

Bandleader Sun Ra claimed to be from Saturn and tailored (both literally and figuratively) his band to support that mythology. But rather than stars and nebulae, the **Sun Ra Arkestra**, under the leadership of alto saxophonist Marshall Allen for the 21 years since Ra's death, performed under a blue sky and pillow clouds at Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park in lower Manhattan (Aug. 7th) as part of the River & Blues series of the Battery Park City Parks Conservancy. These kinds of free concerts bring out diverse crowds so there were Sun Ra aficionados eating chicken salad next to casual listeners awash in potato chips. The music serves both constituencies. The Arkestra is a different entity under Allen, as is the case with any repertoire band; the costumes and the songs may be the same but the energy flows obliquely rather than directly from its (now departed) source. Towards the end of the concert, when Allen switched to EWI and the band began travelling the spaceways behind him, the spirit of Herman Poole Blount hovered in the gloaming. But while the sun still shone, the modern Arkestra showed why they are still a popular draw with expansive yet accessible playing, heavily rhythmic and vocally oriented, and a charming raggedness. Allen's bleats and exhortations might have seemed initially shocking to neophytes (and perhaps unbelievable coming from a 90-year old) but they soon became part of the musical landscape, much like an occasional foghorn from one of the slowly passing sloops on the Hudson River. —*Andrey Henkin*



Sun Ra Arkestra @ Robert F. Wagner Jr. Park

A crowd of nearly 4,500 listeners jammed the Central Park Summerstage arena (Aug. 3rd) to hear **Gregory Porter and the Revive Big Band**, led by trumpeter Igmarr Thomas, in a grand summer's night outdoor concert celebrating Blue Note Records' 75th anniversary. The show opened with drummer Otis Brown III's quintet, featuring trumpeter Darren Barrett and tenor saxophonist John Ellis, playing music from his forthcoming Blue Note CD, with songstress Gretchen Parlato joining the group for their final number. Brown remained on stage with pianist Marc Cary, guitarist Mark Whitfield and bassist Rashaan Carter joining him in the rhythm section as some of New York's finest horn players took their places on the bandstand to fill out the Revive Big Band. Their set kicked off with Raydar Ellis' funky rap that morphed into Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' hardbopping "In Case You Missed It". The show continued with a series of Blue Note classics, starting with Wayne Shorter's "Speak No Evil". Trumpeter Terence Blanchard joined the band for Freddie Hubbard's "One Of A Kind" and singer Jean Baylor was heard on Shorter's "Infant Eyes". By the time Porter got out front the crowd was fully fueled as he wailed through a set starting with "On My Way To Harlem". Blanchard returned to play on the potent "Musical Genocide" and "Someday We'll All Be Free" before the exciting night concluded with pianist Robert Glasper sitting in with the big band on the high energy "1960 What". —*Russ Musto*



Gregory Porter @ Central Park Summerstage

With no one accompanying him to the ShapeShifter Lab stage (Aug. 6th), one wondered what facet of his playing saxophonist **Jon Irabagon** would showcase in a solo exposition. Would it be the madcappery of Mostly Other People Do the Killing or perhaps the muscular approach from his Foxy Trio? Within seconds of sitting and running his soprano through some quick paces, it was evident that it would be a new, if thoroughly considered, side of the most unlikely Monk Competition winner; unlikely because Irabagon's interests have since ranged far from previous winners and now it seems he has spent time investigating the solo saxophone traditions, elements of which featured prominently in his 30-minute performance. It's easy to know the antecedents but not so simple to weave them together into a coherent statement. Irabagon moved through circularly-breathed early Evan Parker reductionism in a scalar narrative and then, jumping between the ranges of his horn, inserted moments of Anthony Braxton's shrillness. Irabagon folded John Butcher-like extended techniques into his lines with the flourish of an old-school bebopper and a later boxy melody recalled the vox humana quality of Steve Lacy as filtered through the bluesiness of Sidney Bechet. Irabagon's marvelous technical control multiplied his options, whether it was segments of sounds approaching electronic processing (recalling Parker once more) or manipulation of his mouthpiece and even playing through it, à la John Zorn. (AH)

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra alto saxophonist **Sherman Irby** stepped out front to lead an allstar quintet performing The Music of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers at Dizzy's Club (Aug. 9th). The group came out roaring for their Saturday night second set on a blistering rendition of Wayne Shorter's incendiary "Free For All", with the hard swinging rhythm section of pianist Eric Reed, bassist Gerald Cannon and drummer Willie Jones III setting up the piece for the frontline of Irby and fellow orchestra member trombonist Vincent Gardner's powerful rendering of the classic melody, followed by high flying improvisations from the pair, as well as Reed and finally Jones. The set continued with a second Shorter composition, "Backstage Sally", a soulful shuffle that had the horn players blowing funky solos over the trio's bluesy accompaniment. Irby proved himself an accomplished balladeer on Shorter's haunting "Contemplation", then smoothly switched gears into a Latin-ish mode on the set's final Shorter song, the spritely "Sweet and Sour", Jones propelling the group with his energetic fills behind the soloists. The band settled deep into the pocket on "The Hub", a rarely heard Messengers piece from the band's *Soulfinger* album, named for its composer, the late Freddie Hubbard. Blakey alumnus pianist Johnny O'Neal joined the group to help end the performance with an extended version of the customary Messenger set closer, "The Theme". (RM)

