

WIZARD OF THE SUN

Sun Ra Mythic Dream Arkestra
under the direction of Marshall Allen

MUSIC FILM

PHILADELPHIA 2024

CONCEPT / SCRIPT / DIRECTION

Cornelia C. Mueller / KA



WIZARD OF THE SUN is the working title of the music film on MARSHALL ALLEN and the SUN RA MYTHIC DREAM ARKESTRA. The music film will spiral around the MUSIC, the music of Sun Ra, the music and arrangements of Marshall Allen, the meaning, the significance, the message, the mythical dimension of music.

The film will use concert performances of the present Sun Ra Arkestra and interviews of Marshall Allen and some of the musicians of the Arkestra, long-term members as well as younger musicians: Michael Ray, Vincent Chancey, Elson Nascimento, Tylor Mitchell, Kash Killion, James Stewart, Tara Middleton, David Hotep, Dave Davis,...

The filming will occur with several cameras. For the concerts we will use 5 fixed placed cameras in order to capture the Arkestra in action – musicians and dancers in a sea of darkness and light. For the interviews we will use 2 cameras.

Cornelia Mueller / KA who won the Recognition Award of the Canton of Grisons Switzerland in 2014 as well as of the Comune di Poschiavo in 2019 and issued her first mute film OEDIPUS in 2018, is directing this precious music film project.

SUN RA MYTHIC DREAM ARKESTRA

under the direction of MARSHALL ALLEN

The SUN RA MYTHIC DREAM ARKESTRA is Marshall Allen's dream version of the Sun Ra Arkestra and includes 22 musicians and 3 dancers for this film project. The dream enriches the jazz and Cosmo songs with harp, violin, viola, violoncello, sarangi, double bass, with two African harps kora and bolong, with vocals, saxophones, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, flutes, French horn, guitar, electronic valve instrument, with the recorded voice of Sun Ra, with piano and Moog analog synthesizer, with drums, conga, bongo, surdo and percussion. Acrobatic female and male dancers are also included.

Marshall's dream first surfaced at the UNCOOL Festival Poschiavo 2012 in the southeastern Swiss Alps with THE SUN RA ARKESTRA, and in 2014 on the European tour with THE SUN RA CENTENNIAL DREAM ARKESTRA¹ in a slightly different cast. This link shows video footage of the 2012 Cosmo Music Performances: <http://www.uncool.ch/2017/arkestra.php>.

Sun Ra (1914 - 1993) was the founder of his world famous and prize winning Arkestra and he wrote music and messages for the people of planet Earth and for the 21st Century. At Sun Ra's side is his Deputy Marshall Allen (* 1924) and member of the Arkestra for 65 years by now. In 1995 Marshall became the Arkestra's director and leads it to new and unknown horizons. He accepted Sun Ra's legacy without hesitation and conducts the Arkestra to ever more creative, innovative, sparkling, cosmic performances. In the music film, multi-instrumentalist, composer and music director Marshall Allen finally receives the attention and recognition he deserves - for his bond with Sun Ra, for his commitment to the Sun Ra Arkestra, and the preservation of the Sun Ra House in Philadelphia, for the music, the compositions and arrangements of Sun Ra and his own. He keeps Sun Ra's music alive in the original context of the Arkestra, extending and mediating it.

The world needs this music, and it needs this music film. Marshall Allen: *"What you need and what you want"* – is not necessarily the same. What you need are existential things, what you want are often superfluous or even harmful things. Music is spiritual, mental, psychic food that nourishes the whole body. Music for well-being, for creativity, for understanding, for peace, for communication in this universal language and for imaginative, unexpected imaging.

