



Jazz Journal  
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## Record Reviews

### MARCO SANTILLI'S CHE ROBA & IL FIATO DELLE ALPI

#### LA STÜA

*Sächsilüüte; Leventango; Tangu Da Wassen; Strada Alticcia; La Giornico Liberate; Morbus Helveticus; Giorni Di Giornico; Sette; Variationen Über Den Namen Hesse; Musik Des Einsamen; When Hermann Meets Hari; Serenada In Minor (61.50)*

Marco Santilli (cl, bcl); Lorenzo Frizzera (12-str g, g); Ivan Tibolla (p, acc, f); Fulvio Maras (pc); with Isabell Weymann (picc, f, af); Davide Jäger (ob, cor); Tomas Gallart (frhn); Alessandro Damele (bsn); Filipa Nunes (cbcl, cl). Rheinau, Switzerland, February 2016.

#### Unit 4729

★★★★

#### L'OCCHIO DELLA BETULA

*Variationen Über Den Namen Hesse; Musik Des Einsamen; When Hermann Meets Hari; L'occhio Della Betulla; Saphyrion; Serenada In Minor; Gazzella; Agasul; Come Le Foglie; Saphyrion (Alt); Love All, Trust A Few, Do Wrong To None (Bonus) (62.30)*

As above minus Il Fiato delle Alpi. Lugano, Switzerland, November 2015.

#### Unit 4727

★★★★

Lovely back story. Santilli grew up in and around his grandfather's folklore museum in Giornico, Italian Switzerland, and often helped to explain exhibits to visitors, improvising when he didn't know the real detail. Just for background, *La Stüa* refers to a small, wood-panelled living room with a stove, while "*che roba*" is the idiomatic equivalent of "wow!", so you sort of know this is going to be intimately strange, imaginative, nostalgic (that's what *Morbus Helveticus* means, named after symptoms first identified in Swiss mercenaries far from home) and borderline sinister even before the music properly begins. It's a live recording, but studio quality.

Heard from an adjoining room, it might suggest, as does *L'occhio Della Betula* even more strongly, an Oregon side-project, but there's a sardonic, wise, tricky European cast to these tracks that one doesn't get even now from the veteran Americans, who seem all the more blissed-out by comparison. Santilli confronts some childhood nightmares like the *Bōōg* "snowman" with its firework head and attempts some clever pairings,

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like the pataphysical "meeting" of Hermann Hesse and George Harrison (who lived in the same village, but at different times).

The "breath of the Alps" ensemble augments and doubles the basic group, but really, as the repeat of *Musik Des Einsamen* and *When Hermann Meets Hari* confirms, these are Che Roba dates, endlessly inventive and alive. If your impression of the Swiss is still unconsciously shaped by Harry Lime, here's the perfect antidote. There are the torsos of folk themes, a few apparent echoes of American minimalist procedures, some classical forms and shapes, but it's mostly beyond category. File under "jazz", "world", "Euro" or what you will, but do find a place for these on your 2018 shelf.

Brian Morton