

New And Unusual Music

After last week's successful concerts by the English guitarist Fred Frith and Toronto's CCMC quartet, Vancouverites once again have the opportunity to expose themselves to new and unusual forms of music this weekend, when the members of the New Orchestra Workshop Society will present the first annual Vancouver Creative Music Festival. The three day event, held on Friday the 16th through Sunday the 18th at 1616 W. 3rd (rear) will showcase 12 of the Pacific Northwest's most innovative new music groups, duets, and solo artists.

Friday night the line-up includes Randy Rain-Reusch, the Contemporary String Quartet, and the N.O.W. Quintet. On Saturday, AKA, Bob Bell, and the CORD Orchestra will play, and on Sunday the featured acts will be Bob Murphy, the Don Druick/Lyle Ellis duet, and Bellingham's Viktor Konzept.

Unless you've been reading these pages regularly, you're probably not familiar with many of the above names. They never get coverage in the daily papers, and they get very little airplay outside of Co-op Radio, but some of the city's best musicians, the ones who prefer to create rather than to mimic familiar

styles, can be found in their ranks.

They never get coverage in the daily papers, and they get very little airplay outside of Co-op Radio, but some of the city's best musicians, the ones who prefer to create rather than to mimic familiar styles, can be found in their ranks. . .

Randy Rain-Reusch is an internationally-acclaimed dulcimer player, one of the few who can play both the old traditional jigs and reels and inventive original compositions. He's got a

wonderful touch on the instrument, and can spin out melodic improvisations for hours. Rain-Reusch also plays khaen, a south-east Asian reed instrument that sounds like a cross between bagpipes and a clarinet, and electric Hawaiian lap-steel guitar.

The *Contemporary String Quartet* contains two violinists, one of whom doubles on guitar, a violist, and a cellist. I haven't heard them, but they play both composed and improvised music and at least two of the members are considerably talented.

The *New Orchestra Quintet* may be the best modern jazz group in British Columbia: at any rate they're certainly the best I've heard here. Gregg Simpson is an astoundingly sensitive and inventive drummer; Lyle Ellis is a strong bassist and an excellent composer; Paul Plimley has a phenomenally fast and fluid piano technique as well as quite an ear for a memorable melody; Paul Cram is adept at drawing a number of unusual vocal sounds out of his assortment of saxophones; and Ralph Eppel alternates between hair-raising bellowing and punchy slide work on his trombone. They're a great group.

AKA is developing a reputation in new wave circles as the band that combines weird guitars and saxophones with futuristic lyrics and an insistently funky, danceable beat. For this New Orchestra Studio appearance they'll be leaving behind their rock drum kit and big amplifiers, to concentrate instead on low volume electric and acoustic improvisations.

Bob Bell is a natural musician, one of those people who can produce interesting sounds out of just about anything. On Saturday he'll probably be using guitars, alto sax, and vibraphone in a display of his solo abilities.

The *CORD Orchestra* incorporates both the Contemporary String Quartet and most of the N.O.W. Quintet, as well as a number of others, in a thoroughly contemporary big band sound. Their group improvisations sometimes echo pioneers like Sun Ra and his Arkestra or the larger AACM groups from Chicago, but the use of bowed instruments gives CORD a distinctive sound that's all their own.

Bob Murphy is one of this city's finest pianists, with a solo style that combines the best of bebop stylists like Bud Powell and Oscar

Peterson with the energy of avant-gardists Cecil Taylor and Muhal Richard Abrams. Murphy's music is always a treat.

The *Don Druick/Lyle Ellis duet* will probably be dabbling in the field of sound collage as well as exploring more conventional styles of duet improvisation. Druick is a well-known performance and video artist as well as a first-rate flautist, and Ellis, a member of the N.O.W. Quintet, is an equally accomplished bassist.

It's hard to describe Bellingham's *Viktor Konzept*, as they draw on almost the entire spectrum of creative music, from bebop to serialist compositional techniques, to Miles Davis' modal progressions, and even to rock'n'roll. The sensitivity of the three musicians is high enough that everything comes out sounding like nothing else but Viktor Konzept. I find them enjoyable and stimulating listening.

Tickets for the series are \$7.00 at Black Swan Records and Quintessence, and single tickets, at \$3.00 a night, are also available. Anyone who's interested in seeing a variety of musical styles flourish in this often unsupportive city should turn out for these concerts./Alex Varty