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Shelly Berg

The Will: A Tribute to Oscar Peterson

C.A.R.S.

By **Chuck Berg**

Shelly Berg is an exuberant pianist with a virtuosic flair reminiscent of, well, the great Oscar Peterson. Indeed, when Berg's dad first played Peterson discs for the then young classical pianist, the 12-year-old was hooked on jazz, and on Peterson. This heartfelt tribute, then, is a labor of love. Adding poignant authority is the presence of former Peterson colleagues bassist Ray Brown and drummer Ed Thigpen. Also impressive are cameos by Carmen Bradford, Eddie Daniels, Jeff Jarvis and Bill Watrous. Berg's brilliantly distilled Petersonian approach bubbles up everywhere, from the effusively deployed full-court press applied to "Sweet Georgia Brown," to the soaring dialogues with clarinetist Daniels on Peterson's "Blues Etude." In a more mellow mood is a samba-inflected stroll with trombonist Watrous through "Tenderly." Trumpeter Jarvis shines in "Brotherhood of Man," while Carmen Bradford's wonderfully vibrant voice puts a bounce in "I Hear Music." There's also a winning Berg original, "The Will (To Swing)," with the Watrous Big Band.

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