



MARTY EHRlich TRIO EXALTATION THIS TIME

SSC 1778 / AVAILABLE 5/30/25

Ehrlich isn't a stranger to leading trios. From 1984 on, he has led or been a co-leader of a number of trios, including his group with bassist Anthony Cox and drummer Pheeroan akLaff, Relativity with Peter Erskine and Michael Formanek and C/D/E with Mark Dresser and Andrew Cyrille. Ehrlich's renewed drive toward the trio again came after a concentrated period of work with larger groups and orchestras. Feeling a need to get to the essential core of the music, Ehrlich approached former bandmates in the legendary pianist/composer Andrew Hill's Sextet, Hébert and Waits.

Improvising trios of horn, bass and drums have typically been spaces for openness in expression for sonic adventurers. Marty Ehrlich and his Trio Exaltation with John Hébert and Nasheet Waits find ample breadth for reflection and exploration on their new recording, *This Time*.

Appearing at Soapbox Gallery

636 Dean St. Brooklyn NY
Wednesday, June 4, 2025
2 sets (8:00 pm & 9:30 pm)



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A highlight of Chicago-bred, L.A.-based pianist-vocalist-composer **Alexis Lombre**'s two-week NYC residency was her one-off gig at Drom (Apr. 11) with Endea Owens (bass) and Terri Lyne Carrington (drums). Although it was their first performance together, the trio proved to be kindred spirits, filling the East Village venue with infectious vibrations over the course of a 90-minute set. First up was a cover of Wayne Shorter's "Fall", taken uptempo, with rolling piano figures and quirky, off-center accents powerfully punctuated by—as Lombre shouted her out at the end of the song—"Terri Lyne f-ing Carrington!" Playing just in front of the beat without rushing, lending everything she did an undeniable authority, Carrington's charismatic yet tactful presence was balanced by Lombre's, whose style melds soulful blues and gospel with a sense of rhapsody and rapture, her flamed octaves and floating arpeggios a counterpoint to the incisive drumming. Owens, standing between the others, head swiveling side-to-side so as not to miss any action, wove it all together with tight-knit bass lines. The set included covers of Geri Allen's "Portrait of Dreams" (featuring Lombre's versatile neo-soul vocals), Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman" (Carrington striking cymbals with the sudden speed of a cobra) and Charlie Parker's "My Little Suede Shoes" (played in 10/4); Lombre's "Blue", "A Blues in Tyne" (Owens juicing her solo spot with hammered triplets) and "Boundaries"; and Owens' "Pursuit of Happiness", "Feel Good" (Carrington laying down a ferocious 6/8 beat) and "Where the Nubians Grow" (bass and drums in funky lockstep). — **Tom Greenland**



Alexis Lombre @Drom

In 1956, the U.S. State Department began a program of musical ambassadorship, including sending Black-led jazz bands around the world as purveyors of American culture. During the Civil Rights Era, Dave and Iola Brubeck wrote *The Real Ambassadors*, a 1961 jazz musical, recently recreated in Jazz at Lincoln Center's Appel Room (Apr. 4-5) in partnership with the Louis Armstrong House Museum, and billed as *The Real Ambassadors: Armstrong and Brubeck*. Based on the experience of Armstrong (star of the original production), and the first State ambassador, the musical addresses racism, hypocrisy, the music business and other inequalities, through narration and 20 songs. The story is set in the fictional African nation Talgalla, as the protagonist, Hero, navigates his life. Narration was voiced by Daniel J. Watts, with vocalists Nicole Zuraitis, Shenel Johns, Vuyo Sotashe and C. Anthony Bryant as Armstrong. Music director-pianist Chris Pattishall wrote new musical arrangements, played exquisitely by Camille Thurman (tenor, vocals), Dave Brubeck son Chris Brubeck (trombone), Alphonso Horne (trumpet), Caylan Bryant (bass) and director Jake Goldbas (drums). Splendidly melodic and mildly swinging overall, the ensemble of players, to lively narration, brought the story of Hero alive from the opener, the infectious "Everybody's Comin'" to the jubilant closer, "Swing Bells/Blow Satchmo". In between, a variety of moods and statements kept the musical flowing at a quick pace, paused in the middle by a mournful recitation by Hero of the monologue, "Lonesome". As a whole, this production was nothing less than spectacular. — **Marilyn Lester**



