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**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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 kindness.

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.

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## List of Audio Examples

### CD 1

- 1 – ‘I’m Coming Virginia’, Sidney Bechet, *The Victor Sessions, Master Takes 1932-43*, 1990, Victor
- 2 – ‘I’m Coming Virginia’, Dick Sutton, *Progressive Dixieland*, 1954, Jaguar
- 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
- 6 – ‘Evidence’, Thelonious Monk, *The Complete Riverside Recordings, Vol.13*, Riverside, 1960
- 7 – ‘Evidence’, Thelonious Monk, *Thelonious Monk Quartet: At Carnegie Hall*, 1957, Blue Note
- 8 – ‘Evidence’, Thelonious Monk performed by Steve Lacy, *Evidence: with Don Cherry*, 1961, Prestige
- 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

- 1 – ‘Bone’, Steve Lacy, from *The Way*, 1980, Hat Hut
- 2 – ‘Existence’, Steve Lacy, from *Remains*, 1991, Hat Hut
- 3 – ‘The Cuckoo’, Steve Lacy, from *Rushes*, 1990, New Sound Plane
- 4 – ‘A folk song’, Steve Lacy, from *Futurities II*, 1984, Hat Hut
- 5 – ‘Alabama Song’, Kurt Weil, *Kurt Weill’s The Seven Deadly Sins and Berlin theatre songs*, Sony Masterworks, 1997 (track recorded 1955)
- 6 – ‘Papa’s Midnite Hop’, Steve Lacy, from *Trickles*, 1976, Black Saint
- 7 – ‘Swiss Duck’, Steve Lacy, from *The Way*, 1980, Hat Hut
- 8 – ‘The New Duck’, Steve Lacy from *Weal and Woe*, 1973, Emanem
- 9 – ‘Chagrin’, Steve Lacy, performed by Steve Lacy and the Borromeo String Quartet (unreleased recording)
- 10 – ‘Itinerary’, Steve Lacy, from *Itinerary*, 1990, Hat Hut

## 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