

# ADAM ROGERS ALLEGORY

CHRIS POTTER  
EDWARD SIMON  
SCOTT COLLEY  
CLARENCE PENN



Criss Cross Jazz 1242

CRISS 1242 CD

Made in Holland

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## ALLEGORY ADAM ROGERS QUINTET

1. **CONFLUENCE**  
(A. Rogers) 8.15
2. **PHYRIGIA**  
(A. Rogers) 9.57
3. **WAS**  
(A. Rogers) 4.03
4. **GENGHIS**  
(A. Rogers) 7.49
5. **ANGLE OF REPOSE**  
(A Rogers) 3.47
6. **ORPHEUS**  
(A. Rogers) 9.44
7. **RED LEAVES**  
(A. Rogers) 6.59
8. **CLEVELAND**  
(A. Rogers) 8.43
9. **PURPOSE**  
(A. Rogers) 9.03
10. **ANGLE OF REPOSE**  
- REPRISE  
(A. Rogers) 3.56

**ADAM ROGERS** guitar  
**CHRIS POTTER** tenor sax  
**EDWARD SIMON** piano  
**SCOTT COLLEY** bass  
**CLARENCE PENN** drums

Produced by Gerry Teekens  
Executive Producer: K. Hasselpflug  
Recording Engineer: Max Bolleman  
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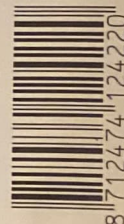
Chris Potter appears courtesy of Verve Records.

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## Allegory

Known for quite a while as one of jazz's most deft and versatile sidemen, **Adam Rogers** made his long-awaited debut as a leader in 2002 with **Art of the Invisible** (Criss Cross 1223). Thanks to that album and a succession of extraordinary live gigs with his working band, Rogers has begun to generate a substantial buzz among jazz lovers and guitar enthusiasts of all stripes. When people happily queue in the pouring rain waiting to hear music, as they did for Rogers in June 2003 at Manhattan's Jazz Gallery, it signifies a rare level of trust between artist and public.

Rogers amply rewards that trust on **Allegory**, his sophomore outing. The album boasts nearly the same lineup as **Art of the Invisible**; pianist **Edward Simon**, bassist **Scott Colley**, and drummer **Clarence Penn** reconvene, joined this time by **Chris Potter** on tenor saxophone. "Chris is a phenomenal player with a beautiful sound," Rogers says. He and Potter have worked together frequently over the years, most recently with trumpeter Alex Sipiagin on his fiery quintet date **Hindsight** (Criss Cross 1220).

Soon after attending this December 2002 recording session, I crossed paths with Potter and Penn separately, and both recalled the sheer difficulty of Rogers's music. But Rogers isn't after what he calls "gratuitous complexity." As he puts it: "Often I'll go back and verify that I was actually hearing mixed meters — for example 4/4, 3/4, 5/4 in the same song — to begin with. If not, I'll try to simplify. But if a musical idea initially dictates something specific, like a mixed meter, I'll try and remain

true to it. That might mean overcoming certain compositional challenges, something I love to attempt. Often I'll begin with one strong idea, and the rest is work."

That said, Rogers isn't one to overwork a piece of music; he's more concerned with bringing out its interior emotions and moods, if only to make them clearer to himself. That is how he arrived at the title of this record. "Music is a symbolic narrative," he contends, "and sometimes — probably most of the time in my case — an abstract account of your experiences in the world. In a sense it's allegorical. A record is a story, reflective of a period of time in history for oneself and the musicians that one is playing with. The songs themselves are probably narrating some story that's taken place in my life, one I'm often unaware of specifically."

Rogers composed ***Orpheus*** during the week of the session. "The great body of the tune I sang into my answering machine while walking down the street. Later, I transcribed and harmonized it." Rogers and Potter begin with a bittersweet unison theme over an unhurried straight-eighth tempo. "The A section is in 6/4 and for one bar changes to 7/4. The B and C sections are more rhythmically complex, and the C also serves as the outro. The A section is a long, kind of languid melody which is offset by the driving rhythmic quality of the C section, which changes the energy of the piece." After proceeding once through the entire form, the music suddenly stops for a silent fermata, then softly resumes, leading to eloquent guitar and piano solos.



Rogers plays nylon-string classical guitar on the ballad **Red Leaves**, which he wrote some years ago. (In fact, Rogers studied classical guitar in college, preferring to learn jazz mainly with private teachers and on his own.) "This song, like some others of mine, takes its title from a William Faulkner short story of the same name. After finishing the tune I was looking for a title and was reminded of the Faulkner story, which had a similar mood of melancholic reflection. Parts of it were influenced by an incredibly beautiful Mozart string quartet, referred to as the Dissonance Quartet. The introduction is one of the most amazing sections of music that I've ever heard. It's very rich harmonically and sounds as if it might have been written at a much later time." Rogers again employs mixed meters: "For the most part this one is in 4/4, but there are bars of 3/4 in transitional sections. That's true to what I heard initially. More often with ballads, I write from beginning to end without going back and editing."

