

Joe Locke

By Gary France

All Things Vibraphone



projects including a 16-city tour of Russia with world-renowned violist Yuri Bashmet, a 30-city tour of all major capitals of Europe performing Charles Mingus' magnum opus, "Epitaph" as a featured soloist under the direction of distinguished conductor Gunther Schuller and a series of duet concerts in Italy with pianist Cecil Taylor demonstrates a profound sense of discipline and commitment.

He has won numerous awards including the 2006, 2008 and 2009 "Mallet Instrumentalist of the Year" Award, presented by the Jazz Journalist Association (JJA). In 2005, Joe received rave reviews performing at the prestigious Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in a mallet duo format with fellow keyboard artist Christos Rafalides, a duo that continues to this very day. Joe has also been voted the #1 Vibist in DownBeat Magazine's Critic's Poll (TDWR) and Brazil's International Jazz Poll. He is active as a clinician/educator and has been the International Vibraphone Consultant at the Royal Academy of Music, London, on a visiting basis since 2008, as well as being a faculty member of the Manhattan School of Music in New York City.

In recent years it is Joe Locke's role as leader and co-producer that focuses the light on a string of groundbreaking projects. He has recorded 20 CDs as a bandleader, including the critically acclaimed "Moment to Moment", a tribute to the music of Henry Mancini, "Live in Seattle" (Origin), by the Joe Locke/Geoffrey Keezer Group, won the 2006 Ear Shot Award for 'Concert of the Year'. "Live in Seattle" featuring Mike Pope and Terreon Gully, was recorded in 2005 at the Ballard Jazz Festival and was released in July 2006 on the Origin label. "Sticks and Strings" (MusicEyes) - featuring Jonathan Kreisberg, Jay Anderson and Joe LaBarbera - was released in November 2007 during an extensive and well received tour of Europe (Germany, Italy, Spain).

In 2008 Joe put together the unique new quartet, "Force of Four" by gathering the young talents and distinct musical personalities of Robert Rodriguez (piano), Jonathan Blake (drums) and Ricardo Rodriguez (bass), building this fresh sounding ensemble. The influences of New York, Cuba, Philadelphia and Puerto Rico, as well as the many places travelled by these four player/composers, come together in this group. Their first recording, "Force of Four" (Origin) was heralded as an overwhelming success.

In 2010 the E1 Music recording, "For The Love of You" of the Joe Locke Group featured the singer Kenny Washington, plus an all-star band: Geoffrey Keezer, George Mraz and Clarence Penn. I am excited about the most recent Joe Locke/Geoffrey Keezer Group release, "Signing" (Motéma Music, 2012). This astounding project also utilizes the music technology in the full delivery of musical recordings, charts, promotional material etc through Joe's website www.store.joelocke.com which documents a lifetime of achievement complete with a wealth of fully accessible knowledge and materials for listeners as well as pdf charts.

I recently caught up with Joe for an interview about his most recent performance projects and his upcoming trip to Australia. Joe very generously provided PERCUSscene a few of his compositions (one published in this very edition) that will feature on his Australia tour.

For many of us growing up in the 60's and 70's, students of Bobby Christian's "Total Percussion" generation, we studied drum-kit, timpani, xylophone and concert marimba etc. In addition, artists such as Airtio Moreira, Bill Summers, Don Alias and Ralph MacDonald introduced us to exotic World percussion. For most percussion majors, the study of Jazz vibraphone was quite removed from concert marimba, which comprises a canon of pedagogical etudes and compositions that could be taught in institutions. Jazz vibes, represented by virtuosic musicians such as Gary Burton, Mike Mainieri and Dave Samuels, was firmly footed in improvisation within the Jazz world, an area not fully established in university percussion programs until the 1990s. Growing up in Syracuse, New York, however, I often heard about a unique young musician (Joe Locke) in the neighbouring city of Rochester, who was focusing, at an early age, on Jazz vibraphone, charting his own path and direction.

As a person who has had a lifetime passion for "All Things Vibraphone", I have collected his albums, admired his style and passion and quietly chipped away at the wonderful canon of repertoire. When I had the opportunity to convene a national conference in 2012 focusing on the vibraphone I called around the country to gather recommendations; it came as no surprise that Joe Locke was at the top of the list!

