

Nimmons 'n' Nine... Now



The Mike Cadó Tentet

Nimmons 'n' Nine...Now! The initial idea to form this group grew out of Mike Cadó's personal interest in the compositional and orchestration techniques of Phil Nimmons, his Master's research at York University, and his sheer admiration with the extraordinary ensemble and solo playing of the original group. Since the original group's debut performance at the Stratford Shakespearean Festival in 1956, Nimmons 'n' Nine became one of the most important and influential jazz ensembles in Canadian history, went on to record several albums and was regularly featured on weekly radio broadcasts at the CBC. The Mike Cadó Tentet performs compositions that haven't been heard for over 40 years and many of the musical selections have never been commercially available on records or CDs. Equipped with the original Nimmons arrangements, the dynamic group interprets these historic compositions and also performs new compositions by various group members. The ensemble consists of Canada's finest jazz musicians including John MacMurchy – clarinet, Andy Ballantyne – alto saxophone, Kelly Jefferson – tenor saxophone, David Mott – baritone saxophone, Jason Logue – trumpet, William Carn – trombone, Tom Szczesniak – accordion, Mike Cadó – leader/guitar, Andrew Downing – bass, and Anthony Michelli – drums. The Mike Cadó Tentet debuted on March 3, 2003 commemorating the 80th birthday year of Phil Nimmons and the 50th anniversary of the formation of Nimmons 'n' Nine, and since then, has performed in various festivals, concert series, conferences, and nightclubs. The Mike Cadó Tentet is a tightly-knit group that presents innovative and sophisticated music that pushes the boundaries of modern jazz while still maintaining a strong sense of earthy swing...seemingly effortlessly!

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Nimmons 'n' Nine...Now! represents the long-awaited debut recording of The Mike Cadó Tentet. Equipped with the original arrangements, the release features a selection of historic Nimmons compositions that haven't been heard for over 40 years and have never before been commercially available. In addition, *Nimmons 'n' Nine...Now!* also includes original compositions by various group members penned specifically for this unique instrumentation which capture the adventurous spirit and collaborative character first exhibited in the early recordings. The Mike Cadó Tentet is comprised of the finest instrumentalists, composers, and arrangers in the country including John MacMurchy – clarinet, Andy Ballantyne – alto sax, Kelly Jefferson – tenor sax, David Mott – bari sax, Jason Logue – trumpet, William Carn – trombone, Tom Szczesniak – accordion, Mike Cadó – guitar, Andrew Downing – bass, and Anthony Michelli – drums.

Nimmons 'n' Nine...Now! opens with an Andy Ballantyne composition that successfully bridges the “**Then and Now**” aspect of the project. According to the composer, the piece is “a grateful homage to Phil Nimmons’ compositional style based on the venerable 12-bar blues form. I tried to capture the energy, humour and flair for the unexpected that is always present in Phil’s music.” William Carn, Kelly Jefferson, and David Mott are featured, each playing on the basic blues but in keys a major third apart. While “**It Sounds Like You**” was originally a trombone feature, Cadó decided it would make an appropriate feature for trumpeter Jason Logue. Although his steadfast ensemble playing is confirmed throughout the recording, here, his versatility as a soloist is demonstrated as well. “**But It’s Dark..**” is another Ballantyne composition that was inspired by his 8-year old son Neil, whose standard protest when told to go to bed is “but it’s dark up there!” According to Ballantyne, “the darkly brooding diminished harmony alternates with a more reassuring main theme set over a bossa-nova rhythm.” It features the composer on alto and accordionist Tom Szczesniak whose role in the group is two-fold...or perhaps threefold. In addition to being an accomplished soloist, as exemplified on several tracks, Szczesniak’s ensemble playing is absolutely brilliant and his musical prowess never ceases to amaze. Not only does the accordion provide an instrumental timbre that contributes to the overall uniqueness of the musical texture, but it also ‘fills in the missing notes’ as well, playing three, four, and sometimes five notes simultaneously, adding to the harmonic richness of the ensemble. “**Tipsy**” presents a clarinet feature for John MacMurchy – a rather challenging and onerous chair to fill! However, whether as a featured soloist, or integral voice within the ensemble, MacMurchy rises to the occasion and exemplifies both a creative sense (demonstrated in his own composition for the group) and his technical proficiency. “**Spirals**” most definitely characterizes the ‘Now’ facet of the recording. According to composer David Mott, “the title serves as a description of musical ideas which cycle, rotate, ascend, and descend. Much of jazz is horizontally goal oriented in its harmonic/melodic motion and I find it interesting to create music within the genre that has a more vertical and, therefore, non-goal oriented motion.” Here, tenor saxophonist Kelly Jefferson demonstrates his mastery of the instrument and inventive improvisational abilities. The quirky “**Carey Dance**” penned by Nimmons in 1963 juxtaposes duple and triple meters before finally settling into a 24-bar blues in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The bandleader, Tom, William and drummer Anthony Michelli are featured. One of the challenges of performing in a jazz tentet is to effectively maintain both a small-group intimacy, and at the same time, highlight the power and energy afforded a large ensemble. Both Michelli and bassist Andrew Downing successfully amalgamate these sensibilities by creating a solid foundation for the ensemble elements of the compositions as well as a sensitive, interactive background for the improvisers to build upon. As described by composer John MacMurchy, “**The Back Alley**” is “meant to conjure images of an alley behind a nightclub in a district of nightclubs. You can hear music from several different bands mixing with the city soundscape of traffic and air conditioners, all filtered through the sense of intrigue and danger one associates with the usual denizens of the back alley: winos, hookers, dope dealers...and at the very end, a garbage truck.” *Nimmons 'n' Nine...Now!* closes with “**Just For Now,**” a beautiful introspective ballad that was originally written by Nimmons to feature the great Jerry Toth. Here, Andy Ballantyne demonstrates an insightful musical interpretation that captures the essence of the composition while exhibiting a persuasive voice steeped in both tradition and individuality.

For some, this recording may spark a sense of nostalgia associated with listening to those original broadcasts over 40 years ago, for others it may present a foray into new and exciting music...whichever it is, the group wishes your listening experience be a pleasurable one.