



Tue. 10/19

George Lewis & New Orchestra Workshop (NOW)

ON THE BOARDS,
8PM
\$12 GENERAL /
\$10 DISCOUNT

It'd be damning with faint praise to say that George Lewis is one of the finest living trombonists. This because of Lewis's immense talents outside the slide's reach. His past is firmly part of the broad Chicago-rooted avant-garde, but Lewis, a Windy City native, has strode far from his hometown.

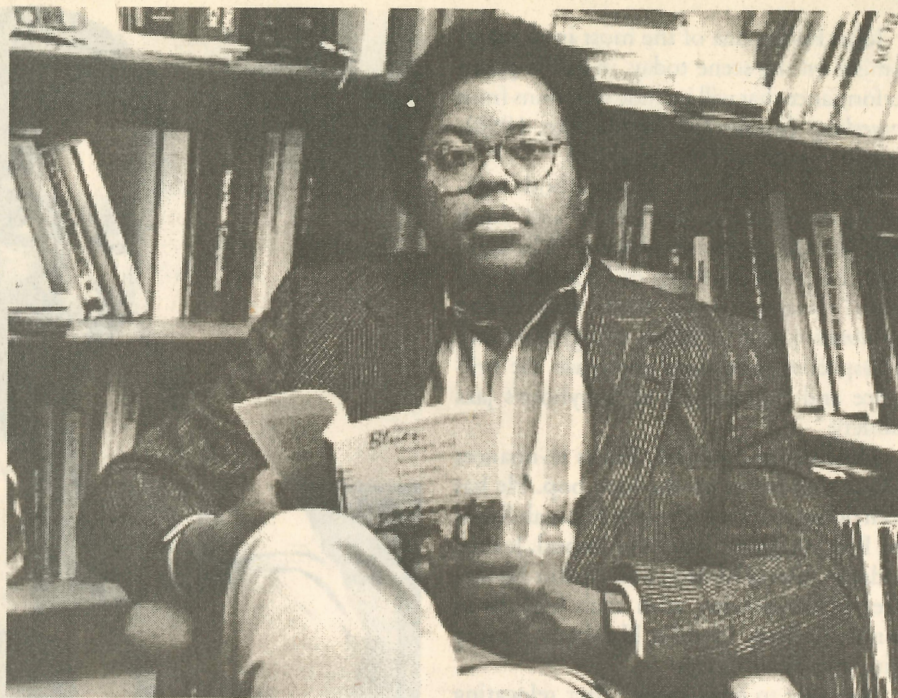
A quick glance at Lewis's recent and forthcoming work alerts one to his interests. With academic essays like "Singing the Alternative Interactivity Blues" and "Improvised Music Since 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," it's no surprise that Lewis's background includes a Yale BA in philosophy.

Playing in composer and pianist Anthony Davis's ensembles while at Yale, Lewis extended a compositional language he'd learned from copying bebop and swing solos from recordings. The jazz formulas most available to Lewis, born in 1952, were by his young adulthood called into question by the free jazz and post-free jazz schools of thinkers, chief among them his hometown's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians.

Lewis returned to Chicago to study theory with AACM co-founder Muhal Richard Abrams, and he committed himself to composition and performance in 1973. Lewis spent the rest of the 70s touring with Count Basie – showing off his wide scope of excellence – and working regularly in Anthony Braxton's bands. He took from Braxton an intensely searching ear for composition. And he integrated, in the following decades, interactive software that he designed for improvisation.

Voyager (Avant), his series of duets between himself or Roscoe Mitchell and the Voyager program Lewis wrote, will surely be considered a classic in the annals of interactive electronic music. And his other works, from the "Shadowgraph" series to the lauded chamber music recording *Changing with the Times* (New World Records) likewise register deeply with Lewis's fan base. A professor of music at the University of California at San Diego, Lewis is a polymath, a genius at all he touches. For another musical confirmation, and there are many, try the trombone quartet CD *Slide Ride* with Lewis's boyhood chum Ray Anderson, Gary Valente, and Craig Harris.

