

**PRESS RELEASE**

## Near The Pond: Josefine Cronholm, Kirk Knuffke, Thommy Andersson, Bent Clausen

### **WILD GEESE**

- Released on CD, LP and in digital distribution

In 2021, when this band released their first album, they hadn't yet decided on a name. But that's changed - now we can call them Near The Pond! As the name indicates, they function as a collective, a band of equals, celebrating their unique sounds individually while exploring what they can create together. The name and the title of their critically acclaimed debut album, NEAR THE POND (and an accompanying poem), emphasize their shared artistic vision.

The first release was created at a cultural crossroads by vocalist Josefine Cronholm, bassist Thommy Andersson, and cornetist Kirk Knuffke, who were inspired by their warm transatlantic friendship and driven by the desire to collaborate. For the first release, they were joined by American drummer Kenny Wollesen. Since then, Danish musician Bent Clausen has become a permanent part of the group, contributing on drums and vibraphone.

NEAR THE POND (2021) featured music inspired by the Swedish-American poet and author Carl Sandburg, who died in 1967. Since the release of their debut, the group has taken a significant artistic turn, this time finding inspiration in the Japanese poet Saigyō, who lived from 1118 to 1190. This collective has found an ear-opening path and process of working with texts from the 20th and 12th centuries, united in a sensitive and heartfelt musical presentation. Both poets have appealed to the group's members with their simplicity and depth with words that create images and a sense of time and space where past, present, and future merge.

**STULP 25011****STUCD 25012**

Saigyō established himself as a significant voice in the history of Japanese literature with his poems. He probably never would have imagined that his words would be read all over the world as anything other than a historical relic. His poems are now presented in a musical context - the result of a process set into motion by Josefine Cronholm's chance encounter with a book of his work while in New York. She was deeply moved and shared her enthusiasm with the group.

The poems are written in the classic Japanese style, waka. Although no one in Near The Pond speaks Japanese, they found ten poems in English translations that formed the basis for the music on their album WILD GEESE. Saigyō was fascinated by nature - its beauty and transience - as well as the passage of time and the human condition in a changing world. In his poems, the musicians see the same pictorial simplicity and depth they found in Carl Sandburg.

The group members have foundations and backgrounds in jazz, folk, and improvisational music, each bringing their voices to the collective sound. They combine minimalism, complex rhythms, and improvisation, resulting in a dynamic whole. Near The Pond bridges cultures and has created a unique musical community.

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According to Josefine Cronholm, the poets' lyrics fit perfectly into the group's vision: "They could have been written today. Carl Sandburg and Saigyo came from very different times and worlds, but we're not changing our personal sound or approach to music. We've found a form that works while it, and we develop together."

Josefine Cronholm (b. 1971) is a world-class vocalist with technical and musical prowess that has long transcended the traditional role of a singer. Like the other group members, she uses her voice as an instrument.

Thommy Andersson (b. 1973) and Josefine Cronholm have lived in Copenhagen for many years. Both are originally Swedish and still carry Sweden's rich culture and folk music with them. Andersson has mastered the virtuosic technical language the double bass offers and speaks it with refined taste and eloquence. For him, the rests between the notes are as important as the notes themselves - he creates a pulse and foundation with deep, warm tones that create space for the other musicians.

Bent Clausen (b. 1952) has enjoyed a long and illustrious career, from the Danish jazz elite to international collaborations with Tom Waits and Elvis Costello.

Kirk Knuffke (b. 1980) grew up in Colorado and now lives in New York. He is known for his versatility and ability to break down genre boundaries, and like the others in Near The Pond, he is a brilliant musician. The group consists of one Dane, two Swedes – and, as Kirk Knuffke says, a cowboy who doesn't necessarily call himself a jazz musician.

Although improvisation plays an important role, it doesn't necessarily lock the music into only the jazz genre. The band's sound has a Nordic presence with a dash of American folklore. All the musicians remain true to their backgrounds and identities, putting themselves out there to unearth a unifying, cohesive energy that carries the musical collective.

Once again, inspired by poetic language and their real-life friendships, the band has created original and moving music for the world to enjoy.

Josefine Cronholm (vocals & percussion), Kirk Knuffke (cornet), Bent Clausen (vibraphone, drums & percussion), Thommy Andersson (double bass, string arrangements) + Lena Fankhauser, Marta Potulska (viola) & Melissa Coleman (cello).

*IF ONLY / EMPTY AS SKY / THE CALL OF WILD GEESE FAR AND NEAR / LIFE'S LONG SLEEP / WINTER DEEPENS  
IN A MOUNTAIN HOME / I KNOW THAT'S THE MOON'S LIGHT / WINTER NIGHT / MORNING STARTS TO MELT /  
TIME ON MY PILLOW / ONLY THE MOON.*

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