

Antoine Herve's Biography

Composer, pianist, director of the National Jazz Orchestra from 87 to 89, Antoine Hervé has played and recorded with, among others : Quincy Jones, Gil Evans, Chet Baker, Dee-Dee Bridgewater, Peter Erskine, Randy Brecker, Carla Bley, Toots Thielmans, Ray Barreto...

As a pianist, he built a musical style based on his percussive yet sensual touch.

Text written by Vincent Bessières :

Born January 20th 1959 in Paris, France.

Django Reinhardt Prize from the Jazz Academy, member of the Yehudi Menuhin Foundation, Officer of Arts and Letters.

A brilliant pianist, Hervé is a composer with set of eclectic references, aptly synthesized through excellence and fancy. A young Antoine Hervé quickly gained recognition as one of his generation's most gifted French jazz pianists. At the age of 28, Hervé is given the opportunity to conduct the second National Jazz Orchestra. This opportunity will introduce Hervé, like many of his previous counterparts, to the flipside of early celebrity, in spite of his industriousness, his creativity, his transdisciplinary ambitions, and a trio whose longevity and faithfulness have rarely been replicated since.

Nephew of the composer Daniel Lesur, Hervé grew up in an environment that favored musical endeavors, and his gift as a child quickly led him to a music-oriented education. As a student of the Paris Conservatory (Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, France), Hervé studied composition under Marius Constant, piano under Pierre Sancan (the heir to the Debussy tradition), and classical percussion with the intent of being a part of an orchestra. During this time, Hervé's increasing interest for jazz music—the improvisation, the rhythmic complexities—and rock lead him to the electric piano, and to musicians such as Serge Lazarévitch, who introduces him to the Real Book, or Andy Emler, his partner-in-crime for their 1980 duo where both would play the piano and the vibraphone.

A prize-winner the following year at the National Jazz Contest of La Défense (Paris, France), Antoine Hervé quickly becomes one of the most gifted representatives of this new generation of crossover jazz improvisers. A fervent proponent of “the fusion of musical styles”, Hervé harbors a deep respect for Europe's classical heritage, including its contemporary stylings, and for today's jazz as well.

In 1983, Hervé is the driving force behind an orchestra comprised of 13 musicians (who will later come to be known as Bob 13). This orchestra will play the Paris Jazz Festival, leading to the recognition of Hervé as a fiercely original composer.

During this time, Hervé also appears in a trio formation with Michel Benita (bass) and Peter Gritz (drums).

On the piano, his composite style is influenced by Bill Evans, Wynton Kelly, Oscar Peterson and McCoy Tyner (artists he's been known to transcribe), illuminated by his knowledge and mastery of classical technique, and marked by a rhythmic and dynamic approach inherited from his days as a percussionist and his familiarity with piano-oriented literature (Chopin, Debussy, Bartok). In 1985, Hervé is recognized as the French jazz musician of the year by winning the Jazz Academy's Django Reinhardt Prize.

Chosen in 1987 to head the National Jazz Orchestra, he puts together an ensemble that he leads through more than one hundred concerts, hosting numerous guests including Quincy Jones, Gil Evans, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Toots Thielemans, Peter Erskine, Didier Lockwood, Randy Brecker... Many of his co-musicians in the NJO will become major figures of the French jazz scene over the following decade.

Under Hervé's influence, the NJO will develop a repertoire that has a tendency to mix rearranged jazz classics and original compositions, and he will also introduce the NJO to pieces written by Jaco Pastorius, Carla Bley, Jean-Loup Longnon, Daniel Goyone, Louis Sclavis, Patrice Caratini, Andy Emler, Denis Badault and Gil Evans, the latter being recognized by Hervé as one of his main influences.

For Antoine Hervé, the NJO was also an opportunity to meet with other forms of artistic expression for the first time in his career, by collaborating with choreographers such as Philippe Découflé ("Tutti" ballet in 1988) and Andy Groat ("Le Melon Royal", Centre Georges Pompidou in 1989).

At the end of his term at the head of the NJO, Antoine Hervé becomes increasingly involved with all forms of improvisation, and creates an association named Hexameron to accommodate his vision.

Upon meeting the Bulgarian singer Yildiz Ibrahimova, Hervé shows a growing interest for Turkish and Bulgarian classical music ("Paris-Zagreb", 1991), which leads him to write "L'Opéra des Pékins" the following year, to which he associates the artists whom also feature in his quintet : saxophonist Laurent Dehors and the Moutin brothers, François (bass) and Louis (drums), as well as trombonist Yves Robert, sonneur Jean Blanchard and tambourinist Carlo Rizzo. Dominique Rebaud was in charge of choreography. Two years later, the same artists would reconvene to create a Concerta Da Camera for jazz quintet and string quartet at Radio France.

