



**Phraim**  
***Tides* (QFTF)**

**A review**

On their second album, *Tides* (available May 29), the collaborative and cohesive Swiss quartet Phraim—Nina Reiter (vocals), [Stephan Plecher](#) (piano), [Marc Mezgolits](#) (electric bass), and [Peter Primus Frosch](#) (drums)—offers 14 original tracks that marry jazz, rock, and art song sensibilities and highlight the band’s chameleonlike ability to match musical responses to compositional demands. Out in front is Reiter,

whose warm, clear vocals—often wordless—reveal a dazzling technical mastery, from breath to pitch to articulation. Her precise pitch control shines right on the opening lines of the first track, “And Still I Rise.” I was sure she was a touch flat on a particular note the first time she hit it, then somewhat astonished when she was flat again the second time, and then, when she squarely hit the note yet again on the third go-round, I realized, to my embarrassment, that she had been nailing exactly the pitch she was after: she wanted that harmonic tension and rightly so. The melodic lines in Plecher’s “Minuit” and Mezgolits’ “First You Come for Me, Then You Run from It” sound improvised but are composed and extremely demanding in tempo and range, but Reiter moves through them smoothly in unison with the piano, clearly articulating the lyrics. The bass and drums bring a rock muscularity to the proceedings and push the music irresistibly forward, though they are distractingly forward in the mix at times, as on “Minuit.” Mezgolits, who has five composing credits on the album, can produce a lovely, lyrical tone and line on his bass, as on “Twist Me a Crown of Windflowers,” Reiter’s composition on Christina Georgina Rossetti’s poem. (Five additional tracks have lyrics, in English, which Reiter wrote after the music was composed.) Ranging from the delicately lyrical to the aggressively abstract, Plecher brings an impressive range of touch and energizing invention to the album, recorded live in the studio in front of an invited audience of 26 listeners. He also offers a valuable rhythmic counter to Mezgolits and Frosch, producing an intriguing multirhythmic tension. Four of the last nine tracks, titled “I,” “II,” “III,” and “IV,” offer short, engaging solo compositions by each member of the quartet. Together, the four musicians work as a cohesive unit, with an ebb and flow to their interactions that develop the distinctive compositions organically and hold the listener’s attention.