



**Wisdom in the Wings**  
**Stan Tracey (reSteamed)**  
 by Andrey Henkin

The British jazz scene produced few musicians as versatile as pianist Stan Tracey, who was born 95 years ago and died eight years ago this month at 86. He came up in London's nascent bebop world in the '50s and was house pianist at Ronnie Scott's club, backing visiting American performers, in the '60s. The following decade saw him collaborating with his more avant garde countrymen like Mike Osborne, John Stevens and Keith Tippett. And his leader career stretched from 1958 well into the new millennium with variously sized ensembles and a penchant for writing thematic suites, beginning with the 1965 Columbia album *Jazz Suite (Inspired By Dylan Thomas' Under Milk Wood)*.

Resteamed was founded in 2007 to reissue his music (his first label, Steam, was established in the '70s) and is now run by his drummer son Clark, who figured on many of his father's recordings of the last three-plus-decades of his career. This 14th release brings together a pair of Columbia sessions, *Free An' One* and *The Seven Ages Of Man*, which are related not only in time (waxed on Sep. 10th and Oct. 8th, 1969, respectively, in London's famed Lansdowne Studio) but space, the former a quartet session with alto saxophonist Peter King, bassist Dave Green and drummer Bryan Spring and the latter a big band effort with those blokes, plus Derek Watkins, Tony Fisher, Greg Bowen and Henry Shaw (trumpets), Keith Christie, Chris Pyne and Mike Gibbs (trombones), Dennis Walton, Tony Coe, Alan Skidmore and Ronnie Ross (saxophones, Coe also on clarinet) and Frank Ricotti (vibraphone).

Tracey wrote all the material, the quartet date five discreet originals, including the unmistakably Anglican-titled "The Green Kingspring Of Springgreen", the big band playing the title suite loosely inspired by William Shakespeare (and the name taken from *As You Like It*). It is highly instructive to have these albums together in a two-CD set, allowing listeners the opportunity to see how the composer approached varied material and how the core group gets folded into the larger aggregation.

Unsurprisingly, it is King who dominates *Free An' One*, his typically tart British alto taking most of the solo space. The pieces are Tracey in microcosm, blending his early straightahead roots and firm support with intimations of more expansive work to come and even absorption of the music around him, such as subtle Township flashes on "Nudgy Vamp", perhaps subconsciously channeling Chris McGregor. One could easily imagine Tracey and Firm playing this set at Ronnie Scott's on a weekday night.

36-minute, eight-part *The Seven Stages Of Man* suite is brash and brassy, definitely pulling from the Bard's more comic work, Tracey pounding the keys and the massed horns in declaratory mode on the opening "All The World's A Stage". The pieces are short so it is the grand themes that are in the forefront, no more so than on "Wisdom In The Wings", but that is not to imply that there are not exciting solos from the bandmembers, many of whom were among Britain's top big band players of the decade. The drive of Green, a veteran of the Don Rendell-Ian Carr Quintet, and Spring, who would go on to fusion with Nucleus and Passport alongside his work in later Tracey octets, push the ensemble harder than they did the quartet yet

still retain nuance. The closing, hilariously titled "Kindly Leave The Stage" begins and ends with Tracey unaccompanied as a reminder that the playwright is as important, if not more, than his actors.

For more information, visit [resteamed-records.com](http://resteamed-records.com)



**Live at FarOut, Atsugi 1987**  
**Derek Bailey/Mototeru Takagi**  
**(Chap Chap-NoBusiness)**  
**Live at Little John, Yokohama 1999**  
**Mototeru Takagi, Susumu Kongo, Nao Takeuchi,**  
**Shota Koyama (Chap Chap-NoBusiness)**  
 by Pierre Crépon

The contrast between two recent NoBusiness releases featuring saxophonist Mototeru Takagi, who would have turned 80 this month (if the circulating birth year is to be trusted), underlines a particular aspect of the free music scene in Japan. Although American avant garde jazz was a major inspiration for the first local New Thing players in the late '60s, a group to whom Takagi belonged, a willingness to engage European free improvisation methodologies also became apparent in the '70s. This could not be said of the U.S. musicians who had provided the original impetus.

