

**Tigran Hamasyan**

***A Fable***

**Release Date: 5 September**

**Verve (Universal Music France) 276 0686 6**

**Tigran Hamasyan & Trilok Gurtu**

**Queen Elizabeth Hall**

**24 September 2011**

Young, dynamic Armenian pianist **Tigran Hamasyan** has been taking France by storm, playing the major festivals and wowing crowds with his high energy mix of jazz, Armenian folk and rock as well as his more gentle solo acoustic numbers. ***A Fable*** is a dynamic collection of solo pieces, with lyrical songs that range from gracefully refined pieces to energetic experiments with rhythmic and harmonic diversity. It shot to No.1 in the French jazz charts within weeks of its release and will be released in the UK on **5 September** to coincide with a very special concert at the **Queen Elizabeth Hall** on **24 September**, which sees Tigran in concert with **Trilok Gurtu**, who has said of the young pianist "*He plays piano like a raga, the next Keith Jarrett*".

The 13-track ***A Fable*** opens with the gentle, quiet "Rain Shadows" that serves as the introduction to "What the Waves Brought," which has a dramatic bounce, stutter steps and a whistling sound. Other originals include the technically challenging but highly melodic "Samsara," played brightly in 5/8 time, that is introduced by the mysterious "Illusion." In addition, there's "A Memory That Became a Dream," another "mood song" that Tigran wrote the night before going into the studio and recorded with wordless vocals on the first take; and the energetic, tumbling "Carnaval," also with wordless vocals that follow the drive of Tigran's pianism.

Two songs come by way of Tigran's love of poetry. The moving piece, "Longing," is based on two quatrains by the famous Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanyan who wrote about exiled Armenians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century who were longing for home. The pensive, dreamy "The Legend of the Moon" is based on 20<sup>th</sup> century poet Gegham Saryan's poem that was a favorite of Tigran's since he was a child. "The Spinners" is a beautiful Tigran arrangement of mystic/philosopher George Ivanovich Gurdjieff's piece of music that was a collaboration with pianist/composer Thomas de Hartmann (Keith Jarrett recorded an album of their music, *Sacred Hymns*, in 1994).

Well-known for melding jazz with traditional Armenian melodies, Tigran again borrows from the rich tradition of his heritage on *A Fable*. The dance-like "Kakavik (The Little Partridge)," which opens gently then develops into a brisk end, is a 4/4 arrangement of a famous Armenian tune. The collection concludes with the melancholy, searching "Mother, Where Are You?," a religious hymn that was originally arranged for a choir.

The live show with **Trilok Gurtu** came about after the two met and played together in Paris at Tigran's album launch this March. Such was the success of this show that the *Montreux Jazz Festival* immediately booked them and now they play London for an exclusive show at the **QEH** on **24 September**.

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Tigran has not only received praise from Trilok Gurtu, but Brad Mehldau interviewed in The New York Times earlier this year also talked about the new sensation “*Tigran really grabbed me, because it’s got several things going on at once. It has a really wild odd-meter thing, and this distorted, aggressive piano treatment. And the harmony is kind of jazz-fusiony. It makes you want to bang your head, in this really cool way*” and Herbie Hancock quipped after watching him perform “*A..may..zing! Now, Tigran, you are my teacher!*”

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Born in Gyumri, Armenia, in 1987, Tigran grew up in a household that was full of music. When he was just a toddler, he gravitated to tape players and the piano instead of regular childhood toys, and by the time he was 3, he was working his way through figuring out songs on piano by the Beatles, Louis Armstrong, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and Queen. His jazz tastes early on were informed by Miles Davis’s fusion period, and then around the age of 10 when his family moved to Yerevan, he came to discover the classic jazz songbook under the aegis of his teacher Vahag Hayrapetyan, who had studied with Barry Harris.

When he was 16, his parents moved to Los Angeles to give their two children (Tigran’s sister is a painter and sculptor) better artistic opportunities. Tigran stayed in high school for two months before gaining entrance to USC, which he attended for two years. Soon he began to win a series of piano competitions, including the top prize at the Monk competition and second place in the 2006 Martial Solal International Jazz Competition in Paris.

At the same time, Tigran began to make contact with such L.A. jazz musicians as Alphonso Johnson and Alan Pasqua, and started gigging with saxophonist Ben Wendel and drummer Nate Wood, who continue to play with him today.

While he studied classical music at an Armenian high school geared toward music studies, Tigran continued to grow on his own as a jazz pianist. He performed at the First International Jazz Festival in Yerevan in 1998, which opened up other performance opportunities, and he returned to the festival for its second edition in 2000. Along the way he met promoter Stephane Kochoyan, who booked him to play several European festivals.

Previous to his signing by Universal Music Classics & Jazz France, Tigran recorded three albums on European labels as a leader: *World Passion* (2006), *New Era* (2008) and *Red Hail* (2009).