

FREE F

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A SERIES OF

MUSICAL IMPROVISATIONS

SEPT. 23 - NOV. 2, 1989



Presented by
HALLWALLS CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER
in cooperation with
THE NEW TRALFAMADORE JAZZ INSTITUTE
THE WESTERN NEW YORK JAZZ SOCIETY
and
EVENINGS FOR NEW MUSIC

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A TRIBUTE TO JOHN COLTRANE
Saturday, September 23, 8 p.m.
\$6/\$3 members
The New Tralfamadore Jazz Institute

Program 2

THE ROVA SAXOPHONE QUARTET
Wednesday, October 4, 8 p.m.
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Program 3

THE STRING TRIO OF NEW YORK
Friday, October 6, 8 p.m.
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Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center

Program 4

TRANS MUSEQ
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Program 5

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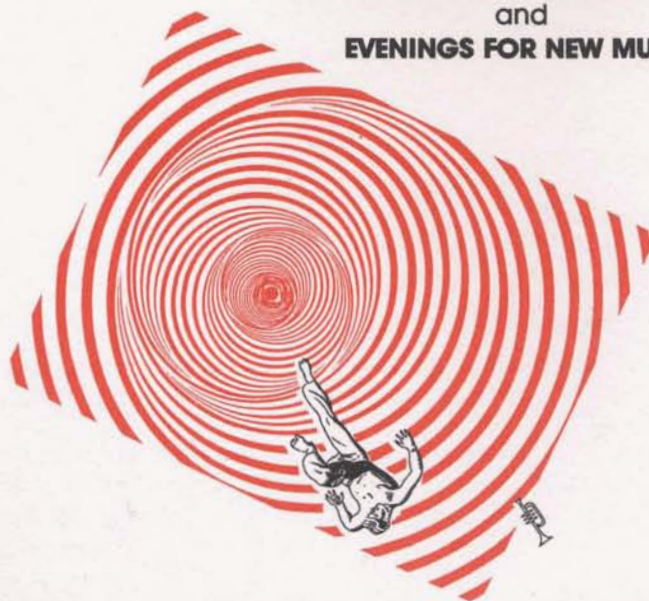
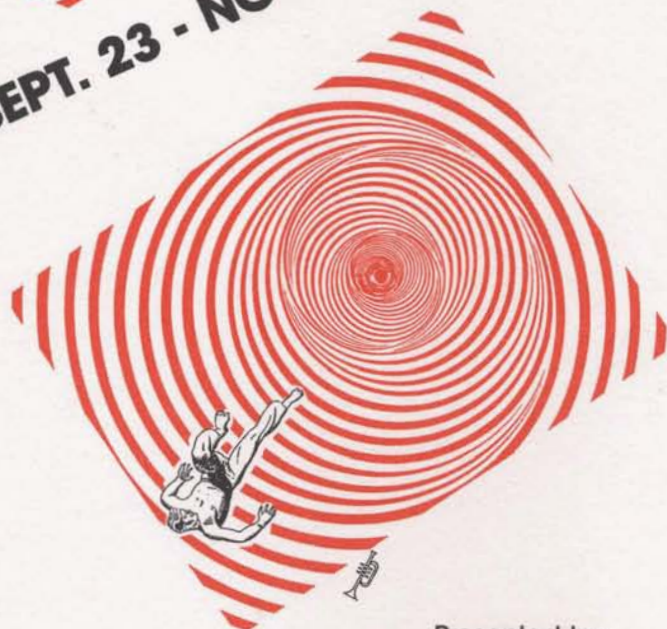
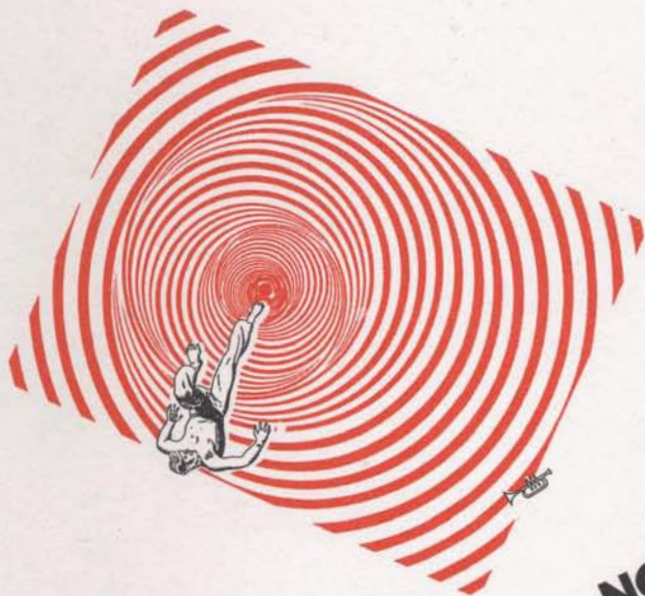
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**LESTER BOWIE & JOHN BACON JR.
WITH MULTI JAZZ DIMENSIONS**
Sunday, October 29, 8 p.m.
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A TRIBUTE TO AL TINNEY
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THE END OF MUSIC

