

jazz composers
Collective

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CONCERT DATE: MAY 16, 2002

IN THE COMPOSERS WORDS



Photo by Jacob Blickenstaff

BEN ALLISON & MEDICINE WHEEL

It was my friend Bob Rizzo, director of the Department of Cultural Affairs in Providence, Rhode Island, who first brought Mamadou Diabate to my attention. "Have you ever checked out that kora player from Mali? I think you'd dig him," Bob said. I hadn't, so I stopped at a record store and picked up one of Mamadou's CDs.

As soon as I heard the kora, and Mamadou in particular, a light bulb went on.

Around the same time, I had been struggling to write some new music. I found myself sitting at the Wurlitzer with a minidisc recorder and a bottle of Macallan's day after day with no results. I had writer's block. But it was more than that. I needed a new direction to shake things up a bit. I needed to challenge myself as a composer. Working with Mamadou was the kind of challenge I was looking for.

The kora is associated with a particular musical tradition and style, one that is not chromatic (it is tuned to one of only a few keys or modes) and certainly has not figured prominently in the jazz tradition. If I tried to fit the kora into my group sound, I would be forced to change the way I write. I started trying to imagine the sound in my mind's ear and some questions emerged. I'm accustomed to switching keys at any time in my music, or to not defining a key at all. With the kora, would I be confined to whatever key we started the tune in? I was pretty sure that musicians from Mali used a different system of notation than we do in the West, if they use one at all. How would I notate the music that I wrote? And would Mamadou Diabate – a descendant from a long line of Manding musician-storytellers, the *jeli*, sometimes referred to by the French term *griot* – be interested in a collaboration with me?

I found the web site of Alula Records, the label that Mamadou records for that is based in North Carolina. I called, told them a little bit about myself, and asked them to forward my phone number to him.

Our first gig together was at *Wall to Wall Miles* – a 12 hour tribute to the music of Miles Davis held at Symphony Space in NYC in late March 2001. I was asked to arrange a couple of tunes by Miles for my trio with Michael Blake on saxophones and Michael Sarin on drums, along with Mamadou on kora and Famoro Diabate on balafon. Since the music from Miles' modal period had already been chosen by other groups, Bill Bragin, the event's curator, suggested that we play some compositions from Miles' mid-1960s quintet – a challenge as the music from this period contains lots of dense chords and strange harmonic jumps. When we arrived at the venue there were about 1,000 people crammed into 900 seats, and hundreds more standing in line waiting to get in. The concert was to be broadcast live on national radio and we were scheduled to follow Joe Lovano's group. Pressure? Nah.

Following that performance, I was inspired to put together a suite of original material with this group as the core (substituting piano for balafon). I hope you'll be able to join us when we play some of this music on May 16.

– BEN ALLISON

For this concert, Ben will premiere new music commissioned by Chamber Music America's New Works: Creation & Presentation Program, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Ben's most recent recordings include *Riding the Nuclear Tiger* with his band Medicine Wheel, and the Herbie Nichols Project's *Strange City* – both available on Palmetto Records. Look for his forthcoming album titled *Peace Pipe*, featuring his new quintet, which will be released by Palmetto in September 2002. For more info, visit Ben's web site at www.benallison.com.

THE RON HORTON QUARTET

As the Jazz Composers Collective nears the end of its 10th season — a year which has included

a busy schedule of concerts, touring, recording, plus a whirlwind week-long festival at New York's Jazz Standard club – we are all taking a moment to reflect on what the past ten years have meant to each of us.

I consider myself fortunate to have been involved with the Collective from the very beginning. My vantage point as a trumpeter and musical interpreter for my fellow composers-in-residence has allowed me to closely observe each one's unique writing style and direction regarding the rehearsal/recording process, which I marvel at to this day. Along the way, we have all enriched our musical palettes by examining the compositions of jazz greats whom we admire, such as Herbie Nichols, Andrew Hill, Lennie Tristano, and others.

The longevity of the Collective would not have been possible without the continued support of our friends, families, fans, record labels, and people like Sue DiMaggio, who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make each concert a success. In short, I would like to thank my fellow composers-in-residence, fellow musicians, our devoted listeners, and Ben Allison for making this last decade a wonderful journey for me. I hope that it will continue for many years to come.

– RON HORTON



Photo by Jacob Blickenstaff

Ron's debut recording as a leader, *Genius Envy*, is available on OmniTone Records. A composer-in-residence of the Collective, he is a member of the Andrew Hill Sextet and can be heard on the group's critically acclaimed CD, *Dusk* (Palmetto). Ron is the musical director of the Andrew Hill Sextet plus Eleven. Look for the band's forthcoming album titled *A Beautiful Day*, which is slated for release on Palmetto later this year.

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other events

BEN ALLISON's PEACE PIPE • May 27
ATLANTA JAZZ FESTIVAL, Piedmont Park, Atlanta, GA
Info: 404-817-6851 • www.atlantafestivals.com

BEN ALLISON & MEDICINE WHEEL • August 11
EDDIE MOORE JAZZ FESTIVAL, Oakland, CA
Info: 510-763-4663 • www.jazzinflight.org

FRANK KIMBROUGH TRIO • August 24
ARTS CENTER • Carrboro, NC
Info: 919-929-2787 • www.carrboro.com

collective notes

- The Jazz Composers Collective's 2001-2002 concert series is made possible with the support of the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust.
- We would like to thank the following people and organizations for their recent contributions: Ed Hazell, Jamey & Sara Aebersold, Debbie DiMaggio & John Farah, Nancy MacLean, Elie Spiesel & Joann Gaughran, Ron Tikofsky, AOL Time Warner Foundation, and Sofia Sequenzia & John Shostrom. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the Collective, please send a check to: The Jazz Composers Collective, 43 East 10th Street, Suite 4B, New York, NY, 10003.

THE JAZZ COMPOSERS COLLECTIVE PRESENTS

BEN ALLISON & MEDICINE WHEEL

BEN ALLISON bass • **MICHAEL BLAKE** saxophones
TED NASH saxophones • **FRANK KIMBROUGH** piano
TOMAS ULRICH cello • **MICHAEL SARIN** drums
and special guest MAMADOU DIABATE kora

THE RON HORTON QUARTET

RON HORTON trumpet • **FRANK KIMBROUGH** piano
BEN ALLISON bass • **MATT WILSON** drums

THE NEW SCHOOL JAZZ PERFORMANCE SPACE
55 WEST 13TH STREET (BETWEEN 5TH & 6TH AVENUES) NYC
THURSDAY, May 16, 8 PM
ADMISSION: \$10 (\$5 Students w/ID, Seniors)
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR (beginning at 7:30 pm)
FOR MORE INFO: (212) 995-1552 • www.jazzcollective.com