## WHAT'S NEWS

A piece of humor writing in the Jul. 31st issue of *The New Yorker* has roiled the jazz community. Entitled "**Sonny Rollins: In His Own Words**", the column, written by *The Onion's* Django Gold, purports to present the legendary tenor saxophonist's remembrances of a life in jazz, almost exclusively negative. The social media world subsequently was full of comments decrying the article and its author and demanding apologies and reparations from the journal (guitarist Jim Hall's widow cancelled her subscription). A smaller subset defended the satire of the article. And an even smaller subset actually believed that the quotes were from Mr. Rollins. This gazette, knowing better, takes no official position but our readers may decide for themselves by visiting [newyorker.com/humor/daily-shouts/sonny-rollins-words](http://newyorker.com/humor/daily-shouts/sonny-rollins-words). A video response from Rollins, as interviewed by Bret Primack, was posted shortly thereafter and can be viewed at [youtube.com/watch?v=aYt8B2RkqM#t=135](http://youtube.com/watch?v=aYt8B2RkqM#t=135). Jumping on the bandwagon, *The Washington Post* published an article "All that jazz isn't all that great" on Aug. 8th by Justin Moyer that specifically claimed not to be satire, which apparently is how satire works, debunking the notion of most jazz as anything worthwhile. It too was met with widespread and vitriolic derision. All in all, more mainstream press than jazz has gotten in decades.

And if that wasn't bad enough, NEA Jazz Master and legendary avant garde pianist **Cecil Taylor** was the victim of an epic fraud, wherein a neighbor stole Taylor's \$500,000 2013 Kyoto Prize (as given by Japan's Inamori Foundation). Noel Muir of Uniondale has been charged with grand larceny; he accompanied Taylor to Japan for the award ceremony and set up a fake bank account under the name The Cecil Taylor Foundation to which the money was deposited and subsequently removed.

The **Creative Music Studio** has announced its fall workshop, which will include Marty Ehrlich, John Hollenbeck, Steve Gorn, Badal Roy, Karl Berger, Ingrid Sertso and artists to be announced. The workshop will take place Sep. 29th-Oct. 3rd at the Full Moon Resort in Big Indian, NY. For more information, visit [creativemusicfoundation.org](http://creativemusicfoundation.org).

Saxophonist Ohad Talmor has scored the music for **Low Down**, an upcoming film, to be released in October, about the life of pianist Joe Albany, as seen through the eyes of his young daughter in the '60s-70s.

Jazz at Lincoln Center has announced the Fall term for **Swing University**. In addition to Jazz 101, 201 and 301, there will be classes on BeBop (taught by Vincent Gardner), Scott Joplin and Eubie Blake (taught by Terry Waldo), Wes Montgomery (taught by Larry Ridley) and Discography (taught by Ed Berger). For more information and to register for classes, visit [academy.jalc.org/swing-university-fall-2014](http://academy.jalc.org/swing-university-fall-2014).

Trumpeter **Sean Jones** has been named Chair of the Brass Department at Berklee College of Music. For more information, visit [berklee.edu](http://berklee.edu).

The winner of the second annual **Jazz Composition Contest for Women Composers**, as given by the Seattle Women's Jazz Orchestra, is Jennifer Bellor of Rochester, NY with Honorable Mention given to Jihye Lee of Boston, MA. For more information, visit [swojo.org](http://swojo.org).

Registration for the annual **Jazz Connect Conference**, to be held Jan. 8th-9th, 2015 at Saint Peter's Church, is open, with early bird registration (\$75) available through Sep. 30th. For more information, visit [jazzconnectnyc.eventbrite.com?i=14432247](http://jazzconnectnyc.eventbrite.com?i=14432247).

Two art exhibitions are opening this month. **Visions, Roots & Rhythms**, celebrating the collaboration between Randy Weston and Melba Liston and featuring the work of over 30 artists, will run from Sep. 28th-Nov. 8th at Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba, with an opening reception Sep. 28th at 3 pm. For more information, visit [wilburwareinstitute.org](http://wilburwareinstitute.org). And **Yale Strom** will present a solo photo exhibition of images captured in Eastern Europe of the Jewish and Roma communities from 1981-2007 at Anne Frank Center from Sep. 10th-Nov. 28th, with an opening reception Sep. 10th at 6 pm. For more information, visit [annefrank.com](http://annefrank.com).

**Symphony Space** has named Andrew Byrne its new Artistic Director, starting Sep. 15th. For more information, visit [symphonyspace.org](http://symphonyspace.org).

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