

Ensemble pushes EDGES



Kings of Cymbal City

Ronald Ramage

"A journey through the whole history of Black music," said one spectator after last Thursday night's concert by the Art Ensemble of Chicago. Featured as part of "Edges"—York's avant-garde import series—the show brought back to York one of the most innovative live acts since

Anthony Braxton. The group has played throughout the world, picking up influences and instruments. Due to border hassles the concert started more than an hour late. However, by the end of a night of gonging, bonking and crashing, the crowd of over 300 were ready to crown the band Kings of Cymbal City. The usually dry Burton stage was

dressed festively thanks to the eclectic instruments. A large array of gleaming saxes, from basses to sopranos, flanks the front. Small walls of gongs and cymbals, vibraphones, xylophones, drums and drums, and boxes of unusual objects like conch shells and bicycle horns, rattles, and much more. It made me giddy thinking about the sounds I was to hear.

The audience around me was eager. A few sat in the lotus position. One girl in front and centre looked electrically rigid.

Out they came. Roscoe Mitchell leading. Lester Bowie in a white lab coat. Don Moya slipping onto his drum stool, Joseph Jarman with pink and white facial stripes corresponding to the pink and black hat and cloak he was wearing. Malachi Favors with white striped face, and another highly patterned costume.

A brief tune-up, and they began. My heart sank, it was so ordinary. The solo spot rotated about. After each performer did his piece, he was given warm applause, but nothing to write

home (or here) about. Until, Duopwoyayeying-ing. What was that? Don Moya, moving off drums and exploring the child's treasure of musical toys. Fweet! as Joseph Jarman moved into whistles and warbles and a whole other treasure of toys from jungle cries to motor sounds.

And off we were on an incredible voyage into uncharted seas, musically exploring spontaneous creativity within structured rhythms. Sounds that were sometimes lullaby soft, laced together with Lester Bowie's trumpet. Other times, gut-wrenching, torturous tension, as when Joseph Jarman got into a sustained toy machine gun blast. Sometimes, highly involving, like Don Moya's bongos. And on occasion, very alienating, like whoever set off the too loud, too long fire siren. It was fascinating to see a performer try out an instrument, or toy, and quickly pass to another. Or with seeming relish, truly get into a particular sound.

Besides the ears, the eyes stayed treated. Don Moya would give a wave, or a pose with his

instrument. Once with a long, long Ethiopian trumpet. Malachi Favors sometimes chose to dance instead of making sound. As mentioned, the instruments gleamed. Lester Bowie's trumpet laid traces of white-hot light over the stage front as he sliced the air with razor-sharp riffs. And, hold your breath, bump! back into ordinary swing to end the first set. The audience's applause lasted on and on, until it was announced that this was the intermission, not the end.

The second set was more of the same, but different. The high point for me was when the whole ensemble finally (except Lester Bowie, who sat out) reached for and achieved a balance between the free and the staid. I loved it. The girl front and down relaxed into a curved spine sprawl.

At the night's end Jarman promised to return to York. "We hope it won't be so long between visits."

Next up on EDGE's calendar is the Mini Bolshoi, from Russia, Sunday, December 9, at 8:00 pm. \$6.50 general; \$4.50 students.

Off York

Theatre

Electra arises! Contrary to the general opinion of a post-punk generation, Greek drama has not given in to the smothering effects of time. A new version of the classic **Electra** is currently being presented at The Theatre Centre.

Based on a popular Greek myth, **Electra** is nonetheless, a timely and perhaps even trendy story of a girl and her brother. These two, angered by their father's demise at the hands of their mother and her lover, try their hand at murder and revenge among the ancient ruins. Commanded and coerced by the god Apollo, **Electra** and **Orestes** eventually succeed in their matricidal end. Coinciding with this plot line are the intricacies of poor **Electra's** situation. She is faced with the death of her much-loved father, her hatred for her mother and stepfather, the heart-ache of an exiled brother as well as the deterioration of her own youth. And you think you've got problems?

This new attempt at old murder, intrigue and deceit can be viewed Tuesday through Sunday at The Theatre Centre, 95 Danforth Avenue.

Brian Nagle

Strip

"Honey, when you're looking at me, you're looking at 260 pounds of dynamite — and I've got a short fuse", says the large, middle-aged and balding master of ceremonies, called George. He stands at one end of a narrow runway; above him hang rows of multi-coloured, flashing lights. Below, in generally high spirits, the audience waits impatiently. This is no ordinary night club. It's the Tropicana, Love Bait Disco, billed as "Toronto's only all-male strip show."

