

# Dub Poet electrifies Halifax audience

Linton Kwesi Johnson is widely regarded as one of the few remaining reggae greats and the man responsible for some of the most moving statements in reggae music. A leading voice in the struggle for racial justice and equality, LKJ pioneered socially conscious reggae poetry back in 1973. He is best known for his classic 1979 "Forces of Victory," an album that was #1 in England and is regarded by many as one of reggae's finest. "...A spellbinding reggae singer, not to mention poet" - The Village Voice.

Linton Kwesi Johnson (hereafter referred to as LKJ) was backed by the band that has worked with him throughout his recording career, the DUB band, one of the tightest outfits now working in reggae. The DUB band, led by bass player/singer/musical arranger Dennis Bovell, opened the show with five strong original pieces. Bovell is a first-rate performer and his reggae bass-playing is second to none. The band was awe-inspiringly tight, moving effortlessly from ska to roots to version/dance hall.

Jamaican dub poet Sister Carol Breeze then joined the band onstage for 5 pieces of her own. Her performance was the low point of the evening; she seemed ill at ease and stiff. She told the audience that this was her first Canadian performance, and perhaps she was uncertain of the audience's reaction. She was well-received, however, and finished her set strongly. The DUB band was as comfortable backing Sister Breeze as they were performing their own material, and they went a long way to contributing to the success of her set.

LKJ then took the stage and captivated the audience with his poem "Five Nights o' Bleeding," performed with no musical backing. LKJ is a charming and captivating man who looks more like a distinguished professor than he does a musician. In his tweed



Linton Kwesi Johnson

jacket and his shirt, tie, and vest, he welcomed the audience and commented on the "sub-zero" temperatures. The bank then kicked in to the classic "Dread Beat an' Blood," which alerted the audience that the show would be nothing less than electrifying. LKJ's poetry stands on its own and has been published and widely read; with the accompaniment of the powerful reggae of the DUB band it is simply awe-inspiring and even somewhat ominous.

LKJ writes about black experience and colonial and police brutality and oppression; he was born in Jamaica in 1952 and moved to England, where he has resided since 1963. He writes about the black immigrant experience in England in powerful poems such as "England is a Bitch," "All We Doin' is Defendin'," and "Reggae Fe Peach." He writes about the struggle of the working class in "Welcome to the Working Class." And he writes poems to victims of oppression such as Guyanese historian Walter Rodney in "Reggae Fe Rodney."

Highlights of the evening's performance were "All We Doin' is Defendin'," "Reality Poem," "Welcome to the Working Class," and "Sonny's Lettah" which drew the loudest applause from the audience when it was announced. Some of LKJ's poetry was performed without the aid of the DUB band, and it is a tribute to the power of the man's work that a club-going audience was captivated by the raw poetry.

The Flamingo Cafe and Lounge is to be commended for the quality of reggae acts that appear regularly on their stage. Seminal acts such as Burning Spear, Sugar Minott, and Judy Mowatt have all appeared at the Flamingo and will continue to do so. Halifax is a four and one-half hour drive from Fredericton; well worth making the quality of the performances. The Flamingo publishes a monthly program of scheduled acts and the entertainer. info line is (902) 420-1051.

luis cardoso

## WATCH FOR AN UP COMING "TRIBUTE TO MEAT" ISSUE



### Get Classical

About 12 years ago I was teaching at a summer school at Salt Pond, in the wolds of the Burin Peninsula, near Fortune, Nfld. There were kids there from all over Newfoundland, and a lively and fun bunch they were too, me darlin'. Some of those kids really played their instruments, but there was one who was simply outstanding. A 13 or 14 year old girl of breath-taking beauty, with absolutely incredible eyes, who played the flute with such grace, charm and agility that we all, young and old alike, fell in love with her. Marina Piccinini was her name. It was obvious that she had the makings of a star, so it was no real surprise to hear a few years later that Julius Baker, the then reigning "King of the Flute" in North America, and who had decided to retire, decided that he should take one last student when he heard Marina play. Since then she has played all over the world, with orchestras and in solo recital, and has played in Carnegie Hall, sharing its stage with her former teacher, Julius Baker, and the legendary Jean-Pierre Rampal. A couple of years ago I had the pleasure of meeting Marina again. She is still fresh and charming, still beautiful, and her flute playing and her eyes are still breath-taking. I tell you all this because you will have a chance to hear Marina this Sunday at Mem Hall, at 8:00 pm. She will be appearing with Andreas Haefliger, a pianist I don't know myself, but they are appearing in the Debut Atlantic Series, so you can be assured that he will be pretty impressive too. Their program has a title: Myth in Music, and will contain works by Debussy, Gluck, Jolivet and Liszt. For a measly two bucks (if you are a student) you can go and bathe yourself in the sounds of one of the world's really fine flute players. Why not plan on it, and go with a friend.

Other musical activity on Campus: today's Friday Noon Series is, as I mentioned in my last column, and all Mozart program. Pianist Motria Sabat will join Arlene Pach at the keyboard for a four hands (at one piano) Sonata, then Arlene will play a Sonata herself, and then her husband Joe will join her for a violin-piano Sonata. An interesting program, and a treat for Mozart lovers. 12:30 today (Friday) at Mem Hall.

My next Wednesday Noon Series will be a program of trios, with guests Sonja Adams, cello and Chris Buckley, viola, joining me to play trios by Beethoven and Taneiev. Sonja and Chris are members of the Saint John String Quartet, and fine players in their own right, as those who heard Chris play Mozart Duos with me last Wednesday will know. A few words about the pieces: the young Ludwig van Beethoven had a tough life. His alcoholic father, when he realized that Ludwig was a genius, decided to try to exploit him to earn money as Mozart's father had done with him. Fortunately a series of understanding music teachers largely frustrated these attempts by the elder Beethoven, but he still managed to make the life of his son miserable. So when he finally escaped his father, and Bonn, to travel to the center of the musical world, Vienna, the young Beethoven had a chip on his shoulder: he had to succeed. He knew full well that his talent and ability were unmatched, and he was determined to make the musical world know as quickly as possible that there was a genius in their midst. So, his early compositions are perhaps unparalleled in music. He did what Haydn and Mozart had done before him, and wrote music of great grace and beauty. But he went further: he introduced the idea of innovation...that concept which was to grow to be the bane of twentieth century music, but provided the foundation for romanticism. You will be able to hear the power of this concept in just the first four notes of the early Beethoven trio we are playing. Taneiev was a Russian composer of the romantic school from around the turn of this century. His music is lush and a little exotic, as is much Russian Music. Why not come and see if Taneiev turns you on? Next Wednesday, March 14, 12:30 at Mem Hall.

paul campbell

### d'Avary Noontime Series Presents...

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PEPPER the Clown

In a world where actions speak louder than words



Monday March 12, 1990 at 12:30 p.m. sharp.

TICKETS: Students \$3.00 Adults \$6.00 at the door.

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