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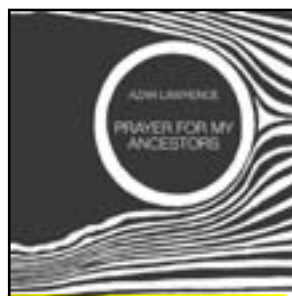


On Broadway, Vol. 5
Paul Motian Trio 2000 + Two (Winter & Winter)
by Brandt Reiter

The brushes are out as drummer Paul Motian continues his ongoing disc series, *On Broadway*. This latest installment features Motian's less starry "2000" trio, with bassist Thomas Morgan and saxophonist Loren Stillman, plus a second saxophonist, Michaël Attias and pianist Masabumi Kikuchi (who also participated on *Vol. 4*). Two decades on, the recipe remains the same - loving, thoughtful explorations of mostly Broadway tunes by one of jazz' great skinsmen.

This volume is perhaps the most intimate of this intimate series; with the exception of the disc's opener, the vaguely North African-tinged "Morrock" (a Motian composition and the sole original on the record), the tempos here seldom rise above the slowest of slow crawls. Which is fine: few drummers have Motian's startling gifts of color and variation and most of the thrills on the disc come from the boundless, gentle melodicism he seems to wring so effortlessly from his kit. There's an especially tender version of "Something I Dreamed Last Night", on which the two saxophones intertwine with the tentative fragility of frightened lovers; a rather astonishing "Just a Gigolo", whose mournful reading here cuts straight to the bone; a deeply melancholic "A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening"; a softly angular and Monk-ish "Midnight Sun" and what is probably the most meditative version of Frank Loesser's "Sue Me" you'll ever hear. It is, in sum, an excellent addition to the series, but does come with one caveat: while Kikuchi's piano is often exemplary (his intro to a marathon "I See Your Face Before Me" is just exquisite), he has an unfortunate tendency to vocalize along with his playing that can wreak havoc on the disc's finely wrought, intensely delicate, deepest deep-night mood.

For more information, visit winterandwinter.com. Motian is at Village Vanguard Nov. 17th-22nd. See Calendar.



Prayer for My Ancestors
Azar Lawrence
(Furthermore)



Speak the Word
Azar Lawrence
(Zarman Prod.)

by Francis Lo Kee

The tenor and soprano saxophonist Azar Lawrence should be known to all by his seminal work with pianist McCoy Tyner, especially on the double LP set *Enlightenment*, which is one of the most powerful recordings of the '70s. The two modern CDs reviewed here display a saxophonist with no less power and skill but perhaps an organically broader pallet of expression. Between *Prayer for My Ancestors* and *Speak the Word* there are beautiful ballads, lyrical bossa novas, songs sung in Spanish, songs from Africa featuring gorgeous kora (African lute) playing and of course, blazing modal jazz. Every track on both of these CDs features a master saxophonist, blowing

expressively clear and strong solos throughout.

For the listeners that love that '70s modal jazz sound, *Prayer for My Ancestors* might be the "must-have" CD of these two releases. The core quartet of Lawrence, pianist Nate Morgan, bassist Henry Franklin and drummer Alphonse Mouzon (with Roy McCurdy on "Swinging in Exile" instead of Mouzon) is relentlessly energetic and deeply expressive. "Open Sesame" begins with a brief tenor sax invocation over piano and percussion tremolos swirling around before the drums kick in the swinging groove. Franklin's quarter notes drive Mouzon and Morgan to place powerful rhythmic accents under Lawrence's passionate tenor flight. Morgan's solo, while possibly influenced by Tyner, is very impressive and a sincerely unique and powerful musical statement. Franklin's solo is also beautiful and leads perfectly back to the final statement of the melody. "Thokole" is quite striking for a number of reasons: the opening sound of the kora and acoustic guitar sonically turn away from the powerful jazz sound of the opening tracks, displaying a totally different texture. Ibrahima Ba's vocals are no less powerful but with a genuinely touching sense of beauty; Lawrence's soprano sax makes this performance an honest and heartfelt fusion of American jazz and African traditional music. "The Baker's Daughter" turns up the voltage considerably with the addition of Nolan Shaheed's intensely virtuosic trumpet. This tune also features a drum solo by Mouzon, who also powered the bands of McCoy Tyner as well as Larry Coryell's Eleventh House and Weather Report. "Ode to Pharoah" is a gentle, lyrical piece while "Swinging in Exile" features some very hot tenor soloing. Every track on this CD hits the target; there are no dead spots.

Speak the Word might be a little more self-conscious in its attempt to be stylistically diverse, but is also a very direct musical statement from a very capable and honest saxophonist. "Revelations" is a great tune to begin a CD with because, while true to Lawrence's modal jazz roots, it's accessible enough to welcome anyone in. A truly beautiful track, this time Lawrence revels on soprano saxophone with great support from Morgan once more on piano, Trevor Ware (bass) and Fritz Wise (drums). Tyner's "Aisha" receives a stunning rendition with Morgan's captivating solo being totally free of Tyner-isms that a lesser pianist might abuse in a misguided attempt at "tribute". "Vestida de Solea (Dressed in Solitude)" features acoustic guitar (uncredited) and vocals in Spanish, but also happens to feature some evocative soprano sax soloing by Lawrence.

For more information, visit furthermorerecordings.com and azarlawrence.com. Lawrence is at Dizzy's Club Nov. 10th-14th. See Calendar.

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