

## Quinsin Nachoff

### *Horizons Ensemble*

SELF-RELEASED

★★★★½

It's always bracing to hear a lesser-known player break out of the pack with some ambitious writing for a first-rate ensemble. Even when the results fall a bit short of the mark, the effort can carry the day. Saxophonist Quinsin Nachoff has been one of the brightest young musicians in Toronto for a number of years—someone who can step easily between contemporary classical music and improvisation—and this chamber quintet recording from 2005 should win him a larger audience.

Nachoff knows that it's not enough to put high-profile guest artists like pianist John Taylor and cellist Ernst Reijseger in the window; you have to give them something to work with. His writing—bold, diverse and filled with compelling counterpoint—does the job. The approach he follows on most of the six landscape-themed compositions allows Taylor to take the lead, occasionally shadowed by the string trio, and add color with his horn. The moods that Taylor sets range from the supple dance movement on “Bogardus Place” to the minimalism of “Glacial Lake,” and Nachoff



often doesn't enter until the piece is well underway.

On occasion—such as the final section of “Bogardus Place”—Nachoff's arrangements can get too busy, but more often he pares things down to focus on texture and spare gestures. “A River Remembers Rain” is the most successful, repeating a

plaintive theme around a slightly bluesy call-and-response movement and some turbulent free playing. The jauntier “African Skies” is also filled with dramatic motion, layering the strings over Taylor's piano introduction and gathering speed to culminate in a raw-toned tenor solo.

When he moves to soprano, Nachoff can call Steve Lacy to mind, particularly on “Glacial Lake,” where his grainy tone mirrors Reijseger's astringent cello and the sound of his instrument's keys add a percussive element. On both his horns, Nachoff's voice is evocative and engaging, and *Horizons Ensemble* provides an ideal setting for it.

—James Hale

**Horizons Ensemble:** Bogardus Place; Desert Landscape; A River Remembers Rain; Cartoon-Scape; Glacial Lake; African Skies. (65:06)

**Personnel:** Quinsin Nachoff, tenor and soprano saxophone; John Taylor, piano; Ernst Reijseger, cello; Nathalie Bonin, violin; Pamela Attariwala, violin.

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