

Illumination

Al Stauffer Trio
Al Stauffer, string bass
Tom Lawton, piano
Joel Levine, recorders

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|-----|-----------------------------|-------|
| [1] | Waltz (Uri Caine) | 6:40 |
| [2] | Exodus (Bernard Peiffer) | 14:33 |
| [3] | Infant Eyes (Wayne Shorter) | 11:50 |
| [4] | Illumination (Al Stauffer) | 10:51 |

Producer and Engineer: Bob Sellman
Artwork: Kathy Maly
Recorded May 31, 1981 at Wilson Music Hall, Glassboro State College
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All of the artists and composers involved in this recording, with the exception of Wayne Shorter, are—or were—interconnected in the fertile Philadelphia jazz sphere. Al Stauffer and Tom Lawton regularly performed together in a midcity venue; Joel Levine and composer/pianist Uri Caine were members of another working group; Stauffer and Bernard Peiffer were musical partners for a dozen years, an association that ended with the composer-pianist's death in 1976; Lawton and Levine studied piano with the late French expatriate pianomaster and also studied improvisational concepts with Stauffer. Not surprisingly, all of them are intense musicians with a tenacious dedication to excellence, and their joint contributions have produced here a session of unusual cohesion and muscularity.

Caine's *Waltz* is a nicely swinging opener which nonetheless serves to prepare the listener for the fire to come. *Exodus*, a musical embodiment of Peiffer's wanderings in a land eternally foreign to him in language and traditions, becomes here a winsome vehicle for Levine's alto recorder (he plays the alto on all of the tracks except the last, on which he switches to a soprano instrument). Levine's recorder style is singing and sinuous, and, in

some respects, unique. He employs ideas that often appear to outdistance the capabilities of the instrument. The cerebral Lawton turns into a tough swinger of these tracks, reaching into pockets of passion that may well astonish those more familiar with the refined aspects of his musical persona. Stauffer sustains his reputation as the Philadelphia jazz bassist most likely to go the distance with Milt Hinton. Shorter's reflective, impressionistic *Infant Eyes* provides a respite before the stormy finale. The title piece is an agitato tour de force for all three musicians, climaxing in a contrapuntal flight of uncommon impetuosity.

Al Stauffer

Al Stauffer was a mainstay of the Delaware Valley jazz community for many years. A native of Stowe, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, he was active musically in Washington and Chicago before returning to his home environs. An accompanist for such superstars of the jazz firmament as Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Bill Evans, he taught at Glassboro (New Jersey) State College (Now called Rowan University) and also maintained a teaching studio in Philadelphia.

Tom Lawton

Tom Lawton was a student and protégé of the late Bernard Peiffer. Originally of Collegeville in the Philadelphia suburbs, he also studied classical piano at the Bryn Mawr Conservatory. He was influenced to take up jazz piano by the playing of Gerald Price.

Joel Levine

Joel Levine, born in Virginia but a Philadelphian for most of his 24 years (his age at the time this recording was made), began the study of music at the age of 7 and improvised on the recorder from the very beginning. He studied the instrument formally with the late Charlotte Rosenberg and Bernard Krainis. He was involved at the time of this recording in further studies at the University of Pennsylvania. — Nels Nelson

Acknowledgements

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Recording Information

Each piece on this recording was recorded as a complete performance and contains no splices or editing. The recording was made using two Schoeps mics placed at a distance from the performing group to capture the sound of the group as you would hear it in a true acoustic performance with no amplification.

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