

Berklee College of Music

DEBUT ALBUM

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree Master of Music in
Contemporary Performance (Production Concentration)

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July 2019

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Abstract

I wanted to focus on proving my first artistic achievement - my debut album. To help me enter the higher level of my music career, I devote this year to making this album. It was released in the legendary series of “PolishJazz,” which for me is a great honor, but also a great responsibility. Wanting to understand why my music can be called PolishJazz, I analyzed the music of outstanding Polish jazz musicians and I connected their music with mine. In my presentation and in this reflection paper I also explain the process of making my debut album. Working on this CE helped me to understand who I am as an artist.

Keywords: Polish Jazz, Debut album, Free Jazz.

1. Introduction

I am a saxophonist and a composer, rooted in improvised music, who studied many music genres, from classical to rock music. Developing my artistic path is what always interested me the most. By always trying to be up-to-date with things that are happening in culture and art, through my entire life, I have developed a sense of artistic aesthetics. While learning how to play the saxophone, I spent a lot of time looking for my own sound and for skillful use of space in improvisation. As an improviser, I try to build my own language, and derive from every possible instrument and music genre. While studying compositions, I spent a lot of time on searching elements in music, that are really close to me. Elements, that were needed for my compositions, were taken by me from every music genre, not only one style.

I devoted the last year of my undergraduate studies to writing the music material for my first composer album. Just like many famous improvisers, I want my first album to describe my personality. In my opinion, recording a debut album, is the best way for a young musician to enter the music business. It took me seven months to write the material. I wanted my first CD to be the result of all my musical experiences - starting with classical music, which I studied as a child, ending on freejazz and European avant-garde music, which I was listening to and playing in conservatories during my studies.

After writing most of the material, I created a polish band called "Jerry & The Pelican System," with which I played a few concerts to master the material before recording it in the studio.¹ The band consists of musicians from different environments, although everyone has a very big improvisation background. A pianist, rooted in classical

¹ Jerzy Maczynski, "Jerzy Mączyński Jerry & The Pelican System - Big Kraśka," posted by Waner Music Poland, May 11, 2019. YouTube video, 4:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5ebncgbSNQ>.

music; a double bass player, who graduated Danish avant-garde schools; a trumpet player, with big rock experience, a drummer, who plays in alternative pop bands. The diversity achieved in this band, describes my mindset for music, how and with who I want to perform my compositions.

After playing a few concerts, I received an offer to release my debut album at Warner Music Poland and the highly prestigious series called “Polish Jazz”². It is one of the most important Polish music series, representing the best Polish music between 1950-1990. My debut is a fresh product of this label, representing my country around the world. It is a great honor, but also a big responsibility. I would like to dedicate my CE work to the most important thing in my life - making my debut album.

2. Proposed Culminating Experience

The release of my debut album is planned on May 10th. In this presentation, I would like to describe the most important elements, concerning the work that was put into the album and explain why my music can be called PolishJazz.

1. I would like to focus on the CD cover, explain why I choose this visual content to describe my music and talk about the most important elements, which a good cover must contain.
2. There are thirteen songs on the album. Some of them will be an example to explain how I compose my music.
3. Soon, I will need to make a promotion video and take some photos. I would like to talk a little bit about my ideas, concerning making a good video and photos.

² All information about PolishJazz are taken from: Maciej Lewenstein “Polish Jazz Recordings and Beyond”, Warszawska Firma Wydawnicza, Warsaw 2014.

4. There is a short text inside my album to describe my journey of making it. Creating a good story around art is very important in our times. I will try to explain where did the idea of my story come from.
5. PolishJazz is a huge music series, so I find it important to explain why I believe, that my music can be a part of it.

I chose this CE project to show who I am as an artist and describe where I find myself in life.

3. Objective & Sub-Objectives

Creating my debut album was the first step in forming my personality as a musician. Nowadays, it is very easy to get lost in the excess of all kind of music. It's very hard to find your own voice in art. That's why it seems very important to me to create a debut album as soon as possible, proving the vision of a musician that I'm becoming.

I dedicated most of my life to creative work. During this time, I developed as a musician and an artist. At the same time, I studied in various music schools, which helped me in developing my personality as a human being. For me, learning new languages, being up to date with culture and frequent traveling, have a great impact on artistic development.

