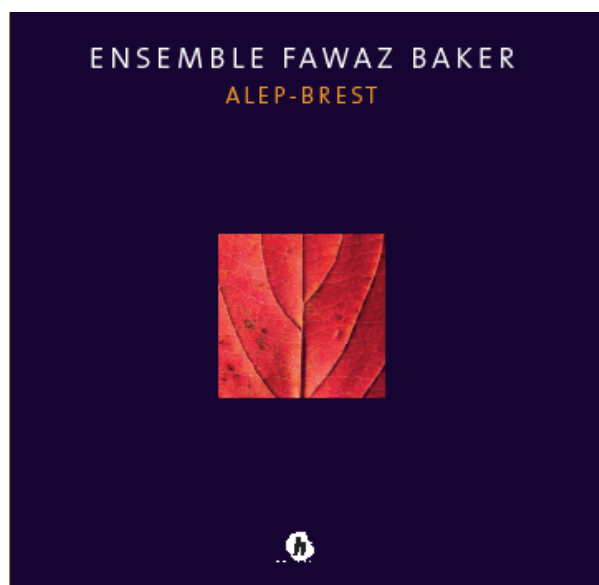


PRESS FILE

FAWAZ BAKER / ENSEMBLE « ALEP – BREST »

Album release, 2019, November the 15th (CD + Vinyl)
Distribution: L'Autre Distribution & Xango



The imaginary of Fawaz Baker, citizen of the world, drinks from many different fountains.

With his new quartet Alep-Brest, the composer pioneers a free, deterritorialized musical language.

It is difficult indeed to pin down this universe, bathed as it is in eastern perfumes and crossed with South-American and gypsy scents, as classical as it is traditional.

Thanks to its bright tonal coupling, this little miracle gets worked.

Anne Millour, le Quartz, Scène nationale de Brest

PRESS CONTACT:



FAWAZ BAKER / ENSEMBLE

MANON COURTIN
guitar/vocals

HELENA RÉCALDE
bass/vocals

SAMIR HOMSI
percussion/vocals

FAWAZ BAKER
direction/oud/vocals

The passing on of music from one musician to another and from one soul to another continues, echoing ancient melodies that used to be heard throughout the city, in churches and cafes; in the mosques and courtyards of stone-carved buildings. These tunes, in Arabic, Syriac, Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish, have been passed down from one generation to the next, their beauty serving as the sole weapon against falling into oblivion.

Their one common denominator is, for FAWAZ BAKER, their constant innovation within the constraints of traditional structure. Eastern music offers myriad possibilities in terms of rhythm, melody and improvisation. It is what is referred to as modal music: composed of musical phrases, not tones or notes like most compositions in the West since the eighteenth century. Eastern sound is based on improvisation and polyphony; a freedom that allows two melodies to evolve simultaneously within a complex architecture, letting each musician interpret and improvise. How, then, might a balance be struck between written and improvised music, between modal and tonal? The challenge is no small feat, but it does illustrate how music - and art in general - is capable of creating a dialogue between contradictory forces, one where ideology falls short.



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WITH SUPPORT FROM
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PRODUCTION ADMINISTRATOR:
Pauline Ranvel

COORDINATION:
Gaby Kerdoncuff

COMMUNICATION:
Élise Bureau / Le Pas de la Baleine

RECORDED BY:
Jacques-Yves Lafontaine in May 2019 at the
Astrolab studio (Le Faouët - 22)

MIXED BY:
Jacques-Yves Lafontaine at Brittany Studios
(Ploermel - 56)

Mastering: Sébastien Lohro Studio NDE

ARTWORK:
Nolwenn Blouin / Tryptik

PHOTOS:
Éric Legret

ALEP – BREST CD & Vinyle

Tracks :

1) HADI
(F. Baker / Al Rawandi) - 6.54

2) CHOUBY
(F. Baker) - 4.20

3) KARTE
(F. Baker / Traditionnel / F. Baker) - 6.07

4 - AYYOUB
(F. Baker / Abul Ala Al Maari X^e century) - 9.59 (3.40 vinyle)

5) AED LANA
(Traditional / F. Baker / Text by a poetess from the city of Homs,
Al Tillawiya - 18th century) - 5.25

6) ABU SAID
(F. Baker) - 3.29

7) TANGO D'ALEP
(F. Baker) - 2.03

8) SONATE
(F. Baker / Omar Al Batsh Alep 1950) - 4.26

9) BREST
(F. Baker / Traditional / F. Baker) - 4.32

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distribution



Music is time.