¹ May 22nd, 1914 Sun Ra's arrival on planet Earth

SUN RA MYTHIC DREAM ARKESTRA under the direction of MARSHALL ALLEN

A possible line-up

[MARSHALL ALLEN](#) alto saxophone, Electric Valve Instrument (EVI), Casio VL-Tone, kora

[TARA MIDDLETON](#) vocals, violin

[JAMES STEWART](#) tenor saxophone, flute

[KNOEL SCOTT](#) baritone and alto saxophone, vocals, percussion

N.N. tenor saxophone

N.N. clarinet

N.N. baritone saxophone, flute, conga und bongo drums

[MICHAEL RAY](#) trumpet, vocals

[CECIL BROOKS](#) trumpet

[VINCENT CHANCEY](#) French horn

N.N. trombone

[DAVE DAVIS](#) trombone

[NINA BOGOMAS](#) harp

[KASH KILLION](#) violoncello, sarangi, bolong

[GWEN LASTER](#) violin

[MELANIE DYER](#) viola

[FARID ABDUL-BARI BARON](#) piano

[DAVID HOTEF](#) guitar

[TYLER MITCHELL](#) double bass

N.N. drums

[RON McBEE](#) percussion

[ELSON NASCIMENTO](#) surdo drum, percussion

N.N. dance

N.N. dance

N.N. dance



MARSHALL ALLEN



TARA MIDDLETON



MICHAEL RAY



JAMES STEWART



KNOEL SCOTT



VINCENT CHANCEY



CECIL BROOKS



DAVE DAVIS



NINA BOGOMAS



KASH KILLION



TYLER MITCHELL



DAVID HOTEPI



FARID BARON



ELSON NASCIMENTO

PUBLICATIONS

Here are some publications about Sun Ra and his Omniverse. There are biographical contributions, discographies, as well as interviews and publications of his poetic and philosophical texts.

John F. Szwed: *Space Is The Place – The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1997, [ISBN 0-679-43589-1](#) (biography)

Hartmut Geerken, Bernhard Hefe: *Omniverse Sun Ra*, Waitawhile, D-82211 Wartaweil, 1994, private print (diskography with reproductions in color of LP-[Cover](#))

Robert Campbell, Chris Trent: *The Earthly Recordings of Sun Ra, 2nd edition*, Cadence Jazz Books, Northwood, NY, 2000, [ISBN 1-881993-35-3](#) (detailed discography)

Hartmut Geerken (Hrsg.): *Sun Ra, The Immeasurable Equation*, Books on Demand, Norderstedt, 2005, [ISBN 3-8334-2659-4](#) (Sun Ra's lyric)

Sun Ra. Interviews & Essays, edited by John Sinclair. Headpress, London 2010, [ISBN 978-1-900486-72-9](#)

And here is a part of Sun Ra's discography at Allmusic.

<https://www.allmusic.com/artist/sun-ra-mn0000924232/discography>

Sun Ra And His Arkestra – In The Orbit Of Ra (2014) FULL ALBUM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVaJWIVHg_c

MUSIC FOR THE 21st CENTURY – The Sun Ra Arkestra under the direction of Marshall Allen

live at uncool 2003 Poschiavo Swiss Alps

<https://www.uncool.ch/2017/edition.php>

There is also a Sun Ra Convention, founded by some of the authors quoted above, whose members meet regularly to discuss new releases. Sun Ra's music is reissued with several recordings per year. There is also plenty of sound material that has never been released. On the Internet you will find countless videos from the beginnings of the Sun Ra Arkestra to performances under Marshall Allen's direction as well as numerous interviews.

AWAKENING

WILD PARK IN PHILADELPHIA

THE AWAKENING OF THE SUN RA MYTHIC DREAM ARKESTRA

They all landed from far away between the trees of a wild park in Philadelphia and find themselves in Marshall's dream of sound and music.... And so, Marshall is calling for his musicians to realize this ancient dream of myth, a dream of cosmic sounds in space, the sounds of light and beauty as Sun Ra taught him.

The awakening scene will take place in a wild park in Philadelphia between Maple trees, Conifers, Platanus, Empress trees, Gingko and bushes. There are also small trails that lead across the park.

