



## The Todd Marcus Jazz Orchestra In Pursuit of the 9th Man

Todd Marcus: *bass clarinet, clarinet (3), frame drum (3), organ (10)*

Russell Kirk: *tenor saxophone*

Issa Lambson: *alto saxophone*

Lyle Link: *alto saxophone, flute*

Reginald Cyntje: *trombone*

Theljon James Allen: *trumpet*

Joel Holmes: *piano*

Jeff Alan Reed: *bass*

Mike Kuhl: *drums (3-8, 10-12), frame drum (3)*

Raul Sööt: *guest soloist, tenor saxophone (9)*

Lee Pearson: *guest, drums (1-2, 9)*

All songs composed & arranged by Todd Marcus  
(Dark Voice, SESAC)

except *If I Should Lose You* by Robin/Rainger

Executive Producers: Tony Haywood and Todd Marcus

Produced by Todd Marcus

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- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 1. Intro                               | (1:17)  |
| 2. In Pursuit of the 9th Man           | (7:27)  |
| 3. Ma'aelsalama                        | (6:57)  |
| 4. Harper's Choice                     | (7:52)  |
| 5. Plummeting                          | (7:18)  |
| 6. If I Should Lose You                | (8:58)  |
| 7. Lament                              | (5:00)  |
| 8. Prelude                             | (2:43)  |
| 9. A Gentler Sort of Thing             | (7:25)  |
| 10. Mr. Sunshine and His Eight Bandits | (3:19)  |
| 11. Pompeii                            | (11:30) |
| 12. Psalm                              | (2:11)  |

Total running time: 72:21



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*If I Should Lose You*

by Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger  
(Famous Music LLC., ASCAP)  
(arranged T. Marcus)

CD Design by Kathy Ridl

Photography by Alan Haywood

Lee Pearson plays on Yamaha, Sabian,  
and Vater equipment.

[www.toddmarcusjazz.com](http://www.toddmarcusjazz.com)

[www.hipnotic.com](http://www.hipnotic.com)

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Recorded June 21 & 22, 2005

Recorded by Paul Wickliffe

at Charlestown Road Studio, Hampton, NJ

Mixed and mastered by Paul Wickliffe

at Skyline Productions, Warren, NJ

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The Todd Marcus Jazz Orchestra In Pursuit of the 9th Man

# THE TODD MARCUS JAZZ ORCHESTRA IN PURSUIT OF THE 9TH MAN



The Baltimore jazz scene is relatively small, but Todd Marcus belongs to an even smaller subset in the jazz world. He is a bass clarinet specialist, an advocate of what he jokingly calls "clarinet power." We can include the famed Don Byron and the underrated Darryl Harper, an erstwhile Baltimorean and Hipnotic labelmate, among Marcus's allies. Eric Dolphy turned the bass clarinet, an orchestral oddity, into a jazz horn; Bennie Maupin projected it into the future on *Bitches Brew* and Herbie Hancock's *Mwandishi*. Thanks to these and other pioneers, it is not unusual for today's saxophonists to double on bass clarinet - Chris Potter, Greg Tardy, John Ellis and Myron Walden come readily to mind. But the 30-year-old Marcus does not play the saxophone; nor did he arrive at his instrument via the saxophone. He played B flat clarinet in school bands, discovered jazz in his late teens and soon heard Dolphy's siren song. The critic John McDonough once likened Dolphy's bass clarinet playing to "writing with magic marker," and one hears this alluring quality in Marcus's deep and dark solo voice as well. "I was really taken with the different range of the horn, the color, the tones," Marcus recalls. "That's when I made the switch."

More often than not, the bass clarinet crops up in avant-garde settings - in Ned Rothenberg's and Gebhard Ullmann's work, for instance - rather than the swinging post-bop idiom favored by Marcus on this debut recording, *In Pursuit of the 9th Man*. In straight-ahead jazz, the bass clarinet is generally used "as coloring on slower numbers, very much a textural thing," Marcus notes. "And even when guys take solos on it, it tends to be more honking and screeching than playing lines." Marcus, in contrast, brings a saxophonic rigor to the bass clarinet while also generating enough sonic power to front a nine-piece ensemble. "It's a quiet instrument," Marcus admits. "The first time I sat in at a jam session, the biggest shock was that I couldn't hear myself. Dolphy would go to his alto sax when the music got louder or faster. So I knew I had to chart this on my own. It's been a lot of work to push the limits farther and farther, making my own adjustments to the mouthpiece, using different reeds."



