

STEFANO LEONARDI/STEFANO PASTOR/FRIDOLIN BLUMER/HEINZ GEISSER - Conversations About Thomas Chapin (Leo 702; UK)
Featuring Stefano Leonardi on flute, Stefano Pastor on violin, Fridolin Blumer on bass and Heinz Geisser on percussion. I recently got an e-mail from a flutist named Stefano Leonardi who had gotten my address from Stefano Pastor, Italian violinist who has a number of fine discs on Slam and who has played here at DMG. It turned out that Mr. Leonardi put together a quartet to do a tribute to the late Thomas Chapin, an incredible reeds player, composer and deep spirit with whom I was good friends. I was very excited to hear about this disc and even happier to now listen to it. I didn't know much about their bassist, Blumer, but the drummer is can be found on some two dozen discs on the Leo, Cadence and Silkheart labels. Although the quartet is listed as playing their own music except for "Anima" by Mr. Chapin, I hear several of Thomas' recognizable melodies referenced. One thing about Mr. Chapin is that besides being an amazing alto sax player, he was also an extraordinary flutist! I have an old friend who used to visit DMG every Saturday for most of the history of DMG, who claims that Thomas Chapin was and still is his favorite flute player. Right from the opening, the quartet play the theme from "Night Bird Song", many folks favorite song by Thomas. The quartet takes off, spinning a superb web around the theme, the flute and violin weaving in grand waves together, the rhythm team dropping out at times and then spinning or floating underneath. Mr. Chapin's longtime trio, had a special way of balancing the free with the charted parts, hence this quartet also balances between the two extremes with similar ethereal magic/glue. Both Stefano's bend their notes together or apart in connected ways. Chapin's music always had this uplifting, joyous quality at the center, like he was about to do a dance for the great things the life can provide. This quartet also capture that joyous spirit and then lift off into higher, freer regions. What I find interesting is this: although Thomas Chapin passed away too young at 41 in 1998, his legacy has continued to thrive through friends, family and fans, from around the world ever since. This mighty fine disc captures his spirit/sound on several levels. Music to inspire us and make us smile, no matter how our days are going. - Bruce Lee Gallanter, DMG

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