



# ABU SADIYA

YACINE BOULARES  
VINCENT SEGAL  
NASHEET WAITS

In 2014 Brooklyn based French-Tunisian saxophonist Yacine Boulares met French cellist Vincent Segal on the recording of Plácido Domingo's intimate album *Encanto del Mar* and they decided to work together on a new trio project. They chose to work with American drummer Nasheet Waits, on re-appropriating the forgotten Stambeli repertoire. Stambeli is a healing trance music created by the descendants of Sub-Saharan slaves brought to Tunisia.

Boulares and Segal's original compositions form a series of variations on the legend of the hunter Abu Sadiya. In his wandering search for his enslaved daughter, Abu Sadiya danced and sang his sorrow in the streets of Tunis thus becoming the first musician of Stambeli and personifying the memory of Sub-Saharan slaves in Tunisia.

Suite for Abu Sadiya was created with the support of the French American Jazz Exchange in collaboration with the French label Accords Croisés and is slated for release in the U.S April 6th 2018.



## Liner Notes by Bertrand Dicale

Abu Sadiya scared children. Tour guides all refer to him as “boussadia”. Dressed in goat skin and rags, wearing a pointed hat, this Black man who danced around while rolling his eyes as if he were possessed was the Bogeyman of the Tunisian streets. He deserted them a few decades ago before the birth of Yacine Boularès, who had heard his father talk about him. At that time, people threw coins at Abu Sadiya and he terrified the kids. Later on, Yacine Boularès developed a passion for that folklore character chased out of the streets by modernity, order and propriety. He learned that Abu Sadiya – provided he did exist – served as a guide for the Tunis slaves in the eleventh century, and that he assigned them to houses, each according to their ethnicity - Haoussas with the Haoussas, Mandingues with the Mandingues... He also met Abu Sadiya among poets who sometimes rebuilt his legend. He would then be an enslaved West African hunter who had lost his mind after his daughter's disappearance and thought she had been kidnapped by the moon. He danced to convince the heavenly body to return the beloved child, and one would see him passing by from time to time. After all, the boussadia was a traveling dancer, even a vagabond.

Yacine Boularès quickly saw in him as well the incarnation of the ambiguities of his country – its guilty conscience due to its past slave practices, the racism that afflicts today's Tunisian blacks, the islamization of its society. Because Abu Sadiya was not only overlooked by pop culture with its television and present-day entertainment: he was censored, being the mythical founder of Stambali, considered as a dissidence of Islam. Stambali is a remnant of Sub-Saharan culture in muslim and arabicized North Africa: a healing ritual of possession performed by musicians descending from Black slaves. And during his childhood when Yacine Boularès father saw a boussadia in the streets, he might have been a slave, since the abolition of slavery only went into effect in Tunisia shortly before WWI.

From its animist West African roots, Stambali inherited the call of the fire, water and wind spirits. Considered ungodly in the eyes of Tunisian Islamic doctors, all of the music and rituals brought to the country by Abu Sadiya and his followers were in fact forbidden. “It was not until the Revolution, in 2011, that we could really listen to Stambali again in Tunisia.” Yacine Boularès rejoices. “Before I had only access to American studies. Now, musicians such as Salah el Ouerqli give concerts but healing rituals stay confined and strictly in a private setting.”

Besides music, Yacine Boularès is fascinated by Abu Sadiya's symbolic: “He incarnates the face of the migrant, the transformation of Africa. He resonates with who I am: a Franco-Tunisian who grew up in Paris yet stayed in touch with Tunisia. It's in New York that I resolved the fragmentation of this identity. The Stambali 6/8 and 12/8 rhythms are typical of the ancient Malian empire, and they went off to the North and Tunisia, but also to the West, the Caribbeans and Jazz.”

He had himself drawn a similar path on the world map. Literature and philosophy studies in France, learning Arabic as an adult... During his Master's degree, Yacine decided to devote himself to his real passion: Jazz. After attending the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Paris, he took off for the United States and the New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. A spectacular journey from an existential standpoint: “New York forces you define your identity. And being Yacine Boularès there is liberating. In New York, I'm someone exotic, someone totally different than a North African in a France with a colonial past. I discover other contrasted musical identities: I play with Ivorian and Cameroonian musicians, but I am also confronted by an extremely powerful mainstream.”

Abu Sadiya's myth keeps running its course through his mind... The album was born indirectly through an intuition of Robert Sadin, American producer who has worked with Herbie Hancock, Brad Mehldau, Wayne Shorter, Kathleen Battle and Busta Rhymes. In 2014, he put together the album *Encanto del mar* where tenor Plácido Domingo took on Mediterranean repertoires alongside Jazz musicians. To transcribe *Lamma bada*, an Andalusian song, Sadin contacted cellist Vincent Segal, whom he had met during the recording of Sting's *If On A Winter's Night*, and saxophonist Yacine Boularès he had spotted in the United States.