The Real Ambassadors @Appel Room

Tony Malaby is something of a trickster, a thwarter of expectations. This quality was readily apparent when the saxophonist's Tamarindo trio—with Brandon López (bass) and Nasheet Waits (drums)—appeared at Close Up (Apr. 6). Picking up his tenor horn in the crowded, low-lit room, Malaby commenced the early set with brisk buzzing notes similar to a flight of bumblebees, while Waits added softly urgent touches with brushes. But just as listeners were growing accustomed to these gestures, the leader abruptly launched into something entirely different: longer-held notes with smoothly screeching overtones followed by a series of caustic coughs, burps and yelps. Such gambits—the establishment of a cohesive theme, its brief unfolding and development, only to have the whole process undermined by a radical plot twist—persisted throughout the concert. With no chording instrument on hand, Malaby, switching between tenor and soprano, was free to follow his flights of fancy, whether it might be a swinging motif or an extended technique that pushed into the upper limits of his instruments. At several points he sounded like a riot squad officer trying to control a crowd through a megaphone. López (performing his seventh gig in three days!) stirred up a frenzy of notes by bowing, plucking or rubbing strings, whacking/slapping the box like a cajón, or evoking a swarm of screaming harpies with multiphonic whistles. Waits' chameleonic presence veered from subtle and spartan to up-front and ecstatic, matching, even topping his bandmates' momentum. (TG)

In 1960, photographer Gordon Parks joined Duke Ellington on tour, snapping pictures of him in public and private. Against these singular works, projected large on a full screen at The Apollo Theater (Apr. 11), pianist **Jason Moran** presented *Ellington in Focus*, a suite of 11 varied Ellington songs, plus a Billy Strayhorn composition and James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout" that, combined with the changing images, formed a gateway into the soul of the genius composer. Billed as "reimagined" works, that dynamic was varied: sometimes so altered, as in "Reflections in D" as to become a contrafact; sometimes close to the melody as in Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom" and sometimes with a combination of a melodic base interwoven with improvisation as in "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)". In all cases, Ellington would approve; he was always forward-thinking and revising/updating/reworking his own pieces over time. Moran, a philosopher and thinker, informed each number with a deep understanding of Duke, a particular influence on his own concept. And like Ellington, he has a percussive style of play. His interpretation of "Black and Tan Fantasy" became a political statement, approached with fierce aggressiveness and ending in a thunderous whirlwind of sound, his hands crossing and recrossing, dexterous fingers flying over the keys. Moran is a compositional improviser: he takes a font of creative ideas and uses them to co-compose within a tune, not just augment it. He'd referenced the show as a "piano climb up Mount Ellington." He reached that summit flawlessly. (ML)

Multi-instrumentalist **Ras Moshe Burnett** is known for introducing new ensembles at most every performance. And though musicians are drawn from the same loose cadre, the outcome rarely echoes the experience of prior outings. At Scholes Street Studio (Apr. 6), the venture was three horns and three upright basses, seemingly chosen as much for numerology's mysticism as the disparate sonorities. With the sextet up front and lights lowered, the leader's last-minute directive came in a stage whisper: "The basses open first, then we'll join in," he said matter-of-factly. "It's like a fast 4/4." Needing no further cue, the room quivered under the low-end throttle of a walk that was more a breathless run, executed by Luke Stewart, Caroline Morton and Jeong Lim Yang. Severing the register, the duo flutes of Burnett and Lee Odom fluttered bluesily in the soundscape, soon joined by Matt Lavelle's flugelhorn. This utterly free jazz (the leader did none of his usual conduction to focus on various voices) saw Lavelle next on bass clarinet where he emitted a guttural, urgent improvisation as the bassists' drive turned percussive and Burnett let loose on a gong. The leader, then on tenor saxophone, immersed in Coltrane-isms, fired rapid descending phrases, coupled with leaps defying any illusion of tonality. Drummerless, the bass pulsations shredded tempo, and Odom on soprano captured the special charm of time-lost Harlem even when fighting an agogo bell onslaught, speaking to the music's past as easily as stepping into its future. — **John Pietaro**