In my work, I noticed I often came across the number four, which itself related to other numbers. So, I decided to represent the cycle of one year in one hour, examining the hours, days, months and lastly, the seasons.

First comes spring. The music I wrote for this season has a color, green, and a taste, tartness. Describing the taste of music is very dear to me. Some ideas for describing music, such as through touch, smell and taste, carry great emotion for me. The sense of smell marks us during our childhood and penetrates our unconscious mind. Music is therefore a passage from consciousness to unconsciousness. My pieces have an odor and taste that are, more often than not, indefinable, elusive even.

Naturally, after spring comes summer, red and with a strong taste. Summer is hot, intense, angry and at the same time fun and friendly. I chose two texts by the 10th century poet, ABUL ALA AL-MAARRI. He wrote a letter to God that served as inspiration for DANTE as he wrote the *Divine Comedy*. He speaks to Him about injustice and the chaos of creation. ABUL ALA AL-MAARRI was blind; I see him as a great poet who expresses the idea of Islam in terms of civilization, beyond just an identity. I constantly seek new cultural elements because as soon as an identity is definable, it becomes fixed, and once fixed, it becomes obsolete. It is no longer usable, and only serves for declaring war. Believe me, I do understand the meaning of this last word. The idea, the essence, the substance of my music are born out of improvisation; after that comes the work. Sitting down with my instrument, I take no time to let my ideas unfurl.

For this summer section, I woke up one morning with a melody inside me, one I had to record before it got away from me. The starting point of my music is emotional, and its point of arrival must be as well. It is not so much a dreamlike inspiration as it is a depth of the unconscious; it is our memory, our soul. It is us! It is by digging deep into our own heart that we reach the universal. This is why we play music: it is a bridge leading to this world, which belongs to everyone. It is as much an inner contemplation as it is a means for communicating without using language. Our cultures are four thousand years old. But the emotions tied to our sensations come to us from forty or fifty thousand years ago.

After summer comes autumn, which is orange, salty. It is very surprising, a salty orange. Autumn is calm and a bit sad, though without ever being imploring. I transformed what was originally just improvisation into a score for strings and woodwinds. I also propose an alternative to this fracture between East and West, this distinction that I do not recognize. The wars in the eighteenth century brought with them reciprocal influences between the Ottomans, the Moldavian princes and the music of MOZART. This is a time when musical boundaries were transcended; that's what I, too, seek to achieve in my work, to erase boundaries.

I am a composer of my time and I like to use its elements. I include in my work ingredients from Aleppo, which is influenced by both the Arab and the Turkish worlds, as well as jazz, rock, and blues, genres I have played for years. I have no limits on that side. I do not wish to define my music as either Eastern or Western. It is music from the heart meant for everyone. In October, the air changes and grows cooler; this is where a children's choir comes in, just as I fade away. Audience members and children sing a song, *Aed Lana*, written by an eighteenth-century poet. It is a beautiful short poem. *Aed Lana* talks about memories that drive demons away, just before we come to the final part, winter.

Winter is royal blue, midnight blue, and even a little black; although winter is happy, sweet. It is even somewhat chocolatey. I'm not talking about the food itself here, but rather the memory of it. The taste of chocolate is the same for all of us; but the memory is different for each individual. I wanted to mould something personal, something that can be shared, re-shared and shared again. That's what matters most to me, ultimately. Wartime is the absence of sharing and, more precisely, the absence of any desire to share.

Melodies have a life of their own, they are contagious - like recipes and jokes. They get passed on from one heart to another.

