

McFerrin joins classical and impromptu



David Badders/DN



By Steve Pearson
Staff Reporter

Friday night, a sold-out Lied Center audience was the secondary recipient of a present Bobby McFerrin gave himself for his 40th birthday.

That present was a promise to devote four to six weeks a year to conducting engagements, and his performance with the Nebraska Chamber Orchestra was a fulfillment of that promise.

Those expecting to hear McFerrin's vocal acrobatics may have been disappointed when they first read the program, but minutes into the first number, they had to agree with McFerrin that, "It's all jazz!"

McFerrin's association with classical music comes naturally. Both of his parents were classically trained vocalists, and his father was the first black man to sing in a principal role for New York's Metropolitan Opera.

McFerrin took the stage in informal attire and engaged the audience in a casual repartee not often found at classical music concerts.

The moment McFerrin began conducting the orchestra strings in Mozart's "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," his vivacious style became readily apparent. His conducting was actually more like dancing, as his joy of the music radiated from every move. That enthusiasm continued after the number was over and McFerrin shook a fist in the air and embraced orchestra members.

The rest of the orchestra took the stage for Gabriel Faure's "Pavane." McFerrin conducted this piece with a baton in one hand and a microphone in the other. While conducting, he sang the main theme, normally taken by the violins.

Up next was Bach's Air on the G string. McFerrin conducted this piece very informally, sitting down and vocalizing with the orchestra.

McFerrin displayed his innate musical ability by singing a short ditty to each section of the orchestra — in the range of the instrument — that it then would begin to play. By the time the whole orchestra was playing, McFerrin had created a rich sound to which he added his vocal improvisation.

No McFerrin concert would be complete without at least a taste of McFerrin's cappella vocal magic, and after dismissing the orchestra, McFerrin obliged.

He began his vocal exhibition by introducing members of the audience to one another and singing their names. He then involved the audience in his vocal improvisation, teaching each half of the audience a short phrase to sing on his command.

An improv tune about "drivin' my car" followed, in which McFerrin displayed his smooth jazz tones and imitated the sound of an accelerating car. It was during this song that McFerrin accomplished the nearly impossible — singing two notes at once.

After thunderous applause, McFerrin en-

See MCFERRIN on 7

Familiar melodies greet students between classes

Mueller Tower's format excludes today's Top-40 hits

By Garth Lienemann
Staff Reporter

Between Bessey and Morrill halls, the Ralph Mueller Tower on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln City Campus rings out every Monday, Wednesday and Friday and adds music to student journeys.

The manager of the tower's music is Jim Klein, a maintenance electrician with the facilities management department. Klein is responsible for the general upkeep of the tower as well as the music that emanates from it.

At 11:23 a.m., the tower begins its day. It chimes a tune for a minute or two and then plays hourly until 5:23 p.m. The tower's working day ends at 6 p.m., when it signs off — once again with a tune.

The tower used to sound at the top of the hour, Klein said, but students and faculty in Bessey Hall complained that the music disturbed class.

In response to these complaints, the facilities management department adjusted the tower's playing time to coincide with the breaks between classes.

The tower began its musical presence in 1949 when it was dedicated to the university by Ralph Mueller for

"... the free education given him by the state of Nebraska," as its plaque reads.

When Klein came to the university in 1970, the tower's music came from a player piano amplified through a pipe system similar to a church organ. The piano aged and suffered from constant problems, he said. Eventually, it took too much time and effort to keep the piano functioning properly.

"That (piano) was a lot of trouble," he said.

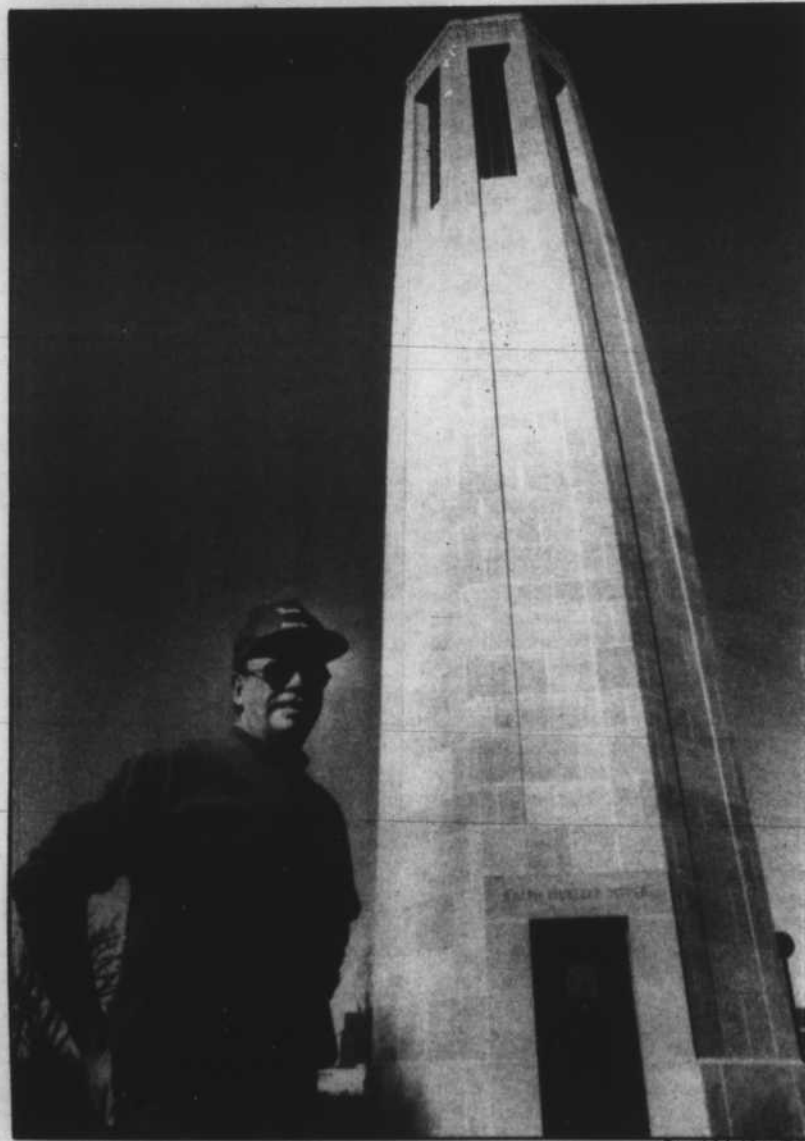
The tower was renovated in 1980 and the system was replaced by a sophisticated tape player. A pre-recorded cassette is now the source of the bell sounds. Audio signals travel to a system of intricate bells no larger than an inch in diameter. Once the bells are struck, the sounds are amplified by a 400-watt amplifier connected to eight 60-watt speakers in the top of the tower. Klein said he had no idea how far the music travels.

