A Light In Darkness

THANK YOU!

AFA IS SUPPORTED BY

The generous support of the Jacob and Ruth Epstein Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, former Council Member Margaret Chin, Council Member Carlina Rivera, Jerome Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Mid Atlantic Arts, Silicon Valley Community Trust, the Givens Foundation for African American Literature and the many donations by artists and supporters.

The Vision Festival is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

Oliver Lake’s Lifetime Achievement Award is underwritten by the Robert D. Bielecki Foundation.

This engagement of William Parker Trio is made possible through the ArtsCONNECT program of Mid Atlantic Arts with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Arts for Art receives support from Henry Luce Foundation, Willem de Kooning Foundation, and Teiger Foundation through the Coalition of Small Arts New York.

This program is supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the city council.

The conference Legacies of Black Creative Music: A Path Towards Justice is supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.

Arts for Art thanks the Jazz Foundation of America for their support, and for the amazing work they do to honor great musicians and provide them with essential, in some cases lifesaving help in times of crisis.

MISSION

Arts for Art is dedicated to the exceptional creativity that originated in the African American multi-arts jazz culture that utilizes improvisation to express a larger, more positive dream of inclusion and freedom.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY

Since 1996, Arts for Art has celebrated the multi-cultural, multi-disciplined, and gender diversity of FreeJazz. To ensure justice and equity in the music we have shone a light on great African American improvising creative artists. FreeJazz was birthed from their struggles. It has been AFA’s privilege to do this whether or not it was popular or expedient to do so.

COMMUNITY

Community is a founding principle of Arts for Art. AFA prioritizes keeping space for artists and audiences to gather online and in-person. Together we explore how the improvising art can bring insight and inspiration, creating a space that is more fluid, a bit kinder, and more open to all peoples and cultures. We help identify pressing concerns of the artists, facilitate discussion, and find solutions. By sharing art, ideas, and information, we help our community to remain relevant, responsive, and resilient.
AFA’s Music is Mine (MiM) education program nurtures and develops the future of FreeJazz by providing free music education to diverse students of all ages in partnership with a number of schools. We bring weekly music workshops to middle and high schoolers at the Institute for Collaborative Education (ICE) in Manhattan. At Brooklyn’s Urban Assembly School of Music and Art (UA), AFA provides regular instruction and helps students improve their music literacy. This year at UA, we’ve hosted monthly interactive performances with a rotating ensemble, and we’ve just begun to provide this experience to students, ages 5 to 11, at PS20 on Essex Street. Each encounter empowers students to develop appreciation for their creative voice, opens up musical possibilities for exploration, and strengthens their collaborative skills, all while teaching them domestic and international music history.

MiM has grown. We are now serving nearly 300 students through workshops and performances.

Please support our work at artsforart.org/education

Support the Vision Festival
Music • Dance • Poetry • Art

Create a Future Filled with Creativity and Culture
The Inspiration that the Vision Festival brings is more important than ever. We stay strong because we support each other.

Your tax-deductible donation helps us build community with equity, diversity and compassion.

Donate • Become a Member • Volunteer

► Donate or Sign Up to Volunteer at the Arts for Art table or at artsforart.org/support

► Join at artsforart.org/membership

► Contact INFO@ARTSFORART.ORG

Connect with AFA on social media
#visionfestival  

[QR Code]

Photos: Eva Kapanadze

Photo: Eva Kapanadze
Next William Parker release in progress. It is EPIC. And this is not the real cover artwork...it's more about the art of the elements. This is a unique collection of pieces. It's a new & thorough examination of the soul, the spirit, and the...
JUNE 19, 7PM - PROGRAM 1

THE LOST GENERATION: OUTSIDE THE MAINSTREAM  William Hooker
THIS FILM IS AN EFFORT to elaborate on the history of the many musicians of the 1970s whose music has gone unrecognized by a larger audience. Most of these artists have international followings and continue to perform, record, and document their art and their lives. 2021, 107 min, digital

JUNE 20, 7PM - PROGRAM 2

THE BLACK ARTISTS’ GROUP: CREATION EQUALS MOVEMENT
Directed by Bryan Dematteis
THIS DOCUMENTARY delves into the history and legacy of the Black Artists’ Group (BAG), a late 1960s St. Louis arts collective devoted to raising Black consciousness, battling social injustice, and exploring the far reaches of experimental performance through a blend of music, poetry, drama, dance, and the visual arts. Through rare archival footage and interviews with key collective members and players, this film shines light on an untold story of passion, creative vision, and community. 2022, 49 min, digital

