

ACT

Nguyễn Lê Quartet

Streams

ACT 9876-2 (also on vinyl)

German release date: 22. February 2019

The only constant about Nguyễn Lê's career is that it's always evolving. The Paris-born and based musician has established himself as a preeminent voice in combining myriad global musics with Vietnamese influences in thrilling and groundbreaking ways. His latest release, *Streams*, continues in that tradition. The album is a collaboration between Lê and the worldly-minded talents of American drummer John Hadfield, Canadian bassist Chris Jennings and French vibraphonist Illya Amar.

"Every album of mine is kind of the contrary of the one I did before, with its own story," says Lê. "*Streams* is more jazz than previous projects, in my most personal definition of the word. I started doing 'world jazz' with 1996's *Tales from Viet Nam* and 1998's *Maghreb & Friends*. Integrating jazz and world music has been a long process across many subsequent albums. Now, I want to reveal where this journey has brought me today and how each cultural idiosyncrasy has melted into my own voice. Every tune on *Streams* has some inner ethnic inspiration. There are lots of Indian rhythm concepts, many Indian and Vietnamese phrasings, Oriental melodic shifts and accents, and rhythms from Maghreb—as well as unknown references to imaginary traditions."

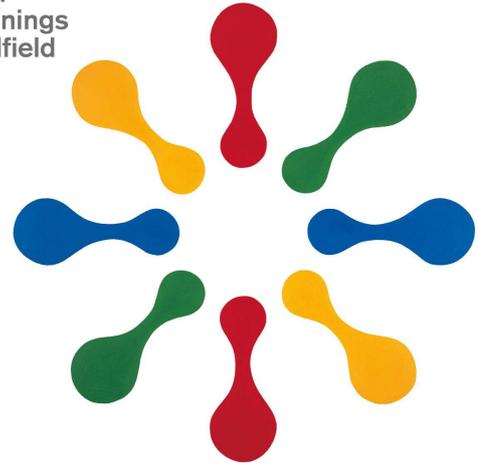
Each tune on *Streams* explores engaging and complex compositional perspectives. "'Subtle Body' is a song with zones of different time signatures following each other seamlessly," says Lê. "'Bamiyan' is about rhythmic subdivisions, groupings and equivalencies. In fact, *Streams* has some of the most difficult music I've ever written. But there's always a focus on melody, which ensures the songs don't sound mathematical. For instance, 'Mazurka' has a romantic melody, followed by strong rhythmic development, based on the song's unique West Indian and Polish roots. I like to think all of *Streams*' music showcases the journey of cultures, and how cultures transform themselves when they travel."

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Illya Amar
Chris Jennings
John Hadfield

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"This group is a great symbiosis of musicians, human beings and artistic personalities," says Lê. "I've known Illya since he was three. He's my stepson and I saw him grow up and become a fantastic vibraphonist. He has been intimate with all the aspects of my music and is now part of several of my bands. I've known Chris for over 10 years. He provides such solid foundations which are rare to hear in funky grooves for an acoustic bass player. At the same time, he makes every bass line sing. Chris introduced me to John, who has a deep love of indigenous traditions. He has traveled extensively to India, Peru, Mongolia, the Middle East, and Indonesia to learn the rhythms and instruments of each of these cultures. All three have deep ethnic musical experiences and knowledge that make them understand my music immediately."

For Lê, an essential element of jazz is having an open mind and open ears. "Because it's based on collective improvisation, jazz is about listening to the other musicians and reacting and adapting your musical speech to the other on the spot," says Lê. "This essential dialog and interplay makes jazz musicians the most empowered for cross-cultural dialogues. The *Streams* quartet is one of my favorite examples of opening up that dialog. It creates rich musical conversations that, while grounded in jazz, ultimately transcends genres, enabling listeners to simply focus on and enjoy the music. I believe a new world of inspiration is opening up between tradition and modernity, East and West, and North and South. *Streams* is the embodiment of that idea."

Text by Anil Prasad

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Photo by Masha Mosconi

- 01 Hippocampus** 5:09
- 02 Bamiyan** 5:39
- 03 Swing A Ming** 5:57
- 04 Subtle Body** 5:03
- 05 6h55** 4:33
- 06 Mazurka** 6:10
- 07 Sawira** 5:47
- 08 The Single Orange** 4:10
- 09 Coromandel** 5:19

Music composed and produced by Nguyễn Lê
Exept 05 by Chris Jennings and 08 by Illya Amar

Produced by Nguyễn Lê
Executive Producer: Siggi Loch

Recorded by Hugo Bracchi at Midilive Studios, France, July 2018
Producing, mixing & additional recordings by Nguyễn Lê
at Louxor studio, Paris, France, August & September 2018
Mastering by Klaus Scheuermann

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Nguyễn Lê / electric guitar, electronics
Illya Amar / vibraphone
Chris Jennings / acoustic bass
John Hadfield / drums & percussion

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