Seeing Lewis is one thing, and seeing him with Vancouver B.C.'s renowned collective ensemble is another. The New Orchestra Workshop has rarely distinguished itself better than in their work with British bassist Barry Guy – maybe one of Lewis's nearest soulmates in terms of their extended inquiries into myriad fields – on *Witch Gong Game* (Maya). NOW is a spectacular big band on one hand, and a thriving laboratory for new ideas on the



other. And Lewis regards the NOW Orchestra "as one of the finest large creative ensembles active in the last decade," adding that the pieces he's playing with them "are designed to facilitate solo performance, notated ensemble performance, and solos and group interplay."

With guitarist Ron Samworth, drummer Dylan van der Schyff, saxist Coat Cooke, and many others, NOW has all the right gears to work with Lewis. Their work on Guy's graphically notated score (read: it's a game of paintings, visual cues, and artwork that guides musicians in their improvisation) alone proves that NOW will be a great sounding board and collaboration crew for Lewis. Never mind that their ranks include free improvisers who can cover the spectrum of sounds from polyphony to raking glissandi, they'll keep Lewis guessing and on his responsorial toes at all times.

Of course that's where Lewis does his finest work. Consider only his at-first-blush strangely monickered *Homage to Charlie Parker* (Black Saint). Lewis is easily up to task for a bop session à la John Zorn's tribute to Sonny Clarke, and yet he elects to do much more. The ensemble he formed for his Bird tribute included Anthony Davis and synthesizer pioneer Richard Teitelbaum. Together the ensemble looks at Bird's entire legacy, questioning the bebop framework with electro-acoustic compositions and improvisations that deeply regard the methods for the composing and improvising mind. The outcome is terrifically unpredictable. And that's how Lewis burns best, with a brew of immeasurable talent and a passion for the undiscovered.

– Andrew Bartlett

Read an interview with George Lewis on the Earshot Jazz website (www.earshot.org), in the Newsletter Archives.



John Hicks, one of the most in-demand pianists on the scene today, in a solo piano performance that will include selections from *Something To Live For* (High Note, 1998), his trio tribute to Billy Strayhorn.

On that album, he recorded both well-known numbers like "Satin Doll" and "Lush Life," as well as several sleepers. "Hicks reveals the inner workings of Strayhorn's intricately haunted world," wrote Wally Shoup for *amazon.com*. "Hicks's straightforward, introspective renditions showcase the brilliance and timelessness of Strayhorn's jazz subtlety."

Muscular and refined, Hicks re-nuances ballads and burns up the hard bop. He has been doing that recently with Pharoah Sanders, Roy Hargrove, Ray Drummond, Joshua Redman, David Murray, and Arthur Blythe, after earlier playing with such legends as Sonny Rollins, Freddie Hubbard, Sonny Stitt, and Betty Carter.

He came to prominence after relocating to New York City from St. Louis 30 years ago and establishing himself as an in-demand, prolific pianist and composer. He had incorporated such influences as Fats Waller piano rolls, Methodist church music, George Gershwin, and bebop, and his mentors included Lucky Thompson, Miles Davis, and Clark Terry. And he had already worked with blues legends Little Milton and Albert Kings, and jazz greats like Al Grey, Johnny Griffin, and Pharoah Sanders. In *The City*, he performed with Kenny Dorham, Lou Donaldson, and Joe Henderson, before joining Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers for two years. He further refined his bebop chops in the Betty Carter Trio.

He has, then, been involved in most of the most im-



Tue. 10/19
Simply
Ellington*

**John
Hicks**

BRECHEMIN
AUDITORIUM,
UW, 8PM
\$14 GENERAL /
\$12 DISCOUNT

portant recent developments in jazz art.

In the 1990s, he has increased his solo performing, while also working with his big band, and in duos and trios. Said Mike Joyce in *The Washington Post*: "Hicks may be one of the unsung giants in jazz."

(See also, *New Art Jazz Quartet*, 10/20, below.)

**Klingon
Science
Reading Room**



24 Track
Digital Recording
& Other Stuff

5' 10" Kawai Grand Piano
& a 62" Pit Bull

(206) 789-5502


Hammond Ashley

est. 1964 Bass Violins

Double bass and 'cello specialists.
Dealers/restorations/repairs/rentals.
Violins & Violas also available.

 www.bassviolins.com

 1-800-STRING BASS

 206-878-3456

19825 Des Moines Memorial Dr.
Seattle, WA 98148-2274, U.S.A.