THE SUN RISES IN THE EAST
Directed by Tayo Giwa
Produced by Tayo Giwa and Cynthia Gordy Giwa
A CHRONICLE OF THE BIRTH, rise, and legacy of The East, a pan-African cultural organization founded in 1969 by teens and young adults in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. Led by educator Jitu Weusi, The East embodied Black self-determination—building its own school, food co-op, news-magazine, and acting as home to more than a dozen other institutions. Hosting world-famous jazz musicians, and serving as an epicenter for groups including the Black Panther Party and Young Lords, The East effectively built an independent Black nation in the heart of Brooklyn. 2022, 58 min, digital
LEGACIES OF BLACK CREATIVE MUSIC
A PATH TOWARDS JUSTICE

ORGANIZED BY KEHINDE ALONGE, MICHAEL HELLER, CARTER MATHES, PATRICIA NICHOLSON, AND DANILO POWELL-LIMA

Free, In-Person and Streaming

artsforart.org/vision

11 am | A Legacy of Self-Determination
AN EXAMINATION OF ARTIST-INITIATED MOVEMENTS

Introduction by Michael Heller – author, Asc. Prof. at Univ. of Pittsburgh

Moderated by Kehinde Alonge – PhD candidate in English at Rutgers Univ.
Ahmed Abdullah – Prof. of Jazz at The New School, musician; on Sun Ra
Ras Moshe Burnett – activist, educator, musician; on Brooklyn based initiatives
Patricia Nicholson – AFA Founder, Artistic Dir; on Manhattan movements 1975-on

12:30PM LUNCH BREAK

1:30 pm | Black Music / White Business
THE INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONS IN JAZZ/FREEJAZZ

Introduction by Patricia Nicholson

Moderated by Salim Washington – musician, author, educator
Jean Cook – Board of Music Workers Alliance, musician; on music and the internet
Gargi Shindé – former Dir. of Grant Programs, musician; on the role of foundations
Mark Laver – Prof. of Music at Grinnell College; on the influence of capitalism
Patricia Nicholson – on resistance to African American FreeJazz in the market

3:30 pm | Freedom & Spirituality

Introduction by Carter Mathes – author, Asc. Prof. of English at Rutgers University

Moderated by Anthony Jermaine Ross-Allam – PhD candidate in Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary
Nicole Mitchell – Prof. and Dir. of Jazz Studies at the Univ. of Pittsburgh, musician; on afro-futurism and freedom
William Parker – author, educator, activist, and musician; on where the music comes from and how music functions in society
Hamid Drake – musician; on spirituality in life & music

This event is supported by a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.
Thanks to Rutgers University - New Brunswick and the University of Pittsburgh for their support.
CELEBRATING WADADA LEO SMITH
A LifeTime of Achievement

Open Healing: Albert Ayler in Adigo
7:00
Wadada Leo Smith trumpet
Pheeroan akLaff drums
A memorial reflection on Mr. Ayler’s contribution to music and spirituality.

Film: Butterfly Silver
7:20
(4 min. excerpt)
Robert Fenz director
A portrait of me interacting with Fenz’s camera in a mountain town in Southern California.

RedKoral Quartet, String Quartet No. 10
7:30
Angela Davis into the Morning Sunlight
Mona Thian violin
Shalini Vijayan violin
Andrew McIntosh viola
Ashley Walters cello
A celebration of Ms. Davis as a beautiful and powerfully creative human being.

Wadada Leo Smith’s Purple Kikuyu & RedKoral Quartet
8:00
Flight 93 in Pennsylvania’s Sky:
No Greater Love A Remembrance of Their Beauty & Courage
Wadada Leo Smith trumpet
Pheeroan akLaff drums
Sylvie Courvoisier piano
Erika Dohi piano
Mona Tian violin
Shalini Vijayan violin
Andrew McIntosh viola
Ashley Walters cello
Every time I read about what the 182 people elected to do on flight 93 my heart turns upside down in knowing that they were true believers in life, liberty and justice, and had a clear comprehension of a true democracy.

Thulani Davis with Wadada Leo Smith & RedKoral Quartet
Recitation and Music:
Billie Holiday, Dark Lady of the Sonnet
9:00
Thulani Davis poet
Mona Tian violin
Shalini Vijayan violin
Andrew McIntosh viola
Ashley Walters cello
This is my first collaboration with Thulani Davis. I think the RedKoral Quartet is perfect for Ms. Davis’ recitation. I selected to place strings around her voice. The score of Billie Holiday is from movement no.1 of string quartet no. 13.

Film: Trumpet and Camera
9:30
(10 min. excerpt)
Robert Fenz director
This showing is in memory of Robert Fenz, who was a great friend and a magnificent filmmaker.

