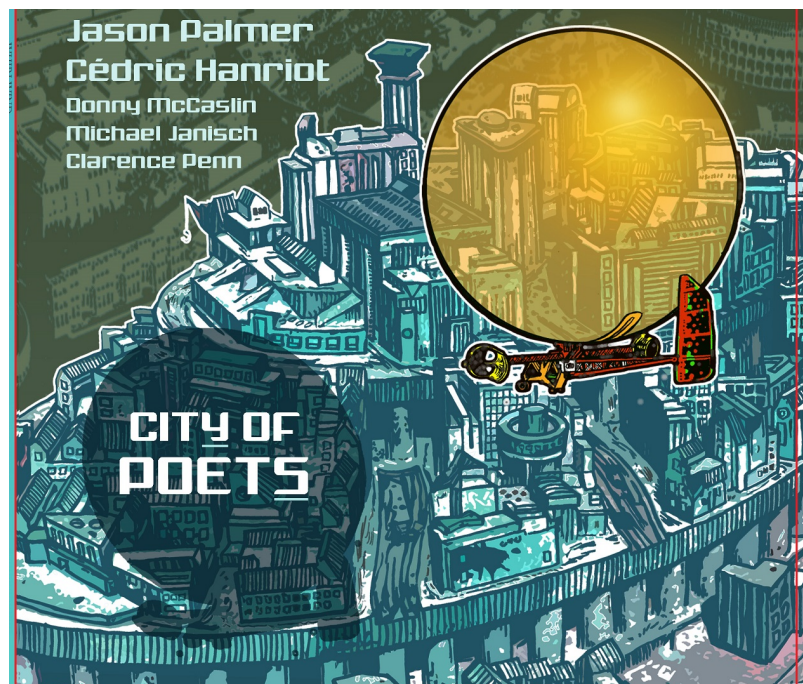


Cédric Hanriot and Jason Palmer's **CITY OF POETS** featuring Donny McCaslin and Clarence Penn

About the album released in May 2016



“*City of Poets* is rich, fresh and vibrant and the standard of the playing exceptional... This is music that simultaneously manages to be both highly intelligent and highly exciting.”★★★★½

The Jazz Mann

“Excellent compositions, outstanding solos and a band of internationally renowned musicians performing on absolutely top form.”★★★★

All About Jazz

“An outstanding set of muscular post-bop, wonderfully executed by the band.”

Jazz Views

“This band is a genuine cracker... A total triumph.”

Sandy Brown Jazz

“It must have been an electrifying date to witness first hand, but the good news is that power and excitement is well conveyed by this recording.”

The Jazz Breakfast

“*City Of Poets* beckons listeners to activate their imagination, challenging them to combine multiple art forms, see characters come alive and invent their own informed storyline.”

DownBeat

“The live sound production is of a high quality and resonates with the live atmosphere.”

★★★★ **Jazzwise Magazine**

“The quintet’s sound harkens back to the heyday of hardbop, with bluesy, swinging beats and ebullient solos—only these guys demonstrate just how high the bar for improvisational vocabulary has been raised over the intervening years.”

The New York City Jazz Record

“Excellent compositions, outstanding solos and a band of internationally renowned musicians performing on absolutely top form.”

★★★★★ **Republic of Jazz (blog)**

“Extraordinary melodic, harmonic and rhythmic beauty... *City of Poets* is not just fascinating, it’s to die for.”

Jazz daGama (blog)

City of Poets

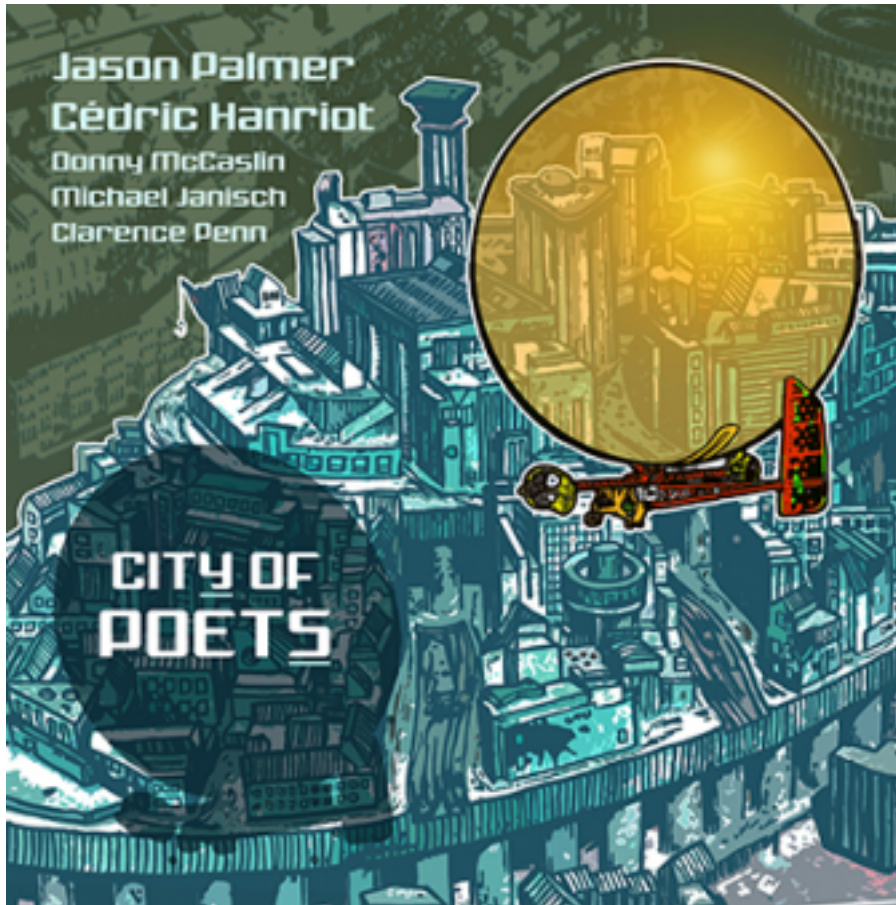
[Jason Palmer and Cedric Hanriot : City of Poets](#)

