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Transparent Productions' Unconventional Ways

Friday, September 16, 2005

Since 1997, Transparent Productions has been championing creative improvised music in various venues in the Washington area. According to Bobby Hill, Takoma Park's Sangha Cafe has become the group's venue of choice in recent years because "the vibe is great, and it's such a collaborative space -- all these pretty things hanging on the wall, no cash registers clanging, nobody offering you to buy beer. It's a performance space that a lot of improvising artists look forward to coming to."



The improv group Mind Over Matter Music Over Mind: Thomas Stanley, left, Bobby Hill and Chris Downing. Hill helped found the nonprofit artist presenter Transparent Productions. (By Paula Stanley)

Transparent, which presents mostly jazz-focused programming, came into being after vanguard presenters District Curators, which had long championed such music at its cornerstone d.c. space, began focusing on larger events. Soon, a small cadre of volunteers -- including Hill and Larry Applebaum (who both host jazz programs on 89.3 WPFW-FM) and local poet and musician Thomas Stanley -- began booking at small but adventurous venues, including recital halls at local universities. Transparent's first show, a co-production with District Curators, brought 100 people to Food for Thought to hear saxophonist Joe McPhee and bassist Michael Bisio. A month later, and on its own, Transparent presented bassist William Parker at Kaffa House, drawing, Hill notes, "over 100 people and selling \$1,000 worth of his CDs."

Using unconventional venues (always donated), nonprofit Transparent keeps costs to a minimum: Tickets seldom rise above \$10, and, Hill notes, since day one, the artists have received 100 percent of the proceeds. "Success for us is 100 to 125 people," he says, adding that "even when things turn out moderate -- 40 to 50 people -- the musicians are happy to be able to expose their music live." Hill proudly points to an impressive concert history (available at <http://www.transparentproductions.org>) and to the concurrent development of an improvisational concert series at the Baltimore record store An Die Musik.

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Hill and Stanley are also in the improv group Mind Over Matter Music Over Mind. Hill, whose WPFW show "The Other Side" is heard Saturday nights from midnight to 3 a.m., manipulates turntables, while Stanley and percussionist Chris Downing use keyboards and laptops to explore what Stanley calls "an illuminated aural prosthetic for extended modes of consciousness."

The following is Transparent Productions' fall season. All shows are at Sangha Cafe (7014 Westmoreland Ave., Takoma Park;

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Oct. 1 -- *Slammin' the Infinite*.

Oct. 8 -- *Bill Cole/William Parker Duo*.

Nov. 4 at 10 -- *Steve Lantner Trio, with Joe Morris and Luther Gray*.

Nov. 23 -- *The Thing, with Joe McPhee, Matt Gustafsson, Ingebrigt Haker Flaten and Paal Nilsson-Love*.

Dec. 9 at 10 -- *Tony Malaby Trio, with Angelica Sanchez and Tom Rainey*.

Performances at An Die Musik Live (409 N. Charles St., Baltimore; 410-385-2638); shows are usually at 8 and 9:30:

Saturday -- *Marilyn Crispell Trio*.

Sept. 24 -- *Yitzhad Yedid Trio*.

Sept. 25 -- *Pete Brotzmann and Nasheet Waits*.

Oct. 9 -- *Roscoe Mitchell*.

Oct. 22 -- *Paul Smoker Trio*.

Oct. 23 -- *Eddie Gale Now Band*.

Oct. 29 -- *Marc Ribot*.

Nov. 1 -- *Bobo Stenson Trio*.

Nov. 12 -- *Dave Ballou Quartet*.

Nov. 19 -- *Rashied Ali and Sonny Fortune*.

-- **Richard Harrington**

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