COLIN VALLON

BIOGRAPHY

> "... Vallon's playing and pieces are tonally dense and rhythmically adept. They have something magic that holds the listener captive..."
>
> REINER KOBE, JAZZPODIUM

Born on 17 November 1980 in Lausanne, Colin Vallon grew up in Yverdon-les-Bains and began studying classical piano at the age of ten. A year later, tired of a framework he found too rigid, he stopped his lessons and discovered the freedom of improvisation through the blues, which he explored on his own. At fourteen he resumed lessons with jazz pianist Marc Ueter, and at eighteen he entered the Swiss Jazz School in Bern, where he studied with Silvano Bazan, William Evans, Manuel Bärtsch and Bert Joris.

Colin Vallon Trio

He founded the Colin Vallon Trio in 1999 with Lorenz Beyeler on double bass and Raphaël Pedroli on drums, and the group soon performed throughout Switzerland and Europe. Its debut album, « Les Ombres », came out in 2004 on Unit Records. It was around this time that he began developing his own prepared piano techniques.

Later in 2004, the trio took on a new face with Patrice Moret on double bass and Samuel Rohrer on drums. In January 2005, it performed with New York guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel at the Swiss Diagonales Festival, then recorded « Ailleurs », released in 2006 on Hat Hut Records. In 2011 the trio signed with the prestigious international label ECM Records, which released « Rruga » that year. Julian Sartorius then took over the drum chair, and the trio went on to release « Le Vent » (2014), « Danse » (2017) and « Samares » (2024), all on ECM Records.

The trio has performed at numerous international festivals (Willisau, Paris, Vienne, Rome, London, Portland, Montreal, Jarasum...) and has toured Europe, the USA, Canada, Japan, China and South Korea.

Solo piano, Vallon-Michel-Rossy, ITCH and duo

Alongside the trio, Colin Vallon leads several other musical projects. He regularly gives solo acoustic piano concerts.

In 2020, he formed a new group with two of the most renowned musicians on the European jazz scene: trumpeter Matthieu Michel and drummer Jorge Rossy.

In 2021, the Théâtre de l'Echandole commissioned him to create a four-hour concert for piano, prepared piano, electronics and surround sound. This work gave rise to « ITCH », a solo performance for piano and electronics that he has been presenting on stage ever since.

In 2023, French cellist Vincent Courtois invited him to share a carte blanche at the Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin. The concert marked the beginning of their duo, which has since toured across Europe. Their debut album, « A Simple Fall », was released in 2025 on BMC Records.

Composition

Colin Vallon is also active as a composer. In 2014 he contributed to the music for the documentary film « Gossenreiter ». He composes for theatre and dance, notably for Zurich choreographer Martin Zimmermann, for whom he created the music of « Hallo » (2014), « Eins Zwei Drei » (2018), in which he also performs live on stage on piano, electronics and drums, and « Danse Macabre » (2021).

In 2015 he wrote « Fauna », a piece for cellos, harps, saxophones and drums at the crossroads of free improvisation and contemporary music, inspired by the strangeness of the animal world.

In 2022, commissioned by the Label Suisse festival, he composed « HOWL », a suite for nine musicians based entirely on texts in critically endangered languages.

Awards

Colin Vallon has won several prizes and competitions: the Friedl-Wald Foundation Prize, third prize at the Montreux Jazz Festival Solo Piano Competition and first prize in the Nescafé « Let's Jazz Together » competition. He received the Nico Kaufmann Foundation Prize in 2008 and the SUISA Foundation Prize in 2009. From 2009 to 2011, the Colin Vallon Trio was part of Pro Helvetia's priority jazz support programme. He was nominated for the Swiss Music Prize in 2016 and received the Prix de la Relève du Canton de Vaud in 2017.

Teaching

Since 2009, Colin Vallon has taught piano and ensembles at the Bern University of the Arts.

Other projects

Besides the Colin Vallon Trio, the Vallon-Michel-Rossy trio and his solo concerts, Colin Vallon performs regularly with Nicolas Masson's « Parallels » and with Wolfgang Muthspiel's Quintet, Large Ensemble and Chamber Trio.

Tours and recordings with Tom Harrell, Larry Grenadier, Jeff Ballard, Andy Scherrer, Ambrose Akinmusire, Tyshawn Sorey, Nils Wogram, Kenny Wheeler…