

Publication: **JAZZWISE**Date: **May 2015**

Elina Duni

**Elina Duni Quartet***Dallëndyshe*

ECM 470 9282 ★★★

**Elina Duni (v), Colin Vallon (p), Patrice Moret (b) and Norbert Pfammatter (d).**  
**Rec. 21–22 July 2014**

I don't know much about Albanian jazz. But perhaps that doesn't matter much in the case of Elina Duni's *Dallëndyshe* (The Swallow) since it isn't obviously jazz in the Wynton-approved sense, and Duni's accompanying group is Swiss anyhow. Duni was born in Tirana, but only discovered the folk songs of her motherland after she began her musical studies in Switzerland. Balkan melodies and themes provided a fertile source of inspiration on her acclaimed ECM debut, *Matanë Malit*, and she draws from the same well this time around, where she sings songs of love and exile – or so says the press release, which I am forced to believe because Duni sings in Albanian and my Albanian is almost nonexistent (and when I say almost I mean totally). Her phrasing and vocal control are good enough to transcend linguistic boundaries, however, and her side players are both rigorously precise and imaginatively expansive. The resulting recording – albeit with differences far greater than the similarities (e.g., this is vocal-led and without any prog-rock tendencies) – does for Albanian folk what Tigran has been doing for Armenian folk these past years: reimagining and recontextualising some delightful melodic and harmonic material and introducing it to a wider audience. **Robert Shore**