

GUIDE

COOL PICKS

THINGS TO DO IN THE UPCOMING WEEK

THIS WEEKEND

'EXPERIENCE CLAY'

If you dig clay as an artistic medium, the Abbott Square courtyard outside the Museum of Art and History in Santa Cruz is the place to be this weekend. On Saturday and Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., several local clay artists will be on hand with both demonstrations and workshops, for those who don't mind getting dirty. Details: www.santacruzmah.org/experienceclay.

SUNDAY

WILL DURST

If you have a) lived in Northern California for more than a week and b) have any kind of interest in political humor, then you probably already know all about veteran political comic Will Durst who comes to Don Quixote's on Sunday for a live comedy show featuring Deb & Mike and Johnny Steele. It all starts at 7 p.m. Details: www.donquixotesmusic.info.



SUNDAY

ART & MUSIC AT THE BEACH

Esplanade Park in Capitola Village will host four art and music days by the beach, beginning Sunday. From 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., a wide variety of art from local artists will be on hand along with live music, this time the Barbara Lopez Group. Other dates, with different bands, include July 31 and Aug. 7 and 21. It's all free. Details: www.ci.capitola.ca.us

THURSDAY JULY 14, 2011

WWW.SANTACRUZSENTINEL.COM

The indomitable Mr. Collins

In the next world – that is, the world where all the wrongs of this one will be righted – that bald British musical schlockmeister from the 1980s named Phil Collins will, wherever he goes, constantly be mistaken for our Phil Collins.

Oh, and Charlie Sheen will have to empty septic tanks for a living.

In that perfect world, people who spend a lifetime pushing and prodding artistic expression



WALLACE BAIN
Baine Street

forward, like our Phil Collins, people to whom art is an experience of exploration and not about pushing buttons of sentimentality in audiences, will be paraded in the streets in glory and admiration.

On Friday, the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission is hoping to make this world more like that perfect world by honoring our

SEE BAIN ON D2

IF YOU GO

2011 ARTIST OF THE YEAR PROFILE PERFORMANCE

PRESENTED BY: Santa Cruz County Arts Commission

WHEN: Friday, 7 p.m.

WHERE: Cabrillo College Recital Hall, Aptos

COST: Free

DETAILS: 454-7901 or www.scparks.com



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Phil Collins, at his 1868 grand piano once owned by Henry Cowell and later by Lou Harris, is Artist of the Year.



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DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

BAIN

Continued from D1

Philip Collins as its 2011 Artist of the Year. Collins will be leading a hand-picked coterie of musicians in a performance at the Cabrillo College Recital Hall. And it's free.

Collins has carved out a unique space for himself in Santa Cruz's musical culture – or, maybe more accurately, two unique spaces. He is a tireless and accomplished composer who counts the late great Lou Harrison as his friend and mentor. And he is a conductor and artistic director of the stalwart performance organization New Music Works, a group he founded more than 30 years ago.

Most musicians, particularly in Santa Cruz County, like to think of themselves as “open-minded,” but Collins puts most everyone else to shame in that realm. His musical genre, in fact, doesn't even really have a name. It's called “new music,” which is accurate but pretty meaningless. What he is doing is using the chamber ensemble to go places where Haydn and Schubert never dreamed of going.

“He has a keen sense of living in a world of sound and time,” said flutist Teresa Orozco Petersen who has been collaborating with Collins for almost 20 years. “He'll call me up on the phone and make this sound and ask if I could play that on the flute. He's just got a really incredible sense of understanding mood and expressing it in sound.”

One of his most ambitious works as a composer, “Requies Ranarum,” subtitled “Frog Requiem,” was dedicated to all the species of frogs now extinct. A year ago, he and his New Music Works Ensemble performed the piece next to an actual frog pond in order to incorporate the songs of actual frogs into the piece. And the frogs, bless them, cooperated, kind of. That piece was emblematic of Collins's attitude toward music as a force that belongs in the

real everyday world of sound.

“Phil does art for art's sake,” said his friend and supporter Sandy Martinez. “He's always challenging you. But I think he can't help himself. It's like, ‘I'm going to do this and if you want to go along with me, please do.’”

Collins exists at the center of a thriving culture of composers and performers up and down the West Coast. He is carrying on where Harrison, perhaps the greatest artist to ever come out of Santa Cruz County, left off, in always testing the elasticity of the human ability to create music.

In a Whitman-esque sense, Collins contains multitudes. He is a humorous man, who is intensely serious about his work, an artist of the avant-garde who is genuine and approachable.

“What I really love about Phil is his sense of humor,” said Martinez, “which surfaces in his work all the time.”

Yet many of those who admire Collins talk about his determination to make art in the real world, a world that bestows the treasures of Tutankhamun on mediocre rappers and, more often than not, ignores artists creating meaningful work.

“He's an absolutely gem,” said long-time friend and supporter Rowland Rebele. “He's never down, always up. No matter how much money a particular concert will lose, he never loses heart. He never gives up and he's dogged in his pursuits.”

The many concerts over the course of 32 years at New Music Works and countless connections those concerts have earned Collins a reputation for experimentation and artistic integrity. He is a man who is essentially his own category of music.

In that perfect world beyond, such work would be more than just its own reward. Come on out to Cabrillo on Friday, and see what that world would look like.