by Bill Besecker



(With acknowledgements to the end of history arguments of Francis Fukuyama.)

A depressing notion fostered by the retrospective logic of the 1980's is that music has no future.

All that is heralded as new, is only a rehash of what went by before, some would have us believe. But even beyond that, there is the premise that there is no where else to go!

We are told that harmony and theory have been exhausted by the intense complexity of the jazz form known as be-bop. Modal musical theories that followed were actually less complex, and in fact the beginnings of a backward evolution. Other attempts to create new forms (such as the *avante-garde*) have become too abstract to be taken seriously, and in some cases, shouldn't be called music at all.

However, saxophonist Henry Threadgill questioned that logic in a 1985 interview. "A lot of people don't believe in evolution and change. They deny the existence and creativity of their own children. When they say that things stop right here, that there is no more hip music past this person, they are saying their kids are imbeciles, and their grandchildren are even bigger imbeciles."

In music and the arts, it is generally recognized that the only inevitable is change. Although that change seems to have been going backward, rather than forward, this decade, the real hope for evolution seems to lie where it always has, in improvisation.

Some musicians can strip away the theme of any musical work, discard the arrangement and then improvise from the structure of the work to create new music. Still others can further abandon the harmonic structure itself and spontaneously create new music from merely an idea. This is called free improvisation.

Their command of their instruments and a compelling sense of musical logic provides them with the confidence to begin, but to complete music of lasting quality, they must also draw from that mystical plane called inspiration.

Improvisation, as discussed here, is a two step process. The first is contextual, that is, the understanding of the means of musical expression, and the ability to execute that understanding. It is much like speaking, where the speaker draws on language and the rules of syntax to create meaningful images of real and conceptual things and events.

The second step involves content, that is, having something to say and not noodling around with scales and theory for its own sake. Usually, the two steps are at odds with one another.

According to Reggie Workman, bassist for John Coltrane from 1960-61, the saxophonist committed his life to cleaning his own house (of both personal and musical baggage) so as to become a conduit for a greater message from beyond.

Saxophonist David Murray often alluded to the "madness" of divine possession in the Sanctified Church as akin to certain states of his own playing.

Guitarist John McLaughlin always advises young musicians to learn all they can regarding theory, and technique. But when the music begins to come from within, "just forget it all and get out of the way."

Whether music is actually a divine gift as some might propose, or if it is simply a language beyond syntax and truly universal, no one really knows. The question goes back to music's genesis.

Music has always been with us, since earliest humanity. The wind, sea and rivers all had their own tones and rhythm and were sources for humanity's first social messages, predating even language. In addition, the musical world extends beyond humanity to animal kingdoms of whales and birds.

Those ancient songs, as much as they survive today, serve as a document to history where none was written, offering insight into cultures, human and otherwise, whose legacies have never been recorded. Consequently, they are impossible to analyze and clearly understand, and likewise continue that mystical element.

Throughout history, improvisation has served as a stepping stone for the evolution of musical activity, although its importance in the mainstream has had its ups and downs. Improvisation became as critical in the 20th Century as it was in the beginning.

Jazz spearheaded its latest resurgence.

It is generally accepted that the origins of jazz lie in the blues and gospel musics of African-American slaves, who found themselves separated from their culture in every way, including the banishment of their most powerful cultural and communicative symbol, the drum. Through rechanneled rhythmic and melodic sensibilities, blues and gospel evolved through an improvisational use of western instruments and harmony to become jazz.

