

Kindred Spirits and Chelsea Opera present



BENDING
TOWARDS THE
LIGHT: a
jazz
nativity

where opera and jazz join hands

DEBORAH VOIGT



featured
singer:

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star

With
Hosts:



Terrance McKnight
WQXR



Sheila Anderson
WJBO



Sunday
December 20th
5pm & 8pm

Christ & St. Stephen's Church
120 W 69th Street, NYC
(btwn Broadway/Columbus Ave)

TICKETS & INFO: www.ChelseaOpera.org

English percussionist **Paul Lytton** and New York-based trumpeter **Nate Wooley** have crafted a significant artistic language and performing relationship over the better part of a decade, working often as a duo and adding a broad range of partners to the equation. On the final night of a brief U.S. tour (Nov. 1st), the Lytton-Wooley Duo met up with alto saxophonist **Chris Pitsiokos** for a set of music at Brooklyn's JACK. Lytton approaches the kit like a painter or a scientist, with an array of "selected and unselected" (to use sparring partner Paul Lovens' term) cymbals, sticks, brushes, scraps and blocks. He can shove a band forward with the dynamic, rolling ass-kick of Art Blakey or compel with methodical movements, which are themselves breathtaking. Wooley is, in this setting, something of a straight man, eking out delicately withering yet crisp lines and eschewing amplification; both players were jolted quite heavily by the excoriating sputter and nagging shouts of Pitsiokos' alto, which, although at the outset a bit over-played, eventually (un)settled into a jagged three-way volley that actually could have easily gone for much longer. The evening began with visiting Danish alto saxophonist Mia Dyberg in a fine duo with trumpeter Herb Robertson (or trio, if you count late-running clarinetist Oscar Noriega). Both Dyberg and Robertson utilized a range of ancillary sound-making devices and techniques, stretching into AACM/CMIF/BAG-inspired passages of deep conversation, playful chatter and bluesy storytelling. — Clifford Allen



Paul Lytton @ JACK

"I hope you saw the aromas, smelled the colors!" remarked emcee James Brown at the conclusion of a thought-provoking second set at The Jazz Gallery (Nov. 6th). Entering its third decade as one of the most progressive jazz clubs on the New York scene, the venue was hosting saxophonist/flutist **Henry Threadgill**, pianist **Vijay Iyer** and drummer **Dafnis Prieto**, a triumvirate of talents who helped build its reputation. Opening with a medley of Iyer's "Sketch 20" and "Passage", the first a moody bossa with sharp punctuations at the phrase ends enhanced by Threadgill's peppery alto saxophone, later by his effervescent alto flute, there was instantaneous simpatico amongst the musicians, a sense of mutual trust as they navigated each others' complex compositions. Prieto went to mallets for his "Nothing and Everything", a grooving 6/8 piece only gradually arriving at the melody while Threadgill and Iyer deconstructed the form and pulse to suit their imaginations. Threadgill's plodding, hymn-like "Where Coconuts Fall" was followed by Iyer's "Cores", both numbers employing unusual rhythmic phrases and featuring Threadgill's sometimes suggestive, other times declarative horn statements, all propelled by Prieto's delicate but definitive polyrhythmic prowess. Two Threadgill numbers closed the set, the pushing and pulling "Last Night" and the ballad "Sail", whose poignant start wound down to a ruminative finish. — Tom Greenland



Henry Threadgill @ The Jazz Gallery

SoHo is a place defined by its architecture. Despite the preponderance of chain stores, such grotesqueries can't totally eradicate the history of cast-iron façades, vaulted ceilings, massive joists and exposed pipes that supported everything from garment factories to large-scale metal sculpture. Plumbing factored heavily into Fluxus-rooted composer **Yoshi Wada's Earth Horns with Electronic Drone**, presented by Issue Project Room at the Emily Harvey Foundation (Nov. 5th-6th). Bisecting a SoHo loft were two lengthy copper tube constructions, played by Dan Peck and Sam Kulik, while Wada and Joe Moffett stuck to smaller cast-iron pipe horns (all made by Wada). Wada's son, composer Tashi Wada, played a reed organ and sine wave generators for a 70-minute version of the original three-hour piece, which turned the smallish loft (downstairs from a space Wada once shared with choreographer Simone Forti) into singing, undulating vibrations of metal, wood and air. The closest thing it can be likened to is throat-singing Richard Serra sculpture and it wasn't hard to forget that musicians and instruments were behind the gradual, modal shifts—it became atmospheric and indelibly tied to the building itself, almost as though the water pipes, walls and floor beams were 'playing', occasionally interspersed by sirens and rattle from the busy Broadway traffic outside. Decades removed from the neighborhood's artistic high water mark, one can still feel the buildings' contribution to old SoHo. (CA)

