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Mr. Ra: governor of the omniverse

precise in the universe and in the omniverse, but people have fallen in love with the word freedom. But the sun isn't free cause it has to rise every morning exactly at a certain time. People are going to have to be part of nature and be precise too. Of course I know it's going to hurt them to drop their favourite words liberty and freedom, but it's better to be alive than free and dead.

Do you think you are ahead of your time?

People are doing things scientifically, wonderful impossible things. It's time for musicians to do the same thing. Even though they might not be on the same scale, it makes no difference. A lot of musicians are afraid to innovate because they think people aren't ready but I think they are.

You and the Arkestra were set up in Montreal for a while in the early sixties. Rumor has it that you were oddly received.

Montreal was the first city outside of America that I went to and they said that I was playing

God's music and the club owners wanted to fire me, which they did after a few days. They had booked me as an outerspace man thinking it would be a rock show. And although we had on our outerspace costumes they said we were playing God's music. I said 'We're supposed to be in God's country so why can't we play God's music?' But I wasn't even saying anything about God in my music and I'm not now. I'm merely representing the Governor of the Omniverse.

Do you think music has a social function?

Music is opening up the ways of hearing different sounds. The ear is shaped like a harp and in there are thousands of strings. They vibrate and you hear. There are some strings in the ear that haven't been vibrated, that means most of the strings in the human are dead. When you hear a new sound these strings vibrate and when they vibrate they're part of another system that makes the whole thing vibrate and finally, if they keep on

vibrating, you might have instead of dead people walking around here you'd have some live people for a change.

Man only uses 5% of his brain. When I was in med school I was singing this song about how I could have enjoyed myself if more people had been alive.

Are Europeans more receptive to your music?

Yes and that's because the government presents me and the people can come out and they don't have to pay much money and they have wonderful halls of culture. Some places have a ministry of culture but in America there are not any holidays for musicians. They should have a holiday for at least one American musician. Musicians have contributed a lot to America.

The material that you perform in concert has such a wide range, from jazz standards, to space travel songs, to musical crash landings to funk. At the Artpark concert in Lewiston you played the blues. How do you

decide what to play?

It just matters where you catch us. Everytime we play somewhere we give a different approach to things because we have some new people and they might not know a lot of standards. Some of my younger musicians had been dealing with rock and that was all they knew.

If you can't play the blues, you really can't play jazz. You've got to be able to play blues and you've got to be able to play classics too.

When did you embrace your philosophy, during the Fletcher Henderson years?

Well I was always into it secretly. My family and associates didn't know anything about it but I was writing things like poetry and ideas about things that were sort of different from what other people thought. When I was in college I kept a diary of what I had been writing. I came up to the dormitory one day and some of the students were reading it and they were having a good time. So after that I wrote a lot of things in code.

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