In the next world – that is, where the whole of this world will be bettered – that bold British musical kleptomaniac from the 50s named Phil Collins will, whenever he goes, automatically be associated with our Phil Collins, the one who always has the best of times. The differences will have to be objectively scrutinized.

In that perfect world, people who spend a lifetime pushing and prodding artistic expression forward, like our Phil Collins, people who make art an experience of exploration and enjoyment, will be pardoned in the streets and adored. On Friday, the Santa Cruz Arts Commission is hoping to make this world move closer to the perfect world by honoring our Phil.

BAINE

Continued from B1

Phillip Collins as its 2011 Artist of the Year, Collins will be leading a beneficent concert of musicians in a performance at the Cabrillo College Recital Hall. And it’s a live, unique space upon himself in Santa Cruz’s unique culture – er, maybe more accurately, a unique space. He is a strange and accomplished composer who seems the late great Lou Harrison as his friend and mentor. And he is a conductor and artistic director of the mineral-performance-ensemble New Music Works, a group he has founded more than 30 years ago.

Most particularly in Santa Cruz County, I like to think of themselves as open-minded, but Collins says the name is a joke in that sense. His musical genre, in fact, doesn’t even really have a name. I’ve called “new music,” which is accurate but pretty meaningless. What he is doing is using the chamber ensemble in new places where Haydn and Beethoven never dreamed of going.

“He has a keen sense of living in a world of sound and time,” said flute newsmaker Ron Scott. “He and his New Music Works Ensemble have performed the piece that is a new annual event in order to incorporate the sounds of otakus into the piece. “The otaku, or Japanese, decorated the piece in a way that shows off the genius of the composer’s attitude toward music as a force that belongs in the real everyday world of sound.”

Phil Collins, at his 1,500-pound grand piano once owned by Henry Cowell and later by Lou Harris, is Artist of the Year.