

Interview with Francois Richard: When I am inspired, I feel that I am getting close to the ultimate spirit: Video

- 02/19/2018

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Jazz interview with jazz flutelist François Richard. An interview by email in writing.

JazzBluesNews.Space: – First let’s start with where you grew up, and what got you interested in music?

François Richard: – I grew up in a nice small town part of the far suburb of Montreal(Quebec) named Beloeil but i was born in Hamilton, Ontario. My parents are French Quebec – Canadian.

JBN.S: – What got you interested in picking up the flute? What teacher or teachers helped you progress to the level of playing you have today? What made you choose the flute?

FR: – Well, my mother was a musician (still alive) and started his own business teaching recorder and piano. My father was a professional photographer and also was an amateur

Opera singer. My mom taught me music theory when I was 6 – 7 years old. So I was already in a musical ambiance. My uncle who was a piano and organ tuner specialist brought a recorder soprano, flute and a method (book) in our home, as a family gift. I was curious and picked up the flute and played some sounds and loved it. I went in my room alone with the book that gave instructions about the fingering and started playing and I passed through the method, it took me 6 months because I knew about music theory. Then i did book number 2 and played Brandebourgeois bach concerto that was the challenge at the end. I was around 8-9 years old when i assisted a semi -professional orchestra rehearsal in which my mother “Thérèse” played the alto recorder beside a musician playing the transverse C flute. I decided to stop playing the small recorder flute and told my parents that i was ready for the “real” silver flute so i met Mme Gail Grimstead who was coming back from Paris studying with the famous Jean-Pierre Rampal at the Conservatoire. She figured out that I was too small to play all the low notes, but she took me as a student. The year after, she introduced me to Rampal for a flute lesson. Rampal was giving a concert in Montreal “Place des Arts ” at the time, I saw the concert and had the lesson the day after, I was 10 years old. Same thing happen when I was 11. At the age of 13 I studied classical flute at Montreal Conservatory with Jean Paul Major and piano as a second instrument. At the age of 15 I got into improvisation, it was just natural for me and at 16 I started to have studio sessions jingle because I read music and improvised either. At 18 I was really into jazz and other modern music, including a rhythm section and was not studying anymore. I learn jazz by playing with jazz players and listening to jazz concerts.

JBN.S: – How did your sound evolve over time? What did you do to find and develop your sound?

FR: – My sound was at the beginning a classical one. I first listen to jazz flute players i was 13. I liked the swinging style and relax and windy jazz sound of Herbie Mann and Roland Kirk humming sound effects(singing and playing at the same time), Ian Anderson (Jethro Tull) also used this technique Being formed as a classical flute player I was really impressed when I heard Hubert Laws playing with an amazing technique and rich sound that is a mix to my point of view (maybe I am wrong) of classical, jazz and contemporary style. Like with Rampal, I heard this great precision in the attack of the notes and very dense color in the sound. So the fact that I played with amplification and sometimes not, sometime with rhythm section and in other situation without percussions (flute and piano) my sound was transformed over the years to be efficient and to fit my original compositions first. I like using harmonics that create a space feeling ... and Flatterzung.

JBN.S: – What practice routine or exercise have you developed to maintain and improve your current musical ability especially pertaining to rhythm?

FR: – Well, I practice with the metronome for a while and then without. I still practice classical and modern impressionist repertoire for the flute. For example, Mozart Concerto opus 313, Bach sonatas (with a very steady time) Poulenc Sonata, Khachaturian Violin Concerto and other modern music for the flute. I will do some free improvisation and

sound exploration. I could sometime use the Aebersold play along CD'S to practice some standards and patterns. And obviously i practice my own composition, including the chorus for improvisation.

JBN.S: – Which harmonies and harmonic patterns do you prefer now?

FR: – I prefer diminished and augmented chords and harmonies using whole tone scale and diminished scales. I have assimilated all pentatonic scales and arpeggios that I transform in a spontaneous way. In the middle of a riff I will change the concept and go somewhere else and transpose the pattern to create some kind of a surprise ... I play piano and i practice my solos on piano so when i switch to the flute and read a chord progression i can see and hear lots of things and notes. I try to not play scales but notes that would bring some color to the music.

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1. *Donctuation* 5:06
2. *Winter Blues** 5:16
3. *Liberation* 6:28
4. *Une Tempête* 6:22
5. *De 7 à 8* 4:16
6. *Dark Waltz* 4:51
7. *La Bossa à Casanova* 5:14
8. *Balade 2017** 5:06

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Compositions :
François G. Richard (SOCAN)
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François Richard
Flûtes traversières en do et en sol * /
C flute & alto flute *

Guillaume Martineau
Piano

Rémi-Jean Leblanc
Contrebasse / Double Bass

Martin Auguste
Batterie / Drums

PRODUCTIONS
CMFR

EFFENDI

NAXOS

musicaction

Canada

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JBN.S: – What do you love most about your new album 2018: <Liberation>, how it was formed and what you are working on today.

