

## ***OUTWARD VISIONS, INC.*** **Company History**

*Outward Visions, Inc.* is a not-for-profit arts and education service organization dedicated to innovative, pragmatic solutions to the problems that confront contemporary artists and arts organizations.

*OVI* was founded in 1976 to assist progressive artists in the development and supervision of their careers by offering management, booking and consultation services. *OVI* quickly enlarged its scope of activities to include producing individual concerts, entire festivals and recordings for major and independent labels. By 1981, *OVI* had broadened its range of services to include similar assistance to performing artists in other disciplines as well as to developing other service organizations.

That same year, *OVI* established a music business cooperative located at 611 Broadway in New York City. This facility included nine record companies, four booking agencies, an accounting firm, a travel agency, two arts service organizations, two production and tour management companies and a rehearsal studio. Affiliated artists spanned the entire musical spectrum, from R.E.M. to Peter Tosh, Bruce Springsteen to the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and Lydia Lunch to Sun Ra.

*OVI* successfully cultivated the careers of such groups as the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the World Saxophone Quartet, working with both groups for over 14 years. From basic survival in irregular, low paying performances, these groups now command substantial fees from major festivals and concert halls around the world. *OVI* has also produced a number of groundbreaking recordings, including 1988's *The World Saxophone Quartet Plays Duke Ellington*. Other management relationships include a 20-year relationship with legendary composer and MacArthur recipient George Russell, a six-year association with Grammy award-winning composer Steve Reich, a four-year relationship with Kennedy Center Honoree choreographer Alwin Nikolais and numerous stints with many of the most innovative figures in jazz of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With an emphasis on self-determination, *OVI* has trained many artists in their own management in order to help them build and control their own careers. To this end, *OVI* has aided countless artists in establishing not-for-profit organizations, thus assisting them in achieving greater artistic, educational and societal goals. As of 2003, *OVI* has been involved in the establishment of more than 60 not-for-profits.

*OVI* has also initiated and produced community-oriented programs, beginning with a series of prison concerts in early 1979. That same year, *OVI* instituted a very successful program for incarcerated youth at five juvenile detention centers throughout inner-city areas of New York City. Ongoing weekly classes, concerts, workshops and lectures were presented by well-known contemporary jazz musicians under the sponsorship of the New York State Division for Youth and the New York City Youth Board, with the assistance of the National Endowment for the Arts, Citibank, Chemical Bank and Meet The Composer. The program continued until 1984, when severe budget cuts in the state and city youth agencies forced the cancellation of the program.

Throughout its existence, *OVI* has inaugurated a number of important creative performing outlets across the United States, many of which now rank among the major presenters of contemporary artists. *OVI* has also been involved in the production of highly successful concerts for the Kool Jazz Festival in New York, and co-produced, along with the Kool Jazz Festival and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Kool Jazz Festival: *New Directions in Sound and Rhythm*, which presented concerts featuring many of contemporary jazz' most adventurous artists in venues such as the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, the Beverly Theatre and the Santa Monica Civic Center. All of these activities further strengthened *OVI*'s commitment to developing new opportunities for artists.

*OVI* has also provided extensive services to the dance community, both in general management and as a consultant, setting up and developing funding strategies, reducing deficits and restructuring entire organizations. *OVI's* ability to apply well-planned, pragmatic solutions to various arts business problems has helped pull more than one major dance company back from the brink of financial ruin, and was particularly helpful in assisting the Nikolais/Louis Foundation for Dance.

*OVI* has consistently furnished pro-bono consultations to deserving artists by providing the assistance necessary for them to establish their own not-for-profit corporations and giving them advice on all aspects of their business operation during their first year of existence. These consultations have concentrated primarily on innovative minority artists.

In the 1990s *OVI* was also the catalyst for previously unaligned music and dance aggregations, raising funds, touring and producing records to showcase these collaborative efforts. These couplings included the Art Ensemble of Chicago & Women of the Calabash and the World Saxophone Quartet with West African Drummers.

Presently, *OVI* functions as the hub for an informal consortium of not-for-profit organizations. This group of talented individuals representing a variety of disciplines was established to provide member organizations and others with almost any conceivable artistic business service. When assembling a project, it is possible for artists to tap into the resources of other organizations involved in the consortium, drawing on their expertise in public relations, management, booking, fundraising and technical services.

Continuing to disseminate its accumulated expertise, *OVI* has provided consulting services to major organizations and has presented seminars and lectures on a variety of subjects at the New England Conservatory, Rutgers University, the National Jazz Service Organization, Arts Midwest, The New England Foundation for the Arts, Yale University, Columbia University, the New School University, the Hartford Artists Collective, ASCAP, the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the IAJE Conference, and three days of seminars under the banner *Business As Unusual* for the New York Department of Cultural Affairs, among others. *OVI* conducted over 60 consultations for the Technical Assistance Program of the National Jazz Service Organization, directly resulting in the establishment of more than twelve new not-for-profit organizations.

The *Outward Visions Touring Program*, which was established in 1976 and ended in 1994, arranged over one hundred tours encompassing more than 100 cities and 35 states in the U.S., Canada, Australia and Japan for such notables as Steve Reich and Musicians, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the World Saxophone Quartet, George Russell and the Living Time Orchestra, John Zorn's Naked City, Sam Rivers, Lester Bowie, Anthony Braxton, Jack DeJohnette, Sun Ra, MacArthur recipient Ali Akbar Khan and Alwin Nikolais' Nikolais Dance Theatre.

