

Charlie Haden at the Barbican, EC2

Alyn Shipton, *The Times*

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The Liberation Music Orchestra was formed out of social and political protest during the Nixon presidency in 1969 by the bassist Charlie Haden. Playing songs from popular movements ranging from the Spanish Civil War to Latin American politics, his 12-piece band established a very distinctive sound, not least because Carla Bley's imaginative arrangements added extra ingredients of musical anarchy. Her interweaving of different themes and her Charles Ives-like irreverence to national anthems created an ideal platform for the pugnacious improvisations of such past bandmembers as Gato Barbieri, Dewey Redman and Don Cherry. All of them shared her ability to puncture balloons of musical pomposity and extract the essence of protest from the source material.

The band was re-formed during the Republican presidencies of Ronald Reagan and both George Bushes, and it has continued to play sporadically ever since the most recent version came along in 2004. As part of Charlie Haden's weekend residency at the Barbican, the current incarnation was a special Anglo-American line-up.

The opening *Not in my Name* was polite rather than challenging, despite a forceful solo from Jason Yarde. But then, on Pat Metheny's *This is not America*, the drummer Matt Wilson turned up the heat, his rimshots and bombs exploding behind the tenor saxophone of Tony Malaby, prodding the band into a joyous romp through several keys before Bley's closing collage of imperial themes.

Bley's own minimal solos were jaunty and heartwarming, inspiring some fine playing from Andy Sheppard on tenor saxophone and John Parricelli on guitar. The most dazzling solo of the evening came from the New York-born trumpeter Michael Rodriguez on *Goin' Home*, the spiritual theme from the second movement of Dvorák's *New World* Symphony. His fat, middle-register tone sounded more like a flugelhorn than a trumpet, and his inspirational playing combined space and eloquence with genuine excitement.

Behind it all was Haden's bass, urging the soloists on and occasionally stepping into the spotlight. When the closing *We Shall Overcome* came to its climax, he played on alone. It was a poignant moment, as he raised his lone instrumental voice in praise of peace and harmony.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/music/livereviews/article3029411.ece>