

ARUÁN ORTIZ

Jazz pianist Aruán Ortiz, “the latest Cuban wunderkind to arrive in the United States,” hit the ground running when he came on the American jazz scene in 2003.

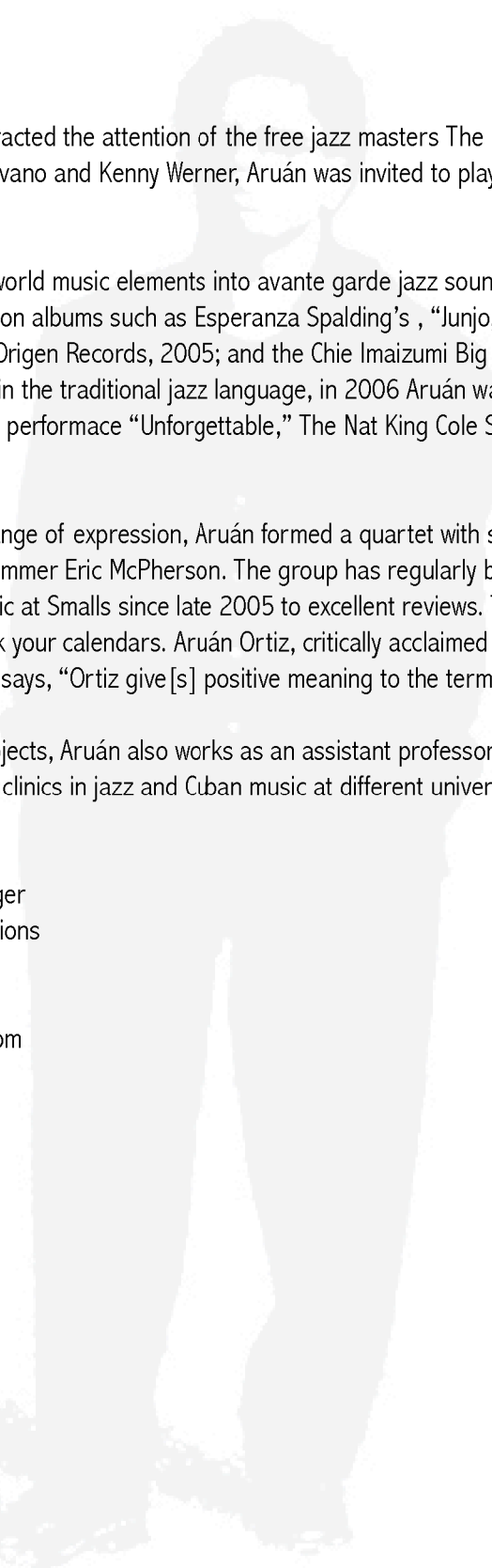
A former classically trained violist and pianist, this Santiago de Cuba native’s sound is as marked by the influence of Bach, Mozart, Liszt as by traditional Afro Cuban sounds and jazz greats Bud Powell, Art Tatum, and Thelonious Monk. After winning Best Cuban Composition at the Symposium of Cuban Music in Jamaica in 1995, Aruán was discovered by the Spanish record label Magic Music/Universal Latino, which brought him to Spain. There he participated in the compilation project *La Isla de la Música* (1996), which was acclaimed by the international press and recognized as one of the first albums to bring Cuban music to the European and American mainstream.

The same year, Aruán continued developing his sound and recorded his first album as a soloist, *Impresión Tropical* (Universal Latino, 1996), a compilation of traditional Cuban music and original piano solo compositions. Soon afterward, Aruán was awarded a series of scholarships to study classical piano with celebrated Cuban pianist and educator Cecilio Tiales at the Professional Conservatory in Vilaseca, Spain, and jazz piano with Joanne Brackeen and Danilo Pérez at the Berklee College of Music.

Aruán’s jazz career took off as a sideman in Barcelona and Paris, playing with Antoine Roney, Horacio Fumero, Mayte Martín, Salvador Nieblas, Pierre Boussaguet, Stephan Belmondo, Sarah Morrow, Tata Güines, Miguel “Angá” Díaz, and later in the U.S. with Wallace Roney, Roy Hargrove, Stefon Harris, George Garzone, Sheila E., Horacio “El negro” Hernández, Giovanni Hidalgo, Lionel Lueke, Eric McPherson, Abraham Burton, Jane Bunnett, Jerry Bergonzi, Hal Crook, John Lockwood, Bob Moses, Baron Browne, and Bruce Gertz. While in Europe he was the recipient of various awards including Best Jazz Interpretation, Festival de Jazz in Vic, Spain (2000) and Semifinalist, Jas Hennessy Piano Solo Competition, Montreux, Switzerland (2001). When he migrated from Spain to the U.S., Aruán participated in the recording of the definitive Miles Davis tribute record on Columbia Records with Davis’ nephew Vince Wilburn, Wallace Roney, Antoine Roney, and Missy Elliot.

