



Footprints: The Life and Music of Wayne Shorter

Michelle Mercer

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The first biography about the man *The New York Times* recently called "jazz's all-around genius, matchless in his field as a composer, utterly original as an improviser."

Saxophonist and composer Wayne Shorter is one of the great architects of jazz, and a man whose influence will be felt by musicians and music fans for generations to come. In this first biography of Shorter, Michelle Mercer traces the amazing trajectory of his fifty-year career. As fellow jazz great Herbie Hancock puts it: "Wayne Shorter has evolved as a human being to a point where he can synthesize all the history of jazz into a very special, very alive musical expression. Nobody else can do that now."

In many ways, Wayne Shorter's story is the story of modern American music. Born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1933, he learned bebop as an adolescent in cutting contests with Sonny Stitt and Sonny Rollins. In the 1950s, he graduated to some "hard-drinking, hard bop years" with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. The saxophonist was the catalyst in the famous 1960s quintet of Miles Davis, then followed the trumpeter on his avant-garde electric excursions. In the 1970s, he and Joe Zawinul pioneered fusion in Weather Report. Into the 1980s and 1990s Wayne's solos graced pop recordings like Steely Dan's "Aja" and Joni Mitchell's "Hejira." And today, at age seventy, he is leading the Wayne Shorter Quartet, a group that critics have compared to Coltrane's classic quartet and to Davis's own groundbreaking quintet.

A rich portrait of a great American artist, *Footprints*. makes a vital contribution to the literature of jazz.

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