



**Love Having You Around
Abbey Lincoln (HighNote)
Aminata Moseka: An Abbey Lincoln Tribute
Virginia Schenck (s/r)
by Anders Griffen**

The atmosphere is hushed with anticipation. The rhythm section grooves, vamping over the first eight bars of "Talkin' to the Sun". Abbey Lincoln's entrance is apparent from the audience applause. Unhurried, she starts to scat around the melody and the song is alive. These March 1980 sets from The Keystone Korner are a treasure. This was during something of a musical resurgence as the '70s consisted of more acting as well as teaching and study. In 1980 the powerful Lincoln returns, at once more refined and more versatile.

The title track is one of a few Stevie Wonder songs part of Lincoln's repertoire. She plays with repeating various phrases, exploring rhythms and the consonance or dissonance of the final note with pianist Phil Wright. Approaching the halfway mark Lincoln directs the band to swing in 4. Bassist James Leary (Art Washington on two tracks) and drummer Doug Sides round out the trio, which, except for that funk number, swings straightahead in support. Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem "When Malindy Sings" was put to music by Oscar Brown, Jr. and recorded by Abbey Lincoln on *Straight Ahead* (Candid, 1960). Here it is full of fire and a vehicle for individual solos and Lincoln calls on the

accompanists one by one. The standard "Little Girl Blue" is a beautiful duet with piano. "Driva Man" was one of Lincoln's powerful performances on the *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* (Candid, 1960) with Max Roach. The voice and percussion duet has quite a different feeling here, the "crack of the whip" not as heavy and the message without the same urgency. In the original album notes, A. Philip Randolph is quoted regarding "America's unfinished revolution". The revolution was in a different place in 1980, but still unfinished. "Throw It Away" is probably best known as the haunting opener on *A Turtle's Dream* (Verve, 1994); each version has its own mood but this one has its own vitality. "Africa" is based on a D minor vamp on a dotted rhythm and rises to fever pitch before the end. The same vamp accompanies the "Closing Remarks" during which Lincoln introduces the band and finally says, "My name is Anna Marie Wooldridge."

Abbey Lincoln was born on Aug. 6th, 1930 in Chicago. Lyricist Bob Russell, her manager for a time, suggested the name Abbey Lincoln. In the liner notes for Virginia Schenck's tribute *Aminata Moseka*, Thomas Cunniffe recognizes that Lincoln was later given the name "Aminata by Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea and Moseka by the Minister of Information of Zaire", but doesn't mention Toure was the President of Guinea at that time. He also said that these names were given on "two separate trips to the continent", but they seem to have been a single 1975 trip made with Miriam Makeba.

Aminata Moseka is a remarkable album, owing especially to the cohesiveness of the unit. The playful ensemble is committed to the music and to one another. Lincoln's influence is perceptible, particularly in some of Schenck's rhythms, but she doesn't imitate her dedicatee. Schenck's uniqueness is immediately apparent and it's great to hear original reiterations of these songs.

The album takes off with a floating 12/8 groove for "Talkin' to the Sun". Rodney Jordan's high-position bass strumming underscores "Another World", a highlight with great texture, with Kevin Bales rendering a muted piano string solo. Percussionist Marlon Patton produces a range of tones throughout the album—what's that? A rain stick? Scraps of metal? "The River" flows, revisiting the textural approach and some free improvisation with guest Kebbi Williams on alto saxophone. "Learning How to Listen" is a great song with a rubato opening developing into a swinging affair. "Caged Bird" offers a reading of Maya Angelou's poem as well as the Abbey Lincoln song. The former is rendered freely and could have benefited from a more unified concept. As they transition to grooving sweetly on the latter, Schenck makes some great bird sounds and Bales nearly echoes "A Child Is Born". The liner notes erroneously state: "Schenck offers both the original Maya Angelou poem and Lincoln's song, which displays how Lincoln adapted Angelou's words to suit the needs of her music." Actually, the phrase "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings", which would become the title of Angelou's first book, comes from the Dunbar poem "Sympathy" and Lincoln suggested the book title to Angelou. So, neither is Angelou's poem "the original" nor does Lincoln adapt her words. They are contemporaries riffing on the same idea. "Bird Alone", with its straight 8 groove and "Throw It Away" are great songs with hints of 'smooth', but on this record as a whole, they don't rely merely on craft, they are driven by a vital spirit. This is an inspired project.

For more information, visit jazzdepot.com and virginiaschenck.com. A Lincoln tribute is at Apollo Theater May 6th with Dee Dee Bridgewater, Dianne Reeves, Esperanza Spalding and Terri Lyne Carrington. See Calendar.

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