Widely recognized as a talented composer, he was commissioned by the Ensemble Intercontemporain to write an homage piece in honor of Frank Zappa named *Transit* (1994), builds several musical shows such as *Sonate d'Automne* featuring Anne Carrié and *Mes bien chers frères* in which he performs several compositions by Serge Gainsbourg and his own

brother François Hervé. Antoine Hervé also writes a concerto for trumpet (Homage to Miles Davis – Paris Conservatory Composition Competition), *Northsea* for trumpet and marimba (Lyon Conservatory Composition Competition), *La Maison Brûlée* for string quartet and *Transactions* for the Alternance ensemble. In 1997, he creates *Mozart, La Nuit*, a show that requires the intervention of 120 choir singers (dressed in pajamas and mules!) as well as a that of a string quartet comprised of the Moutin brothers and of German trumpeter Markus Stockhausen to perform famous Mozart melodies, mixed with contemporary writing, urban jazz sounds, funk and electronic stylings.

Furthering his eclectic tendencies, Hervé took to writing the music for choreographer Bianca Li's *Macadam-Macadam* (1998), collaborated with director Eric Rochant (*A World Without Pity*) and created *Les Caprices de Morgane* for the city of Lorient's Inter-Celtic Festival (bagpipes, bombard, Scottish snares and Celtic harp).

He also took part in the Laura Scozzi musical *A Chacun son Serpent*, which features Boris Vian texts and hip-hop dancers (2000), and was commissioned by the Cité de la Musique (Paris, France) to write *Absolute Dream*, featuring his own quintet and a 17-part string ensemble (2002). Greatly inspired by the form of Béla Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion*, Hervé creates a band imitating the instrumental distribution of the piece called Opus 4, and in which he collaborates with his wife Véronique Wilmart, herself an accomplished pianist and electroacoustics specialist, and two percussionists from the Ensemble Intercontemporain.

Along with this extensive composition work, Hervé continued to express himself in more jazz-related contexts of various shapes and sizes : in duos with Didier Lockwood, Michel Portal or Stéphane Belmondo ; in trios with the Moutin brothers ("Fluide" in 1994, and on the standards compilation "Summertime", in 2002) or in quintets with trumpeter Marcus Stockhausen ("Instantanés", re-released as "Invention Is You", 2001). Throughout all of these various experiences, Hervé's main wish to take in and combine multiple musical languages remains intact.

In 2002, Hervé, during one of his performances at Paris' Cité de la Musique, improvises on a variety of classical pieces (2002). The following year, his album "Inside" is published, a solo piano work illustrating the pianist's maturity, acquired through years of studying the instrument. By visiting multiple playing styles, Hervé becomes the ethereal "one-mand band", who had been dormant within this artist for several decades.

In 2006, he records "Road Movie" (Nocturne), an album entirely made up of original numbers featuring string quartets, horns, percussions, and even bombards and bagpipes.

He then releases a Thelonious Monk tribute album through his label Nocturne, recorded solo at Paris' Cité de la Musique in 2007 : "I Mean You"

Since 2007, he works with Jean-François Zygel on the French TV channel France 2 on the TV show "La Boîte à Musique", and coproduces with Zygel the France Musique radio show "Le Cabaret de France Musique" (2008-09).

The album "Double-Messieurs" was published by Naïve in 2010.

Since 2007, he gives his Concert-Conference ("Jazz Lesson") all around France, covering different subject matter such as "Oscar Peterson", "Bill Evans", "Thelonious Monk", "McCoy Tyner", "Weather Report", "Louis Armstrong", etc... (40 different lessons to this day!) and tours as a piano duo with Jean-François Zygel.

Hervé has also produced seven DVDs covering his "Jazz Lessons", and a "Pianist Box-Set" including lessons covering the styles of Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Thelonious Monk, Dave Brubeck and Keith Jarrett, all published through his own label RV Productions.

His album "PMT QUARKTET" was released in 2012, and features a mix of modern jazz and acousmatic music, featuring Véronique Wilmart on the computer, Jean-Charles Richard on saxophones, and Philippe "Pipon" Garcia on drums. The album was released to great critical acclaim, earning best record honors from Citizen Jazz.

2015 is the year of a new stage project and a new album: "Complètement Stones", a jubilant project around the Stones and the blues roots of their music.

"Elected" Citizen Jazz album of the year.

Antoine Hervé is also a renowned arranger, Vladimir Cosma chooses him to transcribe his opera "Marius and Fanny" for Big Band and 9 singers which will be given at the Festival Les Cinq Continents in Marseille.