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MUSIC; Jazz-Filled Gathering Of Neighbors

LL SYKEN SEPT. 13, 1998

THE members of the local jazz dream team assembled for a concert today at the Montclair Art Museum may come from the same place geographically -- Montclair or nearby East Orange -- but musically, they are all over the map.

Scan their resumes, and you can find examples of the relatively mainstream, such as the bassist Reggie Workman's tributes to John Coltrane, or the avant-garde, as exemplified by the performances by the pianist Steve Colson and the saxophonist Oliver Lake with the poet Amiri Baraka at the Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago earlier this year. The drummer T. S. Monk, son of the late Thelonious Monk, recorded as an R&B artist before coming back to jazz. The trombonist Steve Turre, a member of the television band of "Saturday Night Live," has distinguished himself by recording beautiful jazz albums featuring an unusual instrument -- the conch shell.

But despite their varied approaches to the music, these men are all professionals, and that is why they expect to mesh easily in their free concert at 4:30 P.M. today on the lawn outside the museum.

"The melody happens, and after that, whoever you point to is going to go," said Mr. Lake, who is a founder of the World Saxophone Quartet. "That's the fun of it. Everybody's unique, but were coming together as a group."

The group has never played together before, and in fact, at the time they were interviewed they were planning only the most minimal preparations, basically a meeting to discuss what they might play. Mr. Colson projects this concert will be a mix of jazz standards and original tunes by its participants. But will they do any spoken word pieces? Will Mr. Turre bring his conch shells? Who knows?

Mr. Colson, who helped organize the group, said that at this point in their careers, they have all been through this sort of show before.

"That's part of the fun of doing it," Mr. Colson said. "It's improvisation. We'll go over things, but when we do it in concert, we'll never have done it before. If there is a new context, then something new musically is going to come out of it."



The concert is part of an ongoing museum series, Creating Art: Conversations With African-American Artists, whose simple idea is to expose people to artists and give them a chance to ask questions. Future events will feature Sam Pollard, producer of the television documentary "Eyes on the Prize," on Sept. 27; the mystery writer Walter Mosley on Nov. 22; and the fine art collector Peg Austin on April 11.

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The dream team concert and its lineup were dreamed up by the organizers of the series. They gave Mr. Colson a list of local artists, and he put together the group. Mr. Monk lives in East Orange, and everyone else is from Montclair.

Various members of the team have played together before, some more than others. Mr. Lake and Mr. Workman, for example, are in the Andrew Cyrille Trio, and Mr. Colson has

performed regularly with both of them. Mr. Colson played with Mr. Monk only once, at a birthday bash for WBGO, the Newark jazz radio station. Mr. Lake recalls sitting in once with Mr. Turre. So for the musicians, the show will be half reunion, and half getting to know you.

Mr. Colson predicts the mix of styles will produce some interesting music. As a band leader, he's made a living out of finding musicians who can play together right away.

"Most of my professional career, I've put together groups for concerts," Mr. Colson said. "Musically, they know how to function and make the other poeple function well."

DREAM TEAM JAZZ CONCERT

Lawn of Montclair Art Museum

3 South Mountain Avenue

Montclair

Today 4:30 P.M.; rain date, Sept. 20

(973) 746-5555.

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