A primary focus of *OVI* from 1993 through 1997 was *The Coltrane Project*, an initiative dedicated to the artistry, vision and spirit of John Coltrane. Launched in early 1996 following two years of extensive community planning in partnership with the Annenberg Center at the University of Pennsylvania and seven cultural organizations in seven geographically and ethnically diverse communities throughout the City of Philadelphia, *The Coltrane Project of Philadelphia* presented nearly 200 events, including workshops, community concerts and residency activities throughout the city. The residency activities were conducted by internationally recognized artists connected to, or profoundly influenced by John Coltrane, including Reggie Workman, Oliver Lake, Sonny Fortune, Larry Harlow, Makanda Ken McIntyre, Larry Ridley, Charles Gayle, and choreographers Eiko & Koma, Rennie Harris and Roko Kawai, all of whom worked with established local artists and ensembles.

The first phase of *The Coltrane Project of Philadelphia* culminated on September 22, 1996 with a free all-day concert at Zellerbach Hall of the Annenberg Center at the University of Pennsylvania. This concert was also broadcast live on WRTI-FM and its affiliates throughout the Delaware Valley. More than 20 different works were presented in a variety of disciplines, including six newly commissioned works and new arrangements of Coltrane compositions. These works were developed through the aforementioned residency activities and performed by 12 different ensembles, together with the above-mentioned artists. This concert, in celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the birth of John Coltrane (on September 23), was attended by over 2000 people.

In addition to these activities and performances, firm partnerships were developed among the various participants. Additional projects included the creation of six mosaic murals, including four in various schools throughout the city, created by the students themselves and depicting their interpretation of the music and spirit of John Coltrane, and a benefit concert for the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society on July 17, 1996 (the 39th anniversary of the death of John Coltrane), featuring a special performance of a trio comprised of Sonny Fortune, Reggie Workman and Rashied Ali.

The second phase of *The Project* began in January 1997. Activities included the continuation of collaborative works and additional workshops at the partners' facilities. A second concert was presented at Zellerbach Hall of the Annenberg Center at the University of Pennsylvania that featured Rashied Ali, Charles Gayle and Conrad Herwig, among others. Funders for this Project included The William Penn Foundation, the Meet The Composer/Philadelphia Music Project supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Meet The Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program supported by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the National Endowment for the Arts, The Rockefeller Foundation's Multi-Arts Production Fund and The Nathan Cummings Fund.

In 1998, recognizing that the jazz business was facing a profound economic crisis, and that the Fine Arts establishment was employing a dangerously unproductive "trickle down" approach to solving it, *OVI* attempted to address the issues. A consortium was developed, including six artist-driven non-profits (under the artistic direction of George Russell, Oliver Lake, Reggie Workman, Makanda Ken McIntyre, Larry Ridley and Bill Cole) and eight service organizations, along with six regionally diverse American presenting organizations. Plans and programs were developed for product distribution, business assistance, health and pension plans, educational activities and other important issues confronting jazz and those who create it.

After meeting with the top representatives in the Arts and Culture divisions of more than a dozen major foundations and regional arts organizations, it became apparent that none of these institutions had the desire or the ability to even discuss any of these programs. At that point *OVI* significantly diminished its participation in the active jazz business and began to focus on the education of those who would enter it in the future.

From its offices in Tucson, Arizona (which were opened in 1994) *OVI* began developing new educational programs, working with other like-minded organizations in Arizona and throughout the U.S., including the African American Jazz Caucus (AAJC) of the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE).

In April of 2003 *OVI* partnered with the Sovereign Arts Society in Tucson to present the *Afro-Latino-Americas Festival*, an extension of *The Coltrane Project of Philadelphia*. Artists such as Oliver Lake, Dom Minasi and Mary Redhouse provided over 30 workshops and concerts in 16 different schools in Tucson. The Festival culminated in a free outdoor festival in an urban park where these and other artists performed.

*Outward Visions* is currently involved in:

*The Transcendence Initiative (Dedicated to the Artistry & Spirit of John Coltrane)*, which was launched in the Spring of 2003 with a series of school concerts by the Ravi Coltrane Quartet. This project is an extension of the *Afro-Latino-Americas Festival* and will bring Oliver Lake back to Tucson for two extended residencies in Tucson schools during the 2003-04 season.

Working in conjunction with Incubator, Inc., *Outward Visions* is providing consultations and fundraising to artists and arts organizations throughout the United States. Consultations with artists focus on a variety of issues, including helping them execute an overall plan that weaves together all the elements of their career, providing assistance in developing projects for presentation to booking agents, presenters, touring programs, etc., confronting special problems and troubleshooting, corporate options (especially 501(c)(3) not-for-profits), self-promotion, creating personal opportunities, project development and fundraising. Organizational consultations include board development and restructuring, fundraising possibilities, deficit reduction, long-range and short-term planning and general organizational structure and development.

Setting up not-for-profit corporations across the United States.

Dedicating great efforts toward exposing and clarifying many of the circumstances that have created an enormous malaise in the world of jazz. Through writings for well-established websites, a series of articles have been written that spell out the current business practices in both the commercial and not-for-profit worlds that are meant to elucidate and inform artists and help them confront, understand and overcome the frustrations they are feeling in dealing with the jazz business.

Helping to manage the careers of Oliver Lake, Craig Harris, Dom Minasi and George Russell.

Publishing *Straight Ahead: A Comprehensive Guide to the Business of Jazz (Without Sacrificing Dignity or Artistic Integrity)*, a comprehensive business manual for jazz artists, professionals and students. This book has also been designed for use in conjunction with university curricula.

By continuing to be innovators in the not-for-profit field, *OVI* intends to bring significant change and improvement to the ongoing search for the solutions needed to combat the current crises in urban America by providing new answers for the future through innovative thought and vision on both an artistic and social level.

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