Edward Simon switches to Rhodes electric piano for **Genghis**, a slow, hard-hitting funk groove with careening unison lines and a somewhat ominous feel. "This tune is about a year old," says Rogers, who colors his sound here with a touch of snarling overdrive. "I clearly heard Rhodes on this — it's a very evocative instrument, with a certain stylistic gravity. I was also hearing trumpet in my head as a loose reference for the melody. I wrote the bass line first. I was hearing something with some space between melodic events." And what of the title? "I read a lot about history," Rogers explains, "and I've learned a lot about the Khanate, or

Mongol Empire. Something about the quality of the tune reminded me of a large group of people moving through physical space, like a conquering army."

**Confluence**, another new composition, assumes rather epic proportions. "I was interested in writing a bass line that on the surface suggests a certain time signature but actually is in another and overlaps bars, creating a sense of metrically modulated time. The beginning is in 4/4, but the bass line infers 3/4." After moving through a series of arpeggiated, rhythmically varied harmonies, tenor and guitar play a short, blistering unison passage that sends the tune into a new, burning tempo, with Simon taking the first solo. Rogers and Potter also have their tumultuous say before the same unison passage returns, this time bringing the tempo back down. The track ends beautifully, but deceptively: "Initially, I might have expected to end this with a bang, but after the restated melody, I heard it ending softly.. The song seems to be about some conflict. It's intense, and I wanted to resolve that in some way."

Quite unexpectedly, Rogers wrote **Angle of Repose** on the morning of the session. It takes its title from Wallace Stegner's powerful story of a pioneering American family in the West. "I walked into the studio, sat down at the grand piano, and wrote this sequence of chords," Rogers recalls. The tune begins and ends with a wistful rubato theme, interpolated with a brief solo flight that finds Potter and Rogers interweaving spontaneously and effortlessly. "I quickly wrote this out and it

seemed to play itself. It's evocative of the wide vistas and powerful stories that Stegner writes about in his novel. Kind of an American folk song with, to some extent, the harmonic influence of Aaron Copland."

**Cleveland**, a somewhat older piece, takes its title from the city where Rogers's father was born and raised. "I played this for my father, and he said that it didn't sound like Cleveland at all [laughs]." But Rogers had another, more concrete reference in mind as well: "There's a haunting painting that I grew up with in my house — a scene in Havana that depicts a dark street with cafés, completely empty of people. One of the cafés has a large sign that says 'Cleveland.'" After probing, technically brilliant solos by Rogers and Potter, the band restates the theme; then Simon takes flight on the outro, based on the same chords as the C section. "I wrote the A section harmonic framework for this piece first," Rogers reveals. "It was very strongly in 5/4 so the challenge for me was to come up with something organic and equally engaging melodically in that meter. The other sections seemed to flow naturally after writing the A section."

Rogers wrote the modal **Phrygia** several years ago, but the band conceived and executed the moody, abstract introduction on the spot. The melody bursts forth with a wave of declarative urgency; Rogers likens it to a spiritual invocation of sorts. "I used to play with a klezmer clarinetist named Giora Feidman, and we would do pieces he called 'prayers,' which actually sounded like a Jewish cantor, or an imam sounding a call to

worship. I realized that the emotional intensity that I was drawn to in John Coltrane's music had a similar quality." Colley, the first soloist, builds in intensity and yields the floor to Rogers; after a brief restatement of the B section melody, Potter delivers the coup de grace before restating the initial melody and ending with the B section.

**Purpose**, written shortly before the session, provides a window not only on the band's chops, but also the elasticity of its straightahead jazz approach. "I love playing over blues changes," says Rogers. "I especially love playing blues fast, with like-minded musicians who can really open up. This particular melody, which isn't over blues changes, has a few bars of 4/4 and one bar of 6/4, which makes it rhythmically offset.."

The ambiguously titled **Was** has the feel of a self-contained classical etude or tone poem. Potter and Rogers exchange turns stating the theme and improvising briskly over the changes while Colley loops a rhythmically insistent bass pattern. "I'm not sure what 'Was' means, exactly," Rogers says. "The song evokes something in me, some powerful experience I may have had in my life, although I'm not sure what. It feels like a reflection on something that had happened, something that was."

Doubtless Rogers will barrel ahead in the months and years to come, leading his own band while making sterling contributions to the music of others. Just listen to his bristling, high-velocity work with tenor star Michael Brecker, or his priceless nylon-string feature on "*Eclipse*" from the



Mingus Orchestra's *Tonight At Noon*, or his other memorable appearances with Lost Tribe, David Binney, Matthew Garrison, Randy Brecker, Steely Dan's Walter Becker, Cassandra Wilson, Regina Carter, (saxophonist) Bill Evans, Scott Colley, and even the Grammy-winning Norah Jones. Rogers commands attention even when playing the sideman, whether he's turning out the most dazzling solo or supplying a subtle background texture. It stands to reason that his own music would convey such finely wrought beauty and soul-shaking power.

"I'm thrilled if my music evokes strong feelings or reactions in people," he says. "I became a musician precisely because I had those strong feelings when I first started listening to music. The excitement and joy that I felt and feel from music has dictated the path of my life. If I can share any of those feelings with my audience, I feel like I'm on the right track."

David R. Adler

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