Prayer
10:00
Wadada Leo Smith trumpet
Pheeroan akLaff drums
The Prayer is for and dedicated to Mr. Keith Jarrett, a great composer and performer.
**Matthew Shipp Quartet**

7:00
Matthew Shipp  
Jason Kao Hwang  
Michael Bisio  
Jay Rosen  
Katy Martin

This is a new quartet of mine. The music I play is music. It does not refer to any particular theme that can be outlined in words. It is up to the imagination of the listener to translate the abstract symbols and vibrations of the music to whatever meaning they derive from it. This is also a continuing collaboration with the visual artist Katy Martin who paints on her skin as a way to explore gesture. The idea is that the moving image supports the music and the music opens up the image.

**Whit Dickey Staircase in Space**

8:00
Whit Dickey  
Rob Brown  
Brandon Lopez  
Jo Wood-Brown

I love organic extemporaneous composition that seamlessly changes from within. These musicians are familiar with this vibration that makes up my inner vision of what is ultimately a gentle & gradual staircase in space. Jo Wood-Brown sees the vision and paints it. We are a helix—streaking through space—points of light—connected by the organic order—above and beyond the madness—a band of storytellers—we make our own epic—in our own time—a prism of colors—in a time of darkness—we speak truth justice and compassion—to those who don’t care to listen—and to those who care.

**KERNEL**

9:00
Davalois Fearon  
Mike McGinnis

“KERNEL,” a collaborative performance project between Davalois Fearon and Mike McGinnis, is the second solo from “The Finding Herstory Project.” The project is a series of solos inspired by Africanist forms such as reggae and dancehall that have contributed to Fearon’s establishment as an artist. The project was born out of Stephen Petronio Company 2021 Bloodlines(future) Program commission of “Finding Herstory.” The onset of COVID-19 has brought on dark times for many of us. The light in the darkness for me has been my ability to continue to create despite the immense setbacks.

**Heart Trio Root, Branch, and Fruit**

9:30
William Parker  
Hamid Drake  
Cooper-Moore

The art comes through us as we explore the landscape of Blues, Ritual and Meditation. We look at music as a form of prayer. Our instruments move with breath, wind, and motion—they are made of wood and sinew. Homemade reconstructed, traveling down unknown roads—seeking adventure and enlightenment. Listening to the voice of the ancestors who keep the pot stirring while going deep inside to find the light. Returned to channel energy and lessons learned from mountains and clouds made of sound and silence, rhythm and melody, cries and rejoicing chants.

- May all those in darkness seek enlightenment and be filled with hope and may fear of truth vanish
- Love all
- No matter what seek peace with all who live
- Find strength in giving to the poor
- Share your wealth with the unfortunate
- Believe in the unknown
- Let the Essence fill your soul
- Let it dance in the wind
- Each gesture is to heal the broken world
- Let the space between raindrops invite light
- To caress those who are in pain
- The soul does not age
- Light invites praise to enter into our lives

**Rothenberg / Courvoisier / Drake**

10:30
Ned Rothenberg  
Sylvie Courvoisier  
Hamid Drake

Ned Rothenberg and Sylvie Courvoisier have collaborated for decades but more closely over the past two years, notably on their Clean Feed release Lockdown with Julian Sartorius. They share a passion for extended musical language and sonic immediacy. They are tremendously excited to join forces with the brilliant percussionist and dear friend, Hamid Drake. Our hearts go out in this turbulent time to all caring people who seek truth and freedom. We hope that this music can bring a bit of respite from the world’s turmoil.
Yoshiko Chuma and The School of Hard Knocks

6:30
3x3 ‘HEAD IN THE SAND’ to Tipping
Utopia to Vision Festival

Yoshiko Chuma movement and projections
Miriam Parker movement
Emily Mare Pope movement
Jason Kao Hwang violin
Aliya Ultan cello
Steve Swell trombone

Yoshiko Chuma & The School of Hard Knocks was founded in 1980 during a tumultuous time in New York’s East Village. The name was inspired by Chuma’s interest in American idioms during her early days in the United States. In 1984, the production “5 car pile up” received a Bessie Award for its collective work. The School of Hard Knocks favors abstract art and discourages efforts to interpret the work, saying that “What we do is ambiguous. We don’t have a statement. If we had a statement, we would be a writer.”

C’est Trois

7:30
jamie branch trumpet, electronics
Luke Stewart trumpet, electronics
Theser Holmes drums

What can we say? It’s three burning souls converging. Danceable anti-fascist free punk improvised electronic creative moment music, all friends and regular collaborators uplifting and upholding each other in the music, pushing each other to unfold in real time in a sonic and filmic landscape. A single candle alone can light up a room or burn down the house, we aim to burn bright. We light up the darkness that surrounds and confuses and burn down preconceptions. We put beauty back into the soil with heat and intention. Occasionally, on a great night, we burn down the house. What’s needed in this moment—the reflection of the light refracting back into the body, the rhythm, the soul—all at once, at peace, in time, right now. Not hurriedly, not slow, but in tune and time with the universe.

