

Paradise

BAR



FRANCOIS CARRIER

GUNTER HAMPEL

MIKOLE KAAR

NICK FINZER

STEVE HUNT

WILLEM BREUKER

KOLLEKTIEF -

OUT OF THE BOX

JAZZ IN CRIMEA



International Jazz News

CD Reviews

Book Reviews

DVD Reviews

Obituaries

FRANCOIS CARRIER, ALTO SAXOPHONE, FREE JAZZ, AVANT-GARDE,
IMPROV MUSIC

INTERVIEW BY LUDWIG VAN TRIKT

*Cadence: When I last interviewed you (Cadence Volume 33 Number 4 * April 2007) my final question to you regarded your plans five years from 2007.*

What's been going on musically for you? Certainly there seems to be a great emphasis on total free - improvisation.

François : Simple. To me, everything in the universe is Music. Every life form, every atom is a source of vibration, hence music or resonance if you prefer. Whether or not we are aware of it, we're all entirely made of music. My experience of the recent years has confirmed what I've always felt; we are here for one reason and that is to Be Alive (joyful). The only way to be alive is by being who you really are. So, I play music, wherever there is an audience to listen to what we have to say. In recent years, I (we) have played in many countries around the world.

For many years, I have imitated and interpreted mainstream jazz, like most of my peers. However, I have always been challenged by creativity. This is how I became who I am today. I deliberately choose to celebrate life through the music that comes to me from the heart, from within. If everything is music, then Music must always be there waiting for us? Being attentive is the secret. I thus favor spontaneity (mental [ego] free), pure improvisation, the free expression of the soul. It all have to do with positive creativity and introspection. I am not searching for anything, nor do I think of anything while playing. Each moment becomes a moment of grace. One gives himself body and soul, unconditionally, without compromise.

Cadence: Let's continue talking about free improvisation... with an extensive quote from George Lewis of the AACM found in the 2016 New Yorker magazine ("Vijay Iyer, the Harvard Professor Changing Jazz"). He states: "In any collective improvisation, you hear people stalking out positions. Sometimes they try to take power, sometimes they advocate for their positions - where the music should go. Other people decline; they make collective decisions through sound alone" Please comment?

There are so many ways of doing things, of expressing oneself. There are also many levels of attention and openness. Personally, I prefer playing with ("being with") musicians that can be beyond these two categorizations. In fact, there is nothing to defend neither aren't any decisions to make. Music happens when the mind is silent. One hears it when the music comes from the mind, from decision taking and too often from the ego. But it is so inspiring to hear the music happen when all concepts are put aside. Again, I refer to this resonance

I was mentioning earlier. Music becomes an experience of pure enlightenment and joy. I never think of music when I play with others and we never talk about music between us. There is no discussion needed. Just playing, free play. Music comes through like a whisper in the soul.

Cadence: There is a story about Freddie Hubbard and Tony Williams almost coming to blows because Freddie was annoyed by William's at times loud playing during one of the VSOP tours. I mentioned this because one wonders if there are ever situations where after a performance there are questions about aesthetic choices which were made?

I had the V.S.O.P. The Quintet Live album in 1978 not long after it was first release. I listened to it over and over. I sold all my vinyl collection when the CD came out around 1983.

Tony was and still is a great source of inspiration. Not one day passes by where I don't feel the soul of his artsy. Interesting reaction from Freddie about the loud playing of Tony. People and many musicians seem to misunderstand or misjudge the difference between a musician playing loud or being intense which are two different things. Of course, lots of musicians play too loud simply because they are not "playing" music, they are performing... I can't imagine Tony playing too loud in any circumstance. Certain musicians have more intensity than others. Coltrane and Albert Ayler were among them of course.

There are situations though when you wish you could have done things differently. I question myself all the time about aesthetics and it always comes to the same conclusion, Inner Beauty! There is a price to pay for being who you really are. You can't make any compromises so you get isolated because of this decision. Never mind, going forward is the most important. Playing with players that can reach their sense of urgency is very gratifying. So, perhaps, that night when Freddie was annoyed by Tony's playing, perhaps he was not about the music but about the ego.

