

## 12 Points 2015

By

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### **Hildegard Lernt Filegen**

The honor of closing 12 Points 2015 fell to the six-piece Hildegard Lernt Filegen from Switzerland. Ten years into its journey, the band led by vocalist Andreas Schaerer has accumulated awards and accolades by the bucketful, yet for some unknown reason it has yet to storm the main stages of the world's great jazz festivals. Based on its electrifying performance at Twelve Points 2015 that situation could yet change.

Schaerer was the first male jazz vocalist out of one hundred and eight acts since the first Twelve Points in 2007 and it's hard to imagine that there are many more out there quite like him. The opener "Sevenoaks," with its orchestral layers, swinging trombone solo by Andreas Tschopp and Schaerer's idiosyncratic vocals hinted at the complexities and excitement to come. On "Knock code Three" the singer's stuttering counting in of the tune was a ruse for ensuing vocal acrobatics that twisted konnokol dexterity and beatbox vocabulary in exhilarating fashion.

Hildegard Lernt Filegen's stage show was laced with vaudevillian humor: "Seldom Was Covered with Snow and an Old Oak" began with drummer Christoph Steiner tapping at a typewriter, his literary inspiration giving way to the tune's guiding rhythm while the multi-reed chorus of Tschopp, alto saxophonist Matthias Wenger and baritone saxophonist Benedikt Reising wove intricate harmonies; the

hilarity of Schaerer's gobbledegook meditation on a letter could not detract from the ingenuity of his improvisation, his voice morphing into a trumpet voice that led the riffing brass on the "Don Clemenza."

The latter tune, one of several from *The Fundamental Rhythm of Unpolished Brains* (Enja Yellowbird, 2014), moved from a lithe ensemble passage of brass and marimba to a dancing duet between bassist Marco Müller and Reisng on baritone. Schaerer lent soprano vocals of operatic precision and reach to the mix.

Most impressive was Schaerer's vocalized 'trumpet' duet with Tschopp on trombone on a stripped down number of Balkan-esque stride. The final song was a heady, cartoon-esque stew of comic opera, water-tight ensemble lines, drum pyrotechnics, vocal acrobatics, free-jazz cacophony and Ellingtonian swing—capped by a mesmerizing soprano-cum-tenor opera turn from Schaerer.

An unforgettable performance was met with a standing ovation and rapturous applause. Afterwards the superlatives flew as people exchanged views: ..."unique and impressive -one of the greatest things I've ever seen"—was the opinion of Brian Cole, Dean of Academic Affairs at Berklee College of Music, Valencia; "mind blasting" was how an Italian attendee summed it up.

It wasn't just Schaerer though—a Bobby McFerrin for the new millennium—for Hildegard Lernt Filegen roared and sighed like a Charles Mingus group spiced up with the zany, lunatic musicianship of Frank Zappa's best bands. A group this special doesn't come around every decade.