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## **JAZZ REVIEW; Vision Festival Opens With Purpose and Poetry**

By **BEN RATLIFF**

The opening of the seventh annual Vision Festival last Thursday night at the Center in the East Village delivered both ends of the spectrum in free jazz: music conveying grandiose social ideals and flat realities, and music that quietly earned its special, hand-crafted feeling.

The best moments came from two musicians associated with the San Francisco Bay Area and one formerly associated with New York. Oluyemi Thomas, playing unusual reed instruments, including the musette and the bass clarinet, performed with Ijeoma Thomas, his wife, who read poetry and sang. They were accompanied by Alan Silva, the bass player and pianist, whose roots are in the early New York free-jazz scene of the 1960's.

The Thomases practice a mixture of free jazz and poetry, and practice it well. Mr. Thomas played interval-jumping improvisations that recalled bird songs and Eric Dolphy; Ms. Thomas intoned and repeated lines, going from whisper to shriek. They played in close communication, feeding off each other's sputtering energy. But when Mr. Silva took his bass-playing into their force field, he made the set more commanding. With a technique that included precise harmonics, glissandos and firm intonation, he chose his directions carefully. If Mr. Thomas's playing intimated pleasant randomness, Mr. Silva's intimated rigorous, patient purpose.

The pianist Dave Burrell and the bassist Tyrone Brown, who did a set together, are an odd pairing. In pan-tonal improvisations, Mr. Burrell played the keyboard, sometimes with the sensuous touch of Cecil Taylor, sometimes to a nubby, staccato effect. Mr. Brown, who performs on an electric upright bass while sitting down, kept his torso absolutely still and massaged his instrument to find liquid grooves with blue notes, repeating them with machinelike perfection.

Shadow and Light, a quartet made up of Joe McPhee on wind instruments, Joe Giardullo on reed instruments, Mike Bisio on bass and Tani Tabbal on drums, switched among moods and tones. Mr. Tabbal is an enlivening drummer in the free-rhythm style: he keeps the pulse alive and up in the music. Over a throbbing background, the two frontline players swung from meditative sounds to chattering; in one impressive sequence, Mr. McPhee played in an almost classic ballad tone, à la Ben Webster, but free of a guiding tonality.

After an opening invocation by the saxophonist Joseph Jarman, the 12-piece Lifetimes Vision Orchestra provided the big opening kickoff, performing works by Mr. Jarman, who is in the group, and Chris Chalfant, who played piano. The band sounded rehearsed, at least. But this was enervating music: most of it grounded in one chord, bereft of inspired improvisation (with the exception of a nice long-tone solo by the trumpeter Steven Bernstein), adorned with dull melodies and awkward vocal texts about peace and harmony.

The festival continues in the East Village at the Center, 268 Mulberry Street; CBGB's Lounge, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker Street; and Anthology Film Archives, 32-34 Second Avenue, at Second Street, through June 9. Information: [visionfestival.org](http://visionfestival.org).