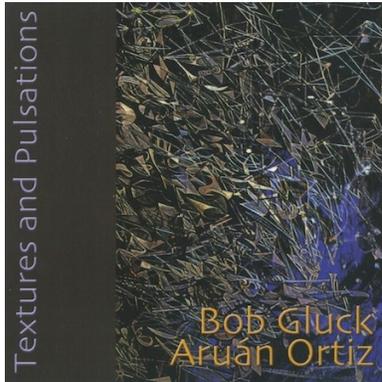


Textures and Pulsations
Bob Gluck and Aruan Ortiz
Ictus CD167 (2012)



Reviews

“Of duet projects played with distinction and originality this combination of keyboardists enhanced by electronic enhancement has to be one of the most challenging in pure musical terms. Bob Gluck and Aruan Ortiz come from vastly different backgrounds and ethnicity, but on this live recording, **they show great empathy in their attempt to forge improvised music that is strong without being steely. There’s an intriguing balance between the acoustic piano and amplified effects that sets this project apart from others.** At times very busy, or spacious beyond tacit moves or slowed vistas of horizons, Gluck and Ortiz have a concept that is restless without being anxious. They combine busy percussive sounds with meditational contrasts during “Blue,” use an African balafon type sound on “Red,” dig into Cecil Taylor like piano clusters for “Green,” while “Black & White” combines active electronic sounds with a minimal looped style reminiscent of Terry Riley. Every track is different, while the preludes and interludes set up spacious or at times light-hearted humor. **From beginning to end, this is a consistently intriguing musical depiction of colors that is successful, and deserves a follow-up. While Ortiz is a rising star, and this adds to his building discography, it should introduce Gluck to an audience that heretofore may be unfamiliar with him.**”

- Michael G. Nastos, Cadence, 39:3 (July-Sept. 2013), 133-134

“Bob Gluck and Aruan Ortiz call themselves pianists, but they’re really explorers. Brooklyn’s Ortiz is a classically trained violinist and pianist, with both Afro-Cuban and classical influences, who has played with Stefon Harris, Cindy Blackman, Esperanza Spalding and others, while Albany’s Gluck is a composer and pianist, influenced by Stravinsky, Coltrane and Hendrix, and the author of “You’ll Know When You Get There: Herbie Hancock and The Mwandishi Band.”

Starting out with “Blue,” the two fearless pianists face off as they venture out, at first, with mysterious melodies on this disc from Ictus Records. Soon it gets quite antsy, in an approaching storm kind of way. Finally, it hits, a fierce release: notes raining like nails, buckets even, then calm, rays of light, and a new beginning. You almost need to rest **[continued...]**

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before the next track, "Yellow On Red," which shows their clever use of space and echo.

The anxious "Red" is rounder, yet has plenty of rough texture. "Black and White" is grainier and unsettling, while the angular "Green in Blue" seems to bore into you like a needle. "Green" finishes that work, injecting cubic melodies, and an ascending cloud of notes until another chaotic, troubling tempest pits the two pianists in a life-threatening battle until it falls into calm, when it's debatable who, if either, wins as it runs into the fitting closer, "Epilogo."

Obliterating boundaries, placing a few new ones, yet never looking back, Gluck and Ortiz are bold, brave and inspiring."

- David Malachowski, Times Union (Albany, NY)

<http://www.timesunion.com/entertainment/article/CD-review-Bob-Gluck-and-Aruan-Ortiz-s-Textures-4557528.php#ixzz2UnityBpS>

"Think back to the pioneering gurus of electronic music in the 20th century. New musical technology guided their path to new forms of sound and composition. Creatively, they also incorporated elements from various musical genres. The pairing of Albany-area resident Bob Gluck with Aruan Ortiz for a live electro-acoustic performance with two pianos, a computer, and a Moog synthesizer for **Textures and Pulsations** furthers the conversations on **improvisational music as the pair manipulates the structures of time and space**. Not knowing who's playing what instrument when doesn't detract from the feeling of their being open to the moment, as Gluck writes in the liner notes.

Cuban-born Ortiz has performed with Esperanza Spalding, Joe Lovano, and Greg Osby, among others; Gluck is the Associate Professor of Music and Director of the Electronic Music Studio at the University at Albany and the author of *You'll Know When You Get There: Herbie Hancock and The Mwandishi Band*. Sounding like a dramatic turning point in a movie, "Black and White" contains an initial oscillating and warping sound that introduces a ferocious midsection and ends with a barrage of notes. The intrigue is built in with a measured, pulsating staccato vamp. "Blue" is stirringly melancholy, with an underlying percussive motif. Though six of the eight compositions have a color in their title, it doesn't signify any feeling or mood. One of the two without a color designation is "Interludio," with its transversing acoustic and electronic tones."

