

**ACT**

## Huong Thanh & Nguyễn Lê

**FRAGILE BEAUTY****ACT 9451-2****(LC) 07644****Huong Thanh & Nguyễn Lê**  
**FRAGILE BEAUTY****Release Date: January 25, 2008**

**Far from being a matter of personal preference** or utopian ideology, the global citizen is a fact of 21<sup>st</sup> century city life. Wandering through the streets of any big metropolis in the world, it becomes immediately apparent that the so-called “global village” is a reality, not just a catchphrase. The consequential convergence and blending of cultures has for a long time been the main artistic subject for singer Huong Thanh and guitarist Nguyễn Lê. Both are of Vietnamese origin, both have been living in Paris for a long time, and both of them live their, as Lê once put it, “identity as children of the diaspora” in a fusion of western and far-eastern culture.

**Fragile Beauty is Huong Thanh’s fourth album** under her name on ACT following *Moon and Wind* (ACT 9269-2), *Dragonfly* (ACT 9293-2) and *Mangustao* (ACT 9423-2), all of which feature Nguyễn Lê as producer, co-composer, arranger and accompanist on the guitar. As before, the name of the album speaks eloquently of the music. The steady flow of life, its ephemeral nature and fragility are central themes of Buddhist culture. Vietnamese poetry has found a multitude of images to describe this: flowers drifting on water, or the passage of the clouds or the swallows. The team Thanh/Lê draw their inspiration from this rich heritage of images and motifs. Their repertoire ranges from an excerpt from the noble 10<sup>th</sup> century national epic “The Pavilion of Crystallized Azure” through the modern impressionist “Drifting on the Water” to sometimes melancholy, sometimes happy work songs.

**Huong Thanh is a daughter of one of the most famous singers** of the new Vietnamese theatre (Cai Luong). Her crystal-clear voice with its strange, yet enthralling quality that uses the syllables, melodies and scales of Vietnamese music, represents the traditional element on this album. Yet her singing remains open to the musical transformations brought to the music by Lê’s Hendrix-legacy, his jazz-innovations and his avant-garde electric playing. European musical tradition forms a kind of connective fabric in this context, given a Mediterranean colour by Paolo Fresu’s gentle trumpet playing and the singing double bass of Renaud Garcia-Fons or a jazz flavour by Dominique Borker’s piano harmonies. Yet a vital factor contributing to the recording’s textural richness is the multitude of string- and percussion instruments from all around the world used on the album: the Vietnamese 16 string zither (dàn tranh) and bamboo balafon play their part as do the African Udu, talking drums, congas and cajon. A further new colour is provided by Mieko Miyazaki, the internationally celebrated young master of the 8<sup>th</sup> century traditional Japanese instrument the koto. And of course Lê himself subtly yet pointedly utilizes his electronic arsenal of radiator, synthesizers and samplers. “One of the main ideas was to give the Asian instruments a different colour by connecting them to different traditions. Africa has inspired me since my work on ‘Ultramarine’”, says Lê.

**African rhythms, Japanese liveliness combined with western melodies** and jazz harmony all become part of an exciting venture, the basis and destination of which remains recognizably Vietnamese. A venture, which leads to a fusion of past and present, that points directly to the future.

**ACT****Nguyễn Lê & Hương Thanh****The CD:**

Fragile Beauty – Hương Thanh &amp; Nguyễn Lê – ACT 9451-2 – LC 07644

**Line Up:**

Hương Thanh – vocals

Nguyễn Lê – electric &amp; acoustic guitars, synthesizers, computer

Mieko Miyazaki – koto

Hao Nhiên Phạm – monocorde (dàn bầu), 16-strings zither (dàn tranh), sao &amp; meo bamboo flutes

Nguyễn Văn-Hồng – backing vocals

Paolo Fresu – trumpet &amp; flugelhorn

Stéphane Guillaume – soprano sax &amp; flutes

Renaud Garcia-Fons – pizz &amp; arco acoustic 5-string bass

Etienne Mbappé – fretless bass

Alex Tran – percussions (cajon, udu, congas, bendir, cymbals, shakers, etc.)

Francis Lassus – percussions (radiator, pendeiro, cymbals, brushes)

Ilyya Amar – bamboo balafon (trung)

Dominique Borker - piano

**Tracks:**

01 Drifting On The Water 3:48 (trad.) 02 Weaving &amp; Awaiting 5:58 (trad.)

03 Faithfulness 3:39 (Hương Thanh, Mieko Miyazaki, Nguyễn Lê) 04 Plantation Song 4:22 (trad.)

05 The Five Calls Of The Night 5:03 (trad.) 06 Fragile Beauty 5:12 (trad.)

07 Rowing The Sampan 3:17 (trad.) 08 The Pavilion Of Crystallized Azure 4:54 (Hương Thanh, Mieko Miyazaki, Nguyễn Lê)

09 At Dusk, From The West Balcony 4:18 (trad.) 10 Go Cong Blues 3:57 (trad.)

11 The Swallows' Bridge 6:23 (trad.) 12 Tales Of The Mountain 7:18 (Hương Thanh, Nguyễn Lê)

Recorded and mixed by Nguyễn Lê, Studio Louxor, Paris Barbès, France, December 2006 - May 2007

Produced by Nguyễn Lê

Executive Producer: Siegfried Loch

**Hương Thanh on ACT**ACT 9423-2 *Mangustao* / ACT 9293-2 *Dragonfly* / ACT 9269-2 *Moon And Wind*ACT 9261-2 Nguyễn Lê: *Maghreb & Friends* / ACT 9225-2 Nguyễn Lê: *Tales From Việt-Nam***Nguyễn Lê on ACT**ACT 9444-2 *Homescape* / ACT 9432-2 *Walking On The Tiger's Tail* / ACT 9410-2 *Purple* / ACT 9289-2 *E\_L\_B*ACT 9275-2 *Bakida* / ACT 9261-2 *Maghreb & Friends* / ACT 9225-2 *Tales From Việt-Nam* / ACT 9245-2 *Three Trios*ACT 9221-2 *Million Waves***Distributors:**

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