

Steve Coleman

Steve Coleman, born September 20, 1956 (1956-09-20) (age 52), is an American saxophone player, spontaneous composer, composer and band leader. His music and concepts have been a heavy influence on contemporary jazz.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, Coleman moved to New York City in 1978 and has lived in the NYC area since that time. Although he has led several groups over the years, his main group 'Steve Coleman and Five Elements' began in 1981 and is still active today.

He was one of the founders of the so-called M-Base movement, has led several groups, and has recorded extensively. Initially influenced by saxophonists Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Von Freeman and Bunky Green, Coleman has performed and recorded with Thad Jones, Sam Rivers, drummer Doug Hammond, Cecil Taylor, Abbey Lincoln and Dave Holland. He has incorporated many elements from the folkloric music of the African Diaspora fused with musical ideas influenced by ancient metaphysical concepts. He has stated that his main concern is the use of music as a language of sonic symbols used to express the nature of man's existence.

Coleman's work around 1990, such as the recording [Black Science (album)|Black Science]], is unusual for its indefinite meter. This is accomplished in many ways, but one example of this technique is composing music that involves each musician performing in different but related time spans, generally resulting in asymmetric cycles, for example a cycle of 7 against a cycle of 11. The feel of the resulting music is usually groove-based, but with a loose structure that is the consequence of the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic relationships of the various cycles. A highlight of this period is the recording *The Tao of Mad Phat* (fringe zones), which was recorded in front of a live studio audience. Coleman does not agree with using categories to describe music today, in particular he does not use the term jazz. Preferring a more organic approach to music he uses the term Spontaneous Composition. According to Coleman there extends back into ancient times a tradition of musicians who have attempted to express through music the various visions and realities that they perceive, and for him this is the driving force behind many of the 'so-called' innovations in music (and indeed in other fields as well). He feels that the various tools and fields of inquiry that people have used (physics and metaphysics, number, language, music, dance, astronomy, etc.) are all related and present one holistic body of work. The various forms that his music assumes are not only intuitively inspired by but intuitively and logically determined by the human perception of 'The Great Work' (i.e. the creation of all Nature by the Universal Mind).

One of the primary methods that Coleman uses to create his music is linked to two concepts: Sacred Geometry (the use of shapes to symbolically express natural principles), and Energy (the potential for change and change itself in physical, metaphysical and psychic phenomena, including Life, Growth, etc.). Coleman uses various kinds of musical structures to symbolize the Sacred Geometry and specific kinds of musical movement to reference the various states of Energy. In any event the concept of Change seems to be central to his theory. He has stated that it is the Change between the various musical structures that represents process, with the structures themselves being symbolic of various principles. Coleman believes that it is through the Spontaneous Composition of forms that these ideas can be most readily expressed, regardless of external stylistic appearances. A frequent statement of his is "it is the movement that is important".

These ideas, although rare, are not new in music. Musicians as diverse as Johann Sebastian Bach, Béla Bartók and John Coltrane have stated similar ideas.

Jen Shyu

Born: March 28, 1978

Born and raised in Peoria, Illinois, from immigrant parents of East Timor and Taiwan, Jen Shyu is a musician, composer, dancer, and band leader based in New York City. She has also recorded and toured with saxophonist Steve Coleman and Five Elements since 2003. Having studied dance from

age 6, piano from age 7, and violin from age 8, she performed as piano soloist at age 13 the Finale of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Peoria Symphony Orchestra and placed 6th at age 9 at the Stravinsky International Piano Competition. Jen studied opera at Stanford University (B.A. 2000), Oxford University in England, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and the Lake Placid Institute in New York. Before moving to NY, Jen lived three years collaborating with Bay Area musicians, producing her debut album "For Now" (4am Music 2002). Since 2001, Jen has traveled many times to Taiwan to research Taiwanese folk and aboriginal music, twice to Cuba to study Afro-Cuban music and dance and to investigate the history of the Chinese Cubans, and to Brazil to study dance with Rosangela Silvestre and Vera Passos. Jen recently composed for and performed with actress/performance artist Soomi Kim on her piece "Lee/gendary" inspired by Bruce Lee at the first National Asian American Theatre Festival. Having also worked with late great poet Sekou Sundiata on his "51st Dream State," Jen is currently fostering her multidisciplinary composition project "Jade Tongue". 2009 MacDowell Fellow, 2008 Roulette Space/Jerome Foundation "Emerging Artist" Commission & World Premiere of "Cry of a Nomad" with choreographer Satoshi Haga, 2007 Asian Cultural Council Fellow, 2006 Bronx Council on the Arts "BRIO" Award for Composition.