Apoorva Krishna, a south Indian violinist, played as a guest on my album in the composition called "Naya Rang" (which means "new color" in Hindi). Our friendship inspired me while creating music. Thanks to this relationship, during my studies in Valencia, I had the goal to create completely new music inspired by her style of playing. My main goal in writing this new music was the compositional challenge that I set for myself. It limited me to writing a multi-part composition based only on one Hindi raga, "Sarasangi".

Sarasangi is the 27th raga of the main collection of 72 Hindu rags called Melakarta. In the book called “Karnataka Sangeeta Sastra: Theory of Carnatic Music” by A. S. Panchapakesa Iyer I found the scales of my favorite south Indian compositions.³ I discovered that a lot of them were made based on this raga. After analyzing this scale, it occurred to me, that in western language this raga is the harmonic major scale. Before listening to south Indian music and reading the book, I have mentioned above, I never thought that the color of this scale would inspire me so much and motivate me to write my own composition based on it.

While working on my debut album, I learned that one of the most difficult things about playing my own music, is organizing life. My goal was to finish tasks on a specific date and learn how to plan my own time. Most of them I made on time. Those things that I'm late with, taught me how much more I can change to be a better organized musician.

During this year, I was inspired by a few tips from the book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck.⁴ I understood that being the leader of my own music project is associated with big stress. Stress affects our whole body, which is why, most important moments associated with the project, such as a concert at an important festival or an important live interview on TV, require proper preparation. The most important thing is regular sleep - the same hours of falling asleep and getting up, a diet without greasy food and daily sports activities that last at least 40 minutes a day.

³ A. S. Panchapakesa Iyer, *Karnataka sangeeta sastra: theory of Carnatic music* (Chennai: Ganamrutha Prachuram, 2003).

⁴ Carol S. Dweck and Bernadette Dunne, *Mindset The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Random House Audio, 2019.)

4. Methodology

My main methodology was to find the best debuts in the past, that would be very similar to mine or those, that would strongly inspire me. Analyzing the young jazz composers and the more known artists resulted in building a plan of my activities, which was based on their paths. I believe that, especially when it comes to debuts, it is very important to apply the well know solutions to the issue of releasing an album.

Album Cover

One of the most important things for me, while working on a debut album, was to create an interesting graphic cover. The Polish Jazz series have special rules. All albums from this series must have the logotype "Polish Jazz" on the front. I found it very limiting, when inventing my own creative graphics. In the end, I decided to choose four covers of my favorite albums to consider what elements I would like to have on my album cover.

First cover was the free jazz album recorded by John Coltrane. It seems to me that, referring to the name of my project Jerry & ThePelicanSystem, this cover could easily be the cover of my album. It's almost everything I wanted to have on my album cover. Graphic of a



Figure 1. Album cover of John Coltrane's album "Concert in Japan".
<https://www.discogs.com/John-Coltrane-Concert-In-Japan/release/857632>

bird as a synonym of freedom in improvisation, lots of colors, which is the main asset of my music and eastern motives, which inspire me in composing.

The second cover, that inspired me, was the graphic of the most famous album in the PolishJazz series – “Astigmatic” - by the greatest polish piano player Krzysztof Komeda. Inspired by this cover, I wanted my character to be on the album. I also understood that the black background perfectly emphasizes the prestige and elegance of the PolishJazz series.

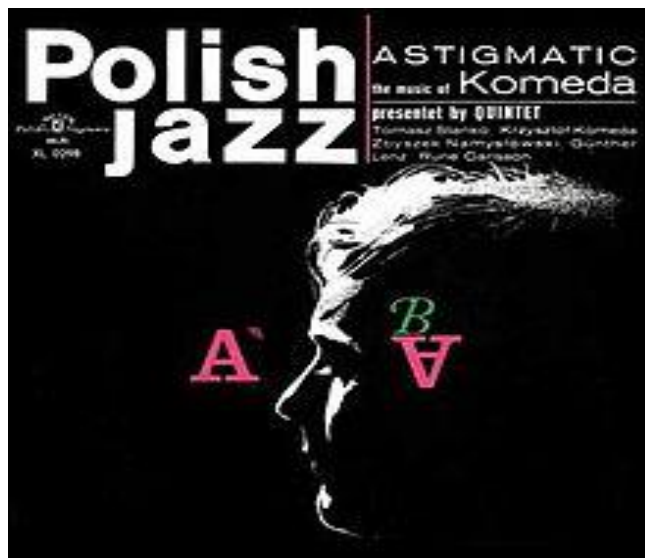


Figure 2. Album cover of the polish jazz band called Krzysztof Komeda Quintet, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astigmatic_\(album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astigmatic_(album))

