



André Nendza
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Text in italics are verbatim quotes from André Nendza

The background:

The new album „5/5/9“ by André Nendza offers 16 tracks in three different line-ups on a triple CD.

The „Canvas“ quintet is the bassist's current working band, while the „Plains“ quintet was formed especially for this album. Both quintets play 5 compositions each and then unite for six tracks to form a nonet. So much for the facts.

The idea for this project was born during the pandemic. The preoccupation with the theme of „Contrafacts“, which characterised Nendza's previous album „On Canvas I“, is continued and further developed here.

A Great American Songbook collection from a well-known recording medium was to serve as the impulse-giving starting point. After some deliberation, the choice fell on Nils Wogram's „Root 70“ album „Wise men can `t be wrong“, on which the group deals with the interpretation of standards in a fantastic way. However, the idea here was not to create a direct musical reference to the recording beyond the use of the repertoire. Rather, it was about using the material as a source of inspiration for new compositions.

The 12 pieces represented an exciting field of research for André Nendza, as most of the titles were not among those frequently played in the bassist's personal real book - every jazz musician has his own. In the first phase of the approach, the standards were „played“. Due to the isolation caused by the pandemic, this was done solely on the bass or piano; in some cases, lead sheets had to be created using recordings, and solo excerpts from well-known musicians such as Dexter Gordon were transcribed to understand the harmonies. The first ideas for their own compositions already emerged during this phase.

„In the course of the creative process, things often take on a life of their own in such a way that at a certain point you no longer have the starting point in mind. The compositions take on their own identity, detached from the original impulse“

As more abstract concepts found their way into the composition process alongside the classic contrafact technique (writing a new melody on the familiar harmony sequence), one inevitable consequence was to imagine different instrumentations for the different groups of pieces.

„As the writing phase took place during one of the peak times of the pandemic, it was clear that the real realisation was not imminent. Some of the pieces were specifically tailored to the existing Canvas quintet, while others had to be considered after completion as to which musical people this material would suit. It was clear that parts of the pieces should be realised with a larger ensemble.“

The 15 compositions span a wide range of styles and use the various strands of modern jazz as playing fields.

„Any form of dogma or purism is alien to me. I enjoy the most diverse forms of music, even beyond jazz. Nevertheless, up to now my various projects have always tended to reflect a sub-area of my interests. Now everything comes together here and yet for me it feels like a unified whole“

The line-up:

Canvas

Angelika Niescier – Alto Saxophone
Matthias Bergmann – Fluegelhorn
Martin Sasse – Piano
André Nendza – Double Bass
Niklas Walter – Drums

The quintet line-up of the previous album „On Canvas“ was to be the starting point for this project. The line-up of Angelika Niescier, Matthias Bergmann, Martin Sasse and Niklas Walter had developed into a fabulously functioning unit, despite or precisely because of the differences in their artistic nature. The compositions on the current album are mostly contrafacts in the classical sense. Although the basic form of the chords is modified at certain points, the core structure remains the same. The background to this concept is still that musicians with different stylistic backgrounds can communicate with each other musically as quickly as possible on a generally recognised basis. In terms of composition, the material has developed further in contrast to the previous album, which was essentially characterised by the classic theme-solo-theme form. Composed intros, interludes and final passages now play a greater role. The thematic design is altogether more complex here. Different instruments take the lead thematically. The original concept of the blowing session is refined and yet the essential driving force of the „swinging“ rhythm section, on the basis of which the soloists tell their very own stories, is retained. The element of timing, which never goes out of fashion, ensures a happy cohesion.