It was a blending, if you will, of western classical theory and exotic ritual-based folk musics that formed ever more complex musical forms.

Today we celebrate "World Music" and play, sometimes like children, with improvisation from other traditions, of which we know relatively little about. Tenor and soprano saxophonist, John Coltrane, may have felt the regiment of bop was still expandable as he began to incorporate the improvisational melodies and rhythms of classical Indian musics into his later music.

Still others, like Don Cherry and Fred Houn, explored even broader cultural blocks of African and Asian musics, and brought those traditions more directly into the jazz framework. (African music has always existed indirectly within American jazz. However, it took the hand drum decades before it ultimately joined the jazz ensemble in the late 40's.)

The Rova Saxophone Quartet successfully connected American jazz avante-garde to progressive musicians in the Soviet Union partly because their music also reflects a heavy Euro-Classical commitment.

The conservative thinkers among jazz practitioners would have nothing to do with this globalization tendency. "What is the point?" they asked, firmly satisfied that bop was as complex a music as one could achieve. However, they miss the point!

The final judgment for music lies solely in it's ability to effect its listeners. If that means simpler, or if that means more complex, whatever has the greater effect is ultimately the better music. If it means drawing from another tradition to make itself meaningful to even more listeners, so be it.

In fact, complexity bears little relationship with effect in music.

The 3 or 5 note focus of Korean music, practiced by Jin Hi Kim, gives rise to the preference for simplicity in modern improvisation, "less is more!"

On the other extreme, modern jazz scales have evolved to chromaticism. Tenor saxophonist David Murray explains that he can play any note, at any time, and still make it sound right, because he knows how to take off and how to land.

Duke Ellington observed there are only two types of music, good and bad. Truly good music transcends the need for an educated ear. All it does require is an open mind, and it works its magic on as many listenings. When it comes to improvised music, there is only one listening (unless it's recorded). Whatever the effect, it must be immediate.

World music study, interestingly enough, brought a reemphasis to the collective improvisational aspect of composer collectives like the String Trio of New York.

Interestingly, Ellington always declined the use of the term, "jazz", to describe his music, observing also that great music generally transcends categories.

Jazz is a beautiful musical movement, unprecedented in its rise from folk origins to sophisticated art, but it was also born out of much suffering. It is a by-product of human abuse and cultural dislocation. Jazz's very existence could never justify all the suffering it rose above. That is why the African-American's desperate claim to the music is so critical. However that possessive hold, in the light of the music's further evolution, may be just as unfortunate.

For jazz is truly an art, the 20th Century's classical music. And art is not something that can remain only with its creator. It becomes alive in whatever kindred spirit it sets afire, regardless of all other conditions. It is itself, living, breathing and growing with whatever it is fed. When it no longer sensually pleases and stimulates the thinking centers of the brain, and when it no longer inspires new ways of visualizing relationships - whether social, historical, political or even mathematical, that are otherwise non-communicable through language, and when we no longer include examples like Louis Armstrong's "Melancholy Blues" aboard unmanned cruises like Voyager 2 to define humanity to the cosmos ... then it will truly be the end of music.



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Program 1

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN COLTRANE

Saturday, September 23, 8 p.m.
Tralfamadore Jazz Institute

In jazz, John Coltrane was the tenor saxophonist who took the music beyond bop and modal into the realm of the adventuresome. While some of his peers accused him of overstretching ideas and soloing without regard to time or taste, his legacy led us to the avant-garde, the East, to spiritual and the essence of music itself.

When all was said and done, and the 40 year old Coltrane died in 1967, it could never be said that he had ever "sold out." Never did he make a recording that ever presented less than 100% of his commitment to the music. Never once did this giant compromise just to find a place in the commercial market.

Bassist Jim "Pappy" Martin's "Love Supreme Jazz Ensemble" recreates the musical message of John Coltrane in a program of all Coltrane compositions. Martin has assembled saxophonists Dave Schiavone and Carol McLaughlin, Pianist Al Tinney, bassist Sabu Adeyola and himself, and drummer John Bacon Jr. for this project.