James Brandon Lewis’ Red Lily

9:30
James Brandon Lewis tenor sax
Kirk Knuffke cornet
William Parker bass
Chad Taylor drums
William Mazza live painting & video art

James Brandon Lewis’ Red Lily Quartet presents “Jesup Wagon”, a brilliant and evocative appreciation of the life and legacy of turn-of-the-19th century African-American musician-painter-writer-scientist George Washington Carver. At the height of an agricultural crisis in the deep south concerning cotton and later polio, Carver was asked how he managed to find solutions in such dark times, he simply replied, “I talked with the plants.” In times of uncertainty the deeper answers which provide the light in darkness might rest in the fabric of the nature around us and the creator that speaks to it.

In order to find the light in today’s darkness, we are compelled to envision and then manifest a world where love and compassion for all can be a reality. With the project, Dreams of Awakening, we will embark on improvisational explorations to illuminate alternative realities.

Nicole Mitchell Ensemble

10:30
Nicole Mitchell flute, composition
Terri Lyne Carrington drums
Val Jeanty electronic percussion
Joshua White piano
Ken Filiano bass

In order to find the light in today’s darkness, we are compelled to envision and then manifest a world where love and compassion for all can be a reality. With the project, Dreams of Awakening, we will embark on improvisational explorations to illuminate alternative realities.
## Isaiah Collier & The Chosen Few

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>Isaiah Collier</td>
<td>tenor sax</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jordan Williams</td>
<td>piano</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luke Stewart</td>
<td>bass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tcheser Holmes</td>
<td>drums</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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We have battled against Darkness for these past two years. We have experienced both victories and defeats. Yet we have not lost anything, and that’s because of a universal light that will always shine through. That light is hope, with that hope we bring change and challenges to our current world. We are manifesting a new trajectory from what is considered to be our current low. Like Phoenixes we rise from the ashes and soar with a vibrant light!

## SPARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>Eri Yamamoto</td>
<td>piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>William Parker</td>
<td>bass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chad Fowler</td>
<td>sax</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Steve Hirsh</td>
<td>drums</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beatriz Sampaio</td>
<td>projected paintings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SPARKS is celebrating our debut recording. Hailing from different musical, cultural and geographic backgrounds, the group came together with one plan: create spontaneously composed folk music that includes echoes of Yamamoto’s native Kyoto, and the raucous R&B of Fowler’s Memphis youth. The energy of these musicians creates flashes of light, hope and optimism. This way of connecting is at the essence of jazz, and it enables us to spread light and positivity in these difficult times.

## Diaspora Meets AfroHORN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Ahmed Abdullah &amp; Francisco Mora Catlett</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ahmed Abdullah</td>
<td>trumpet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Francisco Mora Catlett</td>
<td>multi-percussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monique Ngozi Nri</td>
<td>vocals, poetry</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don Chapman</td>
<td>woodwinds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sam Newsome</td>
<td>woodwinds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bob Stewart</td>
<td>tuba</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radu Ben Judah</td>
<td>bass</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D.D. Jackson</td>
<td>piano</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Roman Diaz</td>
<td>African percussion</td>
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</tbody>
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Ahmed Abdullah and Francisco Mora Catlett met while playing in the Sun Ra Arkestra in the 1970s, and have remained in contact musically and spiritually. Diaspora (Dispersion of the Spirit of Ra) Meets AfroHORN, Jazz; A Music of the Spirit, Out of Sistas’ Place, is the result. The music is a combination of both groups, with a generous sprinkling from the common source: The Sun Ra repertoire. This project, coming out of Sun Ra’s influences, epitomizes Jazz: A Music of the Spirit in that the musician leaders are focused on raising the level of awareness of the listener by doing the work on themselves first.

The Vision Festival is an artist-run initiative, made possible by our generous supporters for the past 26 years. You enable us to continue producing this celebration of boundless improvised art every year!
**Jason Kao Hwang’s Orchestra**

**Myths of Origin**  
6:30  
Jason Kao Hwang  
Conductor, violin  
Violins: Charles Burnham  
Mark Chung  
Keir GoGwilt  
Rosi Hertlein  
Gwen Laster  
Talice Lee  
gabby fluke-mogul  
Elena Moon Park  
Ben Sutin  
Tom Swafford  
Johnna Wu  
Violas:  
Ginger Dolden  
Melanie Dyer  
Judith Insell  
Pete Lancot  
Eric Salazar  
Cellos:  
Dara Bloom  
Kirin McElwain  
Lester St. Louis  
Tomas Ulrich  
Che Chen  
James Keepnews  
Anders Nilsson  
Hans Tammen  
Bass:  
Ken Filiano  
Drums:  
Andrew Drury

