

# Singer Conducts Tonight



Bobby McFerrin

Nine-time Grammy award winner Bobby McFerrin will conduct members of the Charlotte Symphony at 8 p.m. Thursday in the North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center's Belk Theater.

The repertoire will include Beethoven's Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 36.

McFerrin has been studying with Gustav Meier, America's foremost teacher

of conducting, and plans to dedicate four to six weeks of each year exclusively to conducting engagements.

"It started as a fantasy, something I wanted to do for my 40th birthday," McFerrin says. "But after conducting the San Francisco Symphony in Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, I got bit by the conducting bug and I looove it."

The son of classical singers, McFerrin, 43, began stu-

dyng musical theory at 6, shortly before the family relocated to Los Angeles. Piano was his primary instrument in high school where he led a quartet that specialized in Henry Mancini and Sergio Mendes covers.

McFerrin studied at California State University, Sacramento, where he developed a love for jazz from listening to Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* LP and the work of Keith Jar-

rett. He studied also at Cerritos College.

Once finishing his education, McFerrin went on the road with the Ice Follies, then with a few Top 40 bands, lounge acts and dance troupes.

But McFerrin's life's goals changed in 1977 when he felt the urge to become a singer. After sensing the limitations of cocktail lounges, he and his wife Debby hit the road in search of his calling. After a period in New Orleans with a band called the Astral Project, the McFerrins settled in San Francisco in 1979 where Bobby made three important contacts -- Bill Cosby, Jon Hendricks and Linda Goldstein.

Hendricks, the godfather of jazz vocalists, offered McFerrin his first major gig. Cosby heard McFerrin and Hendricks perform together and was so blown away he arranged to have McFerrin perform at the 1980 Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl. Goldstein was a singer making the transition to the business side of music who became McFerrin's manager.

In 1981, McFerrin played the Kool Jazz Festival in New York. The performance got him signed to Elektra/Musician label, which released his self-titled debut LP in 1982. The work featured an all star cast which included Phoebe Snow.

McFerrin toured extensively with his own band and collaborated with Herbie Hancock and Wynton Marsalis. He decided to do unaccompanied concerts in 1983, which led to a solo tour of Germany in 1984. He recorded the live *The Voice* LP, which stressed his vocal techniques, range and ability to mesmerize an audience.

McFerrin continued to work with a varied group of musical and non-musical artists which include Garrison Keillor, Jack Nicholson and Weather Report's Joe Zawinul. He won Grammys for work with the Manhattan Transfer on "Another Night In Tunisia" and the theme music for "Round Midnight."

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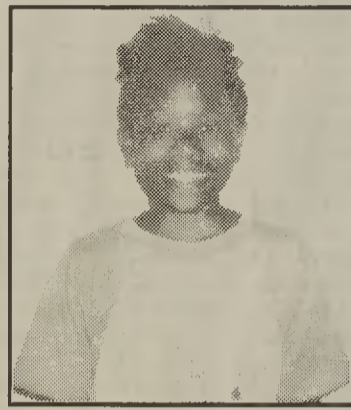
## Off The Shelf

Editor's note: For the next several weeks this column will feature book reviews from area elementary students. This week's reviews were done by students from Westerly Hills Elementary School.

### The Chocolate Touch

By Patrick Skene Catling

The book "The Chocolate Touch" is about a boy named



John Midas who loved chocolate more than anything in the world. One day he was going to Susan's house and on his way he found a funny old coin. He just had to buy a piece of chocolate. He went to the candy store and asked, "can I buy something with this funny old coin?" The man was glad to trade him a whole big box of candy. He ran out the store before the man changed his mind. He opened it and it was only one piece of candy. He felt

really bad, but he ate it. It was so good he wanted some water. The water turned into chocolate. If you want to find out the rest, you will have to read the book.

I really liked this book because I learned that you shouldn't do things you know are wrong or you'll have to accept the consequences. If you want to find out the end, go to the public library and check out "The Chocolate Touch" by Patrick Skene Catling.

Latresha Stewart

5th grade

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### The Great Mom Swap

By Betsy Haynes

"The Great Mom Swap" is about two girls named Scotti



Wheeler and Lorna Markham. They are best friends and next door neighbors. They each share the same problem: their mothers. Lorna's mother nags her about her potential and says "stand up straight dear be proud that you're a tall Texan" and always asks "why can't you be more like Scotti?"

