

Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica - Quintet

Global jazz and exotic chamber music

In the same way a *chef de cuisine* runs a kitchen, percussionist Brian O'Neill leads a team of five musical creators who deftly collaborate on instruments foreign and domestic to form modernist delicacies for hungry, curious listeners. From the high arts of jazz and chamber music to adaptations of mid-century exotica and pop art, the quintet version of Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica renders O'Neill's original compositions and curious adaptations of Bach, Gershwin, Shostakovich and John Adams into cinematic, layered music for armchair travelers ready to journey off road.

"If John Zorn is an exotica Picasso, O'Neill is his Georges-Braque counterpart in cubism's transposition to music." - AllAboutJazz

While the quintet eschews most of the musical forms, rhythms, and styles of the 1950s exotica sound that inspired O'Neill, it fully embraces the unique genre's love of escapism, whether through deliberate, out-of-context use of global sounds or through jazz improvisation that doesn't swing and deliberately imitates the rhythm of a skipping record. On the listener's plate might be equal parts scratch and sniff, bongos with a fugue, and a cat fight at a piano recital. On the stage, the ensemble skillfully negotiates detailed compositions and arrangements of classical works while relying on listening and instinct to drive passionate improvisation.

"Anything but straightforward"
Washington Post

"Evocative exotica"
Boston Globe

"Top 10 CDs for 2011"
The Huffington Post

"Serious jazz and chamber music"
Boston Herald

"Incredible musicianship"
Downbeat

"2012 Best World Music Act: A rigorous classical-jazz hybrid. Are you listening, Keith Lockhart?"
Boston Phoenix

"No other band on the planet sounds anything remotely like Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica"

Lucid Culture

The sound of the Orchestrotica's quintet also exists in two albums that help form the larger *Exotica for Modern Living Series*, which launched in 2010 with the group's big band ensemble performing its transcriptions of the lost music of Esquivel. In June 2011, the quintet released *Third River Rangoon*, its first interpretation of exotica as a mélange of jazz, classical, and world music. This sound matured with the band's sophomore recording, *Where Here Meets There* (2013), a dichotomous album that introduced even more adventuresome original music on its A-side ("Music from Here") and the group's most sophisticated adaptations to date on its B-side ("Music from There"), the latter including its popular arrangements of Gershwin's three "Piano Preludes." The series has also been lauded for its unique mid-century modern-inspired artwork, and audiophile-grade production quality.

In addition to O'Neill's vibraphone and hand percussion, the quintet features Geni Skendo's bass flute, flute, and *shakuhachi*; the highly stylized classical/jazz bassist Brad Barrett; Tev Stevig on the rare trio of *oud*, *tanbur*, and resonator guitar; and Jeremy Smith who referees the ensemble's interactions and improvisations using a bounty of percussion from marching machines to Arabic frame drums. All the musicians are teaching artists, and the ensemble provides educational programs at the primary school, high school, and collegiate levels.

OLD BIO

Referencing the exotica of composers ranging from Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich to George Gershwin, Martin Denny, and John Adams, The Orchestrotica—as a vibraphone quintet—presents an original collection of untraditional jazz, classical adaptations, and world music with flavors from Asia, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Latin America. Led by multi-percussionist, vibraphonist and composer Brian O’Neill, the group also features bass flute/woodwinds (Geni Skendo), percussion (Shane Shanahan), oud/tanbur (Tev Stevig), and acoustic bass (Brad Barrett). The quartet focuses on original music written by O’Neill (“a first-rate composer” – *Huffington Post*) that is highly influenced by his fifteen-year career as a multi-percussionist in symphony orchestras, jazz groups, and world music ensembles leading *AllAboutJazz* to say, “...If John Zorn is an exotica Picasso, O’Neill is his Georges-Braque counterpart in cubism’s transposition to music.” The Orchestrotica was named the 2012 “Best World Music Act” in *The Boston Phoenix*’s annual readers’ poll.

In June 2011, they released their debut CD as a quartet, *Third River Rangoon*, which was described by the *Boston Herald* as “...serious jazz and chamber-music writing...” and cited as one of the *Huffington Post*’s Top 10 Albums for 2011. Their sophomore album, *Where Here Meets There*, was released in 2013, called “Wonderful!” by *JazzWeekly*, and named one of the Best Albums of 2013 by *Panamerika*. Both albums are part of the groups Exotica for Modern Living series that began in 2010 with the big band’s debut recording, *The Unforgettable Sounds of Esquivel*. That album received “4 Stars” from the *Sunday London Times* and was called “incredible” by *Downbeat*. “No other band on the planet sounds anything remotely like Mr. Ho’s Orchestrotica,” says *Lucid Culture*.

ABOUT BRIAN O'NEILL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR:

Brian O'Neill is a versatile multi-percussionist and composer based in New York City and Boston. A "percussion master and musical polymath" (*Boston Phoenix*), he has performed in a variety of contexts including opera and classical (South Florida Symphony, Boston Festival Orchestra, Arizona Opera Ring Cycle Orchestra, Flagstaff Symphony), as a concert soloist (Sun City Symphony), pop music (Kristin Chenoweth, Donna Summer, Archie Bell, the Del-Larks), and jazz (Bert Seager, Peter Erskine, Wallace Roney, Ernie Watts). Currently, he is the percussionist with balkan-klezmer rockers The Klezwoods, Bert Seager's new quartet "The Why", the Boston-based sephardic trio Aljashu, and he also performs as pianist/occasional guitarist with the contemporary chamber quartet, CORDIS. He also is a regular guest artist with the hit Mexo-Americana band, David Wax Museum. Brian's musical adventures have brought him to the Montreal Jazz Festival, The Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall and beyond with a variety of ensembles. In addition to being a sideman, he also leads Boston's "2012 Best World Music Act" (*Boston Phoenix*), Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica, which is comprised of two unique ensembles: a vibraphone quartet performing global jazz and exotic chamber music, and the world's only big band performing Brian's transcriptions of the lost music of Juan Garcia Esquivel—the late 1950s Mexican arranger of space-age pop music.

In 2010, his *Exotica for Modern Living* recording series launched with an homage to Esquivel that received "four stars" from the *Sunday Times London* and that CD, along with a subsequent CD by the quartet in 2011, each made the *Huffington Post's* Top 10 CDs for 2011. *AllAboutJazz* says, "O'Neill may be, in the long run, a better exoticist than [John] Zorn." Keep up with Brian in English, Spanish or Portuguese, and learn about his addiction to global tambourine techniques at crashandboom.com or on Twitter (@orchestrotica).