Young Male specimens with names like Hurricane Frank, Mr. Tease, Tarzan and The Dancing Stud strut and spin as they peel off pin-striped vests, leather jackets, cowboy boots and the occasional tassel. Depending, of course, on one's perceptions, the experience lies somewhere between the commerciality of the tackiest disco and the irony of black humour theatre. To some it may be offensive. Some may be disappointed. Some may even find it erotic. If nothing else, it is amusing.

Karen Tully



Music

Something for hipsters and straight-cats: **1977 Rockabilly** and **Downhome Rockabilly** (Sun/Quality) featuring Sleepy LaBeef, accomplished guitarist and vocal stylist. If you've worn your Robert Gordons into oblivion, these are for you. LaBeef and his boys cut first-rate rockabilly. "Red Hot", "Mathilda", "Mystery Train", and a great version of "You Can Have Her" highlight these albums.

Stuart Ross

And a prole in a pear tree

Robert Penner

It's approaching Christmas and the perennial question everyone is asking is "What do I get for the Marxist who has everything?" New York University professor Bertell Ollman thinks he has the answer with his game **Class Struggle**. As the promotional material says, "You live it, Now play it."

In less than a year and a half, Ollman has sold 50,000 copies in the U.S. and hopes to sell another 5,000 in Canada. Although the game retails for \$12 in the U.S. and \$19 here, Ollman claims the company (Class Struggle, Inc.) he formed to make it is in the 'red.' He anticipates making only a limited amount of profit from this venture, most of that coming from the sale of the movie rights for a fictionalized account of his story to Warner Bros. for a "very, very small amount."

Nevertheless, the contradictions of being a Marxist businessman seem to attract a lot of attention. Ollman finds this surprising despite the fact that his game is marketed with the style and fervor which would be the envy of any capitalist, complete with buttons (Class Struggle Is The Name of The Game), bumper stickers, and promotional tours. Answering his critics, Ollman has set up a foundation which will take the bulk of any profits and redistribute them to "left educational and cultural activities."

Ollman spent over seven years developing **Class Struggle**. Upset with the ideological perspective of such games as "Monopoly," "Rat Race," and "Lie, Cheat and Steal," Ollman decided to develop this game as an alternative. "I wanted to present something people can enjoy and to give them a true understanding of their society."

Unfortunately, he has not succeeded on either account. Rather than being thought of as the left wing alternative to "Monopoly," **Class Struggle** might be more accurately thought of as the Marxist answer to "Snakes and Ladders." The game itself has little merit as



entertainment and relies predominantly on chance. The board consists of numbered squares proceeding towards socialism if you are the worker, or barbarism if you are playing the capitalist. The attempt to integrate a strategic component into the game is somewhat less than successful, and as Ollman admits, the game gives only a very simple explanation of the class struggle. It appears quite likely that 50,000 copies have been sold on their novelty value alone, to remain in the cupboard after the joke has worn off.

Although Ollman hopes his

Wind song

Gary Action

About midway through a recent Wednesday night performance at YUFAM — given by five York Winds 'artistes' — one of them stood up and announced, "Thank you for choosing us over the World Series." Cultured tittering punctuated the thin air. "Coffee will be served at the back during a brief intermission." Very polite.

With a 65 in piano, a 70 in music harmony, and countless ineptly rendered Bach fugues tucked under my belt, (I still can't play left-handed trills) I walked in just as the programme began. The performers, Lawrence Cherney on oboe; Marcus Hennigar, French horn; Jerry Robinson on fagot; Douglas Stewart, flute; and Paul Grice on clarinet, were a very well disciplined little bunch, producing a beautifully supple yet 'tight' sound. The program-

me itself included works from the Renaissance ('Variations on a Choral Theme' by J.P. Sweelinck); the Baroque period ('Prelude' and 'Fugue XXII' from Back's first book for the 'Ill-Tempered Clavicle', the 'Well-Tempered Clavier'); and the 'Moderne' (Kleine Kammermusik, Op. 24 No. 2' by Paul Hindemith). By far the most interesting selection was Hindemith's opus revealing precisely why his music was banned in little Adolph's Germany.

For a soothing soiree of excellently played order and capital A Art, you simply must hear this quintet.

The York Winds will be playing the same program right here at our very own Burton Auditorium on Friday, Dec. 7, at 8:00 pm.

Who won the pennant anyway?