The Arkestra members are wearing precious sparkling costumes and carry their instruments. Marshall ambles along a trail and finds his Arkestra dispatched, resting, hidden and asleep, prostrated on the soft soil, bedded under trees, hidden between the bushes.... The flying melody on his alto saxophone awakes them from their slumber and one after the other is answering back and follow him on the meandering path, joining in the jubilee....

The cameras anticipate and follow Marshall walking and playing and also focus on the various musicians and dancers showing their awakening.

The Awakening is always a beginning, a change of state from unconsciousness to consciousness, a widening of perception and understanding, a transient way.... as Sun Ra puts it: *"If you wake up now, it won't be too soon."*

And thus, the Awakening will open the tale on the music as the first scene and leads into the color and light spheres of music performed on stage.

THE THEATRE

Philadelphia

CONCERTS

It is not yet clear where the concerts of the SUN RA MYTHIC DREAM ARKESTRA will take place. I am looking for a well-equipped theatre offering enough space for the musicians, dancers, and the public.

There should be two concert evenings and at least two days of rehearsal plus one dress rehearsal. The rehearsals and concerts should be scheduled with at least one day between each rehearsal and concert to give Marshall a day of rest that he might need.

It would be nice to invite local kids to the dress rehearsal, whereas the concerts will be sold out.

In some of the scenes the dancers fly above the Arkestra wearing Loïe Fuller's Serpentine dance costumes that form fantastic ornaments when moved and shine in colorful lights. See the original dance by Loïe Fuller (1862 – 1928) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YA1RV2R4cgg>.

All rehearsals and performances are recorded and filmed. It allows the film team to develop strategic positions for interesting shots and close-ups during the rehearsals. The recordings of the performances and some of the rehearsals will be used in the music film.

Breathing Light is a Ganzfelds light installation by the US artist James Turrell that evokes the feeling of being suspended in space – a complete loss of the depth perception, also described as *white out*, an irritating experience like in a snowstorm or in dense fog. There is no orientation. It would be quite unusual to create such an atmosphere in the theatre hall that would recall somewhat the endlessness and maybe even the weightlessness in space.

All these ideas have to be investigated and a more detailed script will be elaborated.

DANCE OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS

DANCE OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS

This dance is expressing the nature of the four elements – air, water, earth and sun, and shows another aspect of the music. The dancing will be accompanied by African harps, Marshall Allen on the kora and Kash Killion on the bolong. Melodic tunes and rhythm will enlighten the scene.

The four elements are the origins of life. Air, water, earth and sun are precious, and their wonderful abundance will be expressed in the dance and the music. As in the Sun Ra song: *"Sometimes you should appreciate the work of nature's God"*. That's the theme – the appreciation of the elements, the acknowledgement of their preciousness and of their indispensability.

The Dance of the Four Elements follows the flow of the two African harps and is embedded in the film between the live recordings of the concerts and the interviews.

It is not yet clear where the filming will take place. Originally it was meant to be within nature, but the water streams of Philadelphia are too polluted to use them as a platform for the water dance.... I am investigating other possibilities.

SUN RA HOUSE

Philadelphia

INTERVIEWS

The interviews of Marshall Allen as well as long term and younger musicians of the Arkestra will take place in the Sun Ra House on 5626 Morton Street, Philadelphia – now a protected landmark.

The interviews orbit around the MUSIC, investigating the essence, the significance, the message of music. The topic MUSIC MAGIC MESSAGE gives an idea of the content of the interviews.

FARWELL

FAREWELL

It is the farewell and closing scene of the musical voyage with the Sun Ra Mythic Dream Arkestra.

In some far off place
many light years in space
I'll wait for you
Where human feet have never trod
Where human eyes have never seen
I'll build a world of abstract dreams
and wait for you

The closing scenes takes place in the theatre where the musicians one after the other dance in a long line and disappear behind the stage followed by the dancers. Marshall and Tara will sing their farewell song accompanied by the rhythm of the surdo drum and some percussion.

They'll come back in shining ships of gold
with memories myth untold
and sundry planes of being....

