

Kira Skov / Maria Faust

# In The Beginning

Released on the 11th May 2017

Stunt Records



Stunt Records CD & LP

STUCD 17012

STULP 17011



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Kira Skov and Maria Faust have united their unique and diverse musical gifts in a new musical and multimedia endeavour entitled “In The Beginning,” to be released on the 3rd of March, 2017, on Stunt Records.

Kira left Denmark in her teens and travelled the world for many years, based in both London and Los Angeles and performing with a bohemian Rock ‘n Roll band, before moving back to Copenhagen to begin on her own solo carrier which instantly took off.

She has released 11 highly acclaimed and awarded studio albums to date, including releases with The Gospel, Persona (with Peter Peter from Sort Sol - the legendary Danish Punk band), The Cabin Project (produced by Mark Howard in the deep woods of Canada), and Memories Of Days Gone By, the praised and acclaimed tribute album to Billie Holiday. She has toured around the world with trip-hop legend Tricky (UK), and her most recent trio of solo albums were produced by John Parish, including When We Were Gentle, earning her multiple awards.

Maria was born in Kuressaare, Estonia. She is currently living in Copenhagen, Denmark and is a rising star in the international Experimental Jazz world. Maria is classically trained in Estonia and a skilled saxophone player, composer, and arranger. She is best known in the fields of third stream jazz, modern big band music, improvised music, as well as other alternative music styles. Maria has toured the world and her music has won multiple awards, including two Danish Music Awards (“Jazz Composer Of The Year” and “Crossover Album Of The Year”) in 2014 for her universally acclaimed release Sacrum Facere.

She is regularly nominated and has won a slew of awards, grants, and prizes, in both Denmark and Estonia – where she was named “Jazz Musician of the Year” in 2016.

In early 2016, Kira and Maria rented a car and embarked on a journey through the southern border regions of Estonia. Here, they came upon a cultural universe of vanishing songs and chants, while unearthing long-buried stories of loss, surrender, submission, faith, doubt, and forgiveness.

Together, in an empty Russian Orthodox Church originally constructed in 1873, they found a place where time seemed to stand still in an otherwise ever-changing world. Many cultural and musical traditions have completely disappeared from the region – in part, through the calculated and systematic eradication of local customs by various ruling regimes over time, and partly due to the growing influence of modern society that swallows up the lesser populated cultures first.

Both Maria and Kira were deeply touched by the many historical narratives and psychological layers they discovered during the study of the culture of this relatively small geographical region that was to eventually serve as the inspiration and framework for their collective creation “In The Beginning.”

The result should not be misunderstood as a literal historical document, but rather as a collage inspired by the Catholic Church’s deep and dark history, a reflection of the various regimes’ annihilation of cultural traditions from the local indigenous past, and a quest for forgiveness.



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The music includes hypnotic, chant-like presentations of tales inspired by sacral orthodox hymns, in a merger of Estonian folklore and western cultural influence that together forge a new genre: a hybrid of musical categories, aural images, and stories. A fusion that challenges listeners from all backgrounds to characterize.

Recording in the Church would itself prove to be particularly challenging. With no running water or electricity on site, a support team was assembled, ranging from international film production managers, to local people who simply “knew how to get stuff if something breaks down or goes wrong.” Against all odds, Kira, Maria, the musicians, and the support staff arranged a recording in the breathtakingly beautiful room, financed in part by a comprehensive crowdfunding campaign.

Along with the legendary Los Angeles-based producer Mark Howard, the team of carefully selected crew and assistants - who supplied generator buses for power, heaters for warmth, lighting for film and photo crews, meals, transportation, beds, saunas, and overwhelming hospitality - created a studio from scratch in the otherwise empty church for the ambitious venture, and successfully recorded Maria's arrangements with a 6-piece Estonian choir, 4 horns, upright bass and cello, drums, and percussion, all featuring Kira as the lead vocalist and storyteller. The setup, recording process, and tearing down of the studio was all documented with Virtual Reality cameras which, upon release and distribution of the material, will take the viewers and listeners into the church, and give them the intimate experience of being present throughout the process. Between the musicians, technicians, assistants,

camera crews, film crews, VR crew, local journalists, and national media crews, there were 24 people uniting to make this project a reality in a room that would have otherwise been completely empty.

This release was postponed due to the tragic death of Nicolai Munch-Hansen (11.5.1977 - 20.2.2017), the bass player performing on this album, and Kira Skov's husband.

The legendary guitarist Lenny Kaye, Patti Smith's long-time sparring partner, as well as well-known author, and writer for the music magazine Rolling Stone, was wildly enthusiastic about the recording and put these words to the music:

*Memory bears witness to song. Song transforms memory. In an old deserted Church in Estonia, close to the Latvian and Russian border, Kira Skov and Maria Faust begin a journey back in time even as the future unfolds. Music is heard in present tense. When recorded, it becomes a continuum, linking fore and aft, the hindsight of prophecy. Within these empty church walls, Kira and Maria find their “lost songs of an abandoned land.” They listen to voices called forth from the earth, folk-tales and harmonies on the verge of extinction, chantings long-forgotten and now re-imagined. They allow the land to speak to them, to tell its secrets, its confessions, its travails and triumphs. This is what we do when we remember who we are; an imprint for the future, so that those to come will know us, and our tales, the human soul one note at a time.*  
(Lenny Kaye)

#### **Lineup:**

*Kira Skov – lead vocals, songs, and lyrics*

*Maria Faust – alto saxophone, songs, and arrangements*

*Tobias Wiklund – trumpet*

*Meelis Vind – bass clarinet*

*Ned Ferm – tenor saxophone and backing vocals*

*Nicolai Munch-Hansen – bass and backing vocals*

*Sebastian Rochford – drums and percussion*

*Choir – Silja Uhs, Marie Roos, Annely Leinberg, Raul Mikson, Meelis Hainsoo, and Joosep Sang*

*Recorded by Mark Howard, assisted by Anton Stvolov - Mixed by Paul Corkett - Mastered by Morten Bue*

*Virtual Reality documentary by Mikkel Keldorf (Khora) - Film footage by Tine Reingaard*

*Press photos by Asger Mortensen - Cover photos by Toomas Voolkman*

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*For more info and interviews please contact MT Promotion, Maria Theessink  
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#### **RELEASE DETAILS:**

*Kira and Maria will unveil their musical endeavour with an exclusive concert followed by an artist interview in Vor Frelsers Kirke (The Church of Our Saviour) in Copenhagen on Wednesday, May the 10th (the day before the official album release), where they will perform material from the album with the full line up from the recording, including the original 6-piece Estonian choir.*

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