FAWAZ BAKER, 2019



HELENA RÉCALDE

is a bass player, double-bassist, guitarist, singer, songwriter and composer. Ecuadorian by birth, brought up to Afro-Latin rhythms and Andean melodies, she arrived in France in 2003 and has since developed many international projects, for which she mixes the music of her upbringing with jazz in her compositions and arrangements. Her openness and taste for improvisation, her musical encounters allow her to navigate through eclectic worlds: Latin, jazz, folk, world music, rock and contemporary music. She has been teaching at the Conservatoire d'Evry since 2011.



MANON COURTIN

is a guitarist and versatile musician who performs with various groups between Paris and Toulouse (*Isiak*, *Helvetian On the Ground*). Her early training as a jazz guitarist and her eclectic musical tastes led her to work on a variety of repertoires, ranging from gypsy jazz and New Orleans styles (*Pigalle Swing*, *Dixaswing*), as well as traditional music from Latin America (*Cumbia Ya*, *Guaguita*). She honed her multi-instrumental skills (Venezuelan cuatro, Cuban tres, bass, percussion, cello) which she developed for the theater (*Compagnie du Peuple lié*) in particular. She also teaches and supervises workshops for people with autism through the *Irimi-Vivace association*.



SAMIR HOMSI

is a highly-talented Syrian percussionist living in Paris. He studied Arabic music and the Oud and percussion instruments in his home country. He has taken part in numerous festivals in France, Belgium, Spain, Algeria and Morocco. Samir has played with the singer SAPHO, IBRAHIM MAALOUF, the violinist SAFWAN KENANI, the Palestinian singer MONEIM ADWAN and the *Alquds troupe*.

From the Tabla to the Djembe by way of the Qanun, bendir, riq and bongo: what is striking about all the instruments he has mastered is how the great richness and diversity of his percussion enhances the groups he plays with.



FAWAZ BAKER

A lifelong musician, Fawaz Baker was a professional architect before devoting himself exclusively to music. From accompanying singers on the accordion as a child, to the keyboards and then double bass, he has explored various music spaces (hard rock, jazz, blues) and devoted years to studying musicology and the multiple influences of Aleppine music (Ottoman, Iranian, Armenian, Indian and Central Asian, including the Sufi tradition). The war ended up tearing this Oud player away from hometown and from everything he had built, though he has long sought to continue in solidarity with his people: he led the Aleppo Conservatory of Music for several years where, he said, «the greatest challenge was composing between the teaching of Western classical music and that of traditional Eastern music.» Beyond the joy and sadness, the music allows him to build new sentiments and create a new memory. As part of his commitment, Fawaz Baker spends much of his time in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon passing on his passion for music to children, showing them how to re-learn silence, far from the noise of war. He is an associate artist at Quartz in Brest until 2020.

Agenda Ensemble Fawaz Baker

SEPTEMBRE

le 4 :

répétition ensemble DEMOS Brest, le Quartz, scène nationale de Brest (29)

OCTOBRE

le 12 :

répétition ensemble DEMOS Brest, le Quartz, scène nationale de Brest (29)

les 18/19/20 :

FAWAZ SOLO master class + 2 concerts solo. Domaine de Kergehenec BIGNAN (56)

NOVEMBRE

du 13 au 15 :

résidence, répétition du concert Alep/Brest au Conservatoire Xénakis à Evry-Courcouronnes (91)

le 18 :

concert sortie d'album au Studio de l'Ermitage, Paris (75)

DÉCEMBRE

le 7 :

répétition ensemble DEMOS Brest, le Quartz, scène nationale de Brest (29)

le 13 :

concert sortie d'album au Quartz, dans le cadre du festival No Border, Brest (29)



Cie Hirundo Rustica – Label Hirustica

Ti an Holl - 22310 Plestin Les Grèves

Tél : +33(0)6 95 12 06 39

information@hirustica.com



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ARE KEEN TO TRAVEL AND TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES.

PRESS CONTACT:



PRESS AGENCY VEEVCOM
SÈVERINE BERGER
M : +33 (0)6 77 83 62 39
SEVERINE@VEEVCOM.COM