Lee Odom @Scholes Street Studio

Stephan Crump's 2024 fluvial-themed album *Slow Water* received a live airing that transformed Roulette (Apr. 9) into an extension of the natural world concerned with liquidity and drift. Presented as a continuous work, each piece seamlessly segueing without pause into the next as on the record, there were still opportunities for collective improvisation via the many connective "liminal flow zones." Crump anchored his sextet with his upright bass center stage, joined by Patricia Brennan (vibraphone), Jacob Garchik (trombone) and Kenny Warren (trumpet), reprising their album roles, flanked by Erica Dicker and Carrie Frey on violin and viola, respectively. For just over an hour, the group soared on the soulful pastoralism of plaintive and memorable melodies such as "Bogged", swirling and eddying into dissonance and uncertainty, before emerging again in lyricism. The relaxed flow of the music evoked organic forms that endowed it with an almost narrative quality, an opera sans libretto—the pizzicato of Frey and Dicker's strings evoking the titular drip, the sparkling splash of the vibraphone's glow and the trumpet's whoosh of air becoming the wind propelling it forward. Crump has built a sound world out of textures whose drumlessness grants a sumptuous spaciousness and gentle ease. A standout moment of invention erupted about two-thirds the way through as Brennan's mallets cascaded and Garchik interlaced his horn, locked into a *pas de deux*. There was a great joy in seeing this fine group inhabit Crump's music and renew it with deep and empathetic improvisations. — **Ariella Stok**



Stephan Crump @Roulette

There was something in the pre-summer air over Brooklyn on this Friday (Apr. 4) evening: streets were alive and all well at Prospect Lefferts Gardens' Bar Bayeux. Catching the early, opening set by bassist Iris Ornig's ensemble was kismet as new vistas dazzled what was once simply "modern." Blame pianist Hyuna Park's darkly introspective colors, countermelodies and the conjuring of Bill Evans haunting the room. When headliner **Jeremy Viner** took the stage area, however, the free spirit of the Loft Jazz era held court, and the crowd thickened into SRO territory. Throughout a single improvised work, saxophonists Viner and Tim Berne spun lines at once interwoven and oppositional, with aerial leaps and crashing harmonies dancing over distant, evolving modes (in an area between near-Eastern, medieval and galactic). The pairing of Viner's tight, splintery, wicked tenor, and Berne's searing, reaching, lamenting alto proved a natural fit (Viner should make these return trips from Berlin more often). But the creative interplay, the instantaneous composition, was on the quartet level throughout, with bassist Drew Gress' melodic, lush interventions singing comfortably within his thicket of anchoring lines, and drummer-percussionist Kate Gentile softly skewering and then tersely defining the motifs, shouts and murmurs about her. Throughout the lifespan of the New Thing, modernism's abstract painting and its various means—wide brush strokes, splatters, drips—stood as symbolic description, but fact is, nothing is abstract here. Its founders and our downtown legacy cast a universe of free music informed by all that led to this moment. (JP)

Against a backdrop of The Drawing Center's remarkable *Hermetic Cartography* exhibit (on display through May 11), which showcases over five decades of **John Zorn**'s visual output of show fliers, drawings, graphic scores and performance art, Zorn activated the space (Apr. 5) with *Cobra*—his most complex of game pieces; its improvisatory structure is shaped by a self-contained system of byzantine rules rather than a score. He served as prompter holding up handmade signs whose letters and shapes conveyed cues to his 13-piece band comprising three drum kits (William Winant, Ches Smith, Billy Martin), three guitars (Matt Hollenberg, Taylor Levine, Celine Kang), three basses (Simon Hanes, Trevor Dunn, Henry Fraser), plus Ikue Mori (laptop), Jay Campbell (cello), Sana Nagano (violin) and original *Cobra* member, David Weinstein (synthesizer). Amplified by the space's intimacy, the performance was suffused with a sense of giddy fun and think-fast spontaneity judging by the musicians' big grins and fist pumping. Across the ensemble, performers' hands shot up begging for recognition from Zorn as umpire. The music careened from swirling drones to machine-gun-thrash skree. Insurgent duos and trios broke out usurping an in-the-pocket groove into unhinged free abstraction. All the while Zorn refereed, casing for ideas to mine. After asking if they should play one more, Zorn issued a string of directives to the ensemble before explaining to the audience (which included at least one original *Cobra* member, Zeena Parkins): "I know you don't understand what I'm saying. That's the whole fucking point." (AS)

