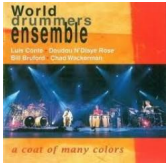


World Drummers Ensemble - A Coat of Many Colors (2006)

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1 *Conundrum* 1:21 2 *Majorette* 11:15 3 *Prism* 12:42 4 *Baye Kene N'Diaye* 5:04 5 *Ritm Kompozisyon* 9:09 6 *A Coat Of Many Colours* 4:48 7 *Self Portrait* 7:06 8 *Sa N'Diaye* 7:01 Doudou N'Diaye Rose - sabar, gorom babass Chad Wackerman - acoustic drums, pitched drums, pitched cymbals Luis Conte - conga drums, timbales, cajon, percussion Bill Bruford - acoustic and electronic drums

For those who think that percussion should be restricted to timekeeping, *A Coat of Many Colors* may come as something of a surprise. On the other hand, listeners familiar with Swiss percussionist Pierre Favre's Ensemble and his remarkable *Singing Drums* (ECM, 1984) will find the idea of a full programme from four percussionists much less of a shock. But what differentiates the World Drummers Ensemble from Favre's is its broader cultural spectrum.

Drummer Chad Wackerman, best known for his work with Frank Zappa and Allan Holdsworth, has pursued a more fusion-centric direction in recent years with albums like *Scream* (Favored Nations, 2000) and *Legs Eleven* (Chad Wackerman, 2004). Afro-Cuban percussionist Luis Conte has contributed across the musical continuum, working with artists like Carlos Santana, James Taylor and Ray Charles. Master percussionist Doudou N'Diaye Rose, who founded the Drummers of West Africa, is considered to be Senegal's greatest griot drummer. Bill Bruford began life as an art rocker with bands including Yes and King Crimson, but in recent years has devoted himself more completely to his acoustic Earthworks band, featuring woodwind multi-instrumentalist Tim Garland in a jazz context that blends complex composition with open-ended improvisation.

The spirit of Favre looms large over the World Drummers Ensemble, which even delivers an extended version of "Prism" from *Singing Drums*—though that won't be any surprise to Bruford fans who are familiar with the duet version he performed with drummer Pat Mastelotto in the

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1994-95 incarnation of King Crimson. But what makes the World Drummers Ensemble unique is the group's cross-cultural approach to the compositions—and they are compositions. While everyone has an opportunity to stretch and improvise, these are not bombastic free-for-alls, but organized and orchestrated percussion pieces that range from being purely visceral to surprisingly melodic, in their own way, despite being perpetually rhythm-happy. The fifteen-minute video performance on the DVD side of this DualDisc release (which also has two bonus audio tracks) allows one to see just how orchestrated the music is, revealing the synchronicity that takes place between the four players.

The mix perfectly mirrors the onstage image on the front cover—Wackerman on the left, followed by Rose, Conte and, finally, Bruford on the right—making it possible to not only absorb the music as a whole, but also resolve and hear what each individual is contributing to the blend. A little over a third of the CD is taken up by compositions by Rose, which range from primitive simplicity to complex interaction. But most strikingly, throughout all the music, rhythm and melody intersect effectively on instruments that many have come to think of in purely metric terms.

The biggest surprises of A Coat of Many Colors are how eminently listenable it is and how captivating its diversity is from start to finish. This album of percussion compositions, perhaps unexpectedly, should attract a broad audience. ---John Kelman, allaboutjazz.com

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