Marcus's other instrument, of course, is his jazz orchestra, comprised of "a mixture of cats from Baltimore and D.C." While Marcus often works in a quartet setting, it is the orchestra that brings his conceptual and arranging skills into full relief. His passion for the large-group aesthetic stems from his exposure to the Jason Lindner Ensemble, one of New York's most lasting and cutting-edge institutions. "This was around the time the Joe Henderson big band CD came out," Marcus remembers.

"Harmonically, a lot of the McCoy Tyner richness appealed to me at the time, and when I went to see the Lindner group at Small's, it was so wonderful. Here was this big band, but it had all these hip voicings and compositions. The beauty of having that sort of harmony and good players in the larger ensemble, and the power you can get from multiple horns - that was where the vision came from." One could also cite David Weiss's New Jazz Composers Octet and Russ Gershon's Either/Orchestra as relevant models.

Leading a large band is a logistical challenge, and this is precisely what Marcus refers to in his album's title. When scheduling gigs and rehearsals, he draws a grid to keep track of his players' availability: "It always seems that when you get to the ninth man, it falls through and you've got to start again." The title is also a play on Horace Silver's 1970 Blue Note LP *In Pursuit of the 27th Man*. Silver appears on the cover in jogging shorts, knee socks and a tank-top - "like he's running a marathon, looking so fatigued," laughs Marcus. "The title and the picture are so comical, and I wanted something with a little humor in it." In another of his titles, "Mr. Sunshine and His Eight Bandits," Marcus refers self-effacingly to his "dark and brooding" personality, as well as his leadership of a larger group. The track, with its edgy overdubbed organ, takes its inspiration from *Exile's Gate* by Gary Thomas. "I knew I wanted a more raucous sort of thing," Marcus says.



"Ma'aelsalama," meaning "Goodbye, God bless" in Arabic, represents Marcus's lyrical take on his Egyptian heritage. "My father grew up in a small farming town called Minya. His father left the family, so he went south to Sudan at 16 and worked to send money home. At 22 he made his way to Chicago and put himself through school. He eventually met my mother and they moved to New Jersey. It was 27 years before my mother convinced him to go back to Egypt, and we all went as a family. I was in seventh grade, and since then I've had the chance to go several times. I have aunts, uncles and cousins in Cairo and Alexandria." Marcus invests this piece with a subtle North African flavor. He makes his first melodic statement on Bb clarinet, as Mike Kuhl articulates the 3/4 pulse on frame drum.

*In Pursuit of the 9th Man* offers many other pleasures. Altoist Issa Lambson steps forward on the modified minor blues "Harper's Choice," which is Marcus's homage to

tenorman Billy Harper. On "Pompeii" and "Plummeting" (the latter featuring Lyle Link on alto), Marcus reveals a gift for slow exposition and development of uptempo numbers. He reworks "If I Should Lose You," the sole non-original, to suit this orchestra's dusky spirit. With trombonist Reginald Cyntje, he plays an intimate contrapuntal duo, "Prelude," to set up "A Gentler Sort of Thing" - a tuneful major-key piece that brings to mind Abdullah Ibrahim (and features Raul Soot of Estonia on tenor). "Lament" employs shifting meters and a piano/bass unison line that was partly inspired by Terence Blanchard's *Wandering Moon*. The closing "Psalm," which inevitably recalls the final movement of *A Love Supreme*, briefly showcases Marcus's horn in a quartet setting.



Marcus is entirely self-taught as a player, composer and arranger. He learned harmony and theory at the piano, and that is where he continues to write. "It's amazing how much the human spirit can teach itself, just a little bit every day," he says. The degree he holds, from Rutgers, is in urban studies, which makes him eminently qualified to speak about Baltimore's limitations. The city has undergone white flight followed by black flight; its population has dwindled to half a million. Nearby Washington, D.C. offers far more in terms of talent pool and gigs, but nothing quite compares to New York. Marcus is venturing north with increasing frequency, and denizens of the Apple would do well to seek him out. With his melodic imagination and technical aptitude on an unorthodox horn, Marcus has something truly new and personal to offer.

David R. Adler  
Contributing writer, *JazzTimes*



Joel Holmes    Issa Lambson    Russell Kirk    Mr. Sunshine    Lyle Link



Mike Kuhl    Jeff Alan Reed    Reginald Cyntje    Theljon James Allen

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