Joe Locke, vibraphonist, composer and bandleader, grew up in Rochester New York, the home of the renowned Eastman School of Music. As a young man he had the opportunity

"In the select group of contemporary vibes players, Locke has claims to head the list." - Penguin Encyclopaedia of Jazz

to study with a "who's who" of established artist/teachers such as John Beck, and Eastman stand out students Gordon Stout, Ted Moore, David Mancini, pianist Phil Markowitz and bassist Steve Davis. (Wow!) Joe moved to New York City in the early 1980's to continue an education focusing on total immersion through professional performance and bench marking with, as we know, the greatest concentration of Jazz professionals in the world. Since Joe Locke's move to NYC he has worked as a sideman with Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Kenny Barron, Freddy Cole, Jerry Gonzales and the Fort Apache Band, Grover Washington Jr., Dianne Reeves, Eddie Daniels, Rod Stewart, Beastie Boys, Eddie Henderson, Hiram Bullock, Bob Berg, Ron Carter, Jimmie Scott, Geoffrey Keezer, The Mingus Big Band and Randy Brecker - to name a few. He has appeared on more than 65 recordings and travels to this day on a path towards documenting his original voice.

Joe Locke's 30-year history of collaborative

Photo by Eric Richmond





“Joe Locke’s playing and writing have been an absolute joy to this vibist’s ears that have been starving to hear a player who challenges himself on every tune. Joe is constantly pushing the envelope musically. The cat is going into orbit soon I love it!” - Mike Mainieri

Australian musicians are very excited about your upcoming visit to Australia as part of the “All Things Vibraphone” conference. Can you please tell us about your unique approach to teaching Vibraphone and Improvisation?

Firstly, it is my great pleasure to come to Australia and meet a bunch of kindred spirits who are as crazy about music as I am! I have taught workshops and masterclasses in many places and I have found each one to be distinctly different. There are many levels of experience in a workshop situation. Even if all of the players are advanced, some may be more knowledgeable improvisers, while others may be excellent mallet players, but not have a strong desire to improvise, or are a bit intimidated to try. It is essential to me that

I approach every teaching situation as new and unique. I don’t have a prepared syllabus to impose, or a “right way” of doing anything. My approach is to offer myself - my experience, my history, my mistakes and my passion - to the participants. There is so much to discuss and explore, and it is always better when it’s a 2-way street. After all, we are all students!

How do you present the Vibraphone to percussionists who may be classically trained but would like to develop strategies for improvisation?
As I said before, some Classical players can be a little shy about attempting to improvise. I think it is important to let them know that improvising simply means, “creating in the moment” or “making it up as you go along”. In a workshop situation, I like to

give a group of mallet players something specific to play - an underpinning, or carpet - and then talk about what can be improvised over that structure. It may be based on only one or two chords. Then I may ask various “soloists” to come up and give it a try, making up an improvisation on the spot, over the framework the others are providing. It’s always wonderful to see a musician realize for the first time that he or she can improvise! I have also written some solo Vibraphone etudes, which can be played by improvisers and non-improvisers alike. Although these pieces are through composed, there are places where the player can get off the page if they desire. These etudes also open a doorway to a discussion about phrasing, dampening and pedalling for Jazz and Classical players.

Can you tell me about your process for composition and do you feel composition helps with your improvisations?

I get inspiration to compose from various sources. Often the inspiration is literary: a novel or a poem. But sometimes the muse can strike upon hearing an off-hand phrase, one that conjures the beginning of a melody. I compose mainly at the piano, with a kernel of an idea. I once heard the great novelist E. L. Doctorow talking about his process of writing. He said he never knows how his books will end.

As he writes and the characters take shape, they tell him where they want to go! I think it is much the same for me when writing music. It is a matter of quieting down and becoming available to the process. The music tells me where it wants to go. I also feel that the improviser in me informs the composer, and vice versa. It has taken a long time for my writing and playing to meet each other in an organic way, but I think I’m finally getting there! **Clearly, your many collaborations with artists such as Geoffrey Keezer have provided a clear direction for your musical expression. Can you please tell us about this collaboration and what future projects are in the planning?**

I always say that any day I wake up knowing I’m going to make music with Geoffrey Keezer is a great day! GK is a certifiable genius with a profound knowledge of music and an impeccable command of his instrument. But his prime directive is always to communicate, and to make the music feel good! He is a masterful listener and is always sensitive to what is happening around him. He has no limitations and an abundance of imagination. Frankly, I feel fortunate indeed to have had such a longstanding musical dialogue with him. The Joe Locke/Geoffrey Keezer Group has a brand new CD out, called “Signing”, on the Motema label. It is the follow-up to our award winning, “Live in Seattle” CD (Origin). The recording features the original band members, Mike Pope and Terreon Gully, along with GK and myself. We’re all really excited about



Photo by Eric Richmond

it! We’ll be doing tour dates in the U.S and Europe this summer and fall, as well as next spring.