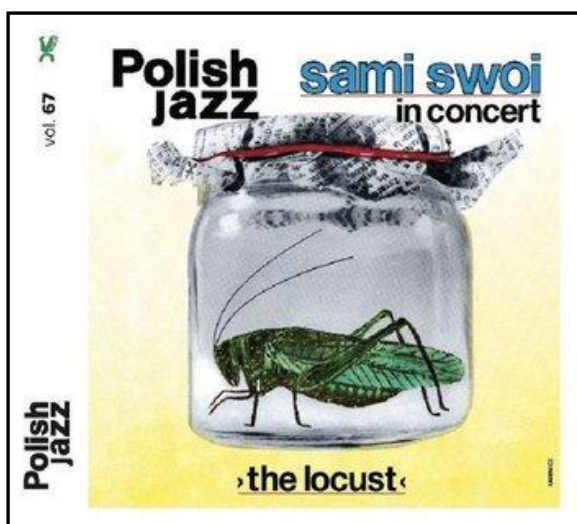


Figure 4. Album cover of the polish jazz band called "Sami Swoi".

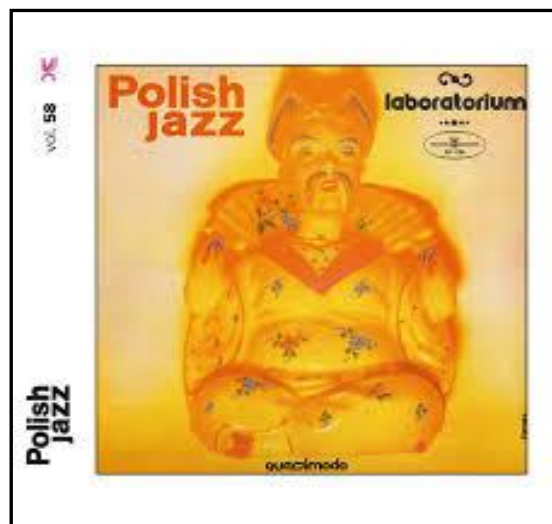


Figure 4. Album cover of the polish jazz band called "Laboratorium".

Figure 3 is the cover of the most famous polish big band. It is designed in a way, in which I really wanted to have pelicans on my cover⁵. And, Figure 4 is the cover of the most famous Polish experimental group - Laboratory.⁶ In one of the interviews, the group explained how important was meditation in their music and why they wanted to have an eastern element on the cover. I decided to get inspired by this idea, so at the back of my album there is a picture of a Japanese sunrise. When I found the most important elements of my ideal cover, I started cooperation with the graphic artist Karifura Caihua to collaborate with him and create the graphic of my album.

Naya Rang

From the moment of signing the contract with Warner Music until the date of releasing my album (May 10th), I tried to implement the plan of debuting and analyzing my compositions. I really wanted to analyze my compositions as soon as possible to be an even more conscious artist. To explain why my music sounds the way it does, why the forms of my works are like that and what is the sense of composing the way I do.

I would like to take the previously mentioned Naya Rang composition as an example to analyze my way of creating a composition. This is a three-part composition in which we can hear many styles. Starting from classical music, through ambient, rock and ending with the music of southern India. The composition, despite its complexity, has the main theme based on the previously mentioned Sarasangi (harmonic major scale). It was important to me, as with most of my compositions, to have a strong main melody throughout the song, which

⁵ Sami Swoi, "The Locust," Last modified April 27, 2018, <http://polskienagrania.com.pl/2018/08/02/polish-jazz-the-locust-volume-67/>

⁶ Laboratory, "Quasimodo," vol. 58. <http://polskienagrania.com.pl/2018/09/28/laboratorium-quasimodo-vol-58-cd/>.

would be remembered long after everything in the song has changed. I would like to have an element of a pop or rock song included in my compositions.

Sudden changes in moods that are very characteristic for my compositions. Most of them are written down in advance and force the artist to adapt to the given moods (whether through improvisation or through playing notes from score), while creating an element of the whole story, full of emotions (see the whole score of Naya Rang in Appendix).

Naya Rang consists of three separate parts but there is only one score for all instruments. I really want all the musicians to see the same way. As you can see, there are not many performance marks on it, because I leave a lot of space in my music for musicians who perform it. In the composing process, I focus more on delineating the form and shape of the composition than on the performance marks.