Tuesday, July 05, 2016

Reviewed by: Ian Mann

ALBUM *The Jazz Mann*

4-5 out of 5



This is music that simultaneously manages to be both highly intelligent and highly exciting.

Jason Palmer & Cedric Hanriot
“City of Poets”
(Whirlwind Recordings WR4687)

On 23rd September 2014 I witnessed a remarkable performance at Dempsey’s in Cardiff by a stellar quintet co-led by the American trumpeter Jason Palmer and the French pianist Cedric Hanriot. Playing under the group name ‘City of Poets’ the band also included the celebrated American musicians Donny McCaslin (tenor sax) and Clarence Penn (drums) with Whirlwind label owner Michael Janisch completing the line up on both acoustic and electric bass. It was a truly memorable night at Dempsey’s with the club packed to the rafters and with a palpable sense of anticipation and excitement apparent throughout. My review of one of the greatest gigs ever seen at Dempsey’s is to be found elsewhere on this site. The quintet’s London show

the night before at the Pizza Express Jazz Club had been captured on tape and I'm delighted to find that that this music has finally found its way onto disc.

"City of Poets" came about as the result of a Franco-American jazz exchange jointly organised by the French-American Cultural Exchange and the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. On the face of it the concept behind the "City of Poets" project may seem a little dry and academic. Written in the main by Palmer and Hanriot it comprises of a suite inspired by "Hyperion Cantos", the four novel science fiction series created by the American author Dan Simmons (born 1948). Simmons' various characters lend their names to the titles of the individual movements which are presented as a series of 'tales'. With its theme of pilgrimage Simmons' work has been described as a "futuristic Canterbury Tales".

Meanwhile the music is based around the "Seven Modes of Limited Transposition" created by the French composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-92). Messiaen's modes are defined by differently shifting degrees or intervals but with each piece being strictly symmetrical and sharing the same beginning and ending point. Palmer and Hanriot structured their melodies around these frameworks while leaving plenty of room for their bandmates, and particularly star soloist McCaslin, to express themselves. As I observed at the time of the Cardiff show;

"There was nothing stilted or stuffy about the playing and some of the soloing was positively incandescent".

True to the spirit of jazz the quintet don't perform Messiaen's modes in strict numerical order and in any case the sequencing on the CD is different again to the Cardiff show. The album begins with Palmer's "The Priest's Tale (Mode II)" which is introduced by Penn at the drums and features Janisch on electric bass, his propulsive grooves acting as the launching pad for the bright, punchy interplay between the horns and the subsequent epic solo from McCaslin that begins with tentative probing but quickly escalates to full throated, full on, but always fluent, improvising. The saxophonist is a world class soloist both with his own small groups and with Maria Schneider's celebrated Jazz orchestra and he has recently come to the attention of rock audiences thanks to his prominent role on the final David Bowie album "Black Star".

Also by Palmer "The Soldier's Tale (Mode IV)" has a more relaxed, gently swinging feel with Janisch back on acoustic bass and working in conjunction with Penn's brushes to support Hanriot's elegant but consistently imaginative piano solo. Palmer also impresses with some lithe and inventive trumpeting that sees him soaring up into the instrument's upper registers to the obvious delight of the London audience.

The CD actually lists nine tracks with two of the items being solo instrumental introductions to lengthier pieces. "The Poet's Tale (intro)" is a brilliantly controlled solo trumpet episode from Palmer that showcases his virtuosity and fluency in a highly musical fashion, exploring a variety of trumpet styles without ever resorting to mere 'flash'.

"The Poet's Tale" itself – Mode V – is another Palmer composition with a bright but tricky theme that allows for some vivid ensemble playing as well as providing the jumping off point for another marathon McCaslin tenor solo, the man's imagination seems to know no bounds. He's superbly supported by Hanriot's intelligent chording and the busily inventive bass and drum work of Janisch and Penn, the latter's contribution incorporating a thrilling dialogue with Hanriot on piano. Penn is also brilliantly supportive of Palmer's vivacious and iridescent trumpet solo.

Hanriot's "The Scholar's Tale (Mode III)" calms things down again with the composer's gently atmospheric solo piano introduction leading to a languid composition that is arguably more obviously based on classical forms than anything else in the set. Palmer contributes a coolly elegant trumpet solo that still pushes ingeniously into the instrument's upper registers. Meanwhile Janisch delivers an electric bass solo that makes inventive and effective use of the various FX available to him to give an appropriately 'sci-fi' feel to the piece. Hanriot then takes over again for a final solo that combines his earlier atmospherics with a flowing lyricism.

