

SHORT TAKES Philadelphia, PA

Harding on alto sax, **Bern Nix** on guitar, and **Warren Oree** on bass. Their two-hour set was a fierce display of stamina and love for game changer Coleman. Zankel, who has spent time with the master, and Harding remarkably channeled the nuances of Coleman. Unsuccessful portions of the performance were kept to a minimum under the watchful eye of Weston who used his monster drum set to stir up trouble. Unfortunately, the two other local members of the old Prime Time Band, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, and Charlee Ellerbe, could not make the gig. Although Weston, Tacuma and Ellerbe live mere blocks from each other in North Philly, this was the first pointed Coleman tribute. Nix spoke after the set, saying every morning he gets up with the intention of setting up some gigs but although he has a reputation from playing with Coleman, work remains elusive ... Koboku Senju translates to "selection of dead trees" in Japanese but it's also the name of a Japanese/Norwegian quintet consisting of noted no-input mixing board specialist **Toshimaru Nakamura** along with **Tetuzi Akiyama** (g), **Martin Tacks** (tba), **Oyvind Lonning** (tpt) and **Espen Reinersen** (ts, flt). Their U.S. debut was on 5/28 at the Fleisher/Ollman Gallery (ANW). Flashing sporadic aggression, the quintet gravitated toward a quieter realm of experimental music. Of note was the work of Lonning who produced a fabulous array of unexpected sounds from his trumpet. The motley mix of artists came about when Tacks, who has a Japanese wife, contacted Nakamura about playing together. Nakamura sticks to a low-tech approach, showing no

school with a popular music piano player. I studied trumpet in sixth grade and had a couple of Folk and Classical guitar lessons. I think playing the conga drums and Blues harmonica was a great introduction to improvisation. Here I had no instructor. I met a Blues piano player for twenty minutes and practiced all summer. I formally studied classical shakuhachi for two years and later entered San Francisco State University as a Classical piano major. We studied composition, theory, etc., and twentieth century composers from Mahler to Stockhausen, Bartok, Messian, Dallapiccolo and Cage. I took a Jazz class with John Handy and eventually studied about six lessons with Jazz pianist Mark Levine. There were so many teachers along the way. Sometimes they were fellow musicians and other times recordings but ultimately when I developed the most personal aspect of my playing I had to rely on my inner voices—and this is still going on. My music has been inspired by nature, metaphysical concepts, and a strong urge to take what has already been done and move it into new areas; to break down preconceptions and inspire change as a relevant form of creativity. To do this one must change the structures you're using and sometimes destroy the things you love in order to find yourself. And then after you've found yourself, let go, and let everything you love pour through you.

The language I've developed on shakuhachi is quite new to the instrument. There is vocalizing, harmonic movement, and improvisational approaches as well as ensemble choices that change the concept of what the instrument had been before. Pianistically I have a very individual style and my effect is strong in steering the direction and content of the composition being improvised.

So when you say self-taught, it is inevitable that an Artist with no matter how many influences ultimately must be self-taught in order to truly add something of himself.

Let's get back to your Jazz studies with John Handy and Mark Levine.

The thing I learned from John Handy was presence of character. I saw this in Reggie Workman, Karl Berger, Bob Stewart, William Parker, Fred Hopkins, Wilber Morris, etc. It's a deep love with conviction and a scary sense of discipline. I also had a strange experience in John's class. He was not there but the musicians in his class were. These musicians were auditioned to get in so they were the best players. I was at the piano and I began to play in a way that I was elevated or levitated in the music. My power was being exposed to me. I was hired by John to be in his band but my domestic circumstances led to one rehearsal only. I would say John's presence and his recognition of my talents as composer and performer were the most significant. I also played with Eddie Henderson and Sonny Simmons in San Francisco.

As for Mark Levine, he came to me as a referral through SFSU. Mark displayed, in a highly logical manner, Jazz voicing and scales. He did not explore improvising much, he primarily gave me harmonic information. It was his introduction to fourth chords layered upon each other in various ways that helped me build my concepts on the shape aspect of chords as an abstract concept affected by common intervals and shape sound as heard throughout every complex form in music there in. Mark's studio had a grand piano and the environment I wished to have for my own. He was the quintessential professional Jazz musician. His work with Cal Tjader is to be noted and published in an excellent instructional book.