From the Western New York Jazz Society (co-sponsors of the series), James Patrick will screen the film, "The Coltrane Legacy" featuring rare footage of the saxophonist from the Miles Davis Quintet of 1959, as well as his own quartet and quintet from 1961-63.



Program 2
THE ROVA SAXOPHONE QUARTET
Wednesday, October 4, 8 p.m.
Tralfamadore Jazz Institute

Formed around the same time as the World Saxophone Quartet, Rova also knew the saxophone ensemble had come of age for the late 1970's. Unlike WSQ however, Rova adds the complexities of modern composers such as Terry Riley, Henry Kaiser, Fred Frith and others to their repertoire of original compositions and collaborative efforts with Anthony Braxton, Richard Teitelbaum and Lawrence "Butch" Morris.

Rova also found a surprising communion with Soviet avant-garde players like Sergy Kuryokhin and the Vyacheslav Ganlin Trio in 1983 as the first new music group from the United States to tour the pre-glasnost Soviet Union.

They are currently planning another Soviet tour in November and will be touring Europe with a group of traditional Japanese drummers later this month.

Current members are Jon Raskin, Larry Ochs, Bruce Ackley, and Steve Adams.

This is their first Buffalo appearance.



Program 3
THE STRING TRIO OF NEW YORK
Friday, October 6, 1989
Hallwalls Contemporary Art Center

As the saxophone is to jazz, so is the violin to classical. The String Trio of New York is so atypical as a classical trio, they defy categorization completely. Like Rova, they also came together in 1977, with an aim to create a new music for which the times were indeed ready.

The three members, violinist Charles Burnham, guitarist James Emery and bassist John Lindberg are well regarded in both new jazz and new classical circles. Together they have recorded five albums on the Black Saint label.

Their music is an everchanging blend of composition and improvisation. Bassist Lindberg describes their approach as "having composition shape the improvisations, but also to have improvisatory elements integrated into the predetermined material."

Writer Francis Davis noted that their multi-thematic compositions exhibit the maturing of contemporary jazz composers, who finally realize, like the novelists and poets have for so long, "that since one idea is never enough for art, and two are already one two many, the correct solution is one and a half (or one and two thirds, or one and tree quarters, as the case may be)."



Vid Inglevis

Program 4
TRANS MUSEQ
Wednesday, October 11, 8 p.m.
Tralfamadore Jazz Institute

Viola player LaDonna Smith and guitarist Davey Williams have chosen a name for their collaboration that signifies their intense commitment to bridging musical styles. Wrought of the southeast, they display an approach that can be described as a front-porch in complete contrast to the stereo-typical worldly chamber sophistication of free improvisation

Williams is described as "a one-man bridge between Derek Bailey, Albert Ayler, Muddy Waters and Spike Jones." Smith, meanwhile, alternates between "sweet siren and fiendish noise maker."

Together they have recorded nine albums since their formation in 1974.



Program 5
THE MC BAND

Thursday, October 12, 8 p.m.
Trafamadore Jazz Institute

Flutist Michael Colquhoun doesn't "double." That's musician's terminology meaning he doesn't play other horns at gigs. Consequently, that has limited his working gigs to Latin bands and arts and education seminars where the flute, and only the flute, was in demand.

His tastes range from Ornette Coleman's free jazz to various Latin musics, mixed together with a heavy dose of humor.

He wants to bend people's ears with the unexpected, before following that up with the sweetest of sounds the flute can conjure. He calls his style, "Freejazz-afroderanged-latinrockpop-boggieblues."

A recent earner of a Ph.D. in Music, Colquhoun studied composition with Morton Feldman and Lejaren Hiller, and flute with Robert Dick and Cheryl Gobbetti.

For this performance he brings together drummer John Bacon Jr., trombonist John Hasselback Jr., bassist Larry Manno and pianist Mark Thomas for a premiere performance of his new band.



Program 6
JIN HI KIM & JOSEPH CELLI
Friday, October 27, 1989
Hallwalls

The disparate worlds of Korean traditional and European classical meet in an improvisational pool of notes and tonal clusters when Komungo player Kim meets oboist Joseph Celli.

The komungo is a fourth century six string zither-type instrument with sixteen frets. Through her father's encouragement, she studied traditional music in her native Korea.

