

Mr. Ho's Orchestrotica - Quintet

Story-driven global jazz and 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.

"Engagingly unique"—Boston Globe

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. The quintet has delighted ears across the US and internationally and was awarded a \$15,000 touring grant from SouthArts' JazzRoad Tours program in 2024.

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

-AllAboutJazz

"Anything but
straightforward"

Washington Post

"Serious jazz and
chamber music"

Boston Herald

"Incredible musicianship"

Downbeat

"A rigorous classical-jazz
hybrid. Are you listening,
Keith Lockhart?"

Boston Phoenix

The sound of the Orchestrotica's quintet also exists in two albums that help form the larger *Exotica for Modern Living Series*, which launched with the group's big band ensemble performing its transcriptions of the lost music of Esquivel. A year later, 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*, 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 concert flute, bass flute, contrabass flute, and *shakuhachi*; the highly stylized classical/jazz bassist Mike Harrist; Tev Stevig on the rare trio of *oud*, *cümbüş*, 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.

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