

Jazz man from outer space puts on cosmic concert

Sun Ra and his Arkestra delivered an occasionally riveting but extremely humorous and entertaining double set of "cosmo-equational" big band music Sunday night at the Cat's Cradle.

Ra, who of course is from Saturn via Alabama and Philadelphia, is here to save the world by allowing the universe to communicate its truths through his music, and Sunday night's performance was another in a series of enlightening services that has spanned some 30 years.

Ordinarily, the benevolent extraterrestrial wears a bent coat hanger on his head for the purposes of receiving trans-

Matthew McCafferty

Concert

missions from outer space, but his orders Sunday night were to "hold all calls" during the show, and he sported a considerably more conservative ritual headress.

Looking and behaving like a cross between a Tibetan monk and Redd Foxx, Ra waddled at front and center stage, sang and played keyboards. At times he waved his arms ceremoni-

ously in front of the group, but it was hard to discern whether he was conducting the group, bestowing his blessings upon the audience or simply exorcising the stage of its evil earthly spirits.

"I could have enjoyed myself on this planet/ If the people had been alive." These were Ra's words, but the audience was not buying; Ra and his Arkestra were obviously enjoying themselves as they created their own genre of African swing, complete with brilliantly calculated, dissonant horn arrangements.

At first listen, the music occasion-

ally recalled the high school marching band messing around before the director showed up for rehearsal. Upon closer inspection, however, it is revealed that there is a mathematical method to the apparent musical chaos.

The more intense, manic tunes were reminiscent of some of Jaco Pastorius' latest works. Pastorius was arguably the greatest and most influential bassist who ever lived, but he descended into psychosis and manic depression during his fatal bout with alcoholism and drug abuse. His last compositions and recordings have a disturbing, frenzied quality that reflected his deteriorating mental health.

rating mental health.

The Arkestra, also driven by a radical bassist (a very young musician who was arguably the group's most consistent player) evoked similar sensations at times, but never lost the band's sense of humor.

Without their outrageous, infectious sense of humor, it is unlikely that the Arkestra could consistently maintain the interest of most Western audiences. This is very esoteric music: often atonal, extremely free-form, and very complex rhythmically. The inclusion of several (barely) recognizable "standards," such as "Let's Go Fly a Kite,"

from *Mary Poppins*, and a divinely perverted version of "When the Saints Go Marching In" helped keep the Cradle audience clapping and laughing.

Whenever you see a bassoon sharing the same square yard of stage space with a four-foot African doombach, you know you're in for an unusual experience. When the group involved is being led by a veteran jazz musician who claims he's from outer space, the situation can look even more promising. Sun Ra's performance here on Earth Sunday night was no letdown. Whether it was enough to save the world, only time will tell.

Soprano highlight of fine chamber music performance

The Ensemble Courant opened its seventh concert season this weekend at Hanes Art Center with an impressive performance of chamber music by G.F. Handel.

The members of the group, which is UNC's professional music society for performance on original instruments, are Elaine Funaro, harpsichord; Penelope Jensen, soprano; Ruth Johnsen, violin; Robbie Link, violone; Richard Luby, violin; Rebecca Troxler, flute; Brent Wissick, cello, viola da gamba; and Ann Woodward, viola.

Joining them this weekend were guest performers Sarah Davol, oboe; and Claire Fontijn, flute; along with violinists Joan Brickley, Edith Gettes and Alexandra Eddy.

The group opened the program with Handel's Concerto Grosso in D Major,

Gretchen Davis

Concert

Op. 6, No. 5. The rhythmic character of the first movement drew the audience's attention immediately, and it was held through the second movement characterized by almost perpetual motion. In the third movement the style changed from Baroque to Romantic, as the harmonies appealed to the audience's emotions. The next movement reverted to the original rhythmic idea, and the fifth movement — a charming, waltzing minuet — ended the concert.

The next group of pieces consisted of "Susse Stille, sanfte Quelle," "In den angenehmen Buschen" and "Flam-

mende Rose," from Handel's set of nine German arias and featured soprano Penelope Jensen.

Jensen sang more than impressively. Her tone, facility with language and melismas, projection, ornamentation, articulation and expression were almost faultless. In "Flammende Rose," there was a marvelous interplay between flute and voice, with the melodic lines crossing, mixing and duplicating each other. Jensen manages to treat her voice as though it were a Baroque instrument, and she maintains an incredible consistency of tone no matter what her dynamic level. It's pure joy to hear her sing, and her voice is especially well-suited to this genre.

After the three German arias, Jensen explained that they "couldn't resist" doing "everyone's favorite aria," which

turned out to be "Meine Seele," from the same set as the others. Vocally it is a less challenging piece, but the thematic material in the aria is the same as in the opening movement of the Trio Sonata in F, which was to follow. Besides making sense musically in the context of the program, it was a definite pleasure to hear even more of Jensen's voice.

The Trio Sonata opened with an intricate contrapuntal dialogue between the two violins, communicated expertly to the audience by Richard Luby and Ruth Johnsen, with Elaine Funaro playing a continuo accompaniment on the harpsichord. The middle movements made very effective use of sudden, dramatic pauses in the music, and kept the audience's attention by the constantly changing tempo. The final

"Allegro" featured more elaborate passagework and was a satisfying ending to the first half of the program.

After the intermission the audience was treated again to Jensen's singing, in a nearly flawless performance of Handel's cantata "Tra le Fiamme." Her Italian is as outstanding as her German is, yet none of her previously complimented vocal characteristics suffer from her concentration on diction. Even on her high notes she used almost no vowel modification, and the purity of the language contributed significantly to the success of her performance.

The final selection of the concert was a Passacaille first written as part of an opera, but not performed until Han-

del included it in his one-act Opera-Ballet "Terpsichore."

The phrasing and harmonies were pleasant, and there were occasional sections featuring groups of two or three musicians (instead of the entire instrumental ensemble of 12) which were integrated and performed well, but the only noticeably impressive aspect of this piece was how well the musicians all stayed together without a conductor.

In comparison to the rest of the program, the Passacaille was considerably less exciting, but nonetheless a satisfying musical finish to an outstanding overall performance.

Election

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Beall said: "The bill is very ambiguous. There's a serious discrepancy between what the students will see on the ballot and what the change will be."

A third referendum would change all instances in which the Student Constitution uses the words "he" and "him" to "he or she" and "him or her."

The referendum will neutralize the constitution, Beall said. "It's very important, because when you only use the word 'he,' you use subliminal sexism. It's not overt, but it has no place in

the Student Constitution."

Because the referendum affects the constitution, it must be approved by a vote of the student body.

"I'm optimistic," Beall said. "It's a perfunctory thing, really, but it's still important."

Congress seats are open in districts 16 and 18. No candidates are listed for the District 16 election, and two candidates are running for the District 18 seat.

No one filed in time to run for the vacant position in District 16, which is south of Franklin Street and East of Columbia Street, said David Smith, Elections Board chairman.

Two students, sophomore Nick Kontogeorgopoulos and junior Ginny Hewitt, will compete to fill the vacant seat in District 18.

Five pollsites are open for today's election. The Pit is an all-campus site. The Campus Y, the Health Science Library, Chase Dining Hall and the Sun Dial are district voting sites. Students may vote from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.



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