

Alice Coltrane, UCLA LIVE Royce Hall February 2006

From the moment her hands touched the piano her fingers played notes that weren't there, notes in between the black keys and the white keys; notes carved directly into the unknown. There, in the urgency of that very first attack she resumed her primordial battle with chaos and harmony - The Ultimate Harmony - the chord that first started the universe and that is still moving through all of us. She is a medium and warrior, a woman with an ancient soul capable of bending the rigid chromatic tuning of the ultimate western instrument into an eastern one by creating undulating collisions. Notes collide at the edges of her elliptical phrases and suns are born. She is juggling waves of sound plasma. Flowing, shifting multidimensional webs and warps of energy that are grounded in the earth and far beyond the earth's gravity. She is channeling from above and below at the same time but there is no above and no below. She is an ethereal antenna in a fluid state of grace and balance. Her hands are magnets shifting over the keys; pulling the energy up from the molten core of the planet - up through us all and back to the cosmos. Fragile and grounded at-once, the timeless lightness of her presence is poised calmly above an immense physical and metaphysical catharsis.

Ravi's playing was direct and articulate. He does not mince words or notes. He is the graceful inheritor of a immortal legacy that is alive and burning in his hands. And the startling and thrilling realization that this was so ripped through the crowd - the audience - yes, this was a true Audience. The flames and sparks spitting from the mouth of his volcanic mother and the pure connection to the spirit of his father tore into each soul at Royce Hall. The transcendent lyricism, the firm focus, the searching, the risks, the fearless fury, the resonance, the intonation . . . the syntax. I told Sussan on the way home that he was named after Ravi Shankar and that it felt like the son of a

great Indian musician paying homage to his father and carrying his tradition forward. So many people were influenced by Coltrane and so many have tried to play like him over the years that it has become tiring and hard to listen to. But last night there was an uncanny, undeniable genetic, transmission and everyone felt it. Wave after wave, on and on, deeper and deeper it came down.

Reggie Workman played truth serum mined directly from the world of Sub-subconscious, subliminal, sublime subtext. He played like a great editor responding to Alice and Ravi's waves of phrases with his wisdom. Answers made from haunting calligraphic strokes. Sometimes his remarks were parenthetical and some times they answered questions before they were asked. He bent low over the bass his ear to the body when playing high up the neck. He was the anchor and the rudder on this sacred vessel moving through space.

Trevor Lawrence Jr. was on drums subbing for Jeff "Tain" Watts and he played with great sensitivity maturity and attention. He was taking the pulse as much as he was giving it. He was understated and he understood.

I first met Reggie Workman in 1966 in a club called The Royal Arms. I was under age but I had phony ID and I took my home work with me. I was with my cousin Amy Darlich who was a girl Jazz prodigy she had played on The Tonight Show and she knew Reggie. Reggie was playing with Herbie Mann. Amy brought me back stage and sat me down next to Reggie and he started to speak to me as if he already knew me. He was very kind and friendly but it was not getting to know you talk. He laid it on me then and there. No one had ever spoken to me like that before and I was somehow profoundly changed after that meeting. Years later I was doing a solo performance in New York at the Greenwich House and I was opening for Reggie's band. I hadn't seen him in 17 years but there was the same

instantaneous rapport. Later he called me to work on a project and I took the chance of asking him if he wanted to play a concert with Sussan and me at The Anchorage in Brooklyn organized by Creative Time. They were also going to show a film we did the music for called "Life Without Death" made by Frank Cole who crossed the Sahara by himself with a 16-mm rewind camera with no batteries. Our band at the time was with Will Calhoun and Doug Wimbish. Sussan also invited Vernon Reid to play and it was the first time they had gotten back together. We loved working with Reggie and we had a chance to invite him to Finland to the Tempere Festival and also to Morocco for the Gnawa festival it was the first time he had set foot on the African continent and he had an amazing time in Morocco. After that I moved to LA to put in another two years working for The Entertainment Wing of the Pentagon and we fell out of touch.

Last January (2006) Sussan had a concert with Jan Kaczmarek and a symphony orchestra at Royce Hall so we booked tickets right away for the Alice concert because we knew we would still be in town. Then we found out Reggie was playing the day before and we called him up. He invited us back stage and to the after party at the W given by his nephew the drummer Eric Benson. It was wonderful to meet all of Reggie's family who had come for the show and every one was in an altered state...a combination of very high and very satisfied and very deep. I got a chance to thank Ravi for the concert and I told him that I had seen him on stage two times. The first one was very unusual. It was the opening the Jiva Nanda Yoga center in New York in the mid 90s. Sting played a set and then Laswell had thrown together a DJ set and Sussan did a cameo. Then Ravi was supposed to play over the DJ other musicians and he stood on stage with his soprano for forty-five minutes waiting for the right moment to enter into the music but it never came. He never felt inspired. So he just kept standing there. He never played a note. And watching him in that fragile state of anticipation was fascinating. It was the most interesting part of the night. It was

then I knew we could expect great things from him. When I reminded him of that moment last night he laughed and said: "Sometimes you gotta use silence". Then he told me he had problems with the show at Royce Hall. He felt some of his phrasing was off and the on stage monitors were bad. He said "But you can't let it get to you, you just have to keep on reaching for the next thing". I told him that I didn't hear one phrase that was out all night and to make him feel better I told him he was just paranoid. Which he thought was funny. Normally telling someone they are paranoid does not make them feel better but he did laugh and I think it worked. Sussan and I both made him feel better about the sound on stage too. She has had three shows there in the last three years and the sound check last year totally exhausted her; it was three hours long and still not right. Sussan had a long talk with Ravi, she was totally in the vibe and being there with her and Garby Leon made the whole night that much deeper. I could feel her soaking it up with her eyes closes and head thrown back mesmerized... What a night.