*Myths of Origin*, a diverse improvising orchestra, defies mainstream society’s enduring fetish for Orientalist fantasies, a history woven inextricably into unconscious biases that have progressed into explicitly racist violence. Inspired by jazz, funk, new music, classical and world traditions, *Myths of Origin* forges a unique language, free of genre expectations, to revolutionize our relationships to each other. Through a notated score interacting with improvisations shaped by a lexicon of conducting gestures, the flow of spontaneous music illuminates the possibilities of our journey. To be transformed by possibilities grounded in truth, is to transcend all *Myths of Origin*.

**Knife & Rose**

7:30  
Patricia Nicholson  
text, movement  
Ellen Christi  
voice  
Jean Carla Rodea  
voice  
Francisco Mela  
drums, voice  
Jo Wood-Brown  
projected paintings

Everything that we do, every creative act, must act, to Light the way. The Knife that cuts both ways and the Rose that enhances and entices with its visual beauty and heady aroma, yet carries its own thorns. This is our stance. We stand naked, holding onto those beams of en-light-en-ing.

We fight with beauty, but we will not be cut down.

---

**Watershed**

8:30  
Steve Swell  
trombone, composition  
Karen Borca  
bashoon  
Rob Brown  
sax  
Melanie Dyer  
viola  
Bob Stewart  
tuba  
TA Thompson  
drums  
Dave Burrell  
piano  
William Mazza  
live painting / video art

*Watershed*: Individual waterways that come together to empty in one large body of water creating a singular body of water. An entire geographical area drained by a river and its tributaries characterized by all runoff being conveyed to the same outlet. Thank you Wadada and Oliver for being important parts of our musical waterways and for strengthening the flow of this music so that it continues to bring the light to darkness.

**Monique Ngozi Nri & Ahmed Abdullah**

9:30  
Monique Ngozi Nri  
poet  
Ahmed Abdullah  
trumpet

Our music and poetry are outward expressions of our spiritual practice. We chant every day for world peace. We chant that our desires are a source of Enlightenment with the knowledge that if people have what they want, it is much easier to work in harmony with other Human Beings.

**Natural Information Society**

10:00  
Joshua Abrams  
bass, gimbled  
Lisa Alvarado  
harmonium, paintings  
Jason Stein  
bass clarinet  
Mikel Patrick Avery  
drums  
William Parker  
guest  
Hamid Drake  
guest

Since 2010, Natural Information Society (NIS) has been grounded in Abrams’ interwoven multi-layered compositions. The group’s long-form environments have been described as ecstatic minimalism. NIS navigates forms that emphasize collective listening & simultaneous differences while building a space that is both meditative & propulsive. Lisa Alvarado’s hanging paintings create a visual analog to the music & recontextualize performance space.

*eye ear translation*  
the senses guide becoming  
dark skies luminous
CELEBRATING OLIVER LAKE
A LifeTime of Achievement

MiM Vision ENSEMBLE

Directed by William Parker. Presented in partnership with Brooklyn Conservatory of Music and Institute for Collaborative Education.

JD Parran Spirit Stage 2
performs the music of Oliver Lake

JD Parran tenor sax
Gwen Laster violin
Kelvyn Bell guitar
Bill Lowe bass trombone
Hilliard Greene bass
Gene Lake drums
Patricia Nicholson choreography
Jason Jordan dance
Miriam Parker dance
Davalois Fearon dance
Amir Bey headdresses

NYC has absorbed the creative energy of this nation: its practitioners, their ideas, ways of being, and living it. Oliver Lake, myself, and many others brought regional creative colors to the Apple for germination and global dissemination. BAG was a St. Louis collective that fed already artistically developed artists into this system particularly in the 70's and 80's. I am honored to participate in this tribute to Oliver Lake who like his mother before him continues “Breaking Glass.” - JD Parran

JUSTICE Vocal Works by Oliver Lake

Oliver Lake: composer, arranger, conduction, spoken word
Sonic Liberation Voices:
  Chaela Harris alto
  Ravi Seenerine tenor
  Shanon Chua soprano
Sonic Liberation Front:
  Kevobatala drumkit, synth drums
  Elliott Levin tenor sax
  Veronica Jurkiewicz violin
  Matt Engle acoustic bass
  Jameka Gordon flute

JUSTICE is a suite of compositions and poetry by Oliver Lake for The Sonic Liberation Front and singers. “The Justice Project has been an exciting journey,” said Oliver Lake. “I hope you are as inspired by our sound excursions as I am.” Sonic Liberation Front is led by drummer composer Kevobatala (Kevin Diehl). Sonic Liberation Singers are a recent addition specifically for this project.

