

## Samy Thiébault Quartet

Drawing on fifteen years of friendship and a shared passion for jazz music, tenor saxophonist Samy Thiébault's quartet has focused since the early 2000s around four gifted musicians: Adrien Chicot at the piano, Sylvain Romano on upright bass, Philippe Soirat on drums, and of course Samy Thiébault on tenor sax. Their meeting was an immediately fruitful one; these four artists share a taste for musical adventure all the while remaining attached to the oral and popular traditions of jazz.

*Blues for Nel*, their first album, came out in 2004 on the Musicast label after the quartet's victory in the prestigious La Défense competition (they won prizes for composition and for solo performance). The same year, they won a group prize at the Trophées du Sunside competition, which led to the recording of this first disc. Without using publicity services and before the advent of social media, the album reached great success in both the public sphere and in the media, which called the album "Coltranian in the best sense of the word" (*Le Nouvel Observateur*).

But the album *Gaya Scienza*, released in 2007 by B Flat, gave the group the exposure it needed to reach even larger audiences. Built around a suite written by Samy Thiébault called "Éveils" (Awakenings), strongly influenced by modal jazz, blues, and spirituals, the album was an opportunity to invite the Belmondo brothers to share in the adventure. The disc was ranked among the best of the year according to the French culture magazine *Les Inrockuptibles*, and the newspaper *Libération* heard in it a "wild burst of energy." The album's tracks were played on the major national radio stations, and national and European tours were booked; audiences thus discovered a young group with total mastery of the codes of traditional jazz but also with the capacity to challenge those codes to their benefit.

The group's 2010 album, *Upanishad Experiences*, brought them notoriety and respect on the international jazz scene. Its release coincided with the creation of Samy Thiébault's own label, Gaya Music Production. For this project, the group expanded to become a large ensemble: twelve musicians and an actor, Jacquie Berroyer, joined forces for its creation. Samy Thiébault's compositions draw here on the poetry of Baudelaire and texts by Nietzsche. On the album, Jacquie Berroyer interprets passages by these authors while the musicians play pieces inspired by the words and rhythms of the texts. Samy Thiébault plays the role of orchestrator and composer here, while the group transforms itself from quartet to veritable orchestra.

On the 2013 album *Clear Fire*, the quarter becomes a sextet, welcoming the Algerian singer and percussionist Méta to its ranks. Samy Thiébault deals here with rhythm and trance, drawing heavily on the music of northern Africa and using the voice in order to reach spiritual and physical liberation. The group played concerts at major international venues in Marciac, Morocco, Sètes, Paris, Georgia, and the United Kingdom. The magazine *Jazzmag* said of the album that “in it we recognize the sound of the great masters of [the group’s] instruments.”

Partnerships in the realms of dance, theatre and cinema developed alongside tours and educational workshops organized as the group traveled abroad. One of the orchestra’s key goals is to meet and form relationships with musicians in the countries they tour in, whether students or professionals.

The 2014 album *Feast of Friends* was created in homage to the Doors, and represents a major turning point in the development of an artist whose “message seems to dance between trance and spiritual communication” (*Le Monde* newspaper). The group made it to the first round of the Victoires du Jazz competition and the album remained in the top ten best-selling jazz albums in France for many months. The album won several major critics’ awards for radio and media outlets (best albums of the year for *TSF*, “Indispensable” rating for *Jazz News*, “Revelation” in *Jazzmag*, “Coup de coeur” for *France Musique*).

This project’s international tour was also a major event: four continents were covered in one year, and the group played at the main European and international festivals, securing its stronghold with audiences and jazz professionals alike on the international stage.

In 2015/2016, the group will take the next step in its journey with *Wild Songs*, a major project featuring new compositions written by the saxophonist for the quartet. These songs focus on melody as a crucial, liberating force necessary to music, and to blues in particular. The album is therefore an intimate, modern reading of blues music, conceived as an opening-up and a hybridization, a gesture toward the “other” and a step in the direction of freedom.

This album will also be the occasion to invite great trumpeter Avishai Cohen to play and record with the quartet on several tracks. The disc will be released in October 2016 on Gaya Music Production (distribution by Socadisc).