

What's Happenin': Thursday, December 8, through Saturday, December 31

Written by Mike Schulz

Tuesday, 06 December 2011 06:00

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Music

Mike Garson

First Presbyterian Church of Davenport

Saturday, December 10, 4 p.m.

Performing in a December 10 concert at Davenport's First Presbyterian Church, the latest guest in Quad City Arts' Visiting Artist Series is acclaimed pianist/composer Mike Garson, and according to his Web-site bio at MikeGarson.com, he's a musician "to whom the word 'no' is quickly transformed into the word 'now.'" Which is funny, because that's exactly what happens whenever I say 'no' around here ... although it's always my editor Jeff who transforms it into '

now

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Alas, that word swap and our shared first name are about all I have in common with Garson, whose prodigious talents have consistently thrilled audiences and collaborators for nearly four decades. With Garson's touring appearances including concerts at UCLA's Royce Hall, the Tanglewood Jazz Festival, and the Kennedy Center, his exhilarating, frequently improvisational wizardry on the keys has earned him fans nationwide, as have his dozen-plus albums, with 2008's *Conversations with My Family* receiving four-and-a-half (out of five) stars from *Downbeat* magazine.

Yet while trained in classical music and particularly fluent in jazz, there appears to be no genre in which Garson *isn't* extraordinarily accomplished. The composer of, no kidding, more than 4,000 individual pieces of music to date, he has worked alongside such varied musicians as Seal, Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor, the Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan, and the members of the L.A. Philharmonic, while his piano and compositional skills have been heard on the soundtracks to such films as *Basquiat*, *Stigmata*, and *Se7en*.

However, he might be best known for being a longtime pianist for David Bowie, with whom Garson has recorded and toured since 1972 (appearing on *Saturday Night Live* with the man in 1997), and who apparently has nothing but his highest praise for Quad City Arts' latest visiting artist. Calling Garson "exceptional" and a musician who "naturally understand[s] the movement and free-thinking necessary to hurl themselves into experimental or traditional areas of music," Bowie sums up his collaborator's talents by stating simply, "It is pointless to talk about his ability as a pianist." Boy, David ... wish you had mentioned that 350 words ago

Davenport's First Presbyterian Church is located at 1702 Iowa Street, and more information on Garson's public concert is available by calling (309)793-1213 or visiting QuadCityArts.com .

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