While Aruán considers himself a jazz musician before a Cuban jazz musician, he incorporates Middle Eastern, Asian, African, and Cuban rhythmic elements into his compositions. Nowhere is this more evident than the debut album of his trio, *Vol. 1 (un mandarín en el espacio)*. With Bulgarian bassist Peter Slavov and fellow Cuban Francisco Mela, Aruán delves into the creative process of the trio format in the real-time composition of melodic phrases that are clearly influenced by the rhythms of his Cuban antecedents, but also recall the stylings of Andrew Hill and Phineas Newborn.

Aruán comments about his trio, “The musical creation process that I have with Mela and Peter when we play together, it’s an adventurous search for a truth, which in its essence can give us freedom, energy, and above all a consciousness that in order to transmit the magic of music we must love, believe, and grow with what we do.”



Aruán's virtuosity with jazz forms attracted the attention of the free jazz masters The Fringe in 2004. Following in the footsteps of jazz greats Joe Lovano and Kenny Werner, Aruán was invited to play a series of concerts with this legendary group.

Aruán's ability to subtly incorporate world music elements into avante garde jazz sound has led him to collaborate with numerous emerging artists on albums such as Esperanza Spalding's , "Junjo," Ayva Música, 2005; Arturo Stable's, "Notes on Canvas," Origen Records, 2005; and the Chie Imaizumi Big Band, "Change for the Better," 2005. Speaking to his roots in the traditional jazz language, in 2006 Aruán was invited to play Nat King Cole's music in Monroe Kent III's solo performace "Unforgettable," The Nat King Cole Story, at the Stoneham Theatre in Massachusetts.

In 2005, in an effort to expand his range of expression, Aruán formed a quartet with saxophone player Abraham Burton, bassist Peter Slavov, and drummer Eric McPherson. The group has regularly been taking on the critical jazz ear of the New York City public at Smalls since late 2005 to excellent reviews. The New York Post raves, "Jazz fans applaud, and novices mark your calendars. Aruán Ortiz, critically acclaimed Cuban pianist is a 'must see,'" and All About Jazz – New York says, "Ortiz give[s] positive meaning to the term intelligent design."

In addition to his trio and quartet projects, Aruán also works as an assistant professor at Berklee College of Music, and has given workshops and clinics in jazz and Cuban music at different universities around the U.S. and at Tanglewood.

Contact: Laura Sitkin, Manager
 NauraZitro Productions
 Boston, MA U.S.A.
 617-833-5498
 naurazitro@mac.com
 www.aruanortiz.net

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“If there is a hot name in jazz it is Cuban-born and Boston-based pianist Aruán Ortiz.”

— Boston Magazine

“Utterly refreshing.”

— Village Voice

“Jazz fans applaud, and novices mark your calendars. Aruán Ortiz, critically acclaimed Cuban pianist is a ‘must see.’ Recognized as a virtuoso by critics around the globe, Ortiz has helped usher Cuban music into the European and American mainstream.”

— New York Post

“Intriguing original music that reveal[s] an impressive approach to improvising and composing.”

— All About Jazz – New York

“Aruán Ortiz is the latest Cuban wunderkind to arrive in the United States.”

— John Murph, BETJazz.com

“Mr. Ortiz, a young Cuban pianist with a modern jazz pedigree, leads a promising ensemble...”

— Nate Chinen, New York Times”

“Pianist Aruán Ortiz was born in Cuba, but it would be misleading to call him a ‘Cuban jazz musician.’ He’s a jazz musician, period. For Ortiz, composition and ensemble cohesion are more important than his own estimable virtuosity. And his 10-minute solo ‘Se Vale Soñar’ puts him in another category altogether — his own.”

— Boston Phoenix

“The Aruán Ortiz Trio has a full ensemble sound that you can trace back to the early trios of Ahmad Jamal, Oscar Peterson, and Nat King Cole.

— Jon Garelick, Boston Phoenix

“[Aruán Ortiz Trio, Vol.1], newly released in the United States, reveals the trio to be practitioners of what Eddie Palmieri calls ‘jazz Latin.’ ...The accompanying Cuban-accented rhythms and lyricism make the music fresh.”

— Bill Beuttler, Boston Globe

“[Aruán Ortiz Trio, Vol.1] is a pure jazz gem with influences by Ornette Coleman, Chick Corea and Federico Mompou.”

— Fresh Sound Records

“In Aruán Ortiz’s music there is... an intelligent treatment of traditional motifs unified with an overwhelming jazz potential.”

— La Vanguardia, Spain