„This quintet is the most „swinging“ of my projects in the classical sense. Making an irresistible statement as a basis or friction surface for the soloists in a trio is pure pleasure.“

Plains

Christine Corvisier – Tenor,- Soprano Saxophone
Maik Krahl – Trumpet, Fluegelhorn
Mike Walker – Guitar
André Nendza – Double Bass
Christoph Hillmann – Drums, Percussion

The compositions for this quintet were finalised before it was clear who would be playing here. The idea was that both quintets would be united to form a nonet. The decision in favor of the guitar as the harmony instrument to avoid two keyboard players in the nonet was quickly made. In addition, one of the two drummers should also be a specialist in percussion in order to be able to utilise differentiated possibilities for rhythmic arrangements in the nonet.

Christoph Hillmann is the ideal choice for this role. Nendza and Hillmann have been friends for many years, not only musically, and have developed a solid common vocabulary through playing in countless projects. This has been refined over 15 years, particularly in the collective group „Tria Lingvo“. This was also the point of reference for the wonderful Mike Walker, as there were four blocks of tours in Germany and the UK in 2018/19 where the English guitarist met the trio. The chemistry was magical from the very first moment before the pandemic and Brexit, so it made sense to revive this spirit for the new project.

On saxophone and trumpet, Christine Corvisier and Maik Krahl are two people Nendza had never worked with before. Both were highly recommended and have already documented their artistic voice on many recordings. Thus, the refreshing spirit of the younger artists met the well-rehearsed rhythm section.

The compositions for Plains sometimes deal with polyrhythmic structures. Opposing, interlocking figures create different time levels. The bass is more strongly integrated as a melody instrument in the arrangements than in the Canvas program.

„For me, the rhythmic flow is also at the center of this quintet. Essentially, it's always about „good tones with an authentic sound at the right time“. I really enjoy communicating on the time level within the rhythm section and with the soloists.“

Nonett - 5 plus 5 equals 9

Nendza, who took his first steps as a professional musician in the mid-1990s with his own septet, is composing music for a larger ensemble again after a long time.

Two saxophones, two brass instruments, two harmony instruments and two percussion instruments plus a bass. The palette of sound possibilities is vast and yet, despite these possibilities, the power of the rhythm is retained at its core. Interlocking and counter-movements in a common



flow of time.

„The fun of polyphonic writing with suspended voicings or even counter voices was there again. In addition to the conception of the wind parts, the integration of piano and guitar was a great challenge.“

While many of the compositions in the quintet repertoire have a swinging-triolic character, the nonet repertoire is primarily characterised by titles in „even-eight“ phrasing, often in odd time signatures. It is also striking that some of the standard impulses are used here for the second time. This creates another perspective with a completely different focus.

„Writing for this instrumentation has shown me a new perspective for the future. I would like to tackle the topic of large ensemble/big band after all. How this experiment will turn out is still completely open, but the fire has been lit.“

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The titles: facts and associations

CD 1 - Canvas

Words

The impulse for „Words“ came from the standard „Too marvellous for words“. The piano plays the chordal theme in the A section, the winds respond with triplet chromaticism in the B section.
A pleasant swinging opener.

A Mad Bridge

The title refers to the legendary pianist Ahmad Jamal and the groove refers to his rhythmic world. Alternates between a funky backbeat in the piano solo and double-time swing under the flugelhorn. Bass solo as an afterthought. Ellington's „Chelsea Bridge“ was the starting point here.

The Half

Melancholic ballad. Beautiful two-part interplay between the wind instruments in the theme. Shimmering saxophone solo. Melodic bass solo narrative. „Isfahan“ was the starting point of the creative transformation here and the title refers to the Persian proverb „Isfahan is half the world“.

Light Steps

A neat light-footed piece of music, based on the changes from „You stepped out of a dream“. Singing melody, two-beat accompaniment. Then a wild saxophone solo as a contrasting program, followed by a violently swinging piano solo. The marvellous opposites Niescier and Sasse „at their best“. Rolling drum feature with kick interjections from the band.

Dream

Bossa-like piece with an „off-beat“ theme on the changes of „Darn that dream“. Considerable trill passage towards the end of the theme. The „Even Eights world“ is also played grooving played to the point. Correspondingly straightforward solos.