Was that a laptop computer on the hallowed Village Vanguard stage (Nov. 3rd)? A sign of changing times, perhaps, but **John Zorn's Electric Masada** didn't seem bothered by the iconoclastic implications: the musicians were far too busy having fun, if the ear-to-ear grins glued onto the faces of drummers Kenny Wollesen and Joey Baron throughout the second set were any indication. Bumped up by the ever-changing percussive arsenal of Cyro Baptista, washed in the electronic soundscapes of Ikue Mori's computer and Jamie Saft's Rhodes over Trevor Dunn's thumping electric bass, the ensuing tumult was—dare I say it?—downright tribal, encouraging laughs and subdued mayhem from the normally polite Vanguard audience. Zorn was clearly in charge, cueing new sections with hand gestures to effect dramatic dynamic contrasts (sudden lulls, ecstatic crescendos) on the turn of a fist. "Lilin", a modal romp with Middle Eastern overtones, featured guitarist Marc Ribot in a bluesy, post-Santana vein. "Kakabel" (after a false start, Zorn quipped "New tune!" and kicked it off a second time) was gentler, enlivened by Baptista's various rattles, whistles and wind effects. "Hath-Arob", introduced as "an oldie but goodie", had a Latin rhythm with heavier skronking from Zorn on alto saxophone. "Karaim", revealed another side of his musicality with an extended solo full of tenderness and soul. "Yatzer", the encore, included more tone painting by Mori and Baptista. (TG)

A synonym for the word instrument is tool. And for those sitting up close, a solo performance can be an opportunity to see how sound is actually produced. Most musicians hide behind their instruments but a few work with a palpable physicality. And when unconcerned with other players, they can exult in an empowerment that goes back to the first Neanderthal and his rock. **Peter Evans'** solo trumpet concerts are what propel him into the upper echelon of improvisers; when Evan Parker, himself a soloing pioneer, gives his imprimatur by releasing two of your solo albums on his own label, you are doing something right. In the expansive acoustical environment of Roulette (Nov. 4th), Evans played for 57 minutes without interruption—and for someone with his circular breathing ability that is not hyperbole. Improvisation is often derided as 'winging it' but there was not a sound that Evans produced, whether a series of electrical blips, crisp notes opening like budding flowers or an approximation of a steel drummer in the subway, which was not deliberate and strenuously created. Everything was about distance: how far fingers were above the keys or lips from the mouthpiece; how near or far (or inside) the bell of the trumpet was to the microphone; even the use of the third valve slide. It was a personal narrative in a language of slurs, groans, squeals, squeaks, flutters, burps and gasps. To be reminded of the person making the sounds, one needed only to look at the lake of spittle at Evans' feet. —*Andrey Henkin*

It has been four decades since **Irakere** burst out of the relative obscurity of Cuba on to the international music scene, forever revolutionizing the sound of Latin jazz with a unique fusion of contemporary and folkloric musical elements juxtaposing modern electronics and traditional percussion instruments in a mélange of AfroCuban rhythms and jazz harmonies. Since then founding member Chucho Valdés has emerged as one of the world's most vital musicians. Commemorating the 40th anniversary of the band that introduced U.S. audiences to Paquito D'Rivera and Arturo Sandoval, Valdés revitalized the brand, bringing a new group of fiery young Cuban players to Town Hall (Nov. 10th). The tentet, with five rhythm players powering the incendiary three trumpet-two saxophone horn section, featured members of the pianist's Afro Cuban Jazz Messengers, including vocalist/batá drummer Dreiser Durruthy Bombalé. He began the proceedings with a ritualistic chant, which segued into the customary Irakere concert opener "Juana 1600", showcasing the serpentine unison horn lines that were the group's hallmark. The program mixed Irakere classics "Misa Negra" and "Estela va a Estallar" with newer Valdés' Afro Cuban Messenger songbook pieces "Abdel", "Caridad Amaro" and "Las Dos Caras". Guest vocalist Roberta Gambarini joined in on the classic bolero "Que Te Pedi" midway through and the show concluded with an exciting encore of the usual Irakere closer "Bacalao Con Pan". —*Russ Musto*

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Peter Evans @ Roulette

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Chucho Valdés @ Town Hall

When **Nonoko Yoshida** began her solo alto saxophone set at The Stone (Nov. 11th, her 28th birthday) with "Almost Sounds Like Grindcore", it may have been a good idea to move to the back of the small room to save one's ears. Built from a quiet thrum and then stentorian honks layered via a Ditto Looper pedal, a pipe-organ effect was created, a placid bed over which she added shrieks and bellows in a five-minute baptism. She said it was her sound check but it was also a red herring. Much of the 56-minute-long set, celebrating her new solo release *Lotus*, was built from the same methodology yet occupied a place of remarkable beauty. The 10-minute "Desert Island", named for an inland Japanese sea, had a gentle theme as its foundation; Yoshida then added counterpoint, alien trills and a pretty melody doubled in fifths, all in a lovely tone. It could have been early church polyphony, not processed solo saxophone. The five minutes of "Urukas" juxtaposed handclapping with short, percussive notes, a melody coming together like jigsaw puzzle pieces. "M's Flat", a dedication to a dear friend in the audience, was another gentle ballad with an Enya-like quality. "Taka 14" was fast-paced and athletic, inspired by Yoshida's soccer-coaching sister and brother-in-law, and featured extended techniques such as her mouthpiece submerged in water. After the atmospheric "Excerpt From 15 Lunatics", which had a frenzied undercurrent, Yoshida closed with the acoustic "East River", a nod to her old practicing spot. (AH)