- Cheryl K. Symister-Masterson, *Chronogram*

<http://www.chronogram.com/hudsonvalley/cd-reviewtextures-and-pulsations/Content?oid=2171610>

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“Put together two very accomplished pianist-improvisers-composers, supplement their arsenal with computer and Moog extensions and turn them loose. If the two involved are Bob Gluck and Aruan Ortiz, *Textures and Pulsations* (Ictus 167) is the very satisfying, adventurous result.

What transpired in concert that day was a live set of collaborations, no overdubs, Bob with a Moog, Aruan a laptop, both at the piano and both with some very good ideas. This is extended music that harnesses fertile improvisational imaginations to the end of a new music, jazz inflected, thoughtfully electrified, avant but more freely structured than purely free in some ultimate sense. That means there are seemingly spontaneous motives that emerge, then ascend to a full performative height through the use of samples, echo, electronic enhancement and synthesizer coloration. There are cyclical ideas (the pulsations) joined by a wide-ranging harmonic-melodic creativity and a well-chosen palette of sound colors (the textures).

What especially impresses me about the duet is the natural way the ideas flow in any given piece. It doesn't feel like the two artists are working up a sweat to come up with the good-idea music, yet the meeting nonetheless provides a forum for some excellent two-peopled invention to take place. And it does. It is not easy to make difficult-to-make music seem easy. But they do. And that is quite an achievement.

Gluck and Ortiz are at the top of their game on this session. The electronics and piano playing fit together happily and in the end some fascinating music comes about. It is an advanced music that comes out of the meeting, yet it has a very communicative, accessible, listener-friendly side to it.

This is one of the most successful melds of pianistic imagination and live electronic vivacity that I've had the pleasure to hear. It manages to unify elements of jazz, rhythmic pulse and advanced spontaneous composition in ways that are wholly original. Maestros Gluck and Ortiz find each niche without fail and develop it with ear-enriching, musically satisfying intelligence. You must hear this one!”

- Greg Applegate Edwards, GrappleGate Music Review
<http://gapplegatemusicreview.blogspot.com/2013/03/bob-gluck-aruan-ortiz-textures-and.html?m=1>

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“For much of the twentieth century, filmmaker, kinetic sculptor and Christchurch, New Zealand native Leonard Charles Huia “Len” Lye broadened the horizons of his chosen areas of interest through consistent experimentation. With respect to the latter field, Lye achieved his primary goal by incorporating motion into what had previously been considered primarily a stationary medium.

In much the same manner, composer, arranger, keyboardist, professor and Rabbi Bob Gluck has herein endeavored to bring a relatively untested dimension into electronic music. He has done so by drawing from the conventional maxim which suggests that the mission statement of a given instrumental work should be adequately depicted in its title. With respect to *Textures And Pulsations*, Gluck (who doubles on piano and Moog Synthesizer for this project) and collaborator/keyboardist Aruán Ortiz have stated their case by suggesting that color can be articulated and/or described through sound. As a result, they have titled six of the eight improvisations accordingly.

While the incorporation of colors (as either a noun or as an adjective) into song titles is a long established practice within jazz and related circles (*Rhapsody In Blue*, *Little Brown Jug*, *Black Orpheus*, *Red Wagon*, *Kind Of Blue*, etc.), each of those earlier endeavors represents a relatively more structured work, with a defined template serving as the foundation for the respective mission statements.

This is not to infer that Gluck is a stranger to such endeavors. To wit, his 2011 *Returning* CD with the Bob Gluck Trio for the FMR label demonstrated at least an affinity for (if not downright solidarity with) the more cohesive expressions of the idiom, and even suggested through such tracks as *That's All You Got?* And *There's No There There* a penchant for levity that is so often in modest supply in such an atmosphere.

But for the project at hand (which was recorded live on 25 October 2011), **the ambitious duo has taken to the road less traveled, with remarkable results.** The opener, *Blue*, decidedly sidesteps the more conventional depictions of the term in a musical setting; electing instead to portray that often invoked color as an uneasy coalition of various hues, each vying for prominence within the overall scheme. That the dynamic tension persists throughout much of the piece's nine minutes and four seconds indicates that such categorization remains a theory awaiting confirmation.

