



Magic Numbers

Quinsin Nachoff

Featuring Mark Helias and Jim Black



When Toronto saxophonist-composer Quinsin Nachoff approached me to do this project I was immediately taken with it. I was already involved in another production involving saxophone and string quartet (Patrick Zimmerli's *Phoenix*), but Quinsin's music is inspired by its own set of touchstones in classical music and jazz. The results speak for themselves, but I managed to convince him to write something about how it all came together.

Tony Reif

Strings have long been a part of my musical environment. I grew up listening to the warmth and resonance of Ravel and Debussy and later was drawn to the more intense sounds and emotions of Stravinsky, Bartok, Shostakovich and Schoenberg. In my music the sonorities of the strings range from ethereal to opaque. Their role is varied and extensive – at some points acting like piano or guitar in a jazz quartet, at others, the featured improviser. A fiery solo violin introduction is played by Nathalie Bonin in "To Solar Piazza," a piece inspired by the Argentinian composer Astor Piazzolla. Piazzolla revolutionized the tango by combining elements of 20th century classical music, improvisation and jazz ideas. The way he recontextualized styles to find a unique voice is something to which I aspire.

Exploration and openness, key elements in the saxophone trio tradition, are a launching point for my improvisations. I remember the first time I heard a recording of Sonny Rollins' *A Night at the Village Vanguard*, and was moved by the energy, freedom and time-feel Sonny had as a soloist in this context. Mark Helias' band, Open Loose, explores and expands this framework. In my music Mark plays a pivotal role, bridging the worlds of composed music for the string quartet and the improvisational world of the saxophone trio.

In these works I seek a diplomatic blend of musical genres. In "How Postmodern of Me" three styles are juxtaposed and layers progressively added, reaching a climax where the original melody is revisited in a new light. A strong rock underpinning in this piece is brought to life by Jim Black's artistic awareness and subtlety. He lays a solid foundation under all the pieces, grooving like crazy, yet is sensitive to the most delicate textures of the string quartet. When I first met and played with Jim at the Banff Centre for the Arts, I knew that I wanted him to participate in this project because of his range of textures and grooves, and the individuality that he is able to elicit from the drums.

While many of the pieces here blur the lines between musical styles, I always try to maintain an essence of melody and beauty. The name *Magic Numbers* refers to the fact that this ensemble has seven members, but to me it also suggests paradoxes of both logic and spirit. In mathematics, magic number squares are fascinating anomalies. The number seven appears in many forms of spirituality, conferring on it a magical quality.

Quinsin Nachoff



All compositions by Quinsin Nachoff, published by Musitronic Productions (SOCAN). Produced by Quinsin Nachoff and Tony Reif. Recorded by David Travers-Smith at Phase One, Toronto, January 17-18, 2004, assisted by Greg Kolchinsky. Digital transfer by Steve Puntolillo, Sonicraft. Edited and mixed by Shawn Pierce at MX Solutions, Vancouver, December 3-8, 2004. Mastered by Graemme Brown at Zen Mastering, Vancouver. Images by Nenad Stevanovic (nashs@telus.net). Design by Eli Bornowsky. Info/bookings: www.quinsin.com, quinsin@quinsin.com. All rights reserved; unauthorized copying, hiring, lending, public performances, and broadcasting of this recording prohibited.

Quinsin Nachoff/tenor/soprano saxophone
 Mark Helias/bass/Jim Black/drums
 Nathalie Bonin/violin/Noémi Racine Gaudreault/violin
 Jean René/viola/Julie Trudeau/cello

1 There & Back 7:37 **2** To Solar Piazza 11:20 **3** How Postmodern of Me 7:47 **4** October 7:21
5 Branches 5:45 **6** Circles & Waves 8:23 **7** Whorls 7:51 **8** Sun-Day 13:05 total time 69:37

All compositions by Quinsin Nachoff. Analogue recording mixed in 24/88.2 to stereo and 5.0 and mastered to DSD.
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