

SONOKLECT

A Festival of Modern Music

Terry Vosbein, director

Dave Douglas & Brass Ecstasy

Saturday
24 October 2009
8PM

WILSON HALL

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY
Department of Music

Brass Ecstasy

Dave Douglas – trumpet

Vincent Chancey – french horn

Luis Bonilla – trombone

Matt Perrine – sousaphone

Jakubu Griffin – drums

Two-time Grammy-nominated jazz musician **Dave Douglas** is arguably the most prolific and original trumpeter/composer of his generation. From his New York base, where he's lived since the mid 1980s, Douglas has continued to earn lavish national and international acclaim including trumpeter, composer, and jazz "Artist of the Year" by such organizations as the New York Jazz Awards, Down Beat, Jazz Times, Jazziz, and the Italian Jazz Critics' Society. His solo recording career began in 1993 with *Parallel Worlds* on Soul Note and he has since released over twenty-eight recordings. In 2005, after seven critically-acclaimed albums for Bluebird/RCA, Douglas launched his own record label, Greenleaf Music. The same year, he was honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship. On Greenleaf, Douglas has released albums with his long standing Quintet, the electronic sextet Keystone, and the mixed chamber ensemble Nomad. His latest project, Brass Ecstasy, features a brass quintet of trumpet, French horn, trombone, tuba and drums and was released Spring 2009.

Douglas is currently the artistic director of the Workshop in Jazz and Creative Music at the Banff Center and the co-founder and director of the Festival of New Trumpet Music, which will celebrate its 7th year in 2009. In addition to leading his own groups, Douglas has an important ongoing musical



relationship as a member of John Zorn's Masada and with artists such as Anthony Braxton, Don Byron, Joe Lovano, Miguel Zenon, Uri Caine, Bill Frisell, Cibo Matto, Mark Dresser, Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg. As a composer, Douglas has been commissioned by the Trisha Brown Dance Company, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Essen Philharmonie, Library of Congress and Stanford University. Recent large scale works have included *Blue Latitudes*, for chamber orchestra and 3 improvisers, and *Delighted States*, for big band with soloists.



Brass Ecstasy and *Spirit Moves*

Over the past several years, Douglas has steadily honed his work with Brass Ecstasy with appearances at the 2008 Chicago Jazz Festival, which commissioned new music from the group, Willisau Festival, Reggio Calabria Jazz Festival, and The Festival of New Trumpet Music. Douglas introduces *Spirit Moves* as he pays homage to the brass instrument with eight new original compositions and three arrangements of classics by such disparate artists as **Otis Redding, Hank Williams** and **Rufus Wainwright**. Informed by the evolving spirit of brass music and by his multi-faceted career as the director of The Festival of New Trumpet Music, label head of Greenleaf Music, a renowned composer and artist, and record producer, Douglas pens an ambitious collection of lyrical songs with impressions of folk, pop and soul music. *Spirit Moves* unveils an idiosyncratic elegance in Douglas's indelible writing with performances by today's great brass players.

Brass Ecstasy captures a distinct cohesiveness and ease on *Spirit Moves*, as if it were the final set in a weeklong residency at the Jazz Standard in New York City. Recorded in a single room, *Spirit Moves* forsakes tradition with each player redefining their role while embracing divergent themes to amass a full brass ensemble sound. Douglas is known for carefully selecting artists for his ensembles. On *Spirit Moves*, the right line-up affords an opportunity to place each player in unforeseen situations where years of dialogue between the players shines with spontaneous brilliance. Brass Ecstasy's compositional adaptability, and voyage in discovering innovative approaches to recorded music, is essentially the backbone of *Spirit Moves*.

An arsenal of elements constructs the overall feel of *Spirit Moves*. Depending on the track, Douglas might be the feature, a select player might take the lead, or the entire ensemble might be highlighted. Each tune carries individual character. Songs shift in tempos and in lengths, moods and genres. The opening track, "This Love Affair" by Rufus Wainwright, stands as a longtime favorite of Douglas's. He has previously covered Wainwright ("Poses," *The Infinite*) and notes him as one of the greatest contemporary songwriters. Brass Ecstasy takes this dirge and rings every salty tear from the nooks and crannies of the piece. "Orujo," which refers to the clear Spanish brandy, marks one of the album's standout successes. An explicit collective achievement, "Orujo" culminates with elaborate interweaving parts and improvisation of counterpoint, while staying within the form of the tune. Douglas comments, "It's easy to lose the fact that there's only a tuba and three horns on top."

Three tracks on the new disc are dedicated to three great trumpeters: **Lester Bowie**, **Enrico Rava** and **Fats Navarro**. While Douglas scribed material for the 2008 Chicago Jazz Festival, "Bowie" surfaced as an appropriate fit to acknowledge Bowie's legendary work with the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Abundant with buoyant harmony, swift comedic passages and diversifying changes, "Bowie" features the collective's singular horn interplay masterfully supported by drummer Nasheet Waits. One of Douglas's top picks, Waits is a shining example of the influential role drummers play in orchestrating modern jazz. Much of the sonic palette on *Spirit Moves* is directed by his craftsmanship.