Starting from the first part of the “Naya Rang” we can notice, that in the entire upper voice the main motive is repeated a number of times. What strengthens it and causes that this repetition does not become boring, is a bass line based on harmonic tensions. The combination of this short theme with the long-growing bass line raises the question to the listener, whether we are dealing with melody and bass line or with ostinato in the upper voice and the main melody line in the lower voice.

The second part is really an open part, where improvisation plays the main role. The constant element is ostinato in the piano (bars 37-28). It is very important to interpret this melody with thinking about the phrase coming from classical music, to put it precisely, it needs to sound like the prelude of Frederic Chopin. Often, two musicians improvise in this part, and I, as a composer, want to hear a dialogue between those two people.

The third part is the culmination where I, as a composer, want to have a simple contrast. Intensely - gently. After a very intense freejazz saxophone solo, a very subtle solo

of Indian violin appears. The transition may seem even infantile, but like all changes in this composition, it should be received in the context of the whole composition. The form of the saxophone solo was inspired by the form of a 12-beat blues with a groove written for the bass. During concerts, I want the groove to be played very clearly, which results in greater dance mood.

Promotion

From the moment of signing the contract (November 2018) to the release of the album on May 10th, I decided to do all necessary activities to promote my music - promotional film, photo sessions, texts about my music, my own website.

1. Promotional Video

The film was created as a shortened version of the "BigKraška" single, inspired by clips from various artists such as Shabaka Hutchinson and Kamasi Washington. It was created from studio shots and from one of the concerts we played in Warsaw. The main purpose was to present the Jerry & ThePelicanSystem team as a group of young people who stand out in Poland and want to create something new together.

2. Photos

The photo session was taken during the concert of my band at Jazz Jantar and also during the recordings taken at the studio. I took inspiration for my outfit and other people's attire from musicians from the English jazz scene, such as Shabaka Hutchinson. I was inspired by clothes of the spirituality of the Middle East. Very often, English musicians dress in colorful robes wanting to remind spiritual guides.

3. Text about my music

Nowadays, it is very difficult to reach people only with music. The person who makes his debut should have a story about his own artistic creation. Along with a journalist from the Polish radio, I managed to create a certain creation of my musical personality, to point out that what I play has a big background to who I am and how I understand the world. We have managed to create a picture of me as a rebel against conservative thinking about music in Poland and a composer who combines all styles to create musical stories.

I chose these quotes⁷, which in my opinion, are the best way to visualize what image of my musical personality has been created.

1. The word ‘pelican’ is used attributively in the band’s name. The ‘pelican system’ of Mączyński’s music denotes absurdity, changeability, and illustrative character. Each of the instrumentalists represents a different environment, but together they have managed to develop a coherent system combining their visions and skills, which results in a multi-colored crossover music and a principle-less system of joint work, departing from reality at times.” - journalist Ola Budka.

2. Jazz, Jerry claim.s, is a closed box filled with various expressions. It can still be added to, but the form itself is finished, complete. His music, which is jazz-and-not-jazz at the same time, is a rebellion expressed not through negative feelings, but through the urge to represent the contents of his own soul.” - journalist Ola Budka.

3. Mączyński invited young, open-minded musicians to play in the band, and indeed – the material on the album calls for an openness both on the part of the performers and the audience. It lacks classic, easy-to-classify solutions” - journalist Ola Budka.

⁷ Quotes are taken from the book inside my album and were written by Ola Budka. Ola Budka, “A Foreign Guide to Polish Jazz,” Culture.PL, June 30, 2014, <https://culture.pl/en/article/a-foreigners-guide-to-polish-jazz>.

POLISH JAZZ

After analyzing the most important albums of the PolishJazz series, I started to compare them with my music, to prove why my music can be called “Polish Jazz”. Album on which I was most focused was, “Winobranie” - Zbigniew Namysłowski “Astigmatic” - Krzysztof Komeda, “Heart” - Włodzimierz Nahorny Trio.

