

Long Bio (836 words)

When your mission is to blend the high arts of jazz and classical music into a world that is balanced, nuanced, textural, and most of all, authentic, some sorcery may be required. Turns out, it takes the cumulative brain powers of five accomplished composer/performers embodying a true diversity of age, race, gender, and culture working coast to coast, intercontinental even, to create the sonic precious metals produced by the Alchemy Sound Project.

The five core members of Alchemy Sound Project were brought together by the **Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute**, a program initiated by the American Composers Orchestra and the Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University to encourage jazz composers to explore writing music for the symphony orchestra. Directed by composer/trombonist/educator George Lewis, JCOI selects 38 jazz composers at various stages of their careers, chosen from a competitive national pool of applicants, for a one-week summer intensive with leading composers, conductors and performers.

Tenor saxophonist **Erica Lindsay** attended the first JCOI session in 2010; at her encouragement, both pianist **Sumi Tonooka** (a frequent collaborator) and trumpet player **Samantha Boshnack** (a former student of Lindsay's at Bard College) applied and were selected in the second round in 2012. There, Tonooka and Boshnack met and bonded with bassist **David Arend** and multi-reedist **Salim Washington**. By day they studied aspects of music history and the orchestral palette, while by night they shared inspiration over dinners and walks around the UCLA campus. A year later, the five reconnected at Tonooka's behest to further explore the ideas they'd studied in the program.

"Everybody brings different dishes to the table and we're all enjoying and tasting and delving in and creating something new out of it. That makes it fun for us and interesting to the listener because it's not just one flavor. It's all of us," Tonooka remarks.

For their debut release, **Further Explorations** (ARC, 2016) each composer penned two new pieces for the group, supplemented for the recording by trombonist **Willem de Koch** and drummer **Max Wood**. The result is an artful and boundary-stretching amalgam of jazz and classical ideas that shows off the chemistry formed during the bandmates' brief but enlightening time studying together.

Critical acclaim poured in. DownBeat included the album in its best of 2016. UK Vibe added the closing track, Washington's "The Call" to its "2016: End of Year Delights" playlist. Travis Rogers of JazzTimes writes, "Further Explorations' is indeed a musical pilgrimage that searches the horizons and moves beyond them. The compositions are inspiring and intelligent and the performance artistry is exemplary. The album is a wonder. How is it possible to fall in love with people

you never met, except in the affection that arises between composer/performer and listener?”

Lynn René Bayley of Art Music Lounge, continues the praise: “This is a superb debut album. One can only hope that this talented group can either continue to produce music on this high a level or, better yet, become even more interesting as time goes on.”

It turns out that Bayley will get her wish. The group has been hard at work completing their second album, due out in January 2018. The same model from **Further Explorations continues:** the collective of five composers offer up their original works as individual contributions, brought to life by the whole and bound together in an album.

The momentum doesn't stop there. In July, Chamber Music America announced the recipients of nearly \$1 million in grants, to be divided amongst its four major grant programs. Erica Lindsay was awarded a grant under the “New Works for Jazz” program, which commissioned her to write a new work for the Alchemy Sound Project. The grant also provides support for performance and presentation of the works, as well as support for community engagement and audience building initiatives.

It's clear that these five individuals are making their way in this ensemble, together. Their collective consciousness, diverse backgrounds, and life experiences all inform the group's sound. A “Third Stream” as originally offered up by Gunther Schuller, isn't a new concept, although it's often met with mixed results. To gracefully glide between the worlds of scrupulous composition and free improvisation is no small task, and the Alchemy Sound Project takes it on with spirit and passion. What's the secret? David Arend offers a theory: “What makes every composer's music unique is that our compositions filter down from the core of the universe (this could be God or whatever you consider to be the source) and through our brains and bodies, and no human life is similar, no experience is identical. We experience the same piece of music, art work or life event differently based on our psychologies. We are not attempting to fit within a specific genre, but are experimenting in an effort to each find our individual artistic voice. It offers relief and empowerment to know that we have a mini-community called Alchemy Sound Project where our experiments are safely received and expertly brought to life.”

For more information, please visit <http://alchemysoundproject.com>

Short Bio (299 words)

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The collective consists of tenor saxophonist **Erica Lindsay**, pianist **Sumi Tonooka**, trumpet player **Samantha Boshnack**, bassist **David Arend**, and multi-reedist **Salim Washington**.

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Quotes

“Further Explorations is an excellent debut from a talented group of composers and players. The goal of jazz/chamber integration is well balanced, primarily because this group has evident passion for rendering their individual and collective contributions to that organic end point. The invention, tonal shading and occasional raucousness on this album give it a warm glow and a sense of fun.”

-Karl Ackerman, All About Jazz, May 23, 2016

“This is a superb debut album. One can only hope that this talented group can either continue to produce music on this high a level or, better yet, become even more interesting as time goes on.”

-Lynn René Bayley, Art Music Lounge 2016

“Its Further Explorations debut (Artists Recording Collective) combines West African folk motifs with European classical and stateside jazz. Does it succeed? In spades!”

-Mike Greenblatt, classicalite.com June 18, 2016

“Further Explorations, a poignant new album by Alchemy Sound Project, is a mesmerizing combination of chamber jazz, symphonic music, modern jazz and big band.”

“The sound of the full ensemble is beautiful and powerful. Instruments move in and out of the full group in surprising and interesting ways, the pieces suddenly changing colors and moods.”

-Bob Protzman, DownBeat September 21, 2016

“This is decidedly one of the best jazz albums I’ve listened to (yet) in 2016! Five composers at the “edge” of their craft do tunes that will truly make your day.”

-Rotcod Zzaj, Improvijazzation Nation

“What happens when you put five composer-performers in the same group? Something wonderful. Something transformational. Something called Alchemy Sound Project.

Alchemy Sound Project’s “Further Explorations” is indeed a musical pilgrimage that searches the horizons and moves beyond them. The compositions are inspiring and intelligent and the performance artistry is exemplary. The album is a wonder. How is it possible to fall in love with people you never met, except in the affection that arises between composer/performer and listener?”

Travis Rogers, Jazz Times, July 3, 2016

“The most impressive quality of the music on this disc is the ability to artfully blur composition and improvisation to where it can be nearly imperceptible, and the way the seven piece group is suggestive of an entire thirteen or fifteen piece big band because the various methods of orchestration make things sound so rich. The Alchemy Sound Project is a wonderfully creative endeavor, that each time reveals subtle new surprises.”

-CJ Shearn, Jazz Views, June 12, 2016

“Ten compositions (two from each contributor) ranging in mood/style from the thoughtful, atmospheric, meditative, soulful, to the progressive/ contemporary, bold and experimental. The musicians, all talented players, have produced a debut CD where the jazz/chamber music integration is well conceived and finely executed providing a thoroughly absorbing set for those devotees of contemporary ‘Third Stream’ music.”

-Dave Brownlow, bebop spoken here, 2016

Web Links

www.alchemysoundproject.com

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Contact

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