

# Oliver Lake Big Band



## Biography

Whether composing commissioned works for Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra and the Brooklyn Philharmonic; creating chamber pieces for Arditti and Flux String Quartets, Amherst Sax Quartet and San Francisco Contemporary Players ; arranging for Bjork, Lou Reed and A Tribe Called Quest; collaborating with poets Amiri Baraka and Ntozake Shange; choreographers Ron Brown and Marlies Yearby; vocalist Mary Redhouse, kumongo player Jin Hi Kim, and bamboo flute player Shuni Tsou; performing with Anna Devere Smith and Patricia Williams; sharing the stage with Mos Def and Me'shell Ndegeocello; or leading his own Organ Quartet, Big Band and cooperative ensembles the World Saxophone Quartet and Trio 3; Oliver views it all as parts of the same whole.

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Lake attributes much of his diverse array of musical styles and disciplines to his experience with the Black Artists Group (BAG), the legendary multi-disciplined and innovative St. Louis collective he co-founded with poets Ajule Rutlin, and musicians Julius Hemphill and Floyd La Flore over 35 years ago. As a co-founder of the internationally acclaimed World Saxophone Quartet with Hemphill, Hamiet Bluiett and David Murray, Oliver continues to work with a variety of groups, and collaborates with several notable choreographers, poets and a veritable Who's Who of the progressive jazz scene, performing all over the U.S., Europe, Japan, the Middle East, Africa and Australia.

In addition to his musical endeavors, Oliver is also an accomplished poet, painter and performance artist. He has published two books of poetry, has exhibited and sold his artwork internationally, and has toured the country with his one-man performance piece, *Matador of 1st and 1st*. In 2011, Oliver began work on the *Jazz House* for the City of Asylum in Pittsburgh, with its completion realized in 2012. Oliver designed the intricately painted exterior and provided works of art for the interior, including a programmed saxophone doorbell, which includes samples of his music.

For the past decade, Oliver Lake's Big Band has served as one of his greatest achievements and most sophisticated compositional outlets. He is currently celebrating the second recorded release of his Big Band, entitled *Wheels*, which has been met with widespread critical acclaim.

In 2014, Oliver received the prestigious Doris Duke Artist Award, a multi-year grant awarded to only 19 American artists in the fields of jazz, theater and dance. As such, the coming years promise to be exciting and filled with bold new artistic endeavors.

*"This post-bop/avant-garde effort demonstrates that Lake enjoys contrasting the inside and the outside in a big band setting as much as he does with a small group. Wheels is avant-garde without being radically avant-garde; the big band's performances are more inside than outside, but when Lake and his sidemen detour into outside playing, they do so without apology." - Alex Henderson - Jazz Inside Magazine*

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*"Oliver Lake's skill as a big-band leader might not be as well known as his tenure with the World Saxophone Quartet or his small-group projects, despite an interest in the format that dates back to the late '60s with the Black Artists Group in St. Louis. Influenced by Oliver Nelson and Duke Ellington, Lake takes a hint from both arrangers and creates vast colorings with the horns, which in turn he utilizes in compositions that draw on his avant-garde style." - Mike Shanley*

*"Lake made a new commitment to running these large ensembles in 1998, and this disc illustrates how he has become an original voice for this format." - Aaron Cohen - Downbeat*

*"Few musicians in the history of jazz have wielded as wide and diverse a palette as Oliver Lake... This is classic Big Band performance with a decidedly modern sound." - Russ Musto - All About Jazz*

*"Lake's a big thinker with a taste for large ensembles that can show off his meaty compositions and his sure sense of coloring." - The New Yorker*

*"The Oliver Lake Big Band places itself in a position to be one of the most important musical ensembles now and for years to come." - CD Universe*

*"Without a doubt, this is one of the most innovative and creative large ensembles anywhere on planet earth. Oliver Lake's compositions rank him as among the greatest composers of contemporary music. All major conceptual areas were seamlessly interwoven in Lake's compositions and performed beautifully by this outstanding ensemble of New York based, global in vision and identity, artists. These musicians swung, rocked, grooved, extended, shouted, and breathed a range of sonic poetry that elevated the audience into a new aural zone. A full plate of musical textures and emotions flowed like an inspirational kente cloth. Oliver Lake's Big Band is a jazz orchestra of historic impact which should be experienced by everybody that considers music to be a major part of their sustenance." - Jay Hoggard*

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