I would like to explain why Polish jazz music is such an amazing phenomenon, so I can analyze my music as a representation of the big series of PolishJazz. In the 100-year history of Polish jazz, all its greatest representatives, such as Zbigniew Namysłowski and Krzysztof Komeda fought for creative freedom. “From 1900 Poland was first enslaved by the Germans and then by the Russians. Communism forbade any influence of other cultures than the ZSSR and thus prohibited playing any artistic jazz projects. The only possible form was the Big Band or a band propagating famous communist tunes. In fact, playing any form of jazz was counted among the avant-garde. Many musicians in the twentieth century began to show their rebellion against the current authorities through improvisations.”⁸ That is why many of them were so inspired by the most emotional of jazz styles - freejazz. People who went to illegal concerts more often wanted to experience the feeling of full freedom flowing from the stage. Playing and listening to freejazz has become a non-separate element of the Polish community during the communist era. Many albums, such as "Heart" by Włodzimierz Nahorny, were a manifesto against the power.⁹ By playing free music people escaped from the grey, communist reality, drawing energy from emotional free jazz solos and identifying with the romantic lyrics of such works by Włodzimierz Nahorny as “Ballada o dwóch serduszkach”.

⁸ Ola Budka, “A Foreign Guide to Polish Jazz.”

⁹ Maciej Lewenstein, *Polish Jazz Recordings and Beyond* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Drugie, 2016).

This combination of energy flowing from free jazz tunes and romantic classic sounds, phrases and forms is for me described the best in the PolishJazz series. I think that even without thinking about creating a debut album in the Polish Jazz series, my style of writing music is strongly rooted in this trend. I spent most of my life in Poland, where I surrounded myself and played music with Polish musicians. The way it is composed is a result of what I've seen for most of my life.

While searching for an answer to why my music can be called Polish Jazz, I came across the album, which became to me the most important one - "Winobranie" by Zbigniew Namysłowski, one of the most famous Polish saxophonists. To start writing about this album, I would like to quote the label's website. This is one of the most important albums in the history of Polish jazz. The album was resumed by the Polish Recordings in an exclusive re-edition of the cult series Polish Jazz, known to fans of Polish jazz music since the 1960s. Few albums in the history of jazz have such a status as Zbigniew Namysłowski's "Winobranie". In the quintet, next to the leader, we will hear Tomasz Szukalski, Kazimierz Jonkisz, Stanisław Cieślak and Paweł Jarzębski. This is a must read for any jazz fan - Polskie Nagrania.

His music is a perfect example of how Polish music sounds and to what recordings young Polish musicians refer to. I would like to focus the most on the song, "Nie ma szmalu to jest łaż." This piece is the most recognizable one, because of the standing out groove in the drums part, inspired by polish folk music. It is one of the most important songs in Polish jazz and it has broken thinking about form as rhythm. Namysłowski broke in this composition the parts of the groove, first with solos of double bass and percussion, to finally lead to a collective solo in the ad libitum space. As Namysłowski himself says in interviews, this step is taken from classical music, which Polish people feel (see Figure 5 for Zbigniew Namysłowski's album cover).

While listening to this album, one should also pay attention to the saxophone solos, in which emotions often take over the strict thinking about the rhythm. Namyslowski, shows how much he is in "Polish Romanticism." It is a demonstration of the improvisers emotions, being the most important part of his music.



Figure 5. Album cover of the polish jazz band called Zbigniew Namysłowski Quintet.

4.1. Plan of Action

1. Here are the things that I did to make a debut, CE presentation and deadlines.
Find a graphic and create an album cover. / **Deadline: End of the December**
2. Create a film and take photos, promoting my album. / **Deadline: End of the March**
Work with a journalist on finishing the inside album text. / **Deadline: End of the April**
3. Analyze albums from the PolishJazz series . / **Deadline: End of the April**
4. Record, mix and master “Naya Rang” with Apoorva Krishna. / **Deadline: End of the April**

4.2. Timeline

November 2018 - contract with Warner Music for the release of my debut album

December 2018 - graphic designer that can make a cover; I booked the date for the JimmyGlass concert; I finished writing the composition called "Naya Rang".

January 2019 - booking all the clubs, in which I wanted to play my first promotional tour of the album.; the analysis of the album "Winobranie" and most of my songs from the album.

February 2019 - Together with the graphic, we finished designing the cover. I finished analyzing my compositions and Włodzimierz Nahorny album called "Heart".

March 2019 - I played together with my band and Apoorva Krishna at one of the biggest jazz festivals in Poland, "Jazz Jantar". I recorded together with Apoorva the last composition for my album called "Naya Rang". Together with my label, we finished the plan for the promotion of the first tour. All the material for the promotional movie of my album has been collected, including the photos promoting my album.

