

Oliver E. Lake

Composer, Musician, Poet

Oliver Eugene Lake was born in Marianna, Arkansas. The Lake family moved to St. Louis, when Oliver was two years old. He began playing cymbals and the bass drum at an early age and at age 17 he developed a serious interest in jazz. He entered Lincoln University in the mid-sixties and graduated in 1968 with a Bachelor's degree in Biology.

After Lincoln, Lake returned to St. Louis and along with Black Artists' Group alumni Hamiet Bluiett, David Murray, Julius Hemphill, formed the renowned World Saxophone Quartet, a group which performed worldwide to considerable critical acclaim. He served as the group's music director, and led Black Artists' Group touring around Europe in the early 1970s. His trademark astringent saxophone sound is piercing, bluesy, and biting. It was the perfect lead voice for the World Saxophone Quartet, the band with which Lake made his most enduring mark on jazz.

Oliver Lake is a true renaissance man. Saxophonist, poet, painter, and composer of theatrical words, Oliver is best known for his enormous contribution to the world of contemporary music, especially jazz. Equally eclectic in his musical vision, the composer, educator, alto and soprano saxophonist/flautist has performed and created for an amazingly diverse array of artists, Meshell Ndegeocello, Abbey Lincoln, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, A Tribe Called Quest, Mos Def, the Flux, and Arditti String Quarters, Bjork, Lou Reed, The Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra and many others.

In 1981, he formed "Jump Up", a jazz/funk/reggae band which was selected to tour on behalf of the United States' Information Agency's Arts America Program. In 1987, Lake was invited to participate in the US-USSR Composer's Symposium where he performed and supervised the performance of chamber music in Russia.

He has received numerous fellowships and grants, including Endowment for the Arts Jazz fellowships, and in 1993, Lake received the coveted Guggenheim Fellowship.