



Phare d'Yves Léveillé : guide fidèle du jazz canadien

Le pianiste et compositeur Yves Léveillé sort un nouvel album, son huitième sous l'étiquette Effendi, intitulé Phare. Un opus au tempérament plus agité qu'à l'habitude, mais toujours aussi empreint de sagesse, de poésie et d'inspiration. Pour paraphraser mon collègue et ami Stanley Péan, Yves Léveillé nous a habitués à des albums aux ambiances feutrées, teintées d'harmonies parfois insolites. En ce sens, Phare fait figure d'enfant plus agité que ce à quoi l'on s'attend de lui depuis quelques années d'enregistrements discographiques. Pas turbulent, seulement plus animé que la moyenne, voire un brin plus nerveux.

Rassurez-vous : c'est impeccable et surtout très accessible. Même quand le compositeur flirte avec l'atonalisme (La lune est dans sa bulle et quelques endroits ailleurs aussi), il reste humain, humble et attaché à la poésie du geste, la noblesse du son, l'authenticité des émotions. Et l'on a toujours droit à des moments élégiaques d'une beauté apaisante (Gestation).

Léveillé s'est adjoint une distribution tout étoile pour l'accompagner dans sa vision : Yannick Rieu au sax alto, Jacques Kuba Séguin à la trompette, Kevin Warren à la batterie, Guy Boisvert à la contrebasse.

Comme il le dit bien en entrevue, ce sont tous des musiciens très forts dans leur cheminement. Ils sont pleinement confiants en leurs moyens et ils sont capables ainsi de mieux s'abandonner dans l'univers d'un autre musicien et d'y apporter une contribution personnelle assurée tout en étant non intrusive.

Dans le paysage du jazz canadien, Yves Léveillé demeure une valeur sûre, un point de repère en qualité, un phare sur lequel on doit continuer de se guider, quoi.

Frédéric Cardin; Ici musique (Radio-Canada) 21 juin 2019

Yves Léveillé Steps Out With “Phare”

PHARE / LÉVEILLÉ: Phare. Sang-Froid. Gestation. Centaure.* Toujours est-il. Eau Trouble. La Lune dans sa Bulle. Gratitude / Yves Léveillé, pno; Yannick Rieu, s-sax/*a-sax; Jacques Kuba Ségui, tpt; Guy Boisvert, bs; Kevin Warren, dm / Effendi FND155

This album by French Canadian pianist Yves Léveillé and his quintet is unusual to say the least. Many of the tracks here start out as if they were “ambient jazz,” a genre I detest, yet most of them quickly begin to morph into something else—more modern, more individual, more interesting. In part, this is due to Léveillé’s unusual harmonic changes, but also due to his unique sense of musical construction. Each of these pieces is a real composition that evolves, like flowers, from their musical buds. Bassist Guy Boisvert, for instance, uses his instrument more like a ground bass in a Baroque ensemble, moving the harmony up and down with his well-chosen notes as the music progresses. The solos, Léveillé’s included, are well spaced out in note choices and make musical sense. To reiterate: these are real compositions, not just a jam session.

Moreover, as one can hear on the opener, Phare, Léveillé scores his works with taste and precision. Not a note or phrase is wasted; everything falls into place, and the soloists listen to one another and build on the evolving musical structure. Even trumpeter Yannick Rieu’s rather extroverted solo never gets so far out of hand that you can’t hear how it fits into the surrounding material.

Sang-Froid is a more aggressive-sounding piece even from the outset, the opening theme played in out of tempo before moving into a sort of broken boogie woogie on the piano. The effective use of backbeats in the percussion with forward movement in the top-line instruments makes an effective contrast, and during the piano solo Boisvert plays single-note fills that complement the ongoing improvisation rather than just supporting it with rhythmic thumps. Trumpet and soprano sax play an atonal lick in thirds, then the tempo decreases almost to a standstill. The drums play quiet rolls and cymbal washes as Rieu plays his solo, then the tempo returns to normal as Ségui plays counterpoint to him on the trumpet. In Gestation Léveillé returns to a soft opening on piano, playing a sparse four-note rising motif in the right hand. Bass, drums and soprano sax enter in a sort of slow, rolling 3 with the drums fairly aggressive in the background. Just before the three-minute mark the whole piece seems to fall apart; the tempo slow down to a crawl while Boisvert plays a bass solo and the others fill in around him. Much of Léveillé’s music put me in mind of the more experimental 1950s and early ‘60s jazz, only in slow motion. I like it!

One could easily provide such detailed descriptions of every track on this CD, but to what purpose? The listening experience supersedes anything I could put in words anyway. Besides which, the verbal descriptions can’t convey the emotional impression of this music and, besides, they may actual spoil your sense of discovery

and enjoyment. With that being said, I must also praise L veill  for his very effective programming. He contrasts moods well, for instance following the rather upbeat Centaure with the strange, ominous-sounding Toujours est-il. In Eau Trouble, he builds the piece around a couple of five-note licks in the bass line played 5 against 4. There are so many little variables like this in the album that I'd rather you discovered them for yourself; you'll appreciate them all the more. Phare is, quite, simply, a remarkable album of jazz compositions skillfully arranged and expertly played. You really should check it out!

—  2019 Lynn Rene Bayley, Jazz in Europe