I was most inspired when I interacted with your web site: it was so full of rich content and numerous opportunities for people to access your music (in a variety of formats), compositions, and genuinely share in your musical journey. Can you please describe your relationship with technology and how you view the future strategies to enable more access your music?

Personally, I’m still a bit of a caveman, but as they say, “progress, not perfection”. I fought tooth-and-nail against learning to use a music-writing software program (I use Sibelius). But now that I have

finally made friends with it (sort of!), I see what a beneficial and timesaving tool it can be. Thanks for your kind words about my website, Gary. I’m quite proud of it, though can take none of the credit! That goes to Nadja von Massow (www.nadworks.com), an absolutely brilliant designer. She is an artist herself, so her aesthetic is quite high, but she also knows a substantial amount about marketing. So, to make an understatement, I’m quite lucky to have her on board. It’s really cool that things stay fresh and interesting at the website. For example, “Signing” is available at www.joelocke.com but now, for the first time, we are offering all of the sheet music to the original compositions on the CD for anyone who wants to play or study them. We’re getting a lot of response to this, and it encourages me to do more to make the website even more interactive! I’m envisioning doing some streaming video lessons in order to help students with whom I’m not able to connect in real-time. Lots of ideas are gestating!

References

- Penguin Encyclopaedia of Jazz
- www.joelocke.com
- ^ A b Henderson, Alex. “Joe Locke: Biography”. Allmusic. Retrieved 2010-09-07.
- ^ Kelman, John (2010-02-15). “Extended analysis: For the Love of You”. All about Jazz. Retrieved 2010-09-07.2

All Things Vibraphone

AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOCUSING ON THE VIBRAPHONE, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

CONFERENCE CONVENER | GARY FRANCE

International virtuoso vibraphone artist Joe Locke (USA) headlines this five Day international seminar and conference focusing on the Vibraphone.

Musicians, scholars and educators will celebrate this often overlooked keyboard percussion instrument through masterclasses, clinics and scholarly papers, hosted by the ANU School of Music.

SEPTEMBER 10 - 14, 2012
ANU SCHOOL OF MUSIC

For more information please contact gary.france@anu.edu.au

 Australian National University

ANU School of Music
Information and program details at music.anu.edu.au

Sword of Whispers

for solo vibraphone

Joe Locke

♩ = 112

intro *Ami* *pp* *let ring*

5 *Ami*

9 **A** *Ami* *Dmi*

13 *Dmi* *E7* *Ami*

17 *Ami* *Dmi*

21 *E7* *Ami*

25 *(E7)* *Ami* *G#o* *Am6* *B^{o7}*

29 **B** *A(add2)/C#* *Dmi*

Copyright © 2010

2

33 *G(add2)/B* *Cmaj7* *Gb7*

37 *Fmaj7* *Cmaj7*

41 *F6* *(r.h.)* *D/F#* **Gtri** *Gb7*

45 *Fmaj7* *Emi* *Ami*

49 *Dm9* *Dbmaj7/G* *ped*

53

56 *Ami* *G7(b9)*

60 **C** *Cm9* *C7(b9)* *Fmi*

64 Fmi G7alt. Cmi

68 Cmi C7 Fmi

72 Abmaj7(b5) G7(b9) (Cmi)

76 Cm6 Cm6 F° G#° B° Cm6 D°

D

80 A(add2) Dmi

84 G(add2)/B Cmaj7 Gb7(b5)

88 Fmaj7 Cmaj7

92 F6 (r.h.) D/F# Gtri

95 Gb7 Fmaj7 Emi

99 Ami Dm9 Dbmaj7/G

103

107 Ami

111 Ami Dmi

115 E7 intro Ami

119 let ring Ami

123 fine