

**Time Flies**

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 moments, but maybe the most sustained displays of that feeling will belong to Friday night's VECC concert, featuring **Unity** and the **Tom Cora/Hans Reichel** duo.

Unity, a quartet featuring the combined energies of saxophonist Graham Ord, trumpeter/violinist Daniel Lapp, drummer Roger Baird, and bassist Paul Blaney, may be the most consistently daring of the New Orchestra Workshop's member groups. They aim for the kind of collective empathy that borders on the telepathic, and usually attain the sort of state that leaves them limp and wringing wet when they leave the bandstand, satisfied that they've poured their all into some of the most physically charged sound around. Unity is still a young collaboration, but the group already sounds like they've earned their name. Rarely have explorations been so soulful.

Of course, soul is not in short supply when Tom Cora and Hans Reichel improvise, either. These musicians have been out on a limb for so long that the most dizzying acrobatics are second nature to them. Cora plays cello, and Reichel plays guitar, but in a blindfold test the listener might be baffled: both players continually push and redefine the possibilities inherent in their instruments, Cora by an ever-growing arsenal of alternative approaches to bowing, plucking, preparing, and processing his string sounds, Reichel by building his own instruments, fluidly sculptural works of art that incorporate extra frets, pickups, and strings and allow him to

jump from psychedelic sonorities to Asian pentatonics to bluesy bends with apparently effortless grace. Cora and Reichel are both modern masters of the truly-avant-garde, and their collaboration should be stunning.

The final Time Flies performance belongs to pianist **Marilyn Crispell**, who will appear in a solo recital and as guest soloist with the 17-piece **N.O.W. Orchestra**. Saxophonist/composer Anthony Braxton, who has played with many of the world's finest pianists, considers Crispell second only to Cecil Taylor for strength, and upon listening to Crispell's recordings, with Braxton and on her own, it's immediately apparent that Braxton's not just talking about physical strength. Crispell's fingering powers are remarkable, but even more striking is the tenacity of her intellectual grasp, the uncompromising intensity with which she approaches, works through, and completes a musical concept. This strength and clarity is as apparent in her improvisations as in her compositional works, and both aspects of her musical persona will receive extended airings in this special program. It will be especially interesting to hear the cream of Vancouver's improvising community interacting with this major talent, in a suite of specially commissioned compositions for the extended orchestra.

Time Flies, indeed. It almost seems as if there's more music here than would be possible to cram into a five-day week, and this mini-festival's promised delights are sure to leave participants—listeners and players alike—breathless with exhilaration.

**The Once and Future N.O.W. Returns**

**W**riting in Toronto's *Coda Magazine*, West Coast jazz critic Scott Lewis notes, "the creative music scene in British Columbia hasn't looked so good in a long time. The

**Off Beat**

ALEX VARTY

focus remains the revived New Orchestra Workshop."

The posters for next week's Time Flies concert series hang on hoardings and in shop windows all over town. Production credits are given to the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society, well-known for producing each summer's duMaurier International Jazz Festival, and to the New Orchestra Workshop.

As part of those festivities, the acclaimed pianist Marilyn Crispell will perform with an ensemble made up of New Orchestra Workshop members.

The focus of a musical scene. A concert-promoting agency. A musical group. Who are these people, and what are they doing to our culture?

To answer these questions, we spoke with New Orchestra Workshop organizers Kate Hammett-Vaughan and Coat Cooke. But first, a little reminiscing is in order.

The first edition of the New Orchestra Workshop was formed in 1977, 11 years ago, the year that I moved to Vancouver from the culturally inhospitable wastelands of the mysterious east. Wandering around town, I noticed that many of the most in-

teresting concert posters bore the N.O.W. imprimatur. Intrigued, I turned up at the N.O.W. headquarters one evening, to hear the American saxophonist Joe McPhee play a solo concert. A great solo concert, as it turned out, and in the audience I found a fraternity of musicians who were dedicated to the same sort of musics that I was interested in: modern jazz, improvisation, and the avant-garde.

I was quite dismayed when, in the early '80s, the departure of a few of N.O.W.'s key members led to the group's dissolution. Despite the usual internal squabbles, N.O.W. seemed to be the sort of community-minded, cooperative organization that the arts, already suffering under a mean-spirited So-cred administration, needed to thrive in the face of adversity.