“The Detectives Tale (intro)” is an episode of improvised double bass that gives Janisch his sole writing credit on the album (he also acts as the record’s producer). The shimmer of Penn’s cymbals leads into “The Detective’s Tale” itself (Messiaen’s Mode VII). Again it’s Hanriot who leads off the solos, this time in a much more exuberant frame of mind as he dazzles the audience at the Pizza with his virtuosity. There’s some terrific interplay between Palmer and McCaslin, energetically shadowed by Penn and Janisch, garrulous but invigorating, before the piece resolves itself with a more considered restatement of the theme.

Written by Hanriot “The Consul’s Tale (Mode VI)” represents a gentler side of the band with the airy theme acting as the vehicle for a gently exploratory solo from McCaslin that nevertheless can’t help incorporating something of his trademark intensity. Palmer’s solo begins in ruminative fashion, building in intensity as he gradually develops his ideas but the piece as a whole ends rather abruptly.

The album closes with Messiaen’s Mode I, here titled “The Shrike”, a Simmons character described in the album liner notes as “mysterious four armed, semi-organic creature”. Opening with a fanfare of squalling horns followed by a dramatic solo drum passage from the excellent Penn this is one of the most robust and forceful pieces on the album as its bop like theme eventually emerges and acts as the springboard for a vibrantly expansive trumpet solo from Palmer which showcases his peerless technique to great effect to the delight of the Pizza audience. McCaslin and Hanriot follow with a fiery and vivacious exchange of ideas. The support and encouragement offered by Janisch and Penn is exceptional, the pair form a formidable rhythm team and their playing is a constant source of joy throughout the album.

Honed on the road in the US, the UK and France the music to be heard on “City of Poets” is rich, fresh and vibrant and the standard of the playing exceptional, with regard to both the ensemble passages and the many blazing solos. It’s to the credit of Palmer and Hanriot, with a little help from Messiaen, that they’ve created such a sturdy framework for the soloists to improvise around. This is music that simultaneously manages to be both highly intelligent and highly exciting. All of the Whirlwind output is well worth hearing but for me this live recording is one of the jewels in the label’s crown.

Listening to this album it’s been great to recapture something of the excitement of that memorable night in Cardiff. But this London performance is an entity all of its own, the running order is different to Cardiff and cross referencing my review of the Dempsey’s gig I also notice that the order of the solos is different on many of the pieces. For me this just goes to prove what an exceptional and exciting genre of music jazz is, genuinely never the same way twice and with a surprise around every corner. “City of Poets”, the album, may be a snapshot of just one moment in time, but it’s a musical image that you’ll wish to look at and listen to time and time again.

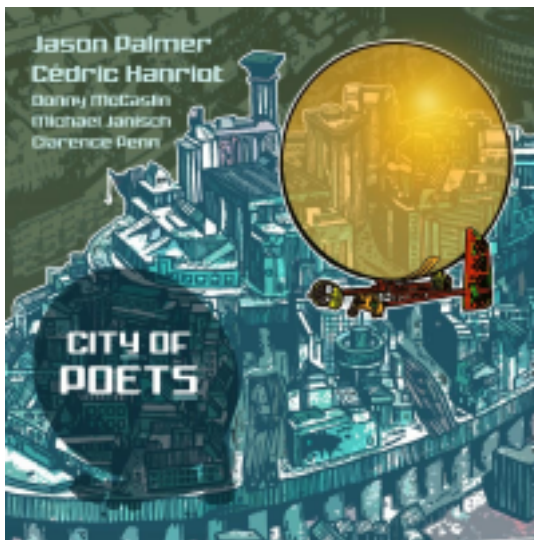
Jason Palmer and Cédric Hanriot: City Of Poets



By [ROGER FARBEY](#)

Published: June 3, 2016

Review on All About Jazz



The formal structure of this album recorded live at London's Pizza Express Jazz Club on September 23, 2014, centres around Olivier Messiaen's Seven modes of limited transposition, musical modes or scales that fulfil specific criteria relating to their symmetry and the repetition of their interval groups. As with [George Russell](#)'s Lydian chromatic concept of tonal organization much has been written about this, so this review will confine itself exclusively to the music.

The titles of the nine pieces take their origins from US author Dan Simmons' four-novel science fiction series Hyperion Cantos, reflecting Simmons' literary themes of pilgrimage, not unlike a modern day or futuristic Canterbury Tales.

Co-leader [Jason Palmer](#) has been a ubiquitous name on the jazz scene for 15 years, working with names such as [Herbie Hancock](#) and [Jack DeJohnette](#). He also played on virtuoso bassist and producer [Michael Janisch](#)'s highly acclaimed CD *Paradigm Shift* (2015) and Janisch's 2009 debut album *Purpose Built* both released on Whirlwind Recordings. *City Of Poets* also acts as a follow-up to French pianist and co-leader Cédric Hanriot's 2011 album *French Stories* which featured [Terri Lyne Carrington](#) and [John Patitucci](#).

