

however is undeniably the unique combination of the quartet's individually distinct voices. *Configuration* is a sanctifying experience from a retro-futuristic perspective. Having spanned at least four generations between them and given their respective history in the music known as free jazz or New Black Music, the contribution by the three elder statesmen of the ensemble: Sirone, Bang and Gayle to the continuing advancement of that music cannot be denied. Their timelessness is a reflection on the culture that spawned them and the culture that they inspire today...a culture that continues on in the tradition of modernism. A tradition that has been imbued in young artists the caliber of drummer Tyshawn Sorey who trades his fire for their wisdom and their fire for his youthful sagacity putting him in perfect alignment to trade concepts with the masters in the continuum.

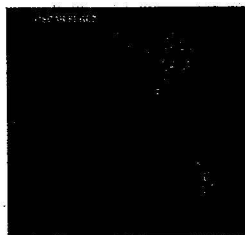
The CD begins with two original compositions by Billy Bang and provides the thematic material on which the rest of the CD is structured. "Jupiter's Future" is delivered as an exultation of textural voices that flow into an extended drum solo by Sorey who reverently and expertly converts the piece into a sorcerer's light show that explodes like fireworks emanating from his brushes, mallets and sticks, beating out a torrent of rhythms into the atmosphere that embellish the theme while keeping its identity in tact. A free collective ensues then sharply departs into an intricate and powerful solo by Gayle whose screaming throaty lines tear across the open space with veracious precision. A dance of extreme tones becomes a balancing parlay between dark and light, earth and air, cutting edges and space, curves and angles, planes and spheres. The darkly resonant billowy character of Sirone's bass and Bang's incredible scope of range and virtuosity carry the piece to its final movement - a conversation of abstracted harmonies and expanded linear dialogues that culminate in a journey back to the source of creation metaphorically supporting the Big Bang Theory. The swinging second cut "Freedom Flexibility" "sets it off" with a hard-kicking throw-down led by Bang's strutting violin and Gayle's taunting saxophone exchange. I loved its sassy dirty - bluesy feel which gets inside your soul and stirs up your juices tugging and pulling you with its sarcastic jibs and jibes.

"We Are Not Alone, But We Are Few" composed by Sirone is a theater of sound piece that lifts like fog coming off of a murky moonlit lagoon - foreboding in nature, ominously foretelling. The wailing effect created by the troupe is thick with images and musical language that is at times operatic and classical in its execution revealing the extreme depth of passion that each musician possesses. "I Remember Albert," the second Sirone composition, drastically diverts from the previous statement and blows up before your eyes in a complexity of colors and lines - Albert Ayler-ized to the nines, and a befitting tribute to one of the main leaders in free music. Charles Gayle's solo is absolutely remarkable with the battalion of sound works all around him provided by Sorey's genius drumming - the energy level is astounding and the hotter Sorey makes it the more Gayle continues to build and forge his solo to the point of combustion. Sirone brings in Bang with a smooth transition that quickly arrives back at the same level of intensity and just like magic,

Sorey reappears and once again raises the ensemble to a cacophonous rage that expands into an open and rhythmic interplay before returning to the original form.

The third Bang composition "Notre Dame De La Garde," summons feelings of an approaching nature. The ensemble lays the foundation but the actual exploration and engagement of ideas is left up to Bang and Gayle's incredibly imaginative dialogues and while not exhausting the endless possibilities that beckon they communicate with style and eloquence respecting the composition's intention. It is one of the simpler pieces and begins the decrescendo into the title piece "Configuration" written by Sirone. The funky overtones and quirky dance-like feel ala "Freedom Jazz Dance" redistributes the elemental components of the preceding pieces into a single new expression that defines the premise of the entire CD allowing for one last statement from each of the artists.

*Configuration* with its masterful combining of visual, aural, performing and dramatic art forms makes it a banquet for the senses and reminds us of what a blessing these four artists are to the current creative music scene in New York City and around the world. This writer wonders why they are not currently performing in venues like the Village Vanguard where years ago in another time and societal head space John Coltrane and other giants and pioneers of progressive music were making history and reshaping modern jazz. The beat goes on but the time is past due for artists of this magnitude to get more visibility around town in the top jazz and creative venues. To the Sirone Bang Ensemble an enormous thank you for making a refreshingly excellent CD and for keeping the music free.



