

Buenos Aires 53 years ago at the age of 7. Three years later, his family moved to Israel and the wunderkind proceeded to take Europe by storm, with recitals in Rome, Vienna, Paris and London. The distinguished German conductor Wilhelm Furtwangler called the boy "a phenomenon" and, at the age of 12, he recorded all of Mozart's piano sonatas. He had his first taste of conducting in 1962 and, in 1975, he succeeded Sir Georg Solti as music director of the Orchestre de Paris.

break my hands," he recalls. "But my wife didn't understand, because she doesn't speak Hebrew. She just saw the hatred in their eyes, took the salad bowl and threw it in their faces!" Barenboim makes light of the incident, but he well knows that in Israel broccoli can easily escalate to bullets: He has received death threats by telephone.

The Ramallah excursion was not an isolated event — Barenboim has been shaking things up for several years. For the last four summers, he and Palestinian

Eastern Dvira. During the political climate of the Middle East too hot for such an initiative, Barenboim has flown his young musicians to Germany, the United States and Spain to perform together. And his choice, in a concert last year in Jerusalem, to present an encore by Wagner — a composer despised by some Jews, who associate his music with Hitler's camps — has also won him enemies in Israel.

Not all Palestinians appreciate his efforts, either: The prominent Arab musician Khaled Jubran an-

the conscience of Israeli intellectuals," he stated. Jubran has established his own Centre for Arab Music on the outskirts of Ramallah.

Barenboim patiently explains his position: "I believe that there is no military solution to the conflict in the Middle East. So one day there will be a peace treaty, and from that moment on, they will try to establish relations on a cultural basis, on a scientific basis, on an economic basis. And I say why do we have to wait for that? The les-

just sit back and criticize them. I think there are a lot of things that the individual can and should do."

However, he insists that he has no political ambitions — indeed, his penchant for direct action is exactly what distinguishes him from most politicians. And if his activities have brought criticism, they have also brought praise: In September, he shared the Prince of Asturias Concord Prize (Spain's equivalent to the Nobel Prize) with Said, and earlier this month he was awarded Germany's Federal Cross of Merit.

cause he has cause to fear for his own future. Successful and powerful, at the beginning of his seventh decade he maintains a fresh, unsatiated attitude: For him, music — by its very nature — demands and generates constant renewal. "With music, you never do everything because whatever you've done has disappeared. It's the fascinating thing about music — sound evaporates. We played Bruckner's *Ninth* yesterday. Where is it? It's gone."

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# West Coast celebrates its own jazz niche

It's been 25 years since some Vancouver musicians got together and carved their own musical idiom, **MARK MILLER** writes

It started in 1977 over at Paul Plimley's house. The New Orchestra Workshop's five founders, all young Vancouver jazz musicians with an inclination to play something other than bebop, got together at the pianist's behest for an afternoon session.

"We felt pretty good about what we did," recalls Plimley of their first encounter, "and we decided to get together a little more and develop a repertoire of pieces."

so a band was born. Jazz groups often begin under just such circumstances. But this band soon became something much more, an organization that is now celebrating its 25th anniversary with its annual fall festival, Hear It NOW, tonight through Sunday at Vancouver's Performance Works and the Western Front.

As the story goes, one of NOW's founders, bassist Lisle Ellis, had recently returned from a term at the Creative Music Studio, a workshop in Woodstock, N.Y., that attracted some of the brightest minds in what was then the avant-garde of jazz. Duly inspired by the sense of common cause and community that he found there, Ellis impressed upon Plimley, saxophonist Paul Cram, trombonist Ralph Eppel and drummer Gregg Simpson the value of developing something similar in Vancouver.

Ellis went so far as to invite the Creative Music Studio's director, German vibraphonist Karl Berger, up for a two-day workshop in the spring of 1978. That event, Plimley remembers, "brought out a lot of people and created a sense of networking and liason among the

musicians in town who were interested in improvisation."