The understanding was immediate between the young jazzman, participating to one his one of his first professional recordings as a sideman, and his elder who had already worked on dozens of projects of all genres and all styles. “From the start, I loved how he didn't play all the soprano saxophone clichés,” recalls the cellist. “But I didn't expect to rediscover my West African musical knowledge through him.” Because Segal, who is fond of that region, was also mentored for a long time by Ballaké Sissoko, Malian kora player who opens up his traditional art to contemporary improvisation.

Yacine Boularès suggested the idea of Abu Sadiya. Production would be possible thanks to the French American Jazz Exchange: “I wrote the music in six months. Vincent and I had our first residency in April 2016, then recorded in June.” It took three musicians to bring together jazz, rhythms and Stambali modes: Yacine Boularès, Vincent Segal and American drummer Nasheet Waits. The first challenge was to balance the dynamics and volume. The saxophonist's round and warm timber was a plus: “I was very influenced mainly by Branford Marsalis, who doesn't have a very timbered sax, but also by the oboe and flute, which have a very straight, controlled and in-tune sound. For Abu Sadiya, I also listened to Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. This was the condition to play along with the cello. I had never played so soft before.”

They rehearsed several days with Segal placed behind Boularès, without amplification. Then Nasheet Waits came for the recording. “He's a very unique drummer,” the saxophonist says. “He can use brushes with a lot finesse on both fast tempo and assertive rhythms.” And the cellist adds: “Nasheet lightens things up as soon as we get too heavy.” But the drummer himself is surprised: “I was not closed up in a sound-proof room with headphones on, but with two others in the same space. It was an incredibly pure experience.”

Abu Sadiya is almost a narrative sequel, passing through uprooting, despair, death, transformation – along the lines of the great works of Duke Ellington or Charles Mingus. But Yacine Boularès makes sure that the limit between improvisation and composed music is not always distinct. And the trio never forgets Stambali, the spiritual matrix of this project, and trance music, all the while interlacing questions about identity. Nasheet Waits sums up the adventure this represents for a jazzman: “Yacine told me: ‘Don't try to play Stambali.’ So I didn't really soak up the tradition. Today, what's known as a jazz musician is familiar to so many cultures, and not only the Black American experience, which is already something quite complicated. A drummer knows Afro-Cuban and Brazilian rhythms, uses drumsticks, mallets, brushes and equipment that comes from very different traditions, from China to Turkey. Jazz develops through listening to the mutations of other cultures.”

With their immense musical culture, Yacine Boularès, Vincent Segal and Nasheet Waits venture out between the streets of Tunis and Manhattan, between tradition, jazz and free music, between history's tragedies and modern day resilience, between old secrets and the freedom of today. This is not only an homage to an African man deported into slavery; it is his revenge.

Bertrand Dicale





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# YACINE BOULARES

SAXOPHONE - BASS CLARINET

After graduating with a BA in Philosophy French-Tunisian saxophonist and composer Yacine Boulares decides to take a year off to respond to the urge to play music. He takes his first music lessons and after studying under Andre Villeger for 3 years he wins the International Esprit Jazz Competition in Paris and is endorsed by legendary brand Selmer saxophones. A year later he enters the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris where his horizons broaden under the influence of peers and mentors such as Riccardo Del Fra and Francois Theberge. He soon understands the necessity to go to the roots of Jazz and in 2009 he is granted a Fulbright Scholarship to study at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary music on a merit scholarship.

In New York, where he resides since 2009. the dream of meeting and playing with his idols becomes true and Yacine gets to learn from Chris Cheek, Donny Mc Caslin, Reggie Workman and with countless musicians who inspire him daily. But New York also exposes him to a myriad of different musics. Soon he is part of ex Fela Kuti's drummer Jojo Kuo's Afrobeat Collective, of late Cameroonian singer Martino Atangana's African Blue Note, of Haitian Kompa legends Tabou Combo. In their musics, he finds a deep echo to his North African roots and the Bikutsi rhythms from Cameroon become reminiscent of the Stambeli trance rhythms and folk songs heard in Tunisia.

These influences urge him to find his own identity and his explorations of Cameroonian dance rhythms lead to the creation of AJOYO, a mystic brew of African tradition, jazz and soul. Yacine signs the music and lyrics of a repertoire that celebrates life, love and justice. The album is released in 2015 on Ropeadope Records and played on radios throughout the world from New York's WNYC to French RFI, London's Jazz FM, National radio in Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria and Japan.

In the meantime, Yacine continues to play as a sideman in the jazz repertoire with the likes of Sheila Jordan, Theo Bleckman and Becca Stevens and for various projects such as Japanese singer/songwriter Senri Oe (3 albums for Sony Japan).

In 2014 he is part of an intimate band picked by producer and arranger Robert Sadin to accompany Opera legend Placido Domingo on his remarkable record Encanto Del Mar. Yacine is featured both as a soloist and arranger of the Andalusian standard Lamma Badaand gets the chance to work closely with Ira Coleman, Mark Feldman, Rhani Khridja, Chico Pinheiro and Bridget Kibbey.