MUSIC FILM

MUSIC MAGIC MESSAGE

MUSIC FILM

The music film is a creative process that uses a script as well as improvisation, i.e. the translation of the idea into a momentary vibration, into an inspiration of the artistic expression. It is an artistic, imaginative cosmic film that makes full use of the experimental and creative approaches to film design. It inspires the playful possibility to react visually, to improvise to the music, to illustrate it in pictures, in movements, colors, shapes, with overlaps and layers, and to transform it into imagery. The music film will seek the unknown in order to correspond to the multifacetedness and interpretations of meaning. *Space is the Place* – there the journey will also visually detach itself from earthly confines and limitations. The feeling of weightlessness, of flying, carried by the music, will find its moving counterpart.

The COSMO MUSIC is presented from Sun Ra's musical and poetic Omniverse². It is music from the treasure of a gigantic legacy of the great master Sun Ra, who landed on planet Earth and worked miracles for a time. These original compositions will be played. The dress rehearsals provide an opportunity to invite kids from local (music) schools as well as guests, supporters of the project, press, radio and television. Thus, the Music Film Project will also offer young people the opportunity to experience an extraordinary concert and immerse themselves in the world of the Cosmo Music.

The music film focuses on the musical heritage of Sun Ra ([biography](#)) and on Marshall Allen's compositions and arrangements. The focus is Marshall Allen who has performed with the Sun Ra Arkestra since 1958. Sun Ra named Marshall his deputy, and he has filled this role, becoming the music director of the legendary Sun Ra Arkestra and shaping and directing it since 1995 ([biography](#)).

MUSIC MAGIC MESSAGE forms the content of the proposed film. It will encompass concert and rehearsal recordings, nature shots and interviews with the musicians about the music, about its magical dimension and its message.

² Omniverse = sum of all universes, an expression that Sun Ra has created.

The film works with Marshall's concept of THE VIBRATIONS OF THE DAY. The vibrations always have an impact on the controllable and uncontrollable events of the day, on coincidence, on what unexpectedly comes to you, like a shooting star linking to a secret wish.... Something that develops in spiraling variations, nothing remains the same, everything is in continuous motion, manifests itself and disappears - as fleeting as the music. The oscillations, the vibrations similarly influence the music, the kind of arrangements, the choice of the pieces, the tempo, the improvisation, the musical idea and its immediate realization.

An unknown future transforms itself into the present. Musically (and otherwise in life), we are dealing with THE UNKNOWN and THE IMPOSSIBLE.

The unknown lies before us, so to speak, because who actually knows what the next day, the next hour will hold...? The unknown is also the improvisation, because it arises at the very moment as inspiration, as intuition, in response to the sound just heard, as rhythmic movement. It creates a musical dialogue, or a solo soaring above the interwoven Arkestra sounds. The unknown cannot be grasped until it manifests itself, and then it becomes inexistent, stored in memory. In this case stored as acoustic and visual concert recordings.

Sun Ra has asked his musicians to play the unknown, to express what they were unaware of, did not know, did not learn - "*outside the square, in the spiral*", as Marshall Allen puts it. The unknown also appears as the impossible. How is it possible to play something unknown?

The impossible is also beyond the present, for the present contains only the possible. Sun Ra did not content himself with the possible, but strove for the impossible, or at least the seemingly impossible. For in the realization of the impossible, the impossible becomes possible and something new appears on the horizon of impossibility.

The question is also what guides the musical expression, what makes a melody, a sound touching, beguiling, seducing.... Is matter made of music, of tones, of cosmic sounds, of vibrations, of movements like the "*string theory*" postulates in physics? This would mean that music is able to arrange and shape matter.

Marshall Allen: *"Music can make you happy, music can make you cry, music can destroy, and music can heal"*. He also says: *"I play for my own well-being, not for fame, not for money, but for my own well-being and if the music does me some good, I can give **you** some"*. Music for your own healing, music for your own well-being as a basis for healing and the well-being of others. *" Music is the Healing Force of the Universe"* as Albert Ayler, saxophonist and composer said. Music is one of the existential needs of man. Singing, clapping hands, stomping in rhythm, swinging and dancing.... and discovering that all sorts of materials are suitable for producing rhythmic sounds and melodies - wood, stone, rattles of dried fruits, nut shells, drums.... accompanied by flutes carved from animal bones in paleolithic age.... music has always been there, at all times in human development.