The opener, "The Priest's Tale (Mode II)" with a backdrop of pulsating rhythm including [Michael Janisch](#) on bass guitar, [Donny McCaslin](#)'s fiery tenor saxophone solo borders on late-period [John Coltrane](#) such is its ferocity. The mood calms down for "The Soldier's Tale (Mode IV)" with Janisch reverting to double bass and Cédric Hanriot producing a keenly absorbing piano solo, his stylistic influences seemingly ranging from (but not limited to) [Bill Evans](#) to [Ahmad Jamal](#). A Palmer trumpet solo follows and he is heard again,

soloing alone on the brief "The Poet's Tale (Intro)" which naturally segues into "The Poet's Tale" and here [Donny McCaslin](#) gives another serpentine tenor solo. It's also here that in-demand percussionist [Clarence Penn](#) is heard employing fractured call and response bursts of dramatic drumming.

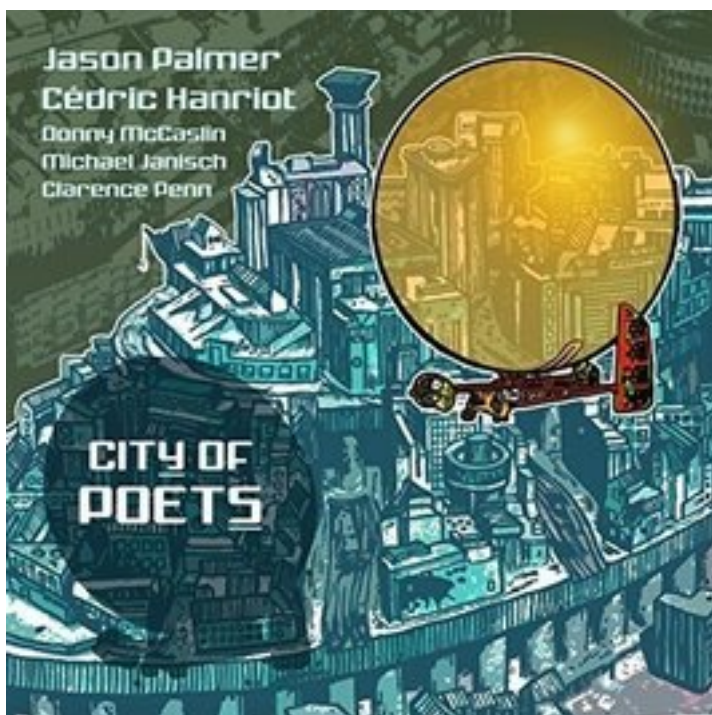
The languid "The Scholar's Tale (Mode III)" sees Janisch back on bass guitar and Palmer evincing a mellifluous solo. On the short "The Detective's Tale (Intro)" it's Janisch's turn to solo, here on pizzicato double bass, which serves as an introduction to "The Detective's Tale" in which its elegant ensemble opening is pursued by another strident Hanriot solo (and given due appreciation by the audience). "The Consul's Tale (Mode VI)" opens with wistful piano and trumpet and continues in that ruminative vein via solos from McCaslin and Palmer. The set concludes with a robust "The Shrike" again with Penn producing some more melodramatically staccato-like drumming and Palmer leading the solos with forcefully vibrant trumpet, followed by rapidly alternating McCaslin and Hanriot solos.

It surely must have been a great gig to witness, because with the combination of excellent compositions, outstanding solos and a band of internationally renowned musicians performing on absolutely top form, the enthusiastic audience response heard occasionally between tracks was clear confirmation of the unequivocal success of the performance.

Track Listing: The Priest's Tale (Mode II); The Soldier's Tale (Mode IV); The Poet's Tale (Intro); The Poet's Tale (Mode V); The Scholar's Tale (Mode III); The Detective's Tale (Intro); The Detective's Tale (Mode VII); The Consul's Tale (Mode VI); The Shrike.

Personnel: Jason Palmer: trumpet; Cédric Hanriot: piano; Donny McCaslin: tenor saxophone; Michael Janisch: double bass, bass guitar; Clarence Penn: drums.

Year Released: 2016 | Record Label: [Whirlwind Recordings Ltd](#)



JASON PALMER & CEDRIC HANRIOT - City Of Poets
Whirlwind WR4687

review on Jazz Views

Cedric Hanriot - piano; Jason Palmer - trumpet; Donny McCaslin - tenor sax; Michael Janisch - bass; Clarence Penn - drums

This musically and conceptually ambitious project seeks to incorporate a huge amount of intellectual content and a startling musical and literary juxtaposition - no less than Olivier Messiaen's *7 Modes Of Limited Transposition* with US sci-fi writer Dan Simmons's four novel *Hyperion Canto* series. So each of the seven tracks is based on one of Messiaen's modes, or invented scales, and each dedicated to a character from Simmons's novels. The project has been supported by the impressively titled French-American Cultural Exchange and Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation; it's a good example of the way that jazz musicians can reach out to other disciplines to support their art.