Oliver Lake / Reggie Workman / Andrew Cyrille

Andrew Cyrille drums
Reggie Workman bass
Oliver Lake poetry

Oliver Lake, extraordinary musician of a special genre, composer, painter, poet and point man alto saxophonist in Trio 3. – Andrew Cyrille

People of the world have been blessed by the love and creativity given by the artist we presently celebrate, OLIVER LAKE. I personally am blessed to have had the opportunity to work consistently alongside Oliver Lake for more than 35 years. Through decades, Oliver’s creative art and giving nature have never waned. When I think of Oliver I hear the sound of his horns, see visions of his work, remember the effect of his poetry, and recall those special moments while visiting, rehearsing meeting in that classic aesthetic atmosphere of his home, created by he and his wonderful partner Marian. The more one listens and involves oneself in the multifaceted creativity of Oliver Lake, the more we realize, the world has been blessed to experience the unique artistry of Oliver Lake.

AT THIS TIME, WE CELEBRATE AND THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU HAVE GIVEN. – Reggie Workman

World Saxophone Quartet

David Murray tenor sax, bass clarinet
James Carter baritone sax
Greg Osby tenor sax
Bruce Williams alto, soprano sax

The World Saxophone Quartet has become an institution in modern Jazz. Oliver Lake’s compositions and his extraordinary sound inspired all of us even before the group was formed. The airy freshness of his music is so different from Julius Hemphill’s, Hamiet Bluiett’s or my own. Oliver Lake brought a wide and rich well from which to draw.

- David Murray
A LIGHT IN DARKNESS | VISUAL ART at THE CLEMENTE

The artists stand together to be a light of creativity and compassion in the oppressive environment of Lies and Intolerance. Crossing disciplines and media, together these works are a statement of Unity and Hope.

At LES Gallery at The Clemente

Oliver Lake “I pick up the brush as part of my meditation. I work with oil and acrylic paint, pencil, collage—often mixing media. I like to work with vibrant colors exploding against each other. The themes come from my long collaboration with my African, Choctaw and American roots, exploring and expressing how I see the world. Though I have received much recognition as a musician, I continue to engage in the merging of artistic disciplines.”

Lisa Alvarado (June 25: Natural Information Society) is a visual artist and harmonium player in the group Natural Information Society with whom she creates mobile stage sets using her free-hanging paintings. Alvarado has exhibited her work in museums around the world, currently including the 2022 Whitney Biennial.

At La Plaza at The Clemente

Amir Bey is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work involves both visual and performance art. He engages in mixed-media sculpture, carving, sumi ink paintings and scrolls. Lovers In State, is from his Equinox Celebration Tarot, representing the final state of a relationship between two entities. It is also a percussive instrument, with high resonance (headaddresses by Bey are part JD Parran’s set on Jun 26).

Lois Eby (June 22: Heart Trio) plays from the heart, working with line, color and space to create paintings full of life and heart. The collaboration of sound and art is meant to amplify the experience of each. Residing in VT, Lois Eby has exhibited in VT, NY and Montreal. Her work can be found in both public and private collections.

At La Plaza at The Clemente

Wadada Leo Smith The only true representation of his inspiration as a creative artist occurs when the visual and the auditory are experienced as one phenomenon. The ankhrasmation symbolic language scores are constructed on cotton paper with ink, acrylic and other sources of hues and systems of reproduction. These art scores have been exhibited in major museums, such as The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago and The Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

Katy Martin (June 22: Matthew Shipp Quartet) is an artist who paints on her skin and then applies it to canvass, exploring gesture and mark-making. Recent solo exhibitions include the Fergus McCaffrey Gallery, NYC and Galerie Arnaud Lefebvre, Paris. Underbrush, her 2019 video with music by Matthew Shipp, grew out of a projection during a live performance at Vision Festival 23.

At La Plaza at The Clemente

Patricia Nicholson & William Parker began creating spirit totems to celebrate the Vision Festival. They continue to develop these totems in honor of the creative spirit that is both ancient and contemporary. In La Plaza they designed a sacred space with a grove of Totems to lift minds to spirit and speak to the importance of community, compassion and harmony.

William Mazza (June 23: James Brandon Lewis’ Red Lily / June 24: Angelica Sanchez Trio / June 25: Watershed) uses chance, duration, and accumulation to interpret landscape as the relationship of people to mediated environments, through the complementary practices of live-painting performance, studio painting, animation, and collaboration.

