumpet tones, the pair instead explores various extended techniques producing all manner of pops, knocks, clicks, creaks, rattles, buzzes, rubs, slaps, growls and a host of aspirated attacks aping boiling teakettles, pressure cookers, hissing radiators and droning motors. One technique (heard on "Griesel") sounds just like the saliva suction tube that dentists use. The five tracks are of a piece, each an interlocking conversation in which one states an idea in the form of an unusual tone or timbre, maintaining it as the other (mixed in the opposite channel) overlays the first idea with a second, creating a new context for the original idea, until this second idea is itself overlain with a third and so on.

For more information, visit [nottwo.com](http://nottwo.com), [librarecords.com](http://librarecords.com) and [relativepitchrecords.com](http://relativepitchrecords.com). Harnik live-streams Mar. 19th at [youtu.be/bhdgluixdwM](https://youtu.be/bhdgluixdwM).