

THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



Pianist Howard Shelley performs with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, led by guest conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier, 8 p.m. at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. Tickets \$13-\$48, call (313) 576-5111.

SATURDAY



Spend an evening with Carl Reiner 8 p.m. at the West Bloomfield High School Auditorium. Tickets \$25 for members of the Jewish Community Center, and \$35 for non-members, call (248) 661-7649.

SUNDAY



Local Celtic favorites Blackthorn appear 3 p.m. at the Southfield Centre for the Arts, 24350 Southfield Road, Southfield. Tickets \$8 and include an opportunity to meet the artists following the performance. Call (248) 424-9041.



Disney on Ice presents "The Little Mermaid," featuring Ursula the Sea Witch and Ariel the mermaid, through Sunday, March 7 at Joe Louis Arena, Detroit. Tickets \$12.50-\$30, call, (248) 645-6666, or (313) 983-6606 for more information.



A FORCE THAT'S 'WHOLLY EARTH'

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER
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What's a 12-letter name for "60s-'90s jazz singer?"

According to the Feb. 14 New York Times Magazine, the answer is Abbey Lincoln.

The 68-year-old diva laughed when asked if she had seen the puzzle.

"Yes, I was thrilled," she said in a voice slightly lighter than her famous, smoky-rich singing voice. Lincoln, who will be performing March 12 at Ann Arbor's Michigan Theatre, has just released a new, provocative CD on Verve, "Wholly Earth," that continues a string of albums dating from the late 1980s that display Lincoln's talents as a singer and songwriter. But, as the puzzle notes, Lincoln has been a force in music since the 1950s.

"I met Louis Armstrong when I was 22, around 1952 and I saw Billie Holiday in Honolulu," Lincoln said. "I think people weren't so business oriented then. They weren't looking to be rich with more money. It was like a calling and you just did it, especially the men, they bring the music no matter what."

Lincoln sees herself in a long tradition of the music.

"Now it's such a business. This is no time for art, no time for a Duke Ellington, Frank Sinatra, Billie Holiday. They didn't call it jazz. It was music. Rosemary Clooney, I sang her songs. Ella..." she said.

WHAT: Abbey Lincoln performs with her trio for the UMS concert series.

WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday, March 12.

WHERE: Michigan Theatre, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor.

TICKETS: \$20-\$32. Call (734) 764-2538.

In 1957, the Kalamazoo native met the great be-bop drummer Max Roach, who was her husband from 1962 to 1970, and started singing with small jazz groups and recording some of her own material. In 1981 she was featured on Roach's famous "Freedom Now Suite," which she said taught her how to use her voice freely as an instrument. She was also introduced to John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk.

It was Monk who encouraged Lincoln to become a composer after she put lyrics to his "Blue Monk."

"I never thought I was going to be a composer," she said. "It was Thelonious Monk who was quoted on the back of an album saying that Abbey Lincoln is not just a great singer but a great composer. I had written lyrics to 'Blue Monk' and he didn't object. ... He came over to the studio and did a little dance and whispered in my ear, 'Don't be so perfect.' I asked Max what he meant, and he said it means you can make a mistake."

That freed Lincoln to experi-

ment and write music that transcends easy categories. The new album displays a strong mystical, spiritual element both in her evocative lyrics and in the multi-textured music. The title tune gives a sense of her concerns: "Places where the folks inhabit/have a geometric grace/Circled, squared, sometimes triangled/ruled with lines and space."

"I'm an older woman and I'm more spiritual," she says with a chuckle. "I don't sing about bad relationships or sex anymore. I'm too old for that, and I don't care about it."

Though usually a lyric comes first, sometimes it's the music.

"It depends, sometimes the music comes first. 'Look to the Stars,' the music came first, I was thinking of Jimmy Scott and the way he holds a note. But 'Conversation with a Baby' came altogether as a piece, music and lyrics," she said.

"Conversation" is an unusual, thought-provoking lullaby dedicated to a child named Gandhi.

"Gandhi is someone's little boy here in the apartment house where I live," she said. "It's for a happy baby."

Lincoln is also a powerful interpreter of songs by others. Her recording of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" on her last album, "Who Used to Dance," received a lot of air play and rave reviews. "I saw 'Mr. Tambourine Man' on a piano when I was with these

young people in San Francisco, I was sort of the Big Mama there," she said. "I saw the lyrics and I said, 'Yeah, this is what I want to say.' It took me 20 years to record it, but I finally did."

On the new album she performs the Mercer-Hampton-Burke standard "Midnight Sun," Benny Carter's "Another Time, Another Place" and, most notably, the Yip Harburg-Harold Arlen "If I Only Had a Brain" from "The Wizard of Oz."

Her version plays with the songs timing and melody while retaining its irony and humor, typical of Lincoln's thoughtful approach.

The album's music is multi-textured. Though on stage she'll be accompanied by just her fine trio, on the album she is supported on vibes and marimba by Bobby Hutcherson, on trumpet by Nicholas Payton and on two songs on vocals by Maggie Brown, whose younger, lighter voice adds a nice contrast.

Lincoln said she'll be performing songs from the Grammy-winning "A Turtle's Dream," "Who Used to Dance" and her new album in Ann Arbor.

She said her long association with Jean-Phillipe Allard has been important in her re-emergence as a singer after quitting music briefly in the early '70s and then recording and performing sporadically.

Please see ABBEY, E2



POPULAR MUSIC

A reluctant Brian Wilson talks about his music

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
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Arranging an interview with Brian Wilson is unlike any other. His publicist warns that Wilson is "not chatty." In order for the interview to work, Wilson needs to talk about his music, his album "Imagination" and maybe his favorite song on it. There can be no "yes or no" questions and if the conversation lulls, "it's over."

Sean Lennon, who interviewed Wilson for "Raygun" magazine, even wrote that Wilson's publicist told him, "Now don't be surprised if he gets up after five minutes." Wilson's conversation with Lennon was long and thoughtful.

But when Wilson called two weeks ago, it was short and to the point. He answers the question, "How are

WHO: Brian Wilson

WHEN: Performs at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 9. The show is expected to run two hours.

WHERE: Michigan Theatre, 603 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor.

TICKETS: \$35 and \$45. For more information, call (734) 668-8397, (248) 645-6666 or visit <http://www.99music.com>.

you?" with, "I'm good. Let's get the interview going, OK?"

One thing that excites Wilson is his tour to promote the album "Imagination," a very Beach Boys-sounding album which earned rave reviews from critics.

"It'll be the first major tour I've taken in my career. It's pretty exciting. To be able to perform my music in front of people is kind of a thrill for me."

In the song "South American" off "Imagination," Wilson sings "I've been around too long to care what anyone says." But that insecurity is what kept him out of the musical spotlight for 10 years.

"I was so hurt just by the fact that my first record didn't sell in 1988," Wilson said about the album



Rare appearance: Brian Wilson performs Tuesday at the Michigan Theatre in Ann Arbor. Last month he was up for the "Best Historical Album" Grammy for The Beach Boys' album "The Pet Sounds Sessions."

Please see WILSON, E2