Fortunately, this weighty cargo of intellectual aspiration doesn't capsize the recording. The concept has been translated into this outstanding set of muscular post-bop, wonderfully executed by the band and crisply and cleanly recorded in front of a live London audience at the Pizza Express. "Priest's Tale" is an uptempo burner over unexpected changes - "Soldier's Tale" a Shorter-esque mid-paced lope with an attractive, snaking melody. "Poet's Tale" starts with an impressive unaccompanied trumpet cadenza illustrating how the legacy of Freddie Hubbard has moved onwards. Although the album cover carefully notes exactly which of Messiaen's synthetic scales have been used on each track, the language of the writing and soloing remains identifiably within the contemporary jazz idiom, and the band are absolutely at the top of their game. "Scholar's Tale" allows Hanriot to bust out his classical chops; elsewhere his contributions are swinging and incisive. McCaslin, who recently made waves beyond the jazz world for his contributions to David Bowie's *Blackstar*, burns throughout, and label boss Janisch and New York A-lister Clarence Penn are everything you could wish for in a rhythm team - album closer "The Shrike" features Penn giving a good impression of the 'mysterious, four-armed creature' that inspired the title. Let's hope that this cross-Atlantic, cross-disciplinary union continues to bring forth more of this high-quality jazz.

Reviewed by Eddie Myer

Album Released: 20th May 2016 - Label: Whirlwind Recordings
Jason Palmer and Cédric Hanriot
City Of Poets

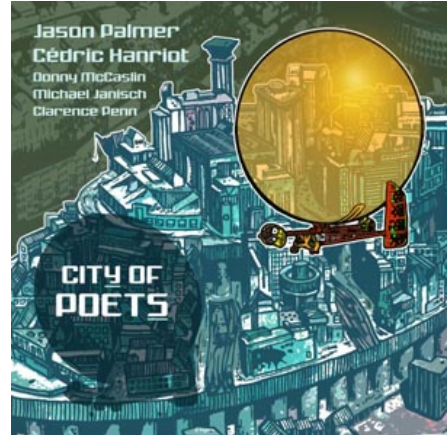
Steve Day reviews this album for us:
<http://www.sandybrownjazz.co.uk>

review on Sandy Brown Jazz

Cédric Hanriot (piano); Jason Palmer (trumpet); Donny McCaslin (tenor saxophone); Michael Janisch (double bass, electric bass), Clarence Penn (drums).

Trumpeter, Jason Palmer is becoming a regular feature in Sandy Brown *What's New*. Last month Jamie Evans caught him in a review of the Noah Preminger album, *Dark Was The Night, Cold Was The Ground*. In January I had also reviewed a Preminger and Palmer album, *Pivot*. Both sessions are rooted in the delta blues. Bukka White, Blind Lemon Jefferson and Robert Johnson might initially appear to be a long way from Olivier Messiaen's 7 *Modes of Limited Transportation*, which forms the musical structure of *City Of Poets*.

I admit I'm in slightly deep water here, and I wouldn't class myself as a strong swimmer. We are talking about seven different symmetrical intervals each sharing the same reference point for both the beginning and end. And yes, it's somewhat more complex than that - hey, I can't be writing a book. The point is the blues also contains a central tenet, that the beginning and end curve toward each other over a specific count. Granted, sometimes it becomes very unspecific, which is exactly what happens on *City Of Poets*. This Quintet play the earth, it is a total triumph. I can make such a statement without hesitation because this band (born out of a French/American jazz exchange project) is a genuine cracker.



The French pianist Cédric Hanriot is new to me, but I'm now going to enjoy finding out more. On *City Of Poets* he has the hands of the catalyst. Hanriot is up there with Ehud Asherie; among the very top of the current crop of creative piano maestros. His lead partner here, the outstanding Jason Palmer, is talk of the town. And Donny McCaslin, the sax player on David Bowie's bow-out album *Black Star* is a revelation. That album is going to be his calling card, yet here on *The Soldier's Tale* he produces an extended solo that is utterly crushing, as complex as mathematics, as direct as a green light. It is beyond the *Black Star*.

Cédric Hanriot

Clarence Penn is one of those flexible classy drummers that beats like you breathe. His *Intro* at the git-go on *The Priest's Tale* is pulse snapping from the first count. Break after break he cracks, simply driving forward. Which of course brings us to Michael Janisch. Over the last few years he has created such a strong scene, not just around his own playing (he is a constant deliverer of dangerous double bass – witness the opening gambit of his *Intro* to *The Detective's Tale*), but in his ability to freshen up creatively the whole business of producing new jazz in and out of the UK. This recording belongs easily as much to Janisch as it does to Palmer and Hanriot. Mr J and I are not buddies but *City of Poets* is already my album of the year (so far).

Whereas Palmer and McCaslin hang out at the 55 Bar in New York, the *City Of Poets* session was recorded at London's Pizza Express Jazz Club, a similar low lit basement with nice acoustics. I guess it was not the most obvious venue to choose, nevertheless it has proved to be a good choice and I'm sure Michael Janisch had a lot to do with it.

The compositions all take their inspiration from characters in Dan Simmons's four novels in the *Hyperion Cantos* series. I'm reviewing the music, not the novels, but I'd recommend them for further investigation. Track three, *Intro to The Poet's Tale* contains a completely sumptuous trumpet solo which introduces *The Poet's Tale* proper. The word 'contains' is exactly how it sounds; cupped, cradled, held up as a precious object. It curls through Messiaen's *Limited Transportation* system as if you didn't know the technique was there. Palmer The Poet is brass, he pours forth constructing an edifice. The English Romantic poet, John Keats figures in the Dan Simmons' *Hyperion* mix. I have not foggiest idea how much Jason Palmer is actually into Keats, who is commonly quoted with the phrase "A thing of beauty is a joy forever...", but his solo in this relatively small London jazz club is certainly an example of beauty. 'Forever' suggests an extremely long survival rate, at least we have it recorded.



