

# VISION FESTIVAL XII

**Concert Review by:** Bryan Zoran  
Jazz Review.com

**Venue:** ANGEL ORENSANZ FOUNDATION (NEW YORK, NEW YORK, USA)

The 12th Annual Vision Festival took place from Tuesday, June 19 thru Sunday June 24th, 2007 and featured a smörgasbord of the world's greatest improvisers. As inspiring as it is unique, the festival showcases artists who have built their reputations courageously on their own terms. To celebrate all of these visionaries under one roof is a testament to the spirit and strength of the festival and its organizers. The venue, the beautiful Angel Orensanz Foundation on the Lower East Side, enriched the overall experience for musicians and audiences alike.

The opening invocation featured William Parker, Hamid Drake and Patricia Nicholson. It set the tone for the festival. Patricia led the trio with a brief, meditative chant expressing a communal, infinite joy that served as an artistic launch pad. The World Premiere of William Parker's "Double Sunrise Over Neptune" followed. This piece had several movements. The contrast between the horns and strings was quite nice. It was my first chance to hear bassist Shayna Dulberger and her playing was consistently excellent. Despite fourteen other musicians around her, I kept finding my ears drawn to her playing.

Gerald Cleaver and Hamid Drake were both behind drum kits. Their different styles fit well together. Noteworthy solos featured Lewis Barnes on trumpet, Dave Sewelson on baritone saxophone, Shiau-Shu Yu on cello and Brahim Fribgane on oud. Joe Morris started on banjo and moved to guitar, where his interaction with violinist Jason Kao Hwang was electrifying. However, the beauty of this piece was not defined so much by the individual soloists but rather by the collective sound of the group. Credit writer and leader William Parker for bringing together this eclectic mix of musicians and constructing the musical canvas for them to create this masterpiece.

Fieldwork, featuring Vijay Iyer on piano, took the stage next. This reflective trio was led by Iyer's introspective melodies and Tyshawn Sorey's rock-solid drumming. Steve Lehman rounded out the group,

emanating great sounds from his alto saxophone, at times sounding like a violin, at times like a flute.

Keyboardist Cooper-Moore made things interesting. He started off his group's artistic offerings with some spoken word/poetry, breaking down the word jazz. This was a powerful set with powerful artists. Drummer Chad Talyor is an excellent musician. The same can be said for Darius Jones on alto saxophone and Nioka Workman on cello. This heavy, soulful music was complemented by Marlies Yearby's edgy, interpretive dance.

Rounding out opening night was a fantastic set by Spiritual Unity, a group which features Chad Taylor, Henry Grimes on bass, Marc Ribot on guitar and Roy Campbell on trumpet. Working from the Albert Ayler songbook, the soloists soared. This quartet operates on an extremely high level. The stellar communication and synergy between them is a rare treat.

Fast forward to Saturday evening. The opening set by Ganelin Trio Priority pushed the envelope. Eddie Gale All-Star Band followed. I have wanted to see Eddie Gale for a long time and was not disappointed. His muted trumpet set the tone for the meditative opening number titled Prayer to the World. Love's All was the next piece. This is just a wonderful tune. It has a killer melody and gave an opportunity for the group to shine. Take Time to Feel, a ballad, and Hi-tech Emergency rounded out the set. The former featured William Parker's bow work in conversation with Kidd Jordan. The latter was a frantic number highlighted by Alvin Fielder's drum solo. Eddie Gale has a commanding musical presence, which makes him a great leader. He gets terrific tones from his instrument. Prince Lasha and Kidd Jordan are exceptional improvisers who helped make this the most powerful and musically satisfying set of the evening. Pianist Valerie Mih is a skillful soloist and provided nice comping behind the other improvisers. Dancer Patricia Nicholson was an added bonus to this artistic venture.

Rob Brown's (alto saxophone) Quartet was solid. Drummer Guillermo E. Brown provided the ambient, industrial sound of the second number, which was distinctive and enjoyable. Lewis Barnes (trumpet) and Todd Nicholson (bass) dipped into the creative stratosphere as featured soloists. Todd Nicholson was also a part of the next group, the Walt Dickey Trio, and sounded better and better the more he played. Walt Dickey is an excellent improviser on the drums. However, Sabir Mateen stole the spotlight in this trio. He played with

great depth and feeling on five different instruments; alto and soprano saxophones, alto clarinet, clarinet and flute.

Amiri and Amina Baraka's Blue Ark closed out the evening using standards as a vehicle for their poetry, including work by Miles and Monk. Amina began with several pieces of powerful poetry. Vocalist Dwight West sang a song for Coltrane before giving way to the finale, Amiri's reading of his response to the New Jersey governor's demand that he resign as the state's Poet Laureate. A great way to end a great evening.