The cassette tapes that produce the tower's music are replaced at least every other week, Klein said. Sometimes, they are changed weekly.

The tower's music collection consists of about 25 tapes, Klein said. Christmas music, school fight music, and Beatles songs are among the musical features. Some of the individual titles include "Yesterday," "Over the Rainbow," "The Sounds of Silence" and "On Wisconsin."

"There's nothing to it," Klein said

See TOWER on 7



Staci McKee/DN

Jim Klein, a UNL maintenance electrician, programs the Mueller Tower on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln City Campus. The system is programmed with a clock timer and various cassette tapes.

Fresh ideas stimulated by Fifth Column revolutions



By Bryan Peterson
Staff Reporter

The most revolutionary music is that which we make ourselves.

That sentence has been ringing in my head for some time now, and when things like that will not go away, it is time to examine them with more scrutiny.

The Fifth Column is about revolutionary music, although it has branched out to look at related catalogs, magazines and books.

Initially, only punk bands were covered, but over the semesters the range has broadened to include nearly every genre of music.

But who could write with consistent freshness and vivacity about screaming punk rock demons across 11 semesters and nearly 40 Fifth Columns? Eventually the theme goes stale, unless invigorated with new ideas and energy.

I would consider myself to be more evolutionary than revolutionary these days, but it was in the second area that the Fifth Column got its start.

To quote a previous introduction: "In writing this column I have been, and will continue to be, concerned primarily with music that has some sort of social or political message. Fifth Column: music as a subversive activity."

The term "fifth column" comes from the Spanish Civil War. At that time, it referred to those working to overthrow the state by aiding the fascists and monarchists against the Spanish Republic.

According to my dictionary, it was first used by the Spanish Nationalist General Mola who, "besieging Madrid with four columns from the outside, boasted of having a 'fifth column' within."

I have no intention of supporting fascists in any way, but I do find interesting the idea of working to overthrow the state from within, especially as the state takes on fascist tendencies.

Even overthrowing the state is a rather narrow interpretation — any music (or other medium, for that

See FIFTH on 7

Friendships ripen in fresh film



"Fried Green Tomatoes"



By Anne Steyer
Staff Reporter

What is life all about? Well, according to Ninny Threadgoode, it's about friends — best friends.

Friendship and small-town sisterhood are the basic themes of "Fried Green Tomatoes," (Cinema 1 & 2, 201 N. 13th St.) although a little old-

fashioned murder mystery is tossed in for fun.

Based on Fannie Flagg's book "Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Cafe," the film takes place in and near the back-country town of Whistle Stop, Ala.

It centers on the friendships of four women in two different stories. Story No. 1 is the developing relationship between Evelyn Couch (Kathy Bates) and Ninny Threadgoode (Jessica Tandy), and subsequently, Evelyn's personality transformation.

Evelyn stumbles upon Ninny at the Rose Hills Convalescent Home in modern-day Alabama. Evelyn is an overweight, lonely and emotionally unfulfilled woman. Ninny is also lonely, but definitely has a more positive outlook on the world.

Their relationship is an important aspect of the film, but it takes a back seat to story No. 2, told to Evelyn by Ninny through a series of flashbacks

to the 1930s.

The lead characters in the flashback story are Iddie (Mary Stuart Masterson) and Ruth (Mary-Louise Parker), dear friends who see each other through joy and hardship in pre-World War II small-town America.

They are initially brought together through tragedy and their friendship blossoms. Together they experience joy and hardship — and murder.

The story is set up to explore the relationships between the women, but writer Flagg also incorporates the compelling whodunit into the picture. Both the audience and Evelyn end up completely charmed by Iddie and Ruth and enthralled with their story.

In fact, story No. 2 makes up the bulk of the film, but Bates and Tandy were both nominated for Golden Globe awards for their performances as best

See TOMATOES on 7

How fast should you get to that movie?

Ratings on a 1-5 reel scale to the speed of celluloid are:

5 reels — Run

4 reels — Jog

3 reels — Racewalk

(See it if you've seen the others)

2 reels — Stroll

(Bring alternate entertainment source)

1 reel — Crawl

Scott Maurer/DN