Jason Palmer

My favourite track: Cédric Hanriot plunges into *The Scholar's Tale* with almost Wagnerian proportions, others will know better than me how that sits with Messiaen. The piano lifts with tremendous gravitas, a fantastic cavernous sound captured by the engineer, Luc Saint-Martin, inside the low ceiling basement, subsequently mixed by Alex Bonney; it is propelled with power through my speakers. *The Scholar's Tale* is an unfolding composition, propositioned by subtle moves throughout all five musicians. By the end Cédric Hanriot places the group with a tantalising enquiry of improv within a score.

Donny McCaslin is a saxophone gift – his reed partnership with Palmer's trumpet feels classic. Palmer is the burnished long line, Mr McCaslin, literally a breathtaking harmoniser. Donny McCaslin carries an internal flame which acts like a beacon. Later, on *The Detective's Tale* he gets into a complex interaction with his compatriots, twisting circles within those Messiaen intervals. Mr Caslin does a lot of studio 'session-work'. You would expect well-honed professionalism, he is much more than that. The construction here is total engagement, the saxophone voices with dexterity, a bold interrogation of the music. His soloing on *The Consul's Tale* is wide open, generous too, by the time Jason Palmer puts his purchase on the composition all he has to do is elucidate the content. He does it with ease. Gold stars too for the Janisch and Penn partnership who underpin proceedings as if this is their regular gig. It could get that way.

Look, *City Of Poets* is a 2016 state of the art jazz quintet line-up. By the time they hit the final track, *The Shrike*, they are transformative, just like the character in Simmons's book which provides the title. Right now Jason Palmer is making a lot of recordings, he's going to be big news. Catch him on *City Of Poets*. You might have missed the gig at Pizza Express, that's no reason to miss out on the music altogether. To quote Keats: "thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad in such ecstasy!" How's that?

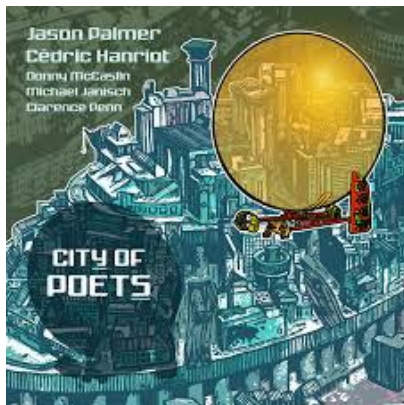
Steve Day www.stevedaywordsandmusic.co.uk

Jason Palmer/Cédric Hanriot – City Of Poets

(Whirlwind Recordings)

review on *The Jazz Breakfast*

By [Peter Bacon](#) on [15 June 2016](#) • ([0](#))



Twentieth-century classical music provides the inspiration for a few modern jazz players and composers, but whereas for saxophonist John O’Gallagher it’s all about Webern and for trumpeter Dave Douglas it’s both Webern and Ligeti, for the American trumpeter Palmer and the French pianist Hanriot, it’s Olivier Messiaen. Their *City Of Poets* suite is fuelled by Messiaen’s 7 Modes of Limited Transportation and also by the science fiction of Dan Simmons.

They performed it live at the Pizza Express in London in 2014 with Transatlantic bass livewire (and Whirlwind label boss) Michael Janisch, and two New York musicians known not only for their own work but as key members of Maria Schneider’s Jazz Orchestra, tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin and drummer Clarence Penn.

Just that line-up in the intimate, supportive, freedom-fuelling environment of the Dean Street club suggests fireworks – and, boy, does this band deliver!

Penn builds the tension from the start while McCaslin’s solo sanctifies the proceedings in *The Priest’s Tale (Mode II)*, Hanriot is dark, brooding and grand on *The Scholar’s Tale (Mode III)*, Palmer burns on *The Shrike (Mode I)*, Janisch is the deftly-stepping gumshoe in *The Detective’s Tale (Mode VII)*.

The music may be clever in its construction and the modes used but it never comes across as overly intellectual – certainly not in the hands of these virtuosos.

It must have been an electrifying date to witness first hand, but the good news is that power and excitement is well conveyed by this recording. A humdinger of an album.

Album Review: Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot's *City Of Poets*
review on **DOWNBEAT MAGAZINE**
Posted 6/23/2016

Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot

City Of Poets
Whirlwind 4687
★ ★ ★½

The case for *City Of Poets* revolves around a French/American jazz exchange program (involving the French-American Cultural Exchange and Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation), and is also based around Olivier Messiaen's seven modes of limited transposition, as well as American author Dan Simmons' science-fiction series *Hyperion Cantos*.

American trumpeter Jason Palmer and French pianist/composer Cédric Hanriot have created an "improvisational concept" that takes mainstream jazz styles for quintet and links them to literary and artistic archetypes, including the poet, the detective and the soldier. The group's other members—tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin, bassist Michael Janisch and drummer Clarence Penn—help usher forth their colleagues' ambitious program in this live recording at London's Pizza Express Jazz Club.

