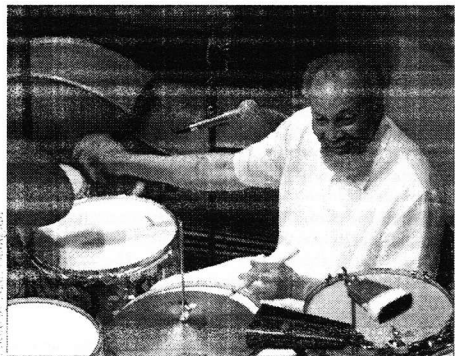


Vision Festival

by John Sharpe



Milford Graves

The 18th annual Vision Festival (Jun. 12th-16th) began with a bang. A whole series of them, in fact, as the sold-out first night at Brooklyn's Roulette was given over to a celebration for the lifetime achievement of Milford Graves, one of the first drummers to overthrow the tyranny of time. In a cleverly constructed program giving an overview of Graves' career - eruditely emceed by WKCR's Ben Young - two sets stood out. The first was as mighty an exhibition of fire music as any which graced the '60s: pianist DD Jackson's enthusiastically hammered clusters and crashes mingled with New Orleans saxophonist Kidd Jordan's urgent falsetto, as the leader belted out a tumbling tattoo on his customized kit. The second combined homage to the seminal New York Art Quartet (NYAQ) with an early '90s trio with saxophonist Charles Gayle and bassist William Parker. But instead of revisiting past glories, the set progressed in a sequence of vignettes. To begin, Graves' gentle talking drums accompanied a fiery recitation by Amiri Baraka. Next Graves duetted with trombonist Roswell Rudd, the other surviving founding member of the NYAQ. Rudd's raucous bluster punctuated Graves' polyrhythmic rumble in a gritty encounter. Everyone united for a spirited finale, which saw Rudd and Gayle wailing righteously as they faced each other across the stage. The honoree enjoyed the evening as much as the audience, grinning almost non-stop throughout.

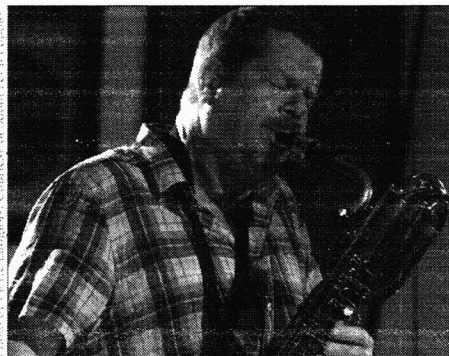
In a repeat of their feat at this year's Winter Jazz Fest, the cooperative trio of pianist Kris Davis, bassist Eric Revis and drummer Andrew Cyrille once again generated the biggest buzz. Demonstrating a telepathic rapport, which translated into emphatic and playful syncopated complexity, the threesome forged waves of dazzling crescendos, alternating tension and occasional release. Davis drew her inspiration as much from minimalism as from Cecil Taylor, often maintaining a percussive ringing tremolo while chording strongly with her left hand. Revis reveled in a nimble-fingered tour de force while Cyrille was both elegant and imperious. Their knotty improvisations garnered a standing ovation for a performance conjuring subtlety and cohesion from thin air.

Although reduced in scale, spread over five days rather than the customary week or more, there was no reduction in ambition. It sometimes seemed as if the normal quota of talent had merely been shoehorned into a smaller number of units. Two groups illustrated the merits of novel aggregations. Going under the moniker of Fast-West Collective, the convergence of five improvisers from three continents created a succession of powerful peaks, each different in flavor, which emerged unheralded from the organic flow of overlapping textures; case in point, the majestic swell

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 42)

Suoni Per Il Popolo

by Mathieu Bélanger



Ken Vandermark

The 13th edition of the Suoni Per Il Popolo Festival took place Jun. 5th-22nd in Montréal, with concerts every night at both Casa del Popolo and La Sala Rossa, the venues run by the organizers of the festival, and, on a few occasions, at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Usine C or Oboro. This year's edition looked very promising, with saxophonists Peter Brötzmann and Joe McPhee in duo; saxophonist John Butcher in solo and in duo with guitarist Andy Moor; trumpeter Nate Wooley and drummer Paul Lytton with and without saxophonist Ken Vandermark; electronic musician Jason Lescalleet; guitarist/electronic musician Kevin Drumm; a five-night series with the Wandelweiser collective and the Quatuor Bozzini; composer Robert Ashley and many others. The question, of course, was whether it would live up to the expectations.

