



Subscriber Only Music Review

# Marilyn Mazur Special 4 at Cork Jazz Festival 2024 review: Rhythm, movement and enchantment brilliantly to the fore

The shapeshifting percussionist, who played vital roles in bands led by Miles Davis and Jan Garbarek, leads an absorbing 70-minute set

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Philip Watson

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## Marilyn Mazur Special 4

Triskel Christchurch, Cork



When the drummer, percussionist, composer and bandleader Marilyn Mazur was seven years old she invented a secret world. She would draw the curtains to the livingroom of her home in Denmark, put on Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring and be met by her "fantasy dance teacher", the fabulously named Mrs Mysticulum. "Alone on our red carpet", Marilyn would then be exclusively taught the choreography of the ballet. "This is when the connection between music and magic started for me," she has said.

Rhythm, movement and enchantment are central to Mazur's approach to music, a compelling trinity that is brilliantly to the fore during her Guinness Cork Jazz Festival appearance in the vaulted elegance of Triskel Christchurch, an afternoon concert that is the final part of a Music Network tour that also took in Dún Laoghaire, Dublin and Letterkenny.

Mazur is a versatile and virtuoso musician who notably played a vital role in bands led by Miles Davis in the 1980s and Jan Garbarek in the 1990s. As a shape-shifting leader, she has also formed an impressive array of "special constellations": groups of musicians with whom she often explores a whole universe of music and collaborates for many years.

Special 4 is no different. While the acoustic quartet is relatively new, and has yet to release an album, 69-year-old Mazur has played with the Danish flugelhorn player Jakob Buchanan for the past 16 years and with the Japanese pianist Makiko Hirabayashi since the early 2000s – mostly in a trio with her long-time musical partner and husband, the Danish double bassist Klavs Hovman, whom she met in 1981.

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Those kinds of deep connections and artistic alchemies rise gently to the surface during an absorbing 70-minute set. Sitting at a standard drum kit, surrounded by a hanging garden of bells, gongs, blocks and cymbals (as well as a percussive clay pot and wooden thumb piano), and singing both wordless and lyrical melodies, Mazur shades and colours the music in an effortlessly graceful way. She remains a magical dancer: active, mobile, physical, sometimes playful. She makes the music *move*.

As does her special quartet. Each is a supremely skilled and sensitive player and improviser, keenly contributing individually to the shape and direction of the overall sound. At the same time, there seems a collective understanding, even telepathy; all four are sympathetically supporting and serving the music, the greater whole.

While Mazur plays several swingingly folk-like tunes that she is, by now, closely associated with, including Reflections, Journey Waltz and That’s Life, overall the concert has a strong sense of being organic, of growing naturally in its own time and space.

Mazur’s soundworld skilfully ebbs and flows between composition and improvisation, structure and freedom. Unerring rhythm is central to the sound, especially of the melodies, yet at times the music is more abstract, open and adventurous, as if it’s being created extempore for a theatre production or independent film.

Rather wonderfully, in the end, it is difficult to say exactly what these thrillingly borderless explorations are; Mazur once called them “multimusic”. The last words, sung by the leader, at this memorable concert, are “We can go anywhere.” Never, creatively, have they been more true.



[Philip Watson](#)

Philip Watson is a freelance journalist and author. He writes about jazz for The Irish Times



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Cork Jazz Festival

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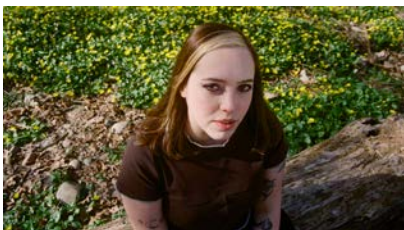
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