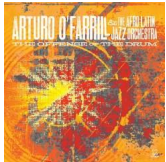


Arturo O'Farrill & the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra - The Offense of the Drum (2014)



1. *Cuarto de Colores* 2. *They Came* 3. *On the Corner of Malecón and Bourbon* 4. *Mercado en Domingo* 5. *Gnossienne 3 (Tientos)* 6. *The Mad Hatter* 7. *The Offense of the Drum* 8. *Alma Vacía* 9. *Iko Iko* Arturo O'Farrill: piano; Ivan Renta: tenor saxophone; Peter Brainin: tenor saxophone; Bobby Porcelli: alto saxophone; David DeJesus: alto saxophone; Jason Marshall: baritone saxophone; Seneca Black: trumpet; Jim Seeley: trumpet; John Bailey: trumpet; Jonathan Powell: trumpet; Tokunori Kajiwarra: trombone; Rafi Malkiel: trombone, euphonium; Frank Cohen: trombone; Earl McIntyre: bass trombone, tuba; Gregg August: bass; Vince Cherico: drums; Roland Guerrero: congas; Joe Gonzalez: bongos, bell; Pablo O Bilbraut: percussion (8); Miguel Blanco: conductor (5, 8); Christopher "Chilo" Cajigas: spoken word (2); Edmar Castaneda: harp (1); Ayanda Clarke: djembe (7); DJ Logic: turntables (2); Jonathan Gomez: percussion (4); Nestor Gomez: percussion (4); Donald Harrison: vocals (9), alto saxophone (9); Vijay Iyer: piano (6); Hiro Kurashima: taiko drum (7); Chad Lefkowitz-Brown: tenor saxophone (7); Jason Lindner: conductor (2); Antonio Lizana: vocals (5), alto saxophone (5); Pablo Mayor: conductor (4), maracas: (4); Uri Sharlin: accordion (5); Samuel Torres: conductor (1), cajon (1).

The Offense Of The Drum may be the least cohesive record in Arturo O'Farrill's discography, but that's largely by design. Here, O'Farrill firmly adheres to his stated "artistic vision"—"to bend what the world knows as Afro Latin jazz over the acoustic horizon"—better than anywhere else in his discography. Guests galore and a belief in Afro Latin camaraderie help him realize that goal, resulting in the most intriguing and expansive offering that he's ever released.

In some ways this album is simply a documentation of O'Farrill's work at New York's Symphony Space. It was there that he broke new ground with pianist Vijay Iyer, DJ Logic, Colombian harpist Edmar Castaneda, spoken word artist Christopher "Chilo" Cajigas, saxophonist Donald Harrison, and percussionist Samuel Torres. The relationship between each of those artists and O'Farrill's Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra is spotlighted on this album. "Cuarto De Colores"—the title track of Castaneda's debut album—is fleshed out to good effect, thanks in large part to the pen

of Torres; DJ Logic and the band lay the groundwork for Cajigas' Puerto Rican pride preaching on "They Came"; Iyer simultaneously toys with the concepts of stasis and development on his ode to O'Farrill—"The Mad Hatter"; and a straight line is drawn from NOLA to Cuba when Harrison shows up for "Iko Iko." Each of those pieces stand apart from the others in many respects, yet they stand in solidarity as firm examples of the evolving definition of Afro Latin jazz.

Some of the other numbers walk a relatively straight path from start to finish; "Alma Vacía," a sizzling salsa number from Miguel Blanco, and "Mercado En Domingo," a modern twist on Colombian porro music, both fall into this category. The most eye-opening works, however, are more collage-like in nature. "On The Corner Of Malecon And Bourbon," with its start-and-stop look at soloists and follow-the-lines-of-history stylistic transformation(s), and the title track, with a mushrooming fugue-ish introduction, shifting tides and percussion breaks, prove to be the most ambitious offerings.

O'Farrill has never been content to simply accept any stylistic definition in a neat little box. He understands that history and imagination, working hand in hand, can have a limitless partnership. This album goes a long way in proving that point. It's a work of visionary brilliance. ---Dan Bilawsky, allaboutjazz.com

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