## Oscar Perez

**NUEVO COMIENZO** - [www.oscarperezmusic.com](http://www.oscarperezmusic.com)  
*My Prelude; Baile de K; El Padrino; Borrowed 'n Blue; Hilltop Arrival; Sweet Duality; Regalo; Solamente Todo; May; Early Endeavor; Nuevo Comienzo Motif.*

**PERSONNEL:** Oscar Perez, piano; Fender Rhodes; Greg Glassman, trumpet, flugelhorn; Stacy Dillard, saxophones; Anthony Perez, acoustic bass; Geoff Clapp, drums; Angel Desai, vocals; Emiliano Valerio, percussion; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone; Peter Bernstein, guitar.

By Dave Miele

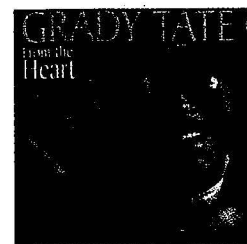
Oscar Perez is a talented modern jazz artist, with Latin leanings but always a taste of swing. His latest CD, *Nuevo Comienzo*, presents a program of completely original music. This is a musician that has his own voice. Both his compositions and his improvisations are evidence of this. The band always

sounds comfortable, whether backing Perez or taking their own improvisations. Good musician, good compositions, good band...good CD. It isn't hard.

Perez begins the disc with "My Prelude," a short but compelling solo piano piece. The band then launches into "Baile de K," a 6/8 Afro-Cuban piano vamp tune. As soon as this feel starts to get comfortable, Perez's composition switches gears into a fast 4/4, clave based feel, and then to swing. The 4/4 Latin/swing format remains throughout the solos. Starting with the piano trio, "El Padrino" has a 6/8 feel which is far from the typical 6/8 Afro-Cuban feel. After the horn lines, soprano sax and bass solos round out the tune. "Borrowed 'n Blue" is a cha cha, the sax has the melody and the horns answer the melodic calls. This tune also switches between Latin and swing styles during trombone, sax, trumpet and finally piano solos. *Nuevo Comienzo* continues with "Hilltop Arrival," a bossa-esque, medium tempo tune with some tuti hits over a bass/piano ostinato during the melody. "Sweet Duality" is a slow and somber duet between Perez and trumpeter Greg Glassman. The tune provides a nice contrast and "break" at about the halfway point.

"Regalo" is an energetic tune, starting with tasty drum breaks around band hits. The tune is up tempo cascara, and special guest Wycliffe Gordon takes a magnificent trombone solo. After Gordon's solo the band drops out and we're left with only bassist Anthony Perez, who begins his solo unaccompanied. When the band comes back in, drummer Geoff Clapp is playing brushes and the accompaniment is gentle. Perez solos in this soft environment and gradually builds the tune up toward the melody restatement. Guitarist Peter Bernstein - another special guest - plays the ballad melody of "Solamente Todo." This gentle tune avoids being sluggish and is fairly quick for a ballad, with a light Latin feel. "May" is an eclectic blend of electric piano, sax, trumpet and vocals. There is a spirit of "collective improvisation" throughout the track. "Early Endeavor" is another ballad that pushes the borders of tempo and intensity. Perez stays with the electric piano. The disc ends with the title track, about one minute of a funky piano/conga/trombone trio, which fades in and out.

Oscar Perez is a composer and improviser worth paying attention to. In which of these two areas Perez's voice is strongest is something I'll leave for you to decide (for I simply can't). His brand of Latin flavored modern jazz is fresh, yet familiar. Whether the greatest strength is in what Perez does with his compositions or the compositions themselves, one thing is certain. *Nuevo Comienzo* sounds great...and that's what it's all about, right?



## Grady Tate

**FROM THE HEART: SONGS SUNG LIVE AT**