The first days of the festival, while far from being bad, did not generate the excitement of the last ten days, something preventing them from being truly memorable. In the case of the Brötzmann/McPhee duet, it was the impression that the musicians were not totally together. For Drumm, his set suffered from a somewhat weaker section about halfway through and was preceded by rather tedious opening acts that tested the patience of the listeners. To give a last example, a talkative crowd made it harder to enjoy Lescalleet's set.

Things took a turn for the best with the concert of composer Malcolm Goldstein and a slimmed-down version - 15 musicians instead of the usual 30! - of Nicolas Caloia's Ratchet Orchestra. In fact, if a highlight of the festival had to be identified, this would be a prime candidate. The concert was a rare occasion for Montréalers to hear some of Goldstein's compositions for ensemble. Indeed, even though he has spent most of his time in Montréal since the early '90s, his music for ensemble has seldom been performed locally. Five pieces were performed: "The Seasons: Vermont (Summer)" (1983); "Sheep Meadows" (1966); "Soweto Stomp" (1985); "Two Silences" (2003) and "In Search of Tone Roads #2 (for Charles Ives)" (2013), the last a commission of the orchestra. They offered a glimpse of the diversity of Goldstein's output. For example, "The Seasons: Vermont (Summer)" was a piece for tape and live instruments. The tape was a collage of sounds, one can only assume typical of Vermont in the summer, to which the musicians, standing around the audience, added sounds of their own in order to create an harmonious soundscape. "Soweto Stomp" started with brass and woodwinds playing "Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika", the anthem of the African National Congress, after which musicians played various patterns and solo before going back to the starting anthem. The result was a piece with a well-defined pulse that could remind one of jazz. All in all, it was a very special night.

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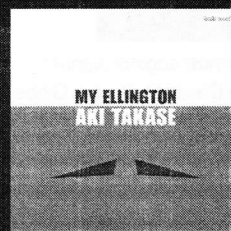


Intakt CD 217

TRIO 3 + JASON MORAN Refraction - Breakin' Glass

Jason Moran: Piano
Oliver Lake: Sax, Voice
Reggie Workman: Bass
Andrew Cyrille: Drums

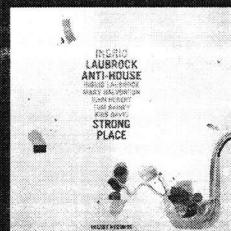
Trio 3 + Vijay Iyer, Birdland,
NYC, August 6-10, 2013



Intakt CD 213

AKI TAKASE My Ellington

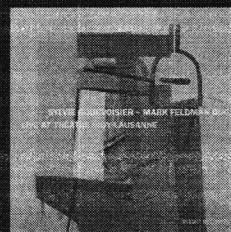
Aki Takase: Piano solo



Intakt CD 208

INGRID LAUBROCK - ANTI-HOUSE Strong Place

Ingrid Laubrock:
Saxophones
Mary Halvorson: Guitar
Kris Davis: Piano
John Hébert: Bass
Tom Rainey: Drums



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Sylvie Courvoisier: Piano
Mark Feldman: Violone



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Wed. 8/21 8pm Fujii Trio with Rene Hart (bass) and David Miller (drums) 10pm Junk Box with Kappa Maki (trumpet) John Hollenbeck (drums)
Thu. 8/22 8pm Duo with Ikue Mori 10pm Fujii Quartet Kappa Maki (trumpet) Rene Hart (bass) David Miller (drums) **Fri. 8/23** 8pm Min-Yoh Ensemble Kappa Maki (trumpet) Curtis Hasselbring (trombone) Andrea Parkins (accordion) 10pm Kaze, Steve Dalachinsky (poet) **Sat. 8/24** 8pm Fujii Large Ensemble Andrew D'Angelo (alto) Petr Cancura (ten) Josh Sinton (bari) Curtis Hasselbring (trombone) Joe Morris (g) Rene Hart (b) David Miller (drums) + KAZE 10pm Minamo Duo with Carla Kihlstedt (vn) **Sun. 8/25** 8pm Brass and Percussion Ensemble KAZE with Frank London, Nate Wooley (trumpet) 10pm Fujii Trio with Rene Hart (bass) and David Miller (drums)

