

Small crowd hears big sound

By MARK E. GALLO

Review

It's a sad fact the folks in our town haven't fully realized their own musical heritage, particularly Detroit's legendary jazz community.

A very poor turnout at the Orchestra Hall/Paradise Theater concert Friday night was more than testament to that fact.

Billed as "Detroit Jazz Composers Live at the Paradise Theater 1979" and dedicated to the memory of Henry Normie, the murdered owner of Cobb's Corner jazz bar in Detroit, this was the second such presentation in a projected series of four.

Heading the bill was the dynamic Marvin "Doc" Holladay, head of Oakland University's Jazz Studies Program in Rochester, with the school's large ensemble and OU instructor Sam Sanders and his popular jazz quartet Visions.

The event was produced by John Sinclair's Strata Associates for the Allied Artists Association, with the support of the Michigan Council for the Arts. It was recorded for submission to the PBS radio network by Ann Arbor's WCBN for possible broadcast over the nationally syndicated "Jazz Alive" program.

EVERYTHING WAS as tightly organized as possible, except that small detail — an audience.

The ensemble performed Roger Neumann's "A Suite for the Duke," an extended work in six parts written for the all-time great jazz composer Duke Ellington.

Very conspicuously Ellingtonian in voicings and timbre, the featured soloists were just as dazzling as aficionados have come to expect from these very serious-minded young jazz musicians. The surprises came not from Peter Wenger, Walt Szymanski, Chris Pitts, Jim Van Dyke, Gary Havercate or even the amazing Mike Blanchard, all of whom have establish-

ed local reputations over the past few years, but rather from the present student body.

Scott Peterson's tenor sax reading of the Paul Gonsalves section of the first work was shockingly fluent and Peter Addy's trumpeting and the trombone work of Todd Bozick were equally impressive.

Visions performed five of Sanders' tunes, as well as one by his former drummer, Jimmy Allen, another alumni from the OU staff who has been slowed considerably this past year by a struggle with cancer.

THE NEW DRUMMER Allen Colding was impressive, though too loud. Pianist Havercate and bassist Ed Pickens (also on the OU staff) were more often than not inaudible over the roar of the drums, while Sanders' usually very strong Coltrane-like forays were muddled and hidden under the percussive attacks.

In the third set, a contingent of the ensemble joined Visions to perform songs by Sanders and trumpeter Walter Szymanski.

Szymanski, one of Doc's main prides of the program at OU, will be a trumpeter of world stature in the very near future as he admirably demonstrated on his "Blister Mouth."

Returning the direction of the ensemble back to Holladay, Sanders retired for the night to much applause and the remaining musicians closed the night with "Suite for Pops."

Written by Thad Jones, the world famous trumpeter from Pontiac, this tribute to Louis Armstrong was full of surprises, the most obvious of which was the non-dixie approach that might have been expected.

WANDERING LIVIDLY between

tender and frantic sketches, the 22-piece aggregation performed for what had by now dwindled to a handful of staunch supporters of the art.

It certainly was a shame because, having personally watched the development over the years of the Jazz Studies Program, the outcome improves yearly and is contributing to a very real Re-

naissance in Detroit's jazz community, making this perhaps the most fertile crop yet produced here.

The shame of it is that the level of support and appreciation of the audience hasn't caught up with the creative energies being exuded by the musicians.

But it's getting better all the time.

TV star appears

Direct from television's award-winning "Sesame Street," David (Northern Calloway) will appear on stage — and in the audience — for Detroit Youth Theater's Wiggle Club on Saturday, May 5.

There will be two one-hour performances, at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the Detroit Institute of Arts auditorium/theater.

Ticket for children and adults are available through the museum ticket office, by calling 832-2730.

As part of Detroit Youth Theater's "Something Every Saturday" series of Wiggle Club shows for young people 3 to 8 years of age, "David of Sesame Street" will include an audience sing-along of well-known children's songs.

Wright on

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