Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
The Way of Steve Lacy:
Finding individuality through musical genealogy

By Lucien Johnson

A thesis and compositions towards a Master of Music in
composition at the New Zealand School of Music,
2012
Acknowledgements

In the year 2000 I saw Steve Lacy perform at the Wellington International Jazz Festival. I was deeply moved and challenged by his music and I became determined to study under this master. In 2004 my dream looked to have come true, as I gained a place in the New England Conservatory where Lacy was teaching. However it was not to be, as his illness and passing in that year robbed the world of one of the great and somewhat underestimated musicians of the 20th Century. Instead of going to Boston I went to live in Paris for some years, where I ended up performing with some of Lacy’s former collaborators, people such as John Betsch and Alan Silva. This project is my way of understanding his work and concluding to some extent the unconscious influence he has had in my life over the last eleven years.

I would like to thank my two supervisors for their superlative assistance. Firstly John Psathas, for his perspicacious help in refining my compositions and challenging me to probe further into the areas that took me beyond my natural habitat. Secondly Norman Meehan for his astute guidance in my written work as well as his buoyant encouragement and kindliness.

I would like to thank all the musicians who partook in the recordings I made: Greg Malcolm, Chris O’Connor, He Jun, Tristan Carter, Andrew Filmer, Charlie Davenport, John Rae, Patrick Bleakley, Anthony Donaldson, Nick Van Dyke, Daniel Yeabsley and the NZSM orchestra.
I would also recognise the help of a couple of fellow saxophone playing Lacy devotees around the world, Huw Lloyd and James Wylie, for their exchanges of various Lacy artefacts and anecdotes.

Finally I would like to dedicate the project to my mother Cecilia for all the years of standing by her musician son and to my sister Miranda for setting the tone in our family with regards to academic achievement and in other regards too.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iii
List of Audio Examples ................................................................................................. vi
List of Recorded Compositions .................................................................................... vii
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
Jazz Advance - from traditional jazz to the avant-garde .............................................. 6
Schooldays – Lacy and the music of Thelonious Monk ............................................... 17
The Forest and the Zoo – Lacy and free improvisation .............................................. 40
Prospectus - Lacy’s “Post-free” music ......................................................................... 46
Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 84
Composition Notes ....................................................................................................... 86
Selected Discography ................................................................................................. 93
Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 94
Compositions ................................................................................................................ 101
   The Night’s Plutonian Shore: String Quartet ......................................................... 102
   The Giddy Heights ................................................................................................. 128
   The Lupanar of Pompeii ..................................................................................... 136
   Report from the Anti-World ............................................................................. 152
   Blue Night Road ................................................................................................. 161
   Les Oiseaux d’Amour ....................................................................................... 169
   Amethyst Twilight .............................................................................................. 173
   Mystique ............................................................................................................. 178
   Breadline Blues .................................................................................................. 185
   No More Troubles ............................................................................................. 191
Appendices ................................................................................................................... 217
List of Audio Examples

CD 1

3 – ‘Charge ‘em Blues’, Cecil Taylor, from *Jazz Advance*, 1956, Blue Note Records
4 – ‘Big Stuff’, Gil Evans, from *Gil Evans and Ten*, 1957, Prestige
5 – ‘Louise’, Cecil Taylor, performed by the Steve Lacy Quartet from *The Straight Horn of Steve Lacy*, 1961, Candid
9 – ‘Brilliant Corners’, Thelonious Monk, performed by Steve Lacy / Roswell Rudd Quartet, 1964, Hat Hut
10 – ‘Monk’s Dream’, Thelonious Monk, performed by Steve Lacy / Roswell Rudd Quartet, 1964, Hat Hut

CD 2

4 – ‘A folk song’, Steve Lacy, from *Futurities II*, 1984, Hat Hut
6 – ‘Papa’s Midnite Hop’, Steve Lacy, from *Trickles*, 1976, Black Saint
9 – ‘Chagrin’, Steve Lacy, performed by Steve Lacy and the Borromeo String Quartet (unreleased recording)
List of Recorded Compositions

CD 3

*Performed by Lucien Johnson (tenor saxophone), Greg Malcolm (guitar), Chris O’Connor (drums), compositions by Steve Lacy*

1 – Art
2 – Bone
3 – Papa’s Midnite Hop

*Performed by Jun He (violin), Tristan Carter (violin) Andrew Filmer (viola), Charley Davenport (cello) compositions by Lucien Johnson*

4 – The Night’s Plutonian Shore part i: Murders in the Rue Morgue
5 – The Night’s Plutonian Shore part ii: Descent into the Maelstrom
6 – The Night’s Plutonian Shore part iii: The Golde Bug
7 – The Night’s Plutonian Shore part iv: The Raven
8 – The Night’s Plutonian Shore part v: The Black Cat
9 – The Night’s Plutonian Shore part vi: The Premature Burial

CD 4

*Performed by the Troubles, Lucien Johnson (saxophones, flute), Daniel Yeabsley (saxophones, clarinet), Nick Van Dijk (Trombone, Trumpet), Tristan Carter (violin) Andrew Filmer (viola), Charley Davenport (cello), Patrick Bleakley (Double Bass), John Rae (drums), Anthony Donaldson (percussion) compositions by Lucien Johnson*

1 – The Giddy Heights
2 – The Lupanar of Pompeii
3 – Report from the Anti-World
4 – Blue Night Road
5 – Les Oiseaux d’Amour
6 – Amethyst Twilight
7 - Mystique
8 – Breadline Blues
9 – No More Troubles

*Performed by the Troubles with the NZSM orchestra*

10 – Cigars of the Pharaoh