

He Brings Music to Attica

By PAT PETRASKE

Lou McIntosh is a "cool cat." The tall, black professional jazz musician is taking a gentle and unobtrusive approach to an explosive issue: the treatment of prisoners. And he does it through music.

With feline grace, he settled his 6 ft. 3 in. frame into an easy chair in his combination office-apartment at 111 Hamilton St. McIntosh picked up his cat, Meatball, and began to philosophize. For McIntosh "music is the only language that communicates with everybody." After a successful program of music communication was established at the Monroe County Jail, he extended his therapeutic approach of teaching music theory and appreciation to 431 inmates of the Attica Correctional Facility.

Whether an inmate becomes of musician or not is of minor importance, McIntosh emphasized. "The underlying purpose is to give him a feeling that someone cares about him and thus to change his outlook on life and assist him in adjusting to life outside prison walls," he said in a funding proposal submitted to the Junior League of Rochester.

The sixteen week program received \$5,840 from the League and is being administered by McIntosh's non-profit organization, Hakika. The name is a Swahili word for reality. Explaining it, the 45-year-old bass player said thoughtfully, "We deal with people and all the things that other people do not want to

touch." He then asked softly, "How many people remember Attica?"

"Jails do not help the guys but just take them out of society's way," he said. His program should help prove to prison administrators he added, that "dedicated qualified people from the outside can be effective with the inmates without disrupting prison routine."

McIntosh does not think of his technique as rehabilitation, but as simply a means of bringing out empathy. "Music acts like a pacifier. But like any art it takes a lot of time. They (the inmates) have a lot of time for practicing," he said. An evaluation of the program in the county jail showed that inmates responded more quickly to music than any other art form.

McIntosh's own response to music was stimulated at the age of six when he first wanted to buy a violin that he saw in a pawn shop in Brooklyn. "My mother was making \$7 a week and saved 50 cents each week to buy it for me," McIntosh recalled. He later studied at the Metropolitan Vocational High School (now the High School of Performing Arts). Using either his bass viol, bass guitar or congo drums McIntosh has played with Chuck and Gap Magione, Monty Alexander, Flip Wilson, Mahalia Jackson, Rev. Charles Walker, the All City Symphony Orchestra and the Jazzmobile in New York City and Rochester. He also has taught music in settlement houses for the Hochstein Music School.

He admits honestly that he started his own jazz group,



Photo by Dave Witbeck

Practicing with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra are members of "Existing Reality," [l. to r.] Jerry Niewood, Lou McIntosh, John "Spider" Martin and Virgil Day, who performed at the Auburn Prison on Sunday.

"Existing Reality" as a means to earn a living. No way could I be a nine to five," he laughed. The jazz music that the sextet plays is "the kind people don't hear everyday." Their music is a substitute for the commercial or "watered down" music that is heard on most of the radio stations, he said.

Rochester hasn't quite accepted jazz, McIntosh believes, noting that his jazz performances have drawn only partially full houses. One reason may be that jazz "may still leave a bad taste in people's minds. Jazz at the beginning was linked to dope and prostitution, I don't know why," McIntosh noted.

Whether the acceptance of the black idiom jazz among

audiences has any racial nuance, McIntosh leaves to speculation. He dismisses the question of race with "I believe in being human." He himself is married to a blonde dancer, Gretchen, and they have one child. At one time, they owned 17 cats.

Blending of the "black idiom and the white idiom" took place on Sunday when Existing Reality played with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and guest conductor Isaiah Jackson for the inmates at Auburn Prison. When similar concerts are held at Attica, it is more than entertainment. Students study the program ahead of time to learn what they are listening to, and after the concert, "Existing Reality" holds a seminar to

review the music and its presentation.

Classes are held at Attica twice a week. Five teachers, two of whom are members of Existing Reality, conduct sessions in theory, orchestration, stage presence and lighting and give individual instruction. One teacher and member of the group is John "Spider" Martin, was released from Attica in August.

McIntosh quoted Helen Tuntland, director of the Hochstein School, to the effect that there is more of a market for jazz entertainment than other types of music and that being a former inmate holds less stigma in the arts than in other professions.



Hadrian to Grace Stage

The comic fantasies of a man who would be, and eventually becomes, Pope will be explored when the McQuaid High School Dramatic Society performs Hadrian VII. Peter Luke's Broadway hit of 1968. The Rochester Community Players, commemorating their 50th anniversary season, are sponsoring the production.

Directed by Father William O'Malley, SJ, the cast consists entirely of McQuaid students except for the two female roles taken by Our Lady of Mercy High School students.

Thursday, Jan. 3, was the first day the troupe rehearsed at the Rochester Community Playhouse. Above the problems of electing a new Pope are discussed by the hierarchy: (l-r) Cardinal Courtleigh (Robert Michie); Father St. Albans (Christopher Ryan); Cardinal Berstein (James Bonaventura); and Cardinal Ragna (Burke McCarthy).

Upper right: George Rose (Frederick Schantz) accepts the blessing and kisses the ring of Pope Hadrian (Gary Monachino).

Right: Father O'Malley, now in his eighth year of coaching drama at McQuaid, gives some advice to Mimi Iacono, in the role of Mrs. Crowe.

Hadrian VII will be performed at the Rochester Community Playhouse, 820 Clinton Ave. S., Jan. 17-20 and 24-26. Curtain time is 8 p.m., except for the show on Sunday, Jan. 20, which will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Information or reservations may be obtained at the box office, 473-4320.



Photos by Susan McKinney