Guitarist and leading European improviser Derek Bailey first recorded with Takagi in a Tokyo studio in 1978. Unlike Kaoru Abe, the other saxophonist on that date, Takagi hasn't yet achieved legendary status. Abe's music often seemed to be the expression of a soul laid bare, at times in a nearly unbearable manner. With Takagi, there is a greater distance between the listener and the performer. Although Takagi had mastered the torrential streams of sound characteristic of early free jazz, the control he seemed to exert in different situations made him a very adaptable musician and presence in many of the early Japanese groups. Takagi's travels outside Japan remained limited, but he did spend time in France in 1974, on the tail of the local free jazz boom. When he first visited New York in 1983, he played with drum master Sunny Murray and violinist Billy Bang.

This adaptability is evident throughout the duet with Bailey issued as *Live at FarOut, Atsugi 1987*. Sticking to soprano saxophone rather than his primary tenor, Takagi negotiates his way through an exhausting hour-long performance circumscribed by the parameters Bailey set for his music. The guitarist's concentrated focus on unconventional techniques situates the music in the area of detailed tone production, set against a sparse background devoid of all artifacts used by American colleagues. The points where the instrumentalists' sonic explorations meet constitute the session's primary interest.

Working outside of this circumscribed area, Takagi's playing moves on to another order of magnitude. On *Live at Little John, Yokohama 1999*, Takagi is featured on tenor with drummer Shota Koyama and two wind players one generation younger: Susumu Kongo and Nao Takeuchi. Respectively playing alto and tenor and both doubling on flute and bass clarinet, they will be names known only to specialists of the Japanese scene but are nevertheless excellent musicians. The liner essay indicates that Kongo is also a noted repairman and that Takeuchi has been a student of both Takagi and Byard Lancaster.

There are several outstanding moments in the 40-minute opening piece, but Track Two is the stunner and gives an accurate idea of the overall dynamic. It opens with tenor underscored by low bass clarinet

tones held through circular breathing. A short cyclical motive signals the move into another phase, which could be described using the vocabulary applying to classic free jazz buildups. But here, gradually increasing intensity does not proceed from cumulative playing merging into a single sound mass; it results from an explosive amount of multidirectional melodic and rhythmic invention from the three horns, all playing simultaneously, but with impressive delineation. As on most of the tape, Koyama's drumming remains economical and supportive.

Elsewhere, Takagi has also taken the uncommon step of approaching U.S. free jazz in terms of repertoire, playing pieces by Ornette Coleman, Charles Tyler, Steve Lacy or the Art Ensemble of Chicago. This piece reaches its conclusion as if following the classic organization of jazz performances that still figured in the music of the early American pioneers, returning to the opening statement, calmly and with perfect balance. This is mature music that uses the best of what had been uncovered during the long and convoluted history of free playing. It is also, importantly for an archival release, not music heard before. Takagi died three years after this performance.


The CD versions of those two releases contain the extended performances. On vinyl, duration is reduced roughly by half. Both recordings are part of NoBusiness' series of releases in partnership with promoter and producer Takeo Suetomi's Chap Chap label (it should be noted that Chap Chap's original catalog, difficult to find outside Japan, is now available on Bandcamp). The series opens the door on archives generated close to a source of consistently remarkable music and Takagi's quartet may be one of the best releases yet.

For more information, visit [nobusinessrecords.com](http://nobusinessrecords.com)

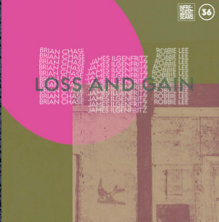
INFRE-  
QUENT  
SEAMS

## ALBUM RELEASE LIVESTREAM

12.17.21 // 8PM EST



**ELI WALLACE**  
*Precepts*  
 (IS-1038)



**ILGENFRITZ + CHASE + LEE**  
*Loss and Gain*  
 (IS-1036)

Livestream + RSVP-only audience at Scholes St Studio

[www.infrequentseams.bandcamp.com/merch/  
 release-party-eli-wallace-ilgenfritz-chase-lee](http://www.infrequentseams.bandcamp.com/merch/release-party-eli-wallace-ilgenfritz-chase-lee)

### FEATURED PERFORMANCES

8:00 – NewBorn Trio (Katie Down, Miguel Frasconi, Jeffrey Lependorf)

8:30 – Craig Shepard solo trumpet & music boxes

8:45 – James Ilgenfritz / Brian Chase / Robbie Lee

9:30 – Gerald Cleaver & Jean Carla Rodea

9:45 – Eli Wallace Quartet feat. Erica Dicker (violin) Lester St. Louis (cello), Sean Ali (bass), Eli Wallace (piano, composer)

10:30 – Metamorphosis | Nirbhaya (2021) – Sound/film by Monika Weiss

[www.infrequentseams.com](http://www.infrequentseams.com)