CD 2 - Plains

Icon

Virtuoso theme unison between bass and tenor sax. Interlaced triplets in the B section. Then an offensive medium-up swing.
Maik Krahl plays flowing lines with a light tone. Mike Walker plays a consistently rhythmic chord solo. Intense trading between tenor saxophone and drums. All this on the changes of „I concentrate on you“.

Despair

A contrafact based on „Everything happens to me“.
Funky groove. Laidback. „Bouncy“ theme. Tricky B section with rhythmic shifts. Every note in the guitar solo is played with great clarity. Beautiful contrast between double-time lines and steady rhythm section in the flugelhorn solo.

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Modular Love

Soft beginning with bass solo plus guitar accompaniment. Swinging $\frac{3}{4}$ theme with lots of syncopation and Afro-like B section. Tenor solo starts on a light note and builds powerfully. Flugelhorn solo floating above things. Starting point here: „Taking a chance on love“.

The Stone Of The Stones

Trumpet-bass unison at the beginning of the theme, which is based on the chord changes of „The song is you“. Post-bop with a slight reference to early Ornette Coleman. Flowing, swinging guitar and sax solos with beautiful melodic development lead into trumpet-drums trading.

Me Vaccinated

Completed on the day of the first coronavirus vaccination, this track is almost fusion-like.

Dense chord kicks in the theme. Asymmetrical form with different rhythm patterns. Two intense solos from guitar and saxophone over modal vamp. Trumpet solo over chord changes.

The fairly unknown standard „Nothing like you“ (a kind of bonus track on Miles Davis' „The sorcerer“) is abstracted to the maximum here.

CD3 - Nonet

About Rivers

Maximum rudimentary reference to „Moon river“. A little of the tonal space and a few hidden motifs.

Rhythm vibe between African and South American elements. A bit of Corea's „Children Songs“ in the piano figure. Otherwise „Wild Meadow“ in the solos.

A consistently dense and yet differentiated fabric.

Seven Long Summers

One - the name says it all - of several odd-meter compositions for the nonet. André Nendza had a long-standing affair with odd metres, beginning in the 1990s, which then seemed to end at the end of the noughties. But old love never rusts. Based on „Once upon a summertime“. A melody played by double bass and the left hand of the piano is accompanied by wind instruments and answered by the guitar. Kicking B section. A modal guitar solo becomes increasingly dense and leads into a massive interlude. Then an intense alto solo over the chordal form.

Five Dreams

At the beginning, a collective improvisation by the winds over the form. Played in $\frac{5}{4}$ time. Finely knurled lines condense into an eruption. Then metrical modulation inferno in the spirit of the quintuplet during the theme. A - somehow bizarre - mixture of Mingus mood and art rock. Artfully crafted guitar solo in the outro. The impulse again came from „Darn that dream“.

What Happens, Happens

Strong off-beat $\frac{3}{4}$ vibe in the theme. Played with two drum sets. Nicely placed „old-school“ right and left in the stereo spectrum. Martin Sasse plays a wildly rhythmic piano solo, Matthias Bergmann cultivates the long lines and Christine Corvisier the controlled offense.

The drummers rummage wildly in their joint solo. This is where the „Everything happens to me“ impulse comes into play once more time.

Zen Trade

Once again „I concentrate on you“ as a starting point. $\frac{9}{4}$ time in a somewhat unusual arrangement.

Beautiful percussion solo at the beginning over piano ostinato. Niklas Walter marks the cornerstones in the heaviest groove and Hillmann sets contrasts. A massive theme in the A sections. Percussive melody in the B section. The solo form utilises - despite the ostinato rhythm - the chord changes of the impulse standard, over which Mike Walker, Matthias Bergmann and Angelika Niescier tell different stories.

The Sixth Dream

A little afterthought. Alternative take of the outro solo by Mike Walker on „Five Dreams“.

Too good not to publish ...