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(VISION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

of distinctive sonorities formed from the interweaving of Larry Ochs' soprano saxophone and Sylvain Kassap's bass clarinet in a loose fugue, over a throbbing pulse from Didier Petit's cello and Miya Masaoka's koto while guzheng player Xu Fengxia and the cellist added vocal counterpoint. A theatrical approach, from Petit in particular, didn't obscure the beguiling symbiosis born from both compass points but belonging to neither. Another unlikely meeting between two Frenchmen (bass clarinetist Louis Sclavis and pianist François Tusques), this time with three Vision stalwarts, under the banner of the French American Peace Ensemble summed up what the Vision Festival is all about in its extension of the avant garde tradition in unexpected directions. Sclavis almost stole the show, as his melodic story-spinning, variously challenging and supportive, completed a tremendous frontline with Kidd Jordan's emotive blues-infused wail, buoyed by William Parker and Hamid Drake's steadily evolving grooves.

Other sets were near their equal. Bassist Reggie Workman's portion started with a tender duet with pianist Marilyn Crispell, almost drowned out by camera shutters. An allstar cast delivered Workman's compositions with a blend of passion and power that lived up to their inherent promise. Saxophonist Odean Pope impressed with his magnificent shriek while drummer Pheeroan akLaff exploded around his trumpet, supplemented by the vocally inflected tablas of Tapan Modak. While they teetered deliciously on the edge of chaos, Workman always hauled them back from the brink, via a mixture of relaxed riffs, exotic didgeridoo and delightful slurred swipes of the bow. AACM veteran multi-instrumentalist Roscoe Mitchell structured his slot around pieces contrasting meditative calm with unfettered expression. He deployed the unwieldy baroque flute and bass recorder to establish the mood before unleashing sensational firestorms of cascading circular breathed alto and soprano saxophones, ably supported by Tani Tabbal's rolling thunder and bassist Henry Grimes hyperactive pizzicato and careening violin.

One of the Vision Festival's enduring pleasures is its ambit of more than just music. Poetry, visual art and dance all featured but it was in Bejewelled - the pairing of violinist Terry Jenoure and dancer Maria Mitchell - that they transcended their parts. Performing a semi-autobiographical piece inspired by Jenoure's grandmother's life in Puerto Rico, the synthesis of Mitchell's rag-doll movement with Jenoure's storytelling and abstract but compelling bowing was simply stunning. As with any festival, not everything made the grade, but other notable turns included violinist Jason Kao Hwang's searing intensity in trumpeter Roy Campbell's Akhenaten Ensemble; emotionally laden cries from the intertwined horns of Rob Brown and Joe McPhee in the former's U.L. Project and a startling display of energy from the irrepressible blind child prodigy Matthew Whitaker on keyboards as part of Hamiet Bluiett's Bio-Electric Ensemble. Notwithstanding the pared-back duration, the Vision Festival remains the pre-eminent avant jazz gathering not only in North America but across the globe. ❖

For more information, visit artsforart.org

(SUONI CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13)

Another performance worth mentioning was that of Wormholes, the duo of Sharif Sehnaoui and Mazen Kerbaj. Their performance stood apart by its use of two different media. First, acoustic guitarist Sehnaoui provided music by putting the instrument on his lap and continuously hitting the strings with small sticks

as if it were a cimbalom. Second, cartoonist/painter Kerbaj created live projections by drawing and painting on a glass board with ink, water, sprays and various objects. While the interaction between the music and the visuals was not always clear and the whole performance perhaps could have been five minutes shorter, the projections conquered the audience and rightly so, impregnated as they were with poetry and evocative power.

This 13th edition distinguished itself from those previous in that one artist, Ken Vandermark to be specific, was asked to curate a series of three evenings. In addition to the sets involving Butcher, Moor, Wooley, Lytton and himself previously mentioned, this series included the duo of drummer Paal Nilssen-Love and guitarist Terrie Ex, McPhee in a rare solo appearance and, to finish things off, Lean Left. The music was faithful to what can be expected from these musicians and, consequently, acted as a reminder of their skills as improvisers.

One downside associated with having several simultaneous events is that the stronger the lineup, the more likely scheduling conflicts become. The 2013 edition called for some tough decisions: the first evening of the Vandermark-curated series conflicted with the fourth one of the Wandelweiser collective and Quatuor Bozzini series, which featured none other than Christian Wolff himself. While obviously not something the organizers do on purpose, it certainly is something worth keeping in mind for the future.

In retrospect, the 13th edition of the Suoni Per Il Popolo Festival confirmed once again that it is an essential part of Montreal's music life. For those who missed it, there is always next year! ❖

For more information, suoniperilpopolo.org



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