Upon a chance encounter with Enrico Rava at the Roccella Ionica Festival in Calabria, Italy last summer, Douglas sculpted "Rava" after an inspiring late-night hang session with the credited trumpeter, in which Rava spoke of his first concert seeing Miles Davis and Lester Young together in the early '50s. Douglas confidently takes the lead on "Rava" as he opens the piece with just Rojas and Waits, setting a somber tone before he invites a delicate harmony from Bonilla and Chancey. The song for Fats, simply titled "Fats," was composed so the band would intentionally seem much bigger than a quintet. Each musician switches between playing rhythm, melody and harmony, resulting in an arrangement reminiscent of a straight Monk tune. Douglas comments, "This is one where having Bonilla and Chancey was so crucial. Having spent a lot of years in Lester Bowie's band, they have a unique affinity of how horn parts of this nature can come together."

Shying away from the too often heavy-hitting, showy, and virtuoso nature of brass music, *Spirit Moves* has a very different focus, one conveying the beautiful, soulful and ecstatic ways of life. After several years of showcasing much of this material to live audiences, Dave Douglas & Brass Ecstasy captures the essence of brass music in the 21st Century with their debut recording effort.



Opening another chapter in his award-winning career, trumpeter, composer and bandleader Dave Douglas has announced the formation and launch of an ambitious new record label, Greenleaf Music. Douglas will follow his successful recording career at RCA-Bluebird by producing his own projects for Greenleaf, continuing his vision of an American Music moving forward in all directions. He will also serve as Artistic Director for the label, providing a supportive platform for other cutting edge artists involved in new music. Joining Douglas in this venture is Michael Friedman, an experienced label manager with a track record of success at both indie and major labels. Longtime friends, Douglas and Friedman are coming together at this time out of a shared desire to produce and release quality masters into the marketplace, to see that fresh approaches are brought to the selling of music and to create a business environment that is mutually beneficial for artist and record company.

For Douglas, a consistent Critics Poll Winner and Grammy nominated artist, the timing of this venture was right. "I was looking for a way to continue producing recordings my own way, in my own time. I decided that the way to find that creative freedom was to start my own business," says Douglas. "I have long admired Michael Friedman's work at Premonition Records, the label he began in 1994. He's a musician and he has the ears and the intuition to know how to deal with creative music. That's important to me. Mike also happens to be a very shrewd and committed businessman, with the ethical sense to agree that artists deserve a much more equitable arrangement, both in terms of creative freedom and in terms of marketing and support." Douglas sees Greenleaf as a logical next step for him as both artist and producer. "I've made 21 albums in my career, and while I've had great experiences at big and small labels, it is time for me to take even more responsibility for my recordings," says Douglas. "And with all of the great music that I hear going on out there, it was also time to try to help broaden the sense of where music is going."

Friedman comes to Greenleaf just as Premonition Records is ending a five-year joint imprint and distribution deal with Blue Note Records/EMI. "Greenleaf Music is a once in a lifetime opportunity to

work hand in hand with someone I consider a modern master,” says Friedman. “That is about all someone in my position can ask for: the opportunity to set your ideas in motion in support of music that truly inspires you. Although its a tough time in the industry, I have unbelievable confidence in Dave Douglas as an artist, record producer and as an individual.”

Both Friedman and Douglas goals for Greenleaf are far-reaching yet pragmatic. “We want innovation and creativity both in the music and in the business. We want to create an enduring legacy. We also don’t want to lose our shirts,” says Friedman. “We believe we can accomplish this by working closely with the artists we sign to set up reachable goals. Artists are some of the smartest people I know. They know they are generally not well served by the current system and are looking for an alternative approach.”

“We will be offering all our artists 50/50 profit sharing deals,” says Douglas. “Because of that the artists will be partners in making the deals work they will know everything we are doing and we will be counting on them to be an integral part of the marketing plans.” The collaborative approach extends to Greenleaf’s corporate setup and philosophy. “Mike and I are equal partners in Greenleaf Music, so there’s an element of trust that the business of music and the actual music can work as mutually beneficial partners,” says Douglas. “We have a realistic sense of what kind of support artists need, what sales goals can be expected, and what level of costs define a healthy risk.”

So what will Greenleaf Music sound like? “Greenleaf Music will concentrate on jazz, post-jazz, and world music, however the labels main credo is simply about creativity in musical expression. As a result, Greenleaf’s sound will be defined by the artists we choose to sign, allowing them room to define their own world,” says Douglas. “I’m always excited to hear something new that connects, music that has something personal to say that is unique to that individual, as well as having something universal to offer. Music will always grow from that premise.”

And how will Greenleaf’s business approach differ? “We endeavor to be as innovative in our marketing plans as the artists are in their music,” says Friedman. “We plan to re-evaluate current approaches to everything from package design to marketing, promotion and sales strategies and look at every marketing expense in light of its potential resonance with each individual project. We will count on web marketing as a means of artist development and as our artists will be on tour, utilize the live performances to sell records and create sales bases. We also believe that what interests listeners is not just the recorded product, but the artists themselves. As such we are interested in making available sheet music, artist commentary, discussion and more.”

2009-2010 Schedule

DAVE DOUGLAS & BRASS ECSTASY

Saturday, 24 October 2009, 8PM

BRAD BLACKHAM – PIANO ERIC JONES – PERCUSSION

Saturday, 30 January 2010, 8PM

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