However, her improvisations aren't traditionally based. "I improvise with western music," Kim claims.

Her 1980 move to San Francisco allowed her the opportunity to study the blend of World Musics available there. A 1986 premiere of her commissioned work, "Linking," by the Kronos Quartet brought her international attention.

Past collaborators have included flautist James Newton and guitarists Henry Kaiser and Elliot Sharp.



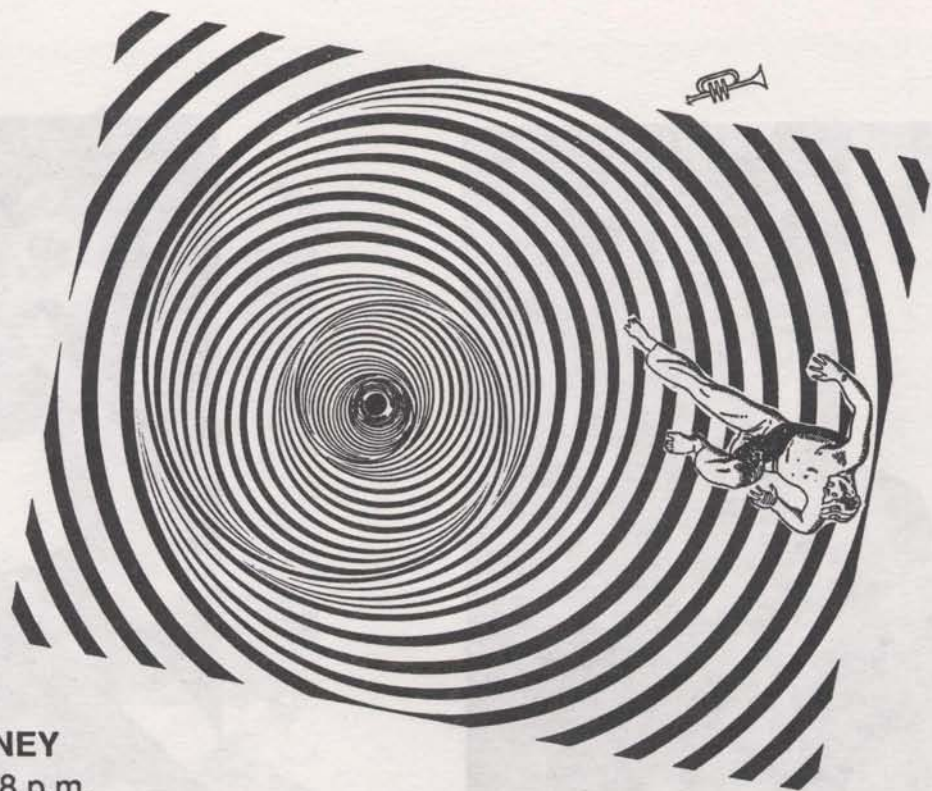
Program 7
**LESTER BOWIE with
JOHN BACON JR. AND MULTI JAZZ DIMENSIONS**
Sunday, October 29, 1989
Tralfamadore Jazz Institute

On the heels of last fall's collaboration with trombonist Roswell Rudd, Bacon and company have sought out Art Ensemble of Chicago trumpeter Lester Bowie for more unique musical experimenting.

Bowie's reputation for being one of jazz music's stalwart avant-gardists from Chicago's AACM (Association for the Advancement of Creative Music) has soon mellowed into one of the music's great humorists. With reinterpretations of funk and R&B classics via his "Brass Fantasy" band, Bowie's current image is on par with 1940's Dizzy Gillespie, and is likewise, just as serious.

The multi-Jazz Dimensions band includes Greg Millar on Guitar, Carl Corwin on reeds, and other guests in addition to drummer Bacon.

Their first album was released on Mark Records in November of 1987. Their second recording has been completed and will be available soon.



Program 8

A TRIBUTE TO AL TINNEY

Thursday, November 2, 8 p.m.