Music is a language that everyone understands, even though it has an enormously wide variety of its expressive forms, reveals a cultural affiliation, and bears individual traits. Music is magical. Through music magic can be understood, its enchanting effect, its secret message. Other languages require translation, music does not. It is immediately understandable. The music of the Sun Ra Mythic Dream Arkestra accompanies the film with compositions by Sun Ra and Marshall Allen, arranged by this brilliant, musical director.

FILM TEAM

The film team might be casted in collaboration with Philadelphia film schools and thus offering young film students a guided and improvised experience of filming in the context of music. Most important is thus the love and appreciation for this particular music. Also, professional cameramen / camerawomen who have some knowledge of the presented music are very welcomed to the team.

Since the cameras will be placed in fixed position, especially during the concerts in order to guarantee an undisturbed performance, a minimum of four equal cameras will be needed. Therefor one camera will be focused on Marshall Allen, another one on the soloing performers, one on the dancers and one overlooking the whole Arkestra.

RECORDING TEAM

The concerts will be recorded live as multitrack recordings which would allow a postproduction balancing of the music. In the nature scenes of the four elements, the music will be dubbed from the concerts' settings. The interviews will also be recorded audio for the film. Maybe some collaboration can be found with a Jazz radio station. Or otherwise with a professional recording studio.

The audio recordings will be mastered and will be used for the film thus guaranteeing an excellent sound quality of the music film.

SCHEDULE

The schedule is shown below. Rehearsals before the performances are necessary. Interviews will occur during the whole 12 days of the project. The outdoor filming is depending on the weather forecast.

Tuesday	Arrival of the nonresident Crew
Wednesday	AWAKENING
Thursday	Interviews
Friday	Rehearsal
Saturday	Interviews
Sunday	Rehearsal
Monday	4 ELEMENTS
Tuesday	Dress Rehearsal
Wednesday	Interviews
Thursday	CONCERT
Friday	Interviews
Saturday	CONCERT
Sunday	Interviews / Outdoor Filming
	Departure of the nonresident Crew

COSTUMES / UNIFORMS

Isa Mehnert Berlin

photos - Bernd Schönberger

COSTUMES / UNIFORMS

Atelier Isa Mehnert Berlin

Isa Mehnert is a theatre costume designer based in Berlin and was engaged 2012 for the first time to design costumes for the Sun Ra Arkestra and the UNCOOL festival. She also designed the costumes for the centennial celebration of Sun Ra's arrival day in 2014. Now she realized a new collection of space costumes for the music film. Some of the costumes are presented by passing pedestrians in Berlin.... Have a look.



















SUMMARY

CONCLUSION

The film presents the music of the SUN RA MYTHIC DREAM ARKESTRA under the direction of MARSHALL ALLEN and focuses on the legendary music of Sun Ra and his Deputy Marshall Allen who is a member of the Arkestra since 1958 and directing it since 1995. The music film uses material recorded in nature scenes, the interviews, the rehearsals and the concerts.

The music film spirals around the theme of MUSIC MAGIC MESSAGE and relies on the music and its rhythm to compose the visual imaginary of space and sounds.

The script will be further elaborated. The film schools in Philadelphia will be contacted for a close collaboration in order to receive professional support and guarantee an excellent product.

The postproduction is envisioned for 2024/25 and will be taken care of later when the possibilities are clear. The postproduction is not included in the presented budget that focuses on the costs to record the first part of the music film project.

The music film will be an artistic approach to the music of the legendary American composer, musician, poet, philosopher and artist Sun Ra and his most dedicated follower Marshall Allen.

Cornelia Müller / KA
Philadelphia, November 25th, 2023



SUN RA 1979 – photo Val Wilmer