The music is very listenable, but doesn't necessarily point beyond itself. Everyone is fully present and in good form, the mood is generally upbeat and the live recording gives a real sense of presence. Opener "The Priest's Tale (Mode II)" begins with Penn's tart stick drumming and a touch of funk. The lively waltz is a good platform to introduce the players, especially McCaslin. "The Poet's Tale (Mode V)" features Palmer's parched, alternatively fiery and sweetly sung trumpet and McCaslin's enjoyable low-key runs. The rhythm section playfully works around the duo, goosing the 5/4 vibe with aplomb.

"The Scholar's Tale (Mode III)" gives a dreamier, more permeable side to this band, Hanriot's gentle piano musings mingling with Janisch's thematic basslines and Palmer's blazing trumpet work.

Throughout, *City Of Poets* beckons the listener to activate their imagination, challenging them to combine multiple art forms, see characters come alive and invent their own informed storyline.

—John Ephland

City Of Poets: The Priest's Tale (Mode II); The Soldier's Tale (Mode IV); The Poet's Tale (Mode V); The Scholar's Tale (Mode III); The Detective's Tale (Mode VII); The Shrike (Mode I); The Consul's Tale (Mode VI).

Personnel: Jason Palmer, trumpet; Cedric Hanriot, piano; Donny McCaslin, tenor saxophone; Michael Janisch, double-bass; Clarence Penn, drums.

Album Review: Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot's *City Of Poets*

[review on http://jazzdagama.com](http://jazzdagama.com)

Posted Aug 1, 2016

By [Raul da Gama](#) -

Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot

City Of Poets

Whirlwind 4687



There is an interesting event in Olivier Messiaen's life. The composer was arrested and imprisoned by the Nazis in World War II in a Stalag 8A, in Gorlitz, Poland. Messiaen recalls that at the time he and everybody in the camp were freezing, starving and miserable. The starvation was such that it heightened his 'coloured' dreams and this coupled with the experience of seeing the 'aurora borealis', coloured waves of clouds, led him to compose what is probably his most performed work: *Quatour pour la Fin du Temps* (*Quartet for the end of Time*). Deeply religious, mystical and completely aligned to Catholicism, Messiaen later went through an experimental period (1949-1951) when he composed his *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités* and *Neumes rythmiques*, the work upon which *City of Poets* is based. But hold that thought:

Now put the mystical Olivier Messiaen together with the phantasmagorical world described, in a seven-volume series, the *Hyperion Cantos* by the celebrated American writer of science fiction Dan Simmons, and you have what is not only an experimental work occupying the rarefied realm of music, but is, first and foremost, a stroke of genius born of what can only be described as hyper-imagination on the part of the American trumpeter Jason Palmer and the French pianist and composer Cédric Hanriot. With this the exploration of the an 'improvisational concept' behind *City of Poets* by putting the French composer Olivier Messiaen together with the American science fiction writer Dan Simmons Palmer and Hanriot have created music based on the characters in Simmons' *Hyperion Cantos* with personalities that align themselves with Messiaen's *7 Modes of Limited Transportation*. If this sounds like a mad hatter's party, just simply spin the record and be transfixed by the extraordinary melodic, harmonic and rhythmic beauty.

You would think that although each track (minus the two introductions), aligned with Olivier Messiaen's seven modes and enshrined in six characters plus a 'four-armed, semi-organic character' from Simmons'

book would be inaccessible and complex. However Jason Palmer, Cédric Hanriot together with bassist Michael Janisch have the colours of Simmons' fantasy *and* retained the harmonic and rhythmic sanctity of Messiaen's modes while making each of these musical narratives viscerally exciting, and telling the interesting story in a lyrical manner as well. Tonal colours are explored by Jason Palmer, Cédric Hanriot and the ubiquitous tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin using a glorious palette. Bassist Michael Janisch and drummer Clarence Penn keep a torrid pulse going, while still managing to join in the lofty improvisations that this music not only suggests but demands as well – just as trumpeter, pianist and saxophonist do.

While you might be able to find similar (musical) surveys so densely packed, historically informed or stylistically varied, you're much less likely to find another collection so palpably connected to the music's social *and* literary roots. *City of Poets* is not just fascinating, it's to die for.

Track List: The Priest's Tale (Mode II); The Soldier's Tale (Mode IV); The Poet's Tale (Intro); The Poet's Tale (Mode V); The Scholar's Tale (Mode III); The Detective's Tale (Intro); The Detective's Tale (Mode VII); The Consul's Tale (Mode VI); The Shrike.

Personnel: Jason Palmer: trumpet; Cédric Hanriot: piano; Donny McCaslin: tenor saxophone; Michael Janisch: double bass, bass guitar; Clarence Penn: drums.

Label: Whirlwind Recordings

Release date: June 2015

Running time: 1:08:03

Album Review: Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot's *City Of Poets*
review on THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD
Posted AUGUST 2016
By Tom Greenland

Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot
City Of Poets
Whirlwind 4687

For their joint project, *City of Poets*, U.S. trumpeter Jason Palmer and French pianist Cédric Hanriot drew inspiration from two sources: Dan Simmons' Hyperion Cantos science fiction novels (themselves based on Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*) and Olivier Messiaen's seven "modes of limited transposition", a series of scales/modes, which, by nature of their inherent symmetry, lack a definitive tonic or 'home' pitch.