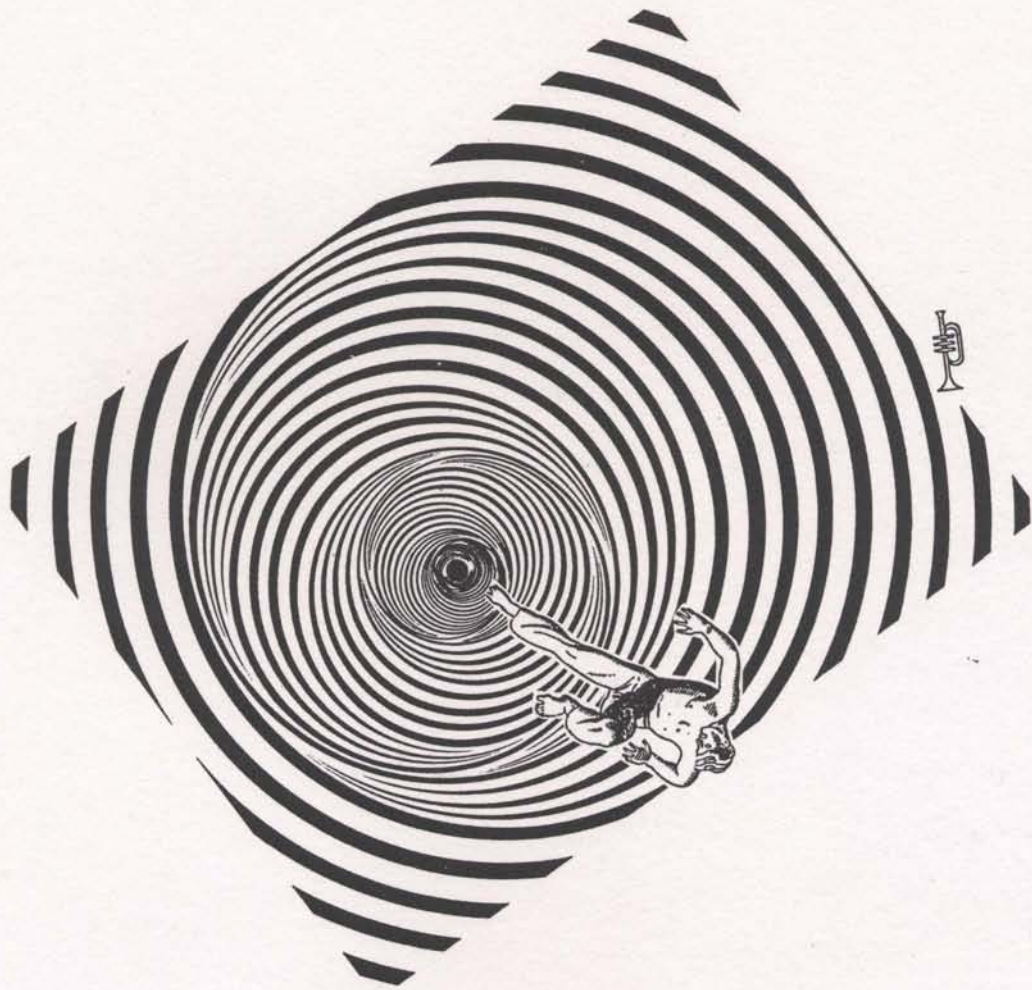
The New Tralfamadore Jazz Institute

Since 1968, Al Tinney has lived in Buffalo, N.Y., where the jazz scene has been enriched time and again because of his presence. The 69 year old pianist was a pivotal figure in early 1940's be-bop revolution in jazz.

Although that fact has certainly been overshadowed by the prominence of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and others who remain entrenched in the developing scene while Tinney left to join the Army and get away from the drug dramas being played out on the sidelines, his importance has been well documented.

Tinney led the house band at the legendary "Monroes's Uptown House" on W. 134th St. in Harlem for almost three years, while he was just 19 - 21 years old. His Talent for organizing and developing what might have remained directionless blowing sessions evolved into brainstorming experiments in improvising that attracted the best musicians in New York City. Of course, the eventual result was the birth of be-bop, the richest and most complex form of African-American improvisational music developed to that era.

Today, Tinney works in the rehabilitation of youthful offenders at the Masten Park Secure Center, in addition to his activity on the local music circuit. He retains the patience and wisdom that still calls many musicians to his tutelage. Those players pay tribute tonight with continued respect and admiration for his presence and example.





**This series was made possible with support from the N.Y.S.C.A., the N.E.A.,
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