FR: – Well, I am happy about the “good vibes ” of the group. The musicians sound like they had a good time playing my compositions during those studio sessions. The challenge of having a different color in each track, I mean different grooves and melodies. The songs are not too long and these days it is a good point, because a studio album is not a live concert, but an art creation that the listener will appreciate (I hope so).

JBN.S: – Which are the best jazz albums for you of 2017 year?

FR: – *Far from Over* VIJAY IYER SEXTET /*Daylight Ghosts* – *Graig Taborn*/ Ralph Towner – *My foolish Heart* / *The source* – Tony Allen/ OK I am sorry for the other one who did great albums and there is some ... it is hard to answer and be objective.

JBN.S: – What’s the balance in music between intellect and soul?

FR: – If the musician uses more the intellect than the soul, especially that modern jazz is a very advanced music, the larger audience will be lost. If I think too much during a musical performance, my soul is not present. I use my brain mostly during rehearsals. That was a difficult question...

JBN.S: – Please any memories from gigs, jams, open acts and studio sessions which you’d like to share with us?

FR: – The jam session with legendary bass player Jaco Pastorius at Sunset jazz Club in Paris (around 1984). The concert I produced with my company CMFR in the Montreal Jazz Int Jazz festival All Year edition at the GESU Hall in 2011 with guest artist David Binney on alto saxophone. Playing piano and flute in the group L’OS at Detroit/ Montreux International Jazz Festival during Canada Night right after amazing Oscar Peterson solo piano performance at Detroit City Hall.

JBN.S: – Many aspiring musicians are always looking for advice when navigating thru the music business. Is there any piece of advice you can offer to aspiring students or even your peers that you believe will help them succeed and stay positive in this business.

FR: – The aspiring musician is better to be aware that music has to be his first passion. When I started my career as a performer in the jazz scene, I had a fairly good success and I stopped teaching cause I prefer playing. Later on I started to teach jazz and pop flute at university (UQAM and Sherbrooke) part time and it really helped my financial situation. If the newcomer wants to make it as a performer, he or she has to take care of business and have lots of willpower. I suggest them to try playing different kind of music like world music, Pop, Rock, classical and to be involved if possible in theatre plays,

contemporary dance company, film music production and other art form as musicians. It will help to find there own way or musical direction and style.

JBN.S: – And furthermore, can jazz be a business today or someday?

FR: – For some musicians, jazz is a very good business, but for others really bad. For the majority, we are survivalist and by example, in the classical music world, musicians are doing better I think. The main job that pays is teaching music. If you write music and create, it could help to get musical arrangements gigs ... So it helps to be versatile.

JBN.S: – Which collaboration have been the most important experiences for you?

FR: – The concert i produced with my company CMFR for the Montreal International Jazz festival All Year edition at the GESU Hall in February 2009 featuring famous jazz violin player Mark Feldman with the ensemble Nouvel Orchestra including a string section . We also played the show at the New York Dizzy's Club in 2008 and Quebec City Petit Champlain Theatre in 2010.

JBN.S: – How can we get young people interested in jazz when most of the standard tunes are half a century old?

FR: – Create original jazz music that won't be a copy of standard jazz but will use the basic root of it and mix it with other music form and modern grooves. Let's not forget the improvisation aspect of jazz ...

JBN.S: – John Coltrane said that music was his spirit. How do you understand the spirit and the meaning of life?

FR: – Big question ... I did not understand the whole thing yet but when i am inspired, i feel that i am getting close to the ultimate spirit. It is a fact that Coltrane added his own spiritual dimension to jazz.

JBN.S: – What are your expectations of the future? What brings you fear or anxiety?

FR: – The situation of jazz musicians for a living as performers, especially if i look at the recording business and the CD and digital albums sale (including Streaming) compare to what it use to be ... I like making music with electronic sound library, ok! But at the same time i think that we have to remember that music is based on the acoustic instruments evolution.

JBN.S: – If you could change one thing in the musical world and it would become a reality, what would that be?

FR: – A better living for artists and musicians.

JBN.S: – What’s the next musical frontier for you?

FR: – Be able to produce my symphonic orchestral experimental compositions live.

JBN.S: – Are there any similarities between jazz and world music, including folk music?

FR: – The rhythmic aspect is an important factor that makes the relation between those music. Sometime I think that modern jazz is close to contemporary music specially if it is free jazz.

JBN.S: – Who do you find yourself listening to these days?

FR: – I listen to many kinds of music, today Bye Bye Black Bird on Round About Midnight by Miles Davis. I like Frank Zappa and Weather Report, it depends on my mood ...

JBN.S: – What’s your current setup?

FR: – Basic jazz combo, piano, bass, drums and flute on top. Sometime I use other combinations, adding a string section, a cello improviser and a shakuachi player. I have been experimenting with many kinds of instrumental formations. Check on my website to have an idea www.francoisrichard.net

JBN.S: – Let’s take a trip with a time machine, so where and why would you really wanna go?

FR: – In 1938 (something like that) and listen to Art Tatum playing piano anywhere from north America to England. And in Paris during the crazy years, the twenties. There was a lot of great artists living there ...

JBN.S: – I have been asking you so far, now may I have a question from yourself ...

François Richard did not ask us a question!

Interview by Simon Sargsyan