Klinck Trio

The dreamlike electroacoustic compositions of Belgium's Klinck Trio connect contemporary chamber music with improv and avant pop

By Clive Bell

Klinck Trio, from top: Maya Dhondt, Adia Vanheerentals and Elisabeth Klinck

Klinck Trio's new album *My Hair Is Everywhere* sounds like a cobweb delicately suspended between classical and pop. These three musicians, using violin, sax and piano, play so quietly as to draw their audience into a kind of deep listening trance. And yet this is accessible musical territory where the tunes are simple and the sound is warm. Pianissimo performance makes its own demands, but it's hard to imagine anyone really disliking their music – though, as one of the group jokes, you would need some nerve to walk out of such a quiet show.

Over a connection to Belgium, I chat with violinist Elisabeth Klinck, saxophonist Adia Vanheerentals and pianist Maya Dhondt about how they create their music. Klinck is just back from a week picking olives in Sicily, and shows me two splinters in her fingers. "In Sicily we did a listening session [to this album] with the others there, and people said, 'Are there three violins? I don't understand what's happening.' And I love that you don't hear that it's either a sax or a violin. Sometimes I'm not aware if it's me that plays a note or it's Adia. Ah OK, it's me!"

The Klinck composing process starts with sketches by Klinck herself: "So the track "Lullaby" I had on pizzicato violin and voice alone, and then I opened it up. We keep playing with it and we find extra voices. Then [title track] "My Hair Is Everywhere" started from the violin where the sounds are almost inaudible – you hear strings and breathing, and then add piano and saxophone and very naturally it became this trip, that I think needs 17 minutes to get lost in. And in the middle of the song you're like, how the fuck did I end up here? And this sensation became the score of this piece. You can't play it in three minutes."

At the top of the track, Klinck's violin notes are enveloped in the sound of breath passing through Vanheerentals's sax. Each of the trio has their own background and solo project: the saxophonist is more of a jazz player, with her trio Bodem, but Klinck's stress on sound as key appealed to her: "Playing with Elisabeth really inspired me in that way, because she also goes very micro. At first we did improvisations to try and find each other's sound. I immediately noticed that really blending with Elisabeth meant going into noise. So that track came together in trying to find each other's grooves, sound-wise."

Pianist Dhondt comes more from glitch pop, with her solo debut *wow, x* released in 2024 on Viernulvier Records: "I'm from a classical background too, but I found my personal liberation through electronic music. I only realised it's pop when I released my first record and I had to choose a genre. It's that world of weird pop that I really love. Viernulvier is a good label; they did my first record, then claire rousay [*The Bloody Lady* soundtrack] and now us." Dhondt points out that, unlike violin and sax, her piano cannot glide gradually into a note: "They can crescendo but I can't. Every piano note has to have a function and meaning, and that makes it super important to be focused and present. This kind of music is so much about intention and presence, mentally even more than physically."

So what's it like being a musician in Belgium at this moment in time? All three respond positively. "I feel the power of the Flemish side of the Belgian scene is that it's very mixed," declares Klinck. "Jazz and classical people are all playing together, and we all make music for theatre. The scene is very warm and supportive, everybody plays on each other's albums – when I perform [solo album] *Chronotopia*, Maya plays with me. There's a big improvisation and free jazz scene, where even I get invited! Also Belgium is a very weird small country. It's very eclectic, the architecture is like all the ages through each other."

"It's true, it's quite a small country," Dhondt agrees. "And it's easy to know everyone. Programmers are quite accessible. There are a lot of people who want to put people together, and that's great. I saw a concert in the conservatory in Ghent, two groups of people improvising together: one group was free jazz musicians, and the other group was contemporary classical, and it's so amazing to put them together, because they play exactly the same, but they look so different!"

Vanheerentals laughs, but looks thoughtful. "I'm also quite positive about the jazz scene here," she offers. "A lot of nice places to play, a lot of conservatories and a lot of great musicians graduating. But we are maybe the lucky ones. There are also a lot of people who get into teaching and never play again." Dhondt is not so sure: "Maybe we are the lucky ones, but we are the ones who while studying felt a bit out of it, and not at home – so that forced us to go and do our own thing, which now makes us the lucky ones."

"Lucky is not the right word," says Klinck. "You battled to find your place as a musician."

● *Klinck Trio's* My Hair Is Everywhere *is released by Viernulvier*

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