Since the late '70s, when it first embarked on its mission to preserve and advance jazz expression of the highest order, the **Wilbur Ware Institute**, named for one of the music's great bassists, has worked to bring the music to wider audiences with concerts, workshops and seminars. Dozens of mainstream jazz artists came together to show their support for the venerable organization during a three-day fundraiser held at Harlem's Cassandra's Jazz & Gallery. The middle night (Nov. 14th) got off to a rousing start with the established quartet of tenor saxophonist Eric Alexander, pianist Harold Mabern, bassist John Webber and drummer Joe Farnsworth taking to the raised bandstand looking out onto Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard. The group wasted no time firing things up with Alexander and Mabern harmonizing over the rhythmic lines of the pianist's soulful "Mr. Stitt", the former vacillating between screaming upper register cries and bellowing bottom notes over the latter's harmonically rich, flowing percussive chords. An uptempo Latin-tinged arrangement of "The Night Has A Thousand Eyes" featuring Farnsworth was up next, followed by Mabern's original arrangements of Coltrane's "Dear Lord" and "Almost Like Being In Love". Alexander softened his sound on the ballad reading of "Sleep Warm" before cranking things up again on Mabern's "Rakin' and "Scrapin'" in anticipation of the addition of fellow saxophonist George Coleman to the band for their next set. (RM)

WHAT'S NEWS

The **2016 National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters** have been announced: vibraphonist Gary Burton and saxophonists Pharoah Sanders and Archie Shepp. Wendy Oxenhorn, head of the Jazz Foundation of America, will receive the 2016 A.B. Spellman NEA Jazz Masters Award for Jazz Advocacy. For more information, visit arts.gov.

The winner of the **Thelonious Monk Institute International Jazz Vocals Competition** has been announced: Jazzmeia Horn was named First Place Winner and Second and Third Place went to Veronica Swift and Vuyolwethu Sotashe, respectively. For more information, visit monkinstitute.org. And the winner of the **4th Annual Sarah Vaughan International Vocal Competition** was also announced: Arianna Neikrug was named First Place Winner and Second and Third Place went to Angela Hagenbach and Nicole Zuraitis, respectively. For more information, visit njpac.org.

Blue Note Records has announced the release of **Detroit Jazz City**, a compilation album of tracks by Motor City artists on the label's roster (both past and present), the proceeds of which will be donated to Focus: HOPE, a non-profit organization dedicated to "intelligent and practical solutions to the problems of hunger, economic disparity, inadequate education, and racial divisiveness in Southeastern Michigan." The album will include new and archival songs by Marion Hayden, Kenny Cox, James Carter, Joe Henderson, Marcus Belgrave, Elvin Jones, Spencer Barefield, Donald Byrd and Sheila Jordan. For more information, visit bluenote.com.

Bending Towards the Light ... a Jazz Nativity, a co-production of Chelsea Opera and Kindred Spirits, will take place Dec. 20th at Christ and St. Stephen's Church at 5 and 8 pm and will be hosted by Sheila Anderson of WBGO and Terrance McKnight of WQXR. For more information, visit chelseaopera.org.

Sound of Redemption, The Frank Morgan Story, a documentary on the late alto saxophonist will have its local premiere at IFC Center Dec. 2nd-9th. For more information, visit ifccenter.com.

Alto saxophonist **Rudresh Mahanthappa** has been named one of 37 United States Artists Fellows for 2015, with a prize of \$50,000 for professional development. For more information, visit unitedstatesartists.org.

Brice Rosenbloom, founder of the BOOM Collective and organizer of Winter Jazzfest, Undead Music Festival, BRIC Jazz Festival and Music Director of Le Poisson Rouge, will receive the second annual Bruce Lundvall Visionary Award at the Jazz Connect Conference in January. For more information, visit jazz-connect.org.

Bringing jazz into the 21st Century are two initiatives by two city institutions: the **Apollo Theater**, in a partnership with Hologram USA, will bring back the spirit of Billie Holiday (who was a regular performer at the hall throughout her career) in holographic form as part of a permanent educational exhibition. For more information, visit apollotheater.org. And the **Blue Note Club** has outfitted itself for 360-degree virtual reality video filming, to be available for viewing via the Google Cardboard headset and available on the Rivet YouTube channel, with plans to expand the technology to its sister clubs B.B. King Blues Club & Grill and Highline Ballroom. For more information, visit bluenoteentertainmentgroup.com.

December 2015 marks the final month of jazz programming at the West Village venue **The Garage**, which began presenting jazz in 1996.

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