



Rock Opera

COURTESY PHOTO
FLOATING OPERA, a group that features musicians from several local bands, will make its television debut Friday night when it performs on NETV's "33rd Street Sessions."

Local musicians delighted for television opportunity

By JASON HARDY
Assignment Reporter

To most, the definition of a band is a close knit, driven group of people who create, practice and perform music together. However, Richard Rebarber is writing his own definition.

Nebraska Public Television's 33rd Street Sessions will feature Lincoln's own Floating Opera on this Friday's program. The group is made up of musicians from different local groups, such as The Millions, Mercy Rule, the Self-Righteous Brothers, Black Dahilas and G.I.O., who donated time and talent to be part of something special.

Floating Opera is the brainchild of Rebarber and Charles Lieurance, who co-wrote all the group's songs.

Rebarber, who is an associate professor of mathematics and statistics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, composed the band's music while Lieurance, former member of Rise up Beggar, wrote the lyrics.

From there the two sought out musicians to fill in the music and ended up with a diverse cast ranging from rock 'n' rollers to classical musicians.

Rebarber said he wanted the band to be a recording project rather than a performing act, mainly because he knew how hard it would be to coordinate rehearsals and show dates with such a large ensemble, so he started the group off in the studio.

The band recorded a self-titled tape in 1993 and then in January 1996 Floating Opera finally released its first full length CD, "Everybody's Somebody's Monster."

Rebarber said an incredible amount of work went into writing and recording the album's songs. He said he recorded and mixed the tracks himself while also composing much of the music. Despite his control over the recording, he said, the musicians played a huge part in defining the sound of the songs.

"The crucial beginning stages of the songs are entirely collaborative,"

Rebarber said.

He said the individual musicians often came up with the music for their own part and "it's the parts that change the music."

The diversity of the band's make-up also gave a few longtime friends the opportunity to work together in the medium they love. Heidi Ore, bass player and singer for Mercy Rule, said Floating Opera allowed her to do different things musically with different people.

"It gave me an opportunity to sing with people whom I haven't got to perform with before," Ore said. "My favorite thing was to be able to sing with Lori Allison."

Both Allison, former singer for The Millions, and Ore sang on the album.

Rebarber said the album's songs were fairly complex, and each one had a distinct sound that he and Lieurance had decided upon before they began recording.

"Every song has its own sonic world," Rebarber said. "I try to vary the sonic world on every song."

He said the sonic world of a song was the tone and mood that was portrayed through the music, and since each song had a different sonic world, each song has a different lineup of musicians as well.

"It depends on what we're trying to get with each song," Rebarber said.

He said the musicians' ability to switch instruments gave the music a spontaneous sound, complete with flaws in timing and texture.

Rebarber saw most of those flaws as charming characteristics of the songs, but said he always chose which flaws to keep.

"I'm not a perfectionist. I like having ragged edges here and there," Rebarber said. "However, I like to control the ragged edges."

After all his hard work, Rebarber said, he found a lot of satisfaction in the finished product.

"I get a real kick out of finishing a song," he said.

After the release of "Everybody's

Somebody's Monster" the band went on to put on a few performances with a reduced lineup of musicians. All the while, Rebarber was playing with ideas on how to do a full showing of the band's talent. That idea came in the spring of 1997 when a friend suggested that Floating Opera do a 33rd Street Sessions show.

Rebarber pitched the idea to Nebraska Public Television, which was receptive immediately. Last July, after lots of practice, Floating Opera performed songs off of "Everybody's Somebody's Monster."

Rebarber said the performance showed the true talent of the group.

"The band was not nervous, I was nervous," Rebarber said. "They're all pros."

He said he was very happy with the performance and was impressed with the quality of sound in the studio.

Rebarber said he hoped the show would entice viewers into buying the band's compact disc, which can be purchased at most local music stores and even graces the shelves of Best Buy.

In the long run Rebarber isn't concerned with being on a major label. But he said he would like for the band to be released on a larger scale of distribution.

"Several members of the band have been in groups on major labels, and their experiences have not all been entirely positive," Rebarber said.

He said he would like to see Floating Opera on a well-established independent label with a large nationwide distribution.

For the time being, however, Rebarber would like to concentrate on making more music and doing some more live performances. Unfortunately the very nature of the group's originality is also what prevents it from being able to perform and record more.

But that doesn't discourage Rebarber in the slightest.

"I'd just like to work faster," he said.

The 33rd Street Sessions program featuring Floating Opera airs Friday at 9 p.m. on channel 13.

Concert showcases NU faculty

By BARB CHURCHILL
Assignment Reporter

Not long ago, Clark Potter, assistant School of Music professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, didn't even know there was going to be a faculty chamber music concert this semester.

Now he's the event's coordinator. "We want to do chamber music every term, but it doesn't always happen," Potter said. "Mainly, we play music because we love to perform, but we're often too busy with our teaching and other concerns to put concerts like this together."

When the opportunity to do such a concert arose, Potter said he became coordinator by default.

"I was already playing two of the pieces on this concert and wanted a place to play them," he said. "Everything sort of snowballed from there."

The faculty chamber music concert will be held at 8 p.m. in Kimball Recital Hall. Admission is free.

Potter said the participating faculty worked independently on piece selection, but together in performance.

"All I had to do is put the pieces in order," he said.

Some highlights of the program include the premiere performance of "Stick," by Randall Snyder, a professor of music theory and composition at UNL.

"Stick" was written specifically for Allen French, associate professor of music, and Scott Anderson, assistant professor of trombone.

Potter said the piece has costumes, a slide show and musical quotations that should be recognized by audience members who aren't musically inclined.

Potter said the "Trio," by Albert Roussel, "is a cheery, interesting piece. There's a lot happening with changes in moods and sounds and in feel. It should be enjoyed by both musicians and

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Mercy Rule returns home for CD release

By BRET SCHULTE
Senior Reporter

The title "the flat black chronicles" is a bit misleading for Mercy Rule's newest release.

The band's first album since the beloved Relativity Records release "Providence" of 1994, "the flat black chronicles" is indeed a bit dark, but about as flat as Barbara Streisand's face.

Mercy Rule celebrates the long-awaited and much-anguished release of the album tonight at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.

Titled such because "everything is flat and black in rock 'n' roll: the road, the stage, the speakers, the walls," according to guitarist Jon Taylor, the new album has been critically acclaimed as the group's strongest album to date.

But it didn't come easy. While most bands can tell stories about the labors of monotonous studio work, stubborn producers and greedy blue suits, few have experienced the torment of Mercy Rule.

After being dumped by Relativity Records, the band managed to maintain its relationship with respected producer Lou Giordano while searching for a new label.

The band thought its quest was over when Giordano negotiated a contract with MCA Records, which would continue production of the

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