So, here we are in 1988, with a government that is even less interested in supporting the arts, but a city that is somewhat more interested in cultural activities that push at the limits of convention, and the New Orchestra Workshop has been reborn, with some of the same goals as the original outfit, with many of the same principals, but already making more of an impact on Vancouver's cultural life.

Coat Cooke, saxophonist, composer, and N.O.W. activist, can take it from here. "What we're trying to do is provide a forum, not just for ourselves, but also for people in the community who are doing original music. Trying to make the presence of the music felt, so that people have an opportunity to hear it."



Vocalist Kate Hammett-Vaughan of the New Orchestra Workshop. Photo by Oraf.

Kate Hammett-Vaughan, singer, composer, and a fairly recent but very visible convert to the N.O.W. cause, continues: "[We're] also trying to increase the awareness, on a public level, of the talent that exists in this town, in the contemporary music scene. There has been too much of an attitude that jazz in this town consists only of the bebop that gets played at the Classical Joint and the fusion that gets played at the Landmark Jazz Bar. That's far from being true."

And as any political theorist will tell you, in order to build a community, educa-

tion is a necessity. Here's where the "workshop" aspect comes in.

According to Cooke, "One aim of the organization has always been to bring in people to do workshops with, and to do workshops by ourselves. We try to get people who are studying music, people in the schools and in the colleges, to be exposed to music other than what they're going to be exposed to 95 percent of the time. It's necessary for people to be exposed to this music firsthand; you are affected more by the music that you hear in person than by the music that you hear on records."

Hammett-Vaughan concurs. "And in a workshop situation you're able to get a little closer to the music, through participating and asking questions, than through watching it live in concert."

With that in mind, one of the aspects of the upcoming Time Flies series that the New Orchestra Workshop is proudest of is the series of afternoon workshops that they'll be hosting from 3 till 5 p.m., at the Vancouver Community College's King Edward Campus. Starting on Wednesday, with a workshop led by Hammett-Vaughan, Lunar Adventures' guitarist Ron Samworth, and freelance percussionist Roger Baird, the series will continue with sessions led by Jean Beaudet, Marilyn Crispell, and the Tom Cora/Hans Reichel team. The workshops cost \$10 to members of the public, and are free to music students, and should offer a rare opportunity to get acquainted with the cutting edge of contemporary jazz.

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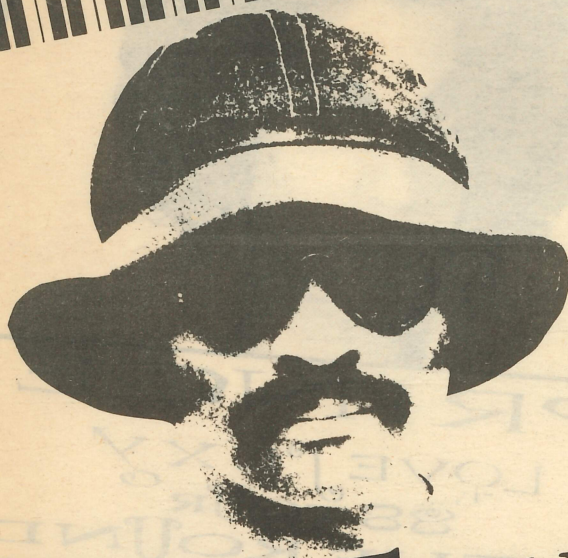
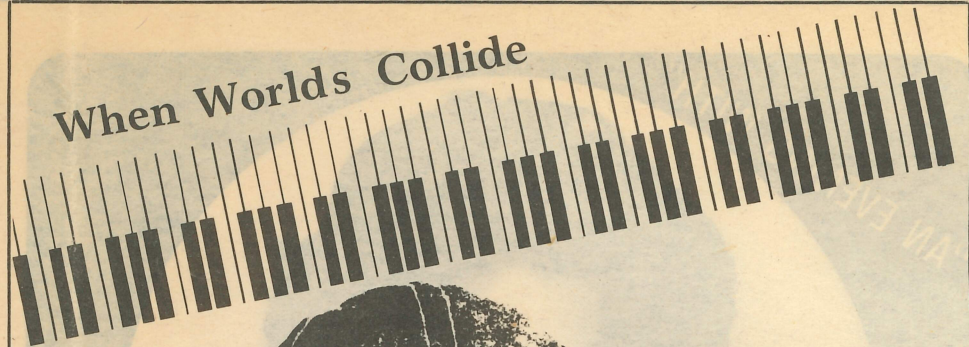
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