This is also where he meets cellist Vincent Segal and gets the idea to explore the forgotten Tunisian Stambeli repertoire with Vincent on cello and drummer Nasheet Waits. In 2015 this project is granted the prestigious French American Jazz Exchange grant. The trio album is slated for release early 2017 on the French label Accords Croises.

Concurrently to his activities as a performer and a composer, Yacine teaches song-writing at the French Heritage Language Program. In 2014 he is commissioned to compose a Musical telling the story of underserved French speaking African and Haitian communities in the USA. The show Amidou & Toya was premiered in NY in May 2014.

Yacine is a proud D'Addario woodwinds and Lebayle Mouthpieces artist.

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# VINCENT SEGAL

CELLO - PERCUSSIONS

Vincent Ségal, is a French cellist and bassist born in 1967 in the French city of Reims.

He is a conservatory musician from the National Music Academy of Lyon who also studied at Banff Centre for the Arts in Canada. He is mainly known for the variety of his collaborations and out of the ordinary projects. He has worked with the likes of Steve Nieve, Elvis Costello, Cesaria Evora, Blackalicious, Carlinhos Brown, the French reggae band Tryo, Franck Monnet, the experimental project Mujeres Encinta, Georges Moustaki or with Alexandre Desplat in the O.S.T. of Lust, Caution and other of his films.

In 1986 he met Cyril Atef and together formed the band Bumcello a downtempo electronica duo that obtain ample success in France as well as Victoires de la Musique award as Electronic artist of the year 2006. He has also collaborated on every Matthieu Chedid (-M-) album. In 2009 he collaborated with Sting's in his album If on a Winter's Night... for which they tour together. In October of the same year he recorded, in the studio of Salif Keita in Mali, the collaboration album Chamber Music with Ballaké Sissoko. The collaboration has had a great success, Sissoko and Ségal have been touring together for the past couple of years.



# NASHEET WAITS

## DRUMS

Nasheet Waits , drummer/music educator, is a New York native. His interest in playing the drums was encouraged by his father, legendary percussionist, Frederick Waits. Over the course of his career, Freddie Waits played with such legendary artists as Ella Fitzgerald, Sonny Rollins, Max Roach, McCoy Tyner, and countless others.

Nasheet's college education began at Morehouse in Atlanta, GA, where he majored in Psychology and History. Deciding that music would be his main focus, he continued his college studies in New York at Long Island University, where he graduated with honors, receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Music. While attending Long Island University, Waits studied privately with renowned percussionist, Michael Carvin. Carvin's tutelage provided a vast foundation upon which Waits added influences from his father, as well as mentor Max Roach. It was Max that first gave Nasheet's formidable talent international spotlight, hiring him as a member of the famed percussion ensemble M'BOOM. One highlight of Nasheet's tenure with M'BOOM was the live concert performance of M'BOOM with special guests Tony Williams and Ginger Baker.

Nasheet's talent came to the attention of reedman Antonio Hart, who asked Waits to originate the percussion chair of his first quintet. Waits remained a standing member of Antonio's various ensembles, recording three albums and touring nationally and internationally in noted venues, jazz festivals, as well as live television and radio performances. Nasheet remained a member of Antonio's group through 1998.

Most recently Nasheet has been a member of Andrew Hill's various bands, Jason Moran's Bandwagon, and Fred Hersch's trio.

As an originating member of pianist Jason Moran's Bandwagon, Jason, bassist Tarus Mateen, and Nasheet have been deemed, "the most exciting rhythm section in jazz" by JazzTimes. The 2001 recording "Black Stars" with the Band wagon, featuring Sam Rivers was named the "Best CD of 2001" in (Jazz Times, Jan 2002) and "The New York Times". In addition he is receiving accolades as the drummer for Nasheet's recording and performing discography is a veritable who's who in Jazz, boasting stints with jazz notables such as Geri Allen, Mario Bauza, Hamiett Bluiett, Jane Bunnett, Abraham Burton, Jaki Byard, Ron Carter, Marc Cary, Steve Coleman, Stanley Cowell, Orrin Evans, Stefon Harris, Andrew Hill, Bill Lee, Joe Lovano, Jackie McLean, Mingus Orchestra, The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, Greg Osby, Joshua Redman, Vanessa Rubin, Antoine Roney, Wallace Roney, Shirley Scott, Jacky Terrason, and Mark Turner. Waits has recorded and toured extensively in Africa, Europe, Japan, Canada, South America and the United States.

Amidst his performing, recording and touring activity, Nasheet teaches private lessons to youth and adults, stressing a personal approach to the drums and music. He has been heralded for his musicality and creativity by such virtuosos as Ed Thigpen, Max Roach, Andrew Hill, and Stanley Cowell . True to his personal philosophy of the necessity to balance Tradition and Modernism, Waits collaborates and performs regularly with musical cohorts, contemporaries, and masters. Nasheet is dedicated to exploring his role and creative path in music.