Cadence: With the recent passing of pianist Paul Bley - do you have any personal fond memories of working with him?

What makes us who we are is the sum of all our experiences. Playing with Paul Bley, Gary Peacock and Michel Lambert in June 2003 were memorable moments indeed. The energy that comes out of sharing moments with such great musicians is staggering and it definitely contributes to open you up. By observing Paul and Gary with an open heart, you realize the importance and seriousness of Music. Music becomes kind of sacred not to say spiritual. I am so

grateful.

When I first decided to invite Paul and Gary, some local musicians told me that Paul was a Diva but I never believe what people say about others. So, I phoned Paul. It took two minutes for him to accept my invitation, especially when I told him Gary would also be part of the concert and the recording session. Five minutes later, knowing that I accepted all his conditions, he called me back to tell me that he wanted an extra 1000\$ for his parking and guess what? I hung up! Then he called me back again and told me: "Hey François, I like your sense of humour. Forget about the parking fee. I'll come to the recording and concert anyway." I knew from then on that we were on the same wave length.

After the session was finished he came close to me and told me this short story, he must have told many others but it was very sweet: "You can tell everyone that I am the only pianist in the world who played with Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman and François Carrier." At that period of my life I was getting away from the word "Jazz". It had less resonance to me but Paul reminded me this: "Your roots come from jazz hence you are a jazzman. Stop saying otherwise." Wow! Yes sir!

I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to play with these Masters.

Cadence: We are crafting a mini bio on you through our two interviews; thus I *wanted you to go back to two important residencies in 2002 & 2011. Please talk in depth about the six months spent in Quebec Studio in Rome & the London companion studio also named Quebec?*

The province of Quebec owns several artists' residencies around the world, so does Canada. We, as artists, have access to these studios through juries of peers. I applied for the Quebec Studio in Rome in 2001 and the answer was negative. The agent responsible for this grant called me personally in July 2001 to tell me that I didn't get the Studio, but for some (intuitive) reason I told her I was gonna go anyway. Meanwhile I was composing new music for the Naxos Jazz album "Compassion" and I had an important concert scheduled at the World Trade Centre in the Winter Garden for a special promotional Quebec event in New York. At first, my concert was supposed to be on September 11, 2001, but in the middle of July, the programmer of the event called me to ask if I wanted to change my date to accommodate another artist so they switched me for September 19 but you know the continuation...

Two weeks after 9/11 I received a call from the Quebec Council for the Arts and the agent told me: "You knew you were gonna go to Rome, did you?". Hence,

Interview

Francois Carrier

I got the six months Quebec Studio in Rome. The artist who was supposed to go had just cancelled and I was next on the list. My project was very simple, I went there get inspired by this fantastic historical City, a real open sky Museum to compose new work and to get to meet with Italian artists. Some of these compositions were recorded for an album called “All’Alba” (Italian for at Dawn). It was a bit of a challenge as I didn’t speak any Italian then.

Ten years passed by and I applied for the Quebec Studio in London for another project. This time I was selected by the jury. I was there from July 1, 2011, to January 7, 2012, in Bow, East London. The Studio was very nice and spacious, the perfect environment to trigger creativity. I composed a lot of new music, more specifically a Free Opera. Guess what is the topic of the Opera? “Ego” of course. I also met many British musicians from the jazz and avant-garde scene. I organized many recording sessions and played a few concerts at the Vortex in Stoke Newington and the Shoreditch Church. Many of these recordings were released on Not Two and FMR Records afterward. I still haven’t presented my costly Free Opera in public. It involves many musicians, dancers, first nation choir (Ojibwa, from Thunder Bay), poetry in motion, video projections and so forth... The music itself will mostly be improvised and inspired by pictures and drawings I have done while in London and the five movements will illustrate the five stages leading to the bursting of the ego.