In short order, NOW established itself as a non-profit society, taking as its mandate "the creation of an original West Coast musical idiom," opening the first of two lofts in Vancouver's Kitsilano district and successfully seeking out financial support from the Canada Council.

Several ensembles were soon flying the NOW banner, among them the founders' own New Orchestra Quintet, as well as the Community Orchestra for Research and Development (CORD), Sessione Milano, A Group and the Sound Energy Arkestra.

Concerts were presented, festivals produced, recordings made and workshops held, the last with such notables as the American saxophonist Roscoe Mitchell and the German trombonist Gunter Christmann. "It's amazing," muses Gregg Simpson at the memory, "how those guys could make you play beyond what you thought you could do."

Of course, NOW was not alone in challenging the prevailing mainstream view of jazz in Canada during the 1970s. Toronto's CCMC (which continues to this day), Montreal's Atelier de musique expérimentale and the Ensemble de musique improvisée de Montréal were all part of what was in fact an international movement toward self-determination among musicians seeking a place of their own in the jazz tradition.

Says Plimley in retrospect: "It was very much a learning period in which we were trying certain



Vancouver's current NOW Orchestra lineup, with original founder Paul Plimley sitting at right rear.

things in our playing and our wit-ting that reflected the different stimuli of all the musical traditions and styles that were around at the time; we were trying to find our way through this plethora of information with the ultimate goal of forming our own voices and our own musical identity."

In 1981, however, NOW — in Paul Cram's words — "wound up in three boxes under someone's steps for a while."

For five years, to be exact. Cram, Ellis and Simpson headed east, Cram spending time in Toronto before settling in Halifax, and Ellis

living in Montreal and San Francisco en route to his current base in San Diego.

Simpson, meanwhile, returned home in time to join Plimley and other old NOW hands, including former CORD saxophonist Coat Cooke, for the organization's revival in 1986. Cooke and guitarist Ron Samworth have since emerged as NOW's primary movers and shakers, both as directors of the society and as co-leaders of its current flagship ensemble, the 15-piece NOW Orchestra, which enjoys a growing international profile through its

work with the American trombonist George Lewis.

Some things are different for NOW this second time around, and some are not. For one thing, it is no longer on the fringe of the local scene the way it was 25 years ago.

These days, though, several of NOW's members, notably singer Kate Hammett-Vaughan, trumpeters Bill Clark and John Korsrud and drummer Dylan van der Schyff, also work on the mainstream scene. And some main-streamers, including Brad Turner (of Metalwood) and violinist Jesse

Zubot (of Zubot & Dawson), have crossed over in the other direction.

The local landscape has further shifted with the rise of the Coastal Jazz and Blues Society, which produces Vancouver's acclaimed summer festival and a year-round series of concerts. Under Ken Pickering's artistic direction, the society has been most sympathetic to NOW's initiatives and has taken over some of the workshop's role in the presentation of improvised music in the city.

NOW has nevertheless continued to sponsor music on its own — at the Glass Slipper, the grunt gallery, the Western Front and lately a downtown loft.

NOW has also remained consistent to its name by offering an autumn series of workshops at the Front and a winter intensive at the loft for the city's emerging improvisers.

"So often when we've gone out on the road," Cooke says, "People have said, 'We've never heard anything like this; it has really got a different flavour and sense to it.' We've heard this from people in Toronto and Montreal, and even in New York. And that's a result of the deepening of the community here — of people playing together, and of workshops where there's a kind of oral tradition of passing on the ideas that were introduced to us by Karl Berger, Roscoe Mitchell and Gunter Christmann."

So it is that an organization so purposefully known as NOW looks in its 25th year both to the past and to the future. "We have a responsibility here," Cooke observes, "to ourselves, to our tradition and to the next generation."

*Hear It NOW includes a performance by the NOW Orchestra with Paul Cram, Lisle Ellis and the Montreal turntable artist Martin Tétreault as guests tomorrow night at Performance Works and other events tonight through Sunday at the Western Front. For information: [www.vancouverjazz.com](http://www.vancouverjazz.com).*