No such fanfare is necessary at the onset for *Yellow On Red*, in which the two relatively less imposing shades explore one another's strengths and weaknesses in a cat and mouse like setting. Nonetheless, the proceedings again escalate and conclude in a stand off, which infers that the dynamics of the darker of the two can be at an impasse with the seeming relentless optimism of the other. Not surprisingly, the third track, *Red* is the most clearly defined, with the like minded *Green* following suit. Both are counterbalanced handsomely by the intervening elements of consternation found in *Black And White* and *Green In Blue*. **[continued...]**

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Interestingly enough, in its peripheral quest on the part of its creators to assert their individualism, *Textures And Pulsations* may not even necessarily align itself with the devotees of the works of such masters of improvisation as John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman. **However, in their resolve to maintain such a determined mission statement, Gluck and Ortiz may have inadvertently struck a chord of solidarity with a much wider musical demographic. For in doing so, they have succinctly made a case for standing in accord with the universal theme of striving for excellence. And, in the words of one of Gluck's earlier accomplishments, that is the *History Of A Mystery* that seems intent upon striving for a happy ending."**

- Michael McDowell, Blitz Magazine

<http://blitzmag.blogspot.com/2007/01/shape-of-things-to-come-by-michael.html>

"Both Bob and Aruán are accomplished pianists. They combine their talents and creative spirit for this improvisational experience. In addition to the pianos, Bob plays a Moog synthesizer and Aruán adds computer simulations. Textures and Pulsations is a very accurate description of the music as the duo played spontaneously over eight tracks. We preferred the core, tracks 3, 4 and especially 5. It is an unusual, intriguing and edgy program."

- O's Place Jazz Magazine <http://www.OsPlaceJazz.com/>

"Two talented pianists who have made their mark in different areas of the Jazz sphere come together for a duo recording of two pianos and some electronics. It works exceedingly well. Both inventive in their own ways, compositionally and performing, which makes for some intrigue, as well as the risk of stepping over the toes of one another (they don't). An album that'll appeal to the avant-garde crowd, the piano enthusiast, and some modern classical fans. Different, for sure."

- Dave Sumner's Jazz Picks (eMusic)

<http://www.emusic.com/17dots/2012/12/12/dave-sumners-jazz-picks-6/>

"Keep an eye this year on Aruan Ortiz, a Cuban-born New York pianist who's become a mark of quality on gigs and records, though you might miss half his work if you don't listen broadly. Within the past year he has led a quartet on "Orbiting" (Fresh Sound), a flexible studio record of originals and standards, and appeared on "Banned in London" (Whirlwind) in a quintet he leads with the London bassist Michael Janisch. (It includes the alto saxophonist Greg Osby, the trumpeter Raynald Colom and the drummer Rudy Royston.) Both of those records are new jazz as we know it, the second one more versatile. But he also made "Santiarican Blues Suite" (Sunnyside), a meticulous classical piece for chamber orchestra, drummers and voices, written to honor the history of Afro-Haitian dance. **And most recently there has been "Textures and Pulsations" (Ictus), a collaboration with Bob Gluck, a pianist and electronic musician of similarly diverse interests, partly improvised electroacoustic duets and partly two grand pianos virtuosically locking together on short, argumentative themes."**

- Ben Ratliff (New York Times)

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/arts/music/new-cds-from-follakzoid-dawn-richard-and-aruan-ortiz.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1359140869-8kYSXxlBvZa3Gle6lvzbVg&_r=0

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“Textures and Pulsations finds Ortiz playing piano and computer alongside Bob Gluck’s piano and Moog synthesizer on eight instant compositions. Gluck and Ortiz appear more comfortable balancing the acoustic and electronic by the second half of the recital. Before that, the outstanding track is “Red”, where interplay between Ortiz’ staccato keyboard melodies and vibraharp-like pops from Gluck’s synthesizer sound like Sun Ra and Walt Dickerson. From then on the cohesion keeps improving, with some tracks more electronic and some more acoustic. “Interludio” highlights an array of references in turn; with pulses that could come from a rock guitar at the top, **the two keyboardists next get into a tremolo duet with the power and interactivity of a boogie-woogie piano team.** In contrast, aviary-like processed yelps and whistles get equal time with the pianos on “Green”. [On this and his recording *Banned in London*] **Ortiz’ keyboard command is aptly demonstrated here. With such fine playing, he may soon be the subject of his composition ‘The Maestro’.**”

- Ken Waxman, New York City Jazz Record (May 2013)