

SONOKLECT '07-'08
A Concert Series of Modern Music
DOUG SCARBOROUGH, DIRECTOR

Monty Alexander Trio

WILSON HALL
LENFEST CENTER FOR THE ARTS
WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY

20 OCTOBER 2007

8:00 P.M.

PROGRAM

SET 1

— INTERMISSION —

SET 2

Monty Alexander, piano

Hassan Shakur, bass

Herlin Riley, drums

Monty Alexander

By grafting the traditions of American jazz to his authentic Jamaican roots, pianist Monty Alexander has spent a lifetime exploring the rich depths of musical and cultural diversity. In a career that spans more than four decades, he has performed and/or recorded with artists from every corner of the musical universe: Frank Sinatra, Ray Brown, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Rollins, Quincy Jones, Ernest Ranglin, Sly Dunbar, Robbie Shakespeare and many more.



Through it all, he continues to draw inspiration from the great icons of American music and popular culture. “All these people came from struggling circumstances,” he says. “They didn’t go to music school. They came from the street. Nat Cole, Sinatra, Louis Armstrong — they all had to hustle to get where they got. It’s that story of people who can grow up in America or come to America and achieve something just because they have this great attitude and they have the talent to go with it, and they reach for something and they get it.”

In many ways, Alexander has lived that same story. Born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, he took his first piano lessons at age six. As a youngster, he was often invited to sit in with the bands of prominent musicians working in Jamaican nightclubs and hotels. During his teen years, he enjoyed, among others, the performances of Louis Armstrong and Nat “King” Cole at the Carib Theater in Jamaica. The shades of joyful gospel music in these artists’ performances had a profound and lasting effect on Alexander’s own style. He eventually formed a band called “Monty and the Cyclones,” which landed several songs on the Jamaican music charts between 1958 to 1960.

Alexander came to the United States in the end of 1961. Less than two years later, he’d landed a gig with Art Mooney’s orchestra in Las Vegas, where

he caught the eye of New York City club owner Jilly Rizzo and his friend, Frank Sinatra. Rizzo hired the young pianist to work in his club, where he accompanied many well-known performers, including Sinatra. He also met Milt Jackson, who hired Monty to work with him, and eventually introduced him to bassist Ray Brown (with whom he subsequently recorded and performed on many occasions). One introduction led to another, and before long he was working with Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, and Sonny Rollins.

In the past decade alone, Alexander has maintained an especially busy schedule with multiple projects spanning multiple genres and styles. In 1991, he assisted Natalie Cole in crafting a tribute album to her father, Nat "King" Cole (the album, *Unforgettable*, won seven Grammy awards). In 1993, he performed at Carnegie Hall in a tribute to the great jazz pianist Erroll Garner.

A regular fixture at the Montreux Jazz Festival since 1976, he performed at the Swiss festival in 1993 and 1994 with opera singer Barbara Hendricks in a program of Duke Ellington compositions. He was back in Montreux in 1995, this time with his all-Jamaican reggae group where he recorded a live album for Island Records, *Yard Movement*.

In August 1996, Alexander performed George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" with a full symphony orchestra directed by Bobby McFerrin at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. By the end of that same year, he had recorded nearly sixty CDs under his own name, and was frequently performing at leading festivals and music venues worldwide.

Alexander joined the Telarc label with the 1999 release of *Stir It Up*, an album that combined acoustic jazz and Jamaican reggae rhythms to interpret the music of the great Bob Marley. *Stir It Up* marked the beginning of a prolific period for Alexander on Telarc — one that continues to this day.

Monty has drawn from the varied sources of his musical experiences to record the next six albums for Telarc; these include sessions in classic trio format such as *Impressions in Blue*, as well as recordings of live concert sets such as *Goin' Yard* and the most recent release *Live at the Iridium* (2005).

In the late summer of 2005, Alexander traveled to Bob Marley's Tuff Gong Studio in Kingston, Jamaica, with a crew of highly talented U. S. musicians and teamed up with Jamaican top session players to record the brilliant follow up to *Stir It Up*. *Concrete Jungle* is a set of twelve compositions penned by Bob Marley and reinterpreted via Alexander's jazz piano-oriented arrangements. The resulting union of musical sensibilities digs even deeper into the Marley legend.

Separate and apart from being the best musician he can be, Alexander's most important objective—whether his vehicle is reggae or jazz or soul, small combo or symphony—is to express the joy of music to all within earshot, regardless of prevailing differences in taste or culture. “My goal is to uplift,” says Alexander. “The piano, to me, is a vehicle for connecting to other human beings. I'm very open to all forms of music. I'm not a bebop musician, I'm not a calypso musician, I'm not a reggae musician. I'm a musician who loves it all.”

source: montyalexander.com



2007-2008 SONOKLECT SEASON

Saturday, 20 October

Monty Alexander Trio

A blend of American Jazz with Jamaican roots



Saturday, 2 February

McLean Mix, Natural Energy

Priscilla and Barton McLean
Live interactive music media



Saturday, 22 March

Alexandre Dossin, piano

Recent winner of the Martha Argerich
International Piano Competition

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT SONOKLECT HEADQUARTERS

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