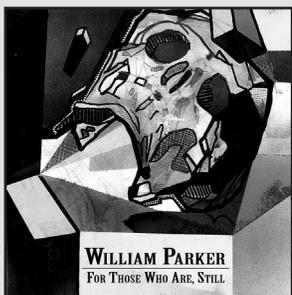


BOXED SET



For Those Who Are, Still
William Parker (AUM Fidelity)
by Kurt Gottschalk

AUM Fidelity has done yeoman's work for close to 20 years publishing the work of bassist William Parker. In recent years, the label has seemingly had to turn to the boxed set just so that the pressing plants could keep up. *Bamboo Flute Songs*, released in 2013, had no real thematic tie except that all of the performances were recorded live. Triple-disc *For Those Who Are, Still* is another collection of recent activity, no more cohesive than any of Parker's work, put in a box, would be. (Which is not to say the work is entirely arbitrary; Parker has an inherent cohesion stronger than most.) There may be an economic factor at play. Parker inspires a strong allegiance among the Downtown jazz intelligentsia. Maybe a large enough margin of those buying anything he puts out will buy everything. In any event, the odd mix of the newer set isn't necessarily a detriment.

The set collects four large-scale works (if song sets are included as large works) and one improvised

preamble. Taken together, the three discs provide a cross-section of some of Parker's areas of work. More to the point, however, the set contains his symphonic debut and a thankful addition to his woefully small body of work with singer Leena Conquest.

Two song sets with Conquest occupy the first disc. The half-hour suite *For Fannie Lou Hamer*, dedicated to the Mississippi-born Civil Rights activist, was commissioned by The Kitchen and performed by the since-defunct Kitchen House Blend ensemble (which—with reed players JD Parran and Sam Furnace and trombonist Masahiko Kono—wasn't such a stretch for Parker) in 2000. The second half, *Vermeer*, is a nine-song cycle clocking in at 50 minutes and recorded at The Gallery Recording Studio in 2011 with Darryl Foster (saxophones), Eri Yamamoto (piano) and Parker. These are important recordings, highlighting not just Parker's political and spiritual sensibilities but also his strength at working with voice. Conquest is a wonderful singer and the best interpreter Parker has; in lesser hands, his humor and plain truths could come off as simple or trite. She imparts to them the meaning they deserve. These are also serious recordings, lacking the silliness of *It's Raining on the Moon* or funkiness of Parker's Curtis Mayfield project. It'd be a mistake to say the disc is lacking those qualities but listeners may reach for those earlier records before moving on to Disc Two.

Cross-cultural construction has long been one of Parker's (many) concerns and finding himself in Paris in 2012 Parker seized the opportunity to draw from a number of pools. *Red Giraffe With Dreadlocks*, the second disc in the box, pulls a core group of double reed player Bill Cole (essential to this recording), saxophonist Rob Brown, pianist Cooper-Moore and

drummer Hamid Drake together with Indian singer Sangeeta Bandyopadhyay, Senegalese singer Mola Sylla (who also plays m'bira and donso n'goni) and Dutch bass saxophonist Klaas Hekman. Across six tracks, they find and explore a number of overlapping territories. At its best moments, the music comes across as speaking deep truth, as if Bandyopadhyay the mystic and Sylla the griot were communicating through unknown tongues. Beautifully serene and wildly free, it's the best disc.

A piece commissioned by the Polish National Forum of Music for the NFM Symphony Orchestra and performed at the 2013 Jazztopad Festival in Warsaw comprises the better part of the third disc and it's here that Parker finds himself stretched behind his means. The 10-section, 50-minute *Ceremonies for Those Who Are Still* lacks the subtlety of his own bands, even with Parker, Charles Gayle (saxophone and piano) and Mike Reed (drums) improvising through the work. The score works in broad strokes, often plodding along where a lighter hand would have better served the purpose. Fortunately for those at the concert, a 25-minute improvisation by the trio (included here) delivered what those familiar with Parker's work were no doubt anticipating.

Parker is a busy musician full of ideas and it's interesting to have some of his divergent efforts packaged together rather than scattered across so many individual releases. The discs here might not invite the same level of repeat listening but there's enough here to make it worthwhile all the while.

For more information, visit aumfidelity.com. Parker is at Downtown Music Gallery Jul. 10th, The Stone Jul. 13th and Dizzy's Club Jul. 26th-27th. See Calendar.

dizzy's club *Coca-Cola*

JUL 1-3

renee rosnes quartet

JUL 4-11

dizzy's closed for annual maintenance

JUL 12

ben webster: ertegun jazz hall of fame celebration
jerry weldon quartet with houston person

JUL 13

jj. johnson: ertegun jazz hall of fame celebration
vincent gardner sextet

JUL 14

wayne shorter: ertegun jazz hall of fame celebration

JUL 15-17

the jon faddis quartet

JUL 18

mason brothers quintet

swing by tonight
212-258-9595

set times
7:30pm & 9:30pm

jazz.org/dizzys

jazz

Jazz at Lincoln Center's Frederick P. Rose Hall • Broadway at 60th Street, 5th Floor, NYC

JUL 19

clarice assad/off the cliff sings
milton nascimento

JUL 20-21

tim hagans quintet

JUL 22-24

7:30pm: cyro baptista's vira loucos
9:30pm: cyro baptista's banquet of the spirits

JUL 25

monday nights with wbgo:
yotam silberstein quartet

JUL 26-27

william parker

JUL 28-30

charles mcpherson quintet

Donna Singer

Italy - June 30th

Switzerland - July 2

Lincoln Center MET Guild - July 25

Central Park Ladies Pavilion, NYC - July 26

"Donna Singer is a first-call vocalist...with an effervescent spirit and impeccable phrasing there is certainly no lack of talent."
- Brent Black @ Critical Jazz



Donna-Singer.com