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Jonathan Finlayson

Noted as a trumpeter and composer of merit, Jonathan Finlayson has been an active voice in the New York music scene since his move from his native California in September of 2000. His talents as a composer and trumpeter have been noted by such prestigious publication as: The New York Times, Jazz Times and Down Beat.

Jonathan has performed with a wide array of artists, including Ravi Coltrane, Stephen Lehman, Ralph Alessi, Steven Bernstein, Meshell Ndegeocello, Vijay Iyer, and Abbey Lincoln. A veteran of Steve Coleman's Five Elements (having joined the band at the age of 18), he has performed on five recordings to date, and maintains an active schedule with the conceptualist powerhouse saxophonist—a relationship of remarkable symbiosis that has developed over 8 years.

David Bryant

Pianist/Composer/Multi-Instrumentalist David Bryant is a world-class artist. Few musicians today match the versatility, originality, and sensitivity that he brings to the music. He combines an extensive knowledge of the jazz tradition and other diverse musical idioms, as well an individualistic approach and sound. After listening to albums such as Marcus Strickland's **Of Song** and Steve Davis' **Images**; it is no surprise that Mr. Bryant is quickly rising to the top of the jazz scene.

David Bryant was born 1983 in Brooklyn, NY. As a member of a family that encouraged a strong musical upbringing, David started playing piano at age 4. By age 8, he was already competing and ranking in some of the New York area's most prestigious youth classical piano competitions, such as BACA and the Queens College Festival of Music Competition. David also began playing cello and trumpet, performing with youth symphonies and chamber music programs on all three instruments. As a result of his dedication, he was accepted to New York's prestigious LaGuardia High School of Music and Arts. It was here that David became interested in jazz.

While at LaGuardia, David quickly became an integral part of the Senior Jazz Band and combos as well as the All-City Jazz Band. He won the "Outstanding Soloist" award at Lincoln Center's Essentially Ellington competition, as well as being invited to participate in the Monterey Jazz Festival. His senior year he was selected to the Grammy Foundation's All-American Jazz Big Band. In 2001, he received a scholarship to study at the New England Conservatory. He made the most of this opportunity quickly becoming a rising star in Boston's jazz scene. As well as joining the Boston Jazz Reparatory Orchestra (BJRO), he performed weekly at Wally's Jazz Café and Jordan Hall while also performing at Ryles and the Regatta Bar. In 2005 he graduated with a degree in Jazz Performance and a distinction in music.

After moving back to New York, David established himself as a musical force. He is featured as a sideman on albums such as *Outlook* by Steve Davis, *Jade Tongue* by Jen Shyu, *Continuum* by Eric McPherson, *Of Song* by Marcus Strickland, *Future* by McPherson & Abraham Burton, as well as being featured on *The Leatherheads Soundtrack*. He has also played with the likes of Christian McBride, Ravi Coltrane, Roy Haynes, Dave Holland, Wynton Marsalis, Delfeayo Marsalis, Louis Hayes, Kenny Wheeler, Bob Brookmeyer, and Jimmy Heath. In these and other groups, he has performed extensively in festivals, halls, and clubs throughout the world, including; North Sea Jazz Festival, Pori Jazz Festival, Stockholm Jazz Festival, Canary Islands Music Festival, Jazz on the River in St. Petersburg, Guimarães Jazz Festival in Portugal, Monterey Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall, House of Blues and Jazz in Shanghai, as well as many other venues internationally. David currently resides in Brooklyn. He is currently working on his own recording projects which feature his skills as a composer, electronic musical producer, and multi-instrumentalist.

Miles Okazaki

The son of a painter and photographer, grew up in the Pacific Northwest in the small city of Port Townsend. He began to experiment with the guitar at the age of six, and remains a primarily self-taught musician. As a teenager, he was recognized with many awards for exceptional achievements in Music and Visual Art.

Okazaki's formal studies were at Harvard University, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Juilliard School. He has pursued a variety of subjects, including Visual Arts, Literature and Language, Mathematics, and Music. He has toured and recorded with a wide variety of artists, including Stanley Turrentine, Lenny Pickett, Samir Chatterjee, Jane Monheit, Jen Shyu, Dan Weiss, David Binney, and others.

Recently, Okazaki has focused primarily on composing and studying improvisational concepts. In 2006, he recorded his debut album, *Mirror*, funding this project with his winnings as a finalist in the Thelonious Monk Jazz Competition. This album, called "a work of sustained collectivity as well as deep intricacy" by the New York Times, won a "New Works" grant from Chamber Music America to produce a second volume of compositions. This project became *Generations*, on Sunnyside Records. Currently Okazaki plays guitar for Steve Coleman and Five Elements, and is working on several new commissions, including a new ensemble work for the French-American Jazz Exchange program, music for classical guitar, and a new collection of compositions for his third album.