WHAT'S NEWS

Trombonist-composer **John Yao** was recently named a Guggenheim Fellow (in Music Composition). Established in 1925 by Senator Simon Guggenheim, this year marks the Fellowship's centenary. In July, Yao is scheduled to release his next album, John Yao and His 17-Piece Instrument's *Points in Time*. For more info visit johnyao.com.

Canada's annual **JUNO Awards** ceremony was held at the Rogers Arena in Vancouver, British Columbia (Mar. 30). The following were announced as winners in the jazz-related categories: "Jazz Album of the Year (Solo)": saxophonist André Leroux' *Montreal Jazz Series 1 (Échanges Synaptiques)* (Disques BG-Believe), "Jazz Album of the Year (Group)": Jeremy Ledbetter Trio *Gravity (s/r)* and "Vocal Jazz Album of the Year": Caitly Gyorgy *Hello! How Are You?* (La Reserve-The Orchard). The JUNO Awards, Canada's equivalent to the GRAMMYS, began in 1964. For more info visit junoawards.ca.

This past April, "Jazz Appreciation Month," trumpeters **Ted Daniel**, **Dave Douglas** and **Ingrid Jensen** were recognized (Apr. 12) by Democratic senator Pete Harkham of the 40th Senate District, for their contributions to the music and culture of the state of NY and specifically District 40 (which includes northern Westchester County, where each of the three reside). The trumpeters received a Proclamation from Harkham in a ceremony that took place at the Croton-on-Hudson Free Library, 30 miles north of NYC. For more info visit nysenate.gov/senators/pete-harkham.

Two significant Brooklyn-based galas occur this month: the **Brooklyn Music School (BMS)** and **Roulette Intermedium**. The BMS Spring Gala's (May 6) "Unforgettable History, Unstoppable Future" will be hosted by vocalist, WBGO on-air host and The Jazz Gallery co-founder Leslie Harrison. The event will take place at The Space at Irontdale Center in Brooklyn. Founded in 1909, Fort Greene's BMS has been a cornerstone of the performing arts in Brooklyn: since its inception, the institution has stood on a foundation of making performing arts education accessible to all. Faculty includes Duane Eubanks (trumpet), Brian Woodruff (percussion), Aaron Edgcomb (drums), Alon Nechushtan (piano), Jeff Newell (saxophones, flute, clarinet) and many others. For more info visit brooklynmusicschool.org/gala2025. Roulette Intermedium's annual gala (May 8) honors NEA Jazz Master and MacArthur Fellow Anthony Braxton, with performances by, among others, Mark Dresser, Mary Halvorson, George Lewis, Steve Lehman, Nicole Mitchell, Tomeka Reid and Wadada Leo Smith. All proceeds support guaranteed artist fees for the venue's performances throughout the year, including its ongoing commissions and residencies. For more info visit roulette.org/gala.

The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) and New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) have announced an innovative grant program: NYCA's NYSCA **Reserve Fund Grants** program, which has been established for NY State-based arts and culture nonprofits. Created to address the needs and concerns of nonprofits across the state, grants will range from \$10K to \$75K. Applications are now open through Jun. 17. For more info visit nyfa.org.

The new Afro-jazz musical **GODDESS** has opened at The Public Theater (through Jun. 1). Created and directed by Saheem Ali, with music and lyrics by Michael Thurber, the vibrant, original musical draws from the myth of Queen Marimba, transporting audiences to a jazz club in Mombasa, Kenya (where Ali grew up). For more info visit publictheater.org/productions/season/2425/goddess.

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