April 2019 – I analyzed the Kuba Więcek album which is called "Multitasking" and created a promotional movie. Together with Warner Music we have created a promotion plan for my album. The text about my album has been finished.

May 2019 - realization of my debut album, tour, promotion of my album in the media.

4.3. Resources/Materials Needed

- Technical Resources: Computer, my charts. Interviews with Kuba Wiecek and Zbigniew Namyłowski. Albums: "Winobranie," "Heart," "Multitasking," "Astigmatic".

- People:

- Technical Resources: Computer, my charts. Interviews with Kuba Wiecek and Zbigniew Namyłowski. Albums: "Winobranie," "Heart," "Multitasking," and "Astigmatic".

- People:

1. Journalist Ola Budka - she prepared the entire text about the album based on the interview with me.

2. Photographer Ola Bodnaruś - she made all the photos for the promotion of the album and the promotional movie.

3. Manager in WarnerMusicPoland Alicja Szymańska - she helped me organize the entire tour and album promotion plan.

4. Musicians in the band: Marcel Baliński - piano, Franciszek Pospieszalski - double bass, Marcin Elszkowski - trumpet, Wiktoria Jakubowska - drums, flute, Apoorva Krishna - violin

5. Karifurava Caihua - cover designer.

6. Ignacy Gruszecki - sound engineer ,mix and master engineer.

5. Results

I have done everything mentioned above and released my debt album. The Jerry & ThePelicanSystem album is in stores and is it possible to listen to it online. I'm very happy about it, but I also know, that some things could have been done a bit better.

The first thing I can see now is how many changes could have been done in the text about my album. This is a great story about my project, but it lacks of a substantive musical analyze.

The second thing is the promotion tour. Although we played 6 concerts, which in my opinion is not a bad result for the first tour promoting the album, after some time I think that along with my band we could have played 4 concerts more. The promotional movie was created from shots, made during my band's stay in the recording studio and during one of the concerts in Warsaw. It seems to me, that it would be better to make a music video with a

story, create something more abstract, which would be much more interesting for people. To me, releasing the album on the intended date – May 10th – is a great success.

6. Justification

This project is an attempt to describe me as an artist. It presents what I'm doing - my compositions, which are written for people with a completely different baggage of musical experiences.

This album is one of the most important things in my music career. It gives me a huge possibility to get much deeper into industry. It's a proof of who I am as a musician.

7. Professional Plan

My debut album was recorded with the band Jerry & ThePelicanSystem. Before the release of the album, I thought it would be a band created only for the debut. After giving it some thoughts and receiving excellent reception of my work, I find that I really care about recording one more album in a similar team.

The last composition on my album is the song "Naya Rang" recorded with the Indian violinist Apoorva Krishna, who I met in Valencia. I would like to continue our cooperation and create at least half of the material for the next album with her and the musicians from Jerry & ThePelicanSystem.

As for the album itself, I would like to promote it around the world by playing with Polish musicians, who recorded it, but also with other musicians, depending on the concert venue and financial conditions.

The most important thing for me is the promotion of my music and the Jerry & The Pelican System in various places around the world. I have already booked some concert dates in Polish institutes in USA.

8. Reflections

For me, working on my debut album was one of the most difficult challenges of my entire life. During one single day I signed a contract for the release of my first album with one of the largest music labels in the world and in one of the most prestigious Polish series called Polish Jazz.

Of course, I'm very happy about the fact, that physically the album has already been released in a really great way. However, it is a kind of long-term commitment to work on myself, the music that I create and the brand name "Polish Jazz." I would like to become a promoter of Polish jazz in the world and I hope that I will meet my demands. As for today, the process of creating my debut album is 100% finished, which to me is the biggest success of them all.

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Appendix

JERZY MACZYŃSKI

NAYA RANG

Intro **PLAY 3 TIMES** **A** **PLAY 3 TIMES**

Piano

8 Pno. Saxophone

13 Pno. Break

18 Pno. Piano tension

25 Pno.

32

Pno.

B

BOW SOLO „SHOUTING IN A SPACE“

37

PIANO OSTINATO OVER SOLO

HORNS BACKGROUND PART

Pno.

43

Pno.

52

Pno.

ON CUE HORNS

rit.
61

Pno.

SAXOPHONE STARTS GROOVE THAN ³

SOLO

NOISE IN TRIO

64 - **C** AFTER EVRYBODY PLAY GROOVE ONE TIME

67

70

73 SOLO TANPURA

76 rit.