Jo Wood-Brown (June 22 Whit Dickey’s Staircase in Space / June 25 Knife & Rose) is a painter and multimedia artist who has worked in AFA’s Vision community for 25 years. Her images move across mediums, using painted canvas, photography & video to bring together different points of view. ATLAS, her site-specific installation suspended overhead, helps us see the world with the push and pull between creative and cosmic forces and between creativity and creation.

Miriam Parker (June 23: Unnameable Element) is creating a new video iteration of Black Emergence, exploring blackness, color, light, and the interplay in the creation of form. How does form emerge? What is needed in order to capture the forming of something, or rather the dissection of creation that emerges through studies of surface’s resistance or supple nature?

Photos: courtesy of the artists except Patricia Nicholson & William Parker with Jeff Schlanger by Eva Kapanadze
THE IDEA OF GIVING trumpet, composer, writer and visual artist Wadada Leo Smith a Lifetime of Achievement Award is timely. With more than 60 albums to his credit as a leader—many of them boxed sets totaling hundreds of hours of music, and at least three-dozen releases as a collaborator—his music and ideas have exerted a singular influence on generations of musicians and listeners. It’s hard to consider “creative music” without discussing Smith’s work.

Yet the idea of giving Smith this award may also be premature. In December he marked his 80th birthday with six recordings released in three installments, most as box sets, totaling 22 CDs in all. His music pours forth as if he has a lifetime of achievement still to come.

The last time we spoke, Smith recalled a Saturday morning in 1967 when he sat at a coffee table in his Chicago apartment composing a piece called “The Bell.” When he got to the ending, an idea—powerful, yet still inchoate—popped into his head. “That’s when I found what I was looking for,” Smith said. “But I didn’t yet know how to use it. I didn’t know what to call it, or how to tell anybody how to do it.”

He put x’s on staff lines of sheet music. He drew connected vertical stems, similar to those of eighth notes, and placed them within a box formed by dotted lines. Hours later, he headed off to the weekly rehearsal of the Experimental Band at the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), a not-for-profit Black musicians’ collective and conservatory founded two years earlier by the pianist Muhal Richard Abrams and three other musicians. The Experimental Band had been conceived by Abrams as a laboratory for original music by AACM members, which, on this Saturday, included “The Bell.”

A few months later, during a break at a recording session led by saxophonist Anthony Braxton, the musicians—Braxton, Abrams, Smith, and violinist Leroy Jenkins—listened to a tape recording of “The Bell,” as played during a concert one week earlier. Near the end, right where the dotted box would appear, Smith heard something. The other musicians grew silent. They heard it, too. “Right there, Muhal gave the music another stroke,” Smith said. “And then I gave it another stroke. And I felt that sense of space I’d only imagined. Those two strokes had an equivalence of silence in between them. I realized that sound could be silence, and silence could be sound. I understood how they connected. I heard it as a ‘rhythm unit.’” Later that day, Braxton’s quartet recorded “The Bell,” which was released among, as his album title declared, “3 Compositions of New Jazz.”

From these experiences Smith gained an enlightenment that has lasted more than a half-century. Here was a concrete realization of his “rhythm units,” a non-metrical approach to music that balances sound with silence in an especially nuanced way. And here were the first seeds of “Ankhraimation,” the distinctive symbolic language system for creating music that Smith continues to develop and that, since the 1970s, has involved his own vivid, multi-colored original works of art as scores.

Smith’s urge to compose began in Leland, Mississippi during his early teens, not long after he’d started playing trumpet. By 13, still new to his horn, he was playing in blues bands led by his stepfather Alex Wallace, a guitarist known as “Little Bill.”
treatise devoted to “developing a heightened awareness of improvisation as an art form.” He still plays trumpet much the way he did when he arrived in Chicago. His tone—direct, with only the slightest vibrato—can be boldly declarative or soft to the point of breaking. His most emphatic moments are often his quietest. Sometimes he sounds fierce, even defiant, as if protecting something, or searching, yet not lost for direction, and always projecting mesmerizing focus.

Empowerment is his essential theme. His clearest musical statement about justice is among his greatest works: Ten Freedom Summers (Defining Moments in the History of the United States of America), a 21-movement piece named for a 10-year stretch from the landmark Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision declaring school segregation unconstitutional to the “freedom summer” voter-registration drive and Civil Rights Act of 1964. “This music will eventually eliminate the political dominance of Euro-America in this world,” he wrote in his 1973 treatise notes. “When this is achieved, I feel that only then will we make meaningful political reforms in the world: culture being the way of our lives; politics, the way our lives are handled.”

Smith’s achievements, still in full flower, are meant to transform our life and times.

(This essay is adapted from a cover story in the Spring 2022 issue of Chamber Music Magazine, which you can find by scanning the QR code below.)

