Living Today

DEEP IN THE FOREST:

Enjoying the sounds of nature or the sounds of experimental music

By Amareswara A. Abhikar

CAIRO — An Acra foundation dedicated to experimental radio music, primordial edgy connotes just as much to avant-garde artists looking for a distinctive voice, in the forest to examine just how far a mass- produced instrument can go.

It’s a 28-acre spread of both cleared and past forested land off Route 25 in Acra, up the back ascents into Woodstock in the Catskill Mountains. A tri-colored wooden sign on the outside gives the plot — highlighted by orange construction cones on the high-way making a show with no house in sight — a name: "Tree Top Sound Wave Farm.

The FM radio station that plays there and is broadcast over a 10-mile radius is called "the noise," although a wanderer through the plot there wouldn’t have guessed it. The noise is a pot of brochure is worn to capture the station’s frequency, drawing out the sounds of birds and chipmunks gathering foliage in late summer with avant-garde music.

"This is very much a labor of love," said Gailen, Joseph Hunter, who lives on the land in a split-level house with her husband and Wave Farm Program Director Tom Ross and their three infants. "This is what our life’s work is about, really. Making and doing very well.

In the 10 years since its inception, the radio station has been located in Brooklyn where Joseph Hunter and Ross have resided, until it moved to Acra in 2004. It has attracted the attention of groups of significant organizations such as the New York State Council for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and through a funding program by the Greene County Council in the Arts, the Greene County Legislature.

"There was once a very experienced farm and some of it’s widely accepted," said Ross.

The emphasis on the Wave Farm, which has space for resident artists, is experimentation.

"There’s an important part of our mission as a non-profit it’s a to be a resource for artists and audiences," said Gailen Hunter, who like her husband, was interviewed one August workday afternoon in the quiet of their kitchen over tea.

And maybe that’s reason, said Gailen Hunter it’s put, never became more apparent than the August on the stage that falls on the expanses of the property hidden from the road by trees. As a family, they really don’t care to come out tonight, listened to the sounds of music that to the uninformed seemed like a radical departure from the songs constantly repeated on mainstream radio.

The show that evening was called "Animals," curated by "Silent" Men of the Silkworm Orchestra. The show brought Animal Kind, an animal behavior organization located in Hudson.

"It’s our way of looking at music that has a lot of meaning for expression," said Moss.

Most of the musicians there that evening, coming from a number of groups including Evolution Revolution, Ool, Latitude/Longitude, consider themselves instrumentalists. Dance meanwhile remained in the background.

"Every... time I come here it’s different,... it’s a nice surprise," said Moss. "We’re trying to put music and people in different situations and watch it WP," said Moss.

The stage is part of a larger structure built like a large lawn to similar to the type found on hiking trails, partially open to the fresh air and facing out toward the field and adjacent grove parking lot. In the structure, housing audio visual equipment, is an exhibit of the whole basin of the Wave Farm.

The "Pit: Bang, Rave" exhibit shows what could come See More, page 52

"Studios for Radio Transmitters" in July 2006 showed what the Wave Farm is supposed to be about: playing with radio equipment and seeing what noise, sounds and music comes about.

"Silkworm Men play the avenue as part of the Silkworm Men Orchestra in the August 23 concert "Animals," at the Acra Wave Farm, which features an Animal Kind theme. Moss was the curator of the concert.
Music

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ily be several hundred thin aircraft cables hanging from the ceiling, with dangling wooden blocks at their ends. Blowing slightly through the wires pushes a suspended board, triggering an electronic mechanism that makes the seemingly hundred of small wooden blocks move in a sound wave-like motion.

And sound abounded that Saturday in the clear late August air, with an offbeat experimental rock playing from the stage.

"I play a lot of different things," said Michael Garofalo, a visitor from Brooklyn. He, like several others there that evening, called himself a multi-instrumentalist.

Part of Garofalo's assemblage of instruments in the Mhira, a Zambian thumb piano known to be used in elementary school music classes. If there is any requirement for being at the Wave Farm that evening, it's to keep an open mind and be open to experimentation with instruments not necessarily found at the local music shop.

He said events at the Wave Farm like that evening's are getting more and more popular, bringing to audience members there a sense of community. "It's sort of a hub where a lot of new ideas are meeting."

Children were running about, there with their families, while the most of the crowd were people in the 20s and 30s.

"It's a very beautiful piece of land they're using it in a way that's very innovating and exciting," said Luisa Kildiss, a Hudson librarian. "It's a nice place to come with your dog and your kids."

The Wave Farm is at 5662 Route 23 in Acre. For information, visit the web site www.free103point9.org