Recorded live at Pizza Express Jazz Club in London with McCaslin, bassist Michael Janisch and drummer Clarence Penn, the quintet's sound harkens back to the heyday of hardbop, with bluesy, swinging beats and ebullient solos—only these guys demonstrate just how high the bar for improvisational vocabulary has been raised over the intervening years. McCaslin, for example, is not a player known for certain signature riffs; instead, he can effortlessly take any idea that pops into his head (or was popped there by an accompanying musician) and then transmogrify it into something larger, working it, warping it, without compromising its essence—inventing form, without a formula. You can hear this happening on "The Poet's Tale" or "The Consul's Tale", where his arsenal of trills, bends, slides and other ornaments never occludes broader logic. Palmer, a sunny player with a warm, expressive tone given to vocal effects, and Hanriot, a swinging stylist who can keep several ideas afloat at once, make notable contributions as well, moving the hardbop ethos into present times.



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Album Review: Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot's *City Of Poets*
[review on http://republicofjazz.blogspot.com](http://republicofjazz.blogspot.com)

Posted 07/19/2016

By Roger Farbey

GAB's Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot

City Of Poets

Whirlwind 4687

The formal structure of this album recorded live at London's Pizza Express Jazz Club on September 23, 2014, centres around Olivier Messiaen's Seven modes of limited transposition, musical modes or scales that fulfil specific criteria relating to their symmetry and the repetition of their interval groups. As with George Russell's Lydian chromatic concept of tonal organization much has been written about this, so this review will confine itself exclusively to the music.

The titles of the nine pieces take their origins from US author Dan Simmons' four-novel science fiction series Hyperion Cantos, reflecting Simmons' literary themes of pilgrimage, not unlike a modern day or futuristic Canterbury Tales.

Co-leader Jason Palmer has been a ubiquitous name on the jazz scene for 15 years, working with names such as Herbie Hancock and Jack DeJohnette. He also played on virtuoso bassist and producer Michael Janisch's highly acclaimed CD Paradigm Shift (2015) and Janisch's 2009 debut album Purpose Built both released on Whirlwind Recordings. *City Of Poets* also acts as a follow-up to French pianist and co-leader Cédric Hanriot's 2011 album French Stories which featured Terri Lyne Carrington and John Patitucci.

The opener, "The Priest's Tale (Mode II)" with a backdrop of pulsating rhythm including Michael Janisch on bass guitar, Donny McCaslin's fiery tenor saxophone solo borders on late-period John Coltrane such is its ferocity. The mood calms down for "The Soldier's Tale (Mode IV)" with Janisch reverting to double bass and Cédric Hanriot producing a keenly absorbing piano solo, his stylistic influences seemingly ranging from (but not limited to) Bill Evans to Ahmad Jamal. A Palmer trumpet solo follows and he is heard again, soloing alone on the brief "The Poet's Tale (Intro)" which naturally segues into "The Poet's Tale" and here Donny McCaslin gives another serpentine tenor solo. It's also here that in-demand percussionist Clarence Penn is heard employing fractured call and response bursts of dramatic drumming.

The languid "The Scholar's Tale (Mode III)" sees Janisch back on bass guitar and Palmer evincing a mellifluous solo. On the short "The Detective's Tale (Intro)" it's Janisch's turn to solo, here on pizzicato double bass, which serves as an introduction to "The Detective's Tale" in which its elegant ensemble opening is pursued by another strident Hanriot solo (and given due appreciation by the audience). "The Consul's Tale (Mode VI)" opens with wistful piano and trumpet and continues in that ruminative vein via solos from McCaslin and Palmer. The set concludes with a robust "The Shrike" again with Penn producing some more melodramatically staccato-like drumming and Palmer leading the solos with forcefully vibrant trumpet, followed by rapidly alternating McCaslin and Hanriot solos.

It surely must have been a great gig to witness, because with the combination of excellent compositions, outstanding solos and a band of internationally renowned musicians performing on absolutely top form, the enthusiastic audience response heard occasionally between tracks was clear confirmation of the unequivocal success of the performance.

Album Review: Jason Palmer & Cédric Hanriot's *City Of Poets*

review on JAZZWISE magazine

Posted 08/2016

Review by Selwin Harris

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

**Jason Palmer
Cédric Hanriot**

City of Poets

Whirlwind Recordings WR4687

★★★★

Cédric Hanriot (p), Jason Palmer (t), Donny McCaslin (ts), Michael Janisch (db, eb) and Clarence Penn (d). Rec. September 2014

City of Poets is a French-American exchange project inspired by themes from the American sci-fi author Dan Simmons' *Hyperion Cantos*. Musically speaking it draws from Olivier Messiaen's seven 'modes of limited transportation'. But this isn't essential information as a guide for listener's expectations; the suite written by the French pianist Cédric Hanriot and internationally renowned east coast star trumpeter Jason Palmer isn't the kind of cerebral opus that the background inspiration might suggest. As with much of double bassist and Whirlwind Recordings boss Michael Janisch's Euro-US collaborations, the emphasis for the set recorded live at the Soho Pizza Express in September 2014, is on sophisticated jazz that sets up a challenging harmonic and rhythmic vehicle for a handful of hardcore jazz men to blow the hell out of. The live sound production is of a high quality and resonates with the live atmosphere, the tones of Maria Schneider sideman/tenor saxophonist Donny McCaslin and Jason Palmer aces in the pack. It's contemporary angled post-bop of a high level rather than highbrow.

Selwyn Harris