Scotti's mother nags her about her eating habits. Not to be so fussy about healthy food. Her mother always said "why can't you be more

like Lorna?" Sometimes Lorna would think if she wasn't my best friend I would absolutely hate her. So on summer vacation they decided to swap moms but they find out its a big mistake!

Joanna Perez

4th grade

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## Sounds

By Winfred Cross



Janet Jackson  
janet.  
Producers: James K. Harris III, Terry Lewis, Janet Jackson and Jellybean Johnson  
Virgin Records

☆☆☆☆

Following up an album as successful, both critically and commercially, as Janet Jackson's *Rhythm Nation 1814* is no easy task.

With sales of more than 6 million copies and seven Top 5 singles, Ms. Jackson had a world of pressure on her to top those achievements.

Apparently pressure makes Ms. J more creative. She and groove melsters Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis have topped *Rhythm Nation* with a CD that bristles with excitement.

Gone is the shy, coy Jackson who wanted to save the world. Now she's more con-

cerned with matters of the heart and she uses rap, house, hip-hop and funk to get her message across -- I'm a woman now and I'll talk about my evolution in no uncertain terms.

There are 27 tracks listed on the CD, but 13 of them are snippets or segues into the next track. After the snippet "Morning," the CD opens with the monster smash "That's The Way Love Goes," a throw down, throw back to sweet '70s grooves. A sample from James Brown's "Papa Don't Take No Mess" is featured in the song, but it's Jackson's cool, assured vocals that make this song click. It has already streaked up both black and pop charts, planted firmly in the No. 1 spot. It is one of many songs that has the potential to hit the top spot. The song also shows the more mature path Jackson has chosen to



take. "Oh baby, don't stop, don't stop/Go deeper, deeper baby/It feels so good I'm gonna cry," says Jackson as she urges her lover on.

If you think that's a bit steamy, wait until you get to "If." Jackson taunts her lover in the song's chorus: *If I was your girl/Oh the things I'd do*

*to you/I'd make you call out my name/I'd ask who it belongs to . . . But I'm not, so I won't/But, If I was your girl.* Jackson spews lyrics like venom, chanting the words at a dizzying pace over a slamin', classic infectious groove provided by Jam and Lewis.

And if you're looking for something more direct and to the point, "Throb" is just the thing for you. It's a rousing house number that has Jackson moaning *When you start to pounding/Love to feel you throbbing.*

I generally don't like songs with such lyrics but Jackson pulls them off without sounding as brash and outlandish as rappers who talk about the same subjects.

Jackson does employ the talents of rapper Chuck D on "New Agenda," a song that takes her back to the social consciousness of *Rhythm Nation*. The pair says "it's time to rejoice/A new agenda's due," amid a swinging hip-hop beat. Chuck D's vocals bring an urgency to the song, keeping it from just being preachy.

But dance and rap aren't the musical forms Jackson is comfortable with. "What'll I Do" is good-time '60s soul/rock. "This Time" combines some Hendrix-like guitar riffs with opera diva Kathleen Battle's ethereal voice. It sounds odd, but believe me, it works. "Again" almost doesn't work, with its Broadway-like string arrangement and sappy lyrics. Jackson puts enough polish on it to make it pass.

The other ballads work quite well, thank you. "Where Are You Now" is reminiscent of "Come Back To Me," but has a reggae-like shuffle. "The Body That Love You" returns to the more adult theme, floating over a relaxed melody with a lovely 12-string guitar solo. "Any Time, Any Place" is a bit more to the point, with an airy, cool groove.

Jackson has included a veritable cornucopia of musical styles, but keeps them from fighting each other. Credit much of that to Jam and Lewis, the best producing team in the music industry. Who else but this shrewd duo could have Kathleen Battle, Chuck D and samples by the Supremes and James Brown on the same CD, and make it all work? No one.

And no one but Jackson could pull off being the glue that makes it all stick together. Michael, make a little room. You've got to share the throne with the Princess of Pop.

Rating:

☆☆☆☆ Classic  
☆☆☆☆ Excellent  
☆☆☆☆ Good  
☆☆ Fair  
☆ Why?

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