IN A CAREER spanning over a half-century, saxophonist, flutist, improviser, composer, painter, and poet Oliver Lake has transcended conventional stylistic and disciplinary boundaries while embodying a steadfast commitment to self-empowerment and aesthetic independence. Born in Marianna, AR, raised in St. Louis, MO, and surrounded by blues and gospel music, the young Lake played percussion in the local drum-and-bugle corps and painted. At age 19, influenced by Charlie Parker, Jackie McLean, and (later) Eric Dolphy he was inspired to take up the alto sax. After completing his study of music at Lincoln University and touring the Midwest in bands backing leading soul singers, Lake co-founded the Black Artists Group (BAG) in 1968, drawing inspiration from the cooperative example of Chicago’s Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians—broadening the conception to embrace drama, poetry, and dance as well as music. Having won critical recognition for his trailblazing work with this seminal collective, in 1972 he moved to Paris along with several BAG colleagues, where they performed, recorded, and launched European tours in addition to playing duos with Anthony Braxton and recording a solo album for later release.

Returning stateside in 1974, he quickly established himself on the downtown New York City loft-jazz scene, recording his acclaimed debut release Heavy Spirits within a few months of his arrival. Upon the suggestion of Kidd Jordan in 1976, he co-founded the World Saxophone Quartet with fellow BAG alumni Julius Hemphill and Hamiet Bluiett, plus loft compatriot David Murray. In the 1980s, Lake balanced...
quartet and quintet recordings featuring his trademark spiky virtuosity and bluesy melodicism with Caribbean crossover releases by his jazz/funk/reggae band Jump Up, premieres of his compositions with both the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra and the Arditti String Quartet, and continuing recordings and tours with WSQ. Subsequent decades have found him forging ahead on all fronts: composing commissioned symphonic and chamber works for acclaimed ensembles; working with musicians including Bjork, Lou Reed, A Tribe Called Quest, Mos Def, and Me'shell Ndegeocello; collaborating with poets Amiri Baraka and Ntozake Shange, and choreographers Ron Brown and Marlies Yearby; reuniting with loft-jazz veterans like Reggie Workman and Andrew Cyrille in Trio 3; and debuting his own Steel Quartet, Big Band, and organ combos.

In addition to releasing dozens of albums as bandleader and even more as co-leader and featured artist, Lake also published two books of poetry, exhibited his visual artwork internationally, toured the country to present a one-man performance-art piece, and forged a long-term artistic relationship with Pittsburgh’s City of Asylum—serving on its advisory board, inaugurating its Jazz Poetry Festival, and conceiving paintings for its Jazz House. He also performed at the very first Vision Festival in 1996, and has returned regularly for a dozen or so featured performances over the years since with groups including his Big Band, his Steel Quartet, and his Trio, as well as performing in benefit concerts organized by Arts for Art. As these latter few examples aptly demonstrate, Lake’s uncompromisingly independent muse not only crosses any arbitrarily imposed boundaries it may encounter, but also serves to create empowering creative spaces to help others do the same.

After co-founding the BAG collective in the 1960s, and the cooperative WSQ in the 1970s, Lake served as co-founder and chairman of the board for the Musicians of Brooklyn Initiative, uniting members of jazz and contemporary-music scenes in one of the most pivotal alliances of the 1980s. Subsequently, he founded Passin’ Thru, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering, promoting, and advancing the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of jazz, new music, and other disciplines in relation to music. Under his artistic direction, Passin’ Thru has commissioned new works, sponsored performances, and released over three dozen CDs, providing much needed support for emerging as well as veteran artists. Young artists have also benefitted from Lake’s numerous music classes, workshops, and artist residencies in high schools, colleges, and universities at home and abroad—from Washington D.C.’s Duke Ellington High School to Harvard University to the Ismet Siral Creative Music Studio in Istanbul, Turkey.

A recipient of the prestigious John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, Oliver Lake became one the composers most frequently commissioned by the Meet the Composer Fund. He received a Jazz Fellowship Grant from National Endowment for the Arts, a Special Project Residency Grant and a Presenters Program Grant from the Lila Wallace Arts Partners Program, Commission and Recording Grants from the McPhoto from left: Michael Wilderman, William Mazza, painting courtesy of the artist

Kim Fund in the Library of Congress, the Mellon Jazz Living Legacy Award at the Kennedy Center, and the Doris Duke Artist Award, as well as grants from the Composers Forum, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the International Association for Jazz Education, the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, and US-Artists International, etc. Arts for Art is honored to join these esteemed organization in recognizing Oliver Lake’s unparalleled contributions to music and musicians worldwide with its 2022 Vision Festival Lifetime Achievement Award.
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