

Jazz: A Varied Tribute to Dr. King

By JON PARELES

IN style, personnel, emotional tone and musical quality, "Free at Last, Free at Last" — the Kitchen's Friday night concert — was thoroughly mixed. For a tribute to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., some of New York's best young jazz musicians joined the tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp — a patriarch of 1960's jazz — and musicians from the sphere of nonjazz "new music" improvisation, including the violinist Malcolm Goldstein, who directed the group.

The first half of the concert used black American and African styles. The spiritual "Been in the Storm So Long" opened as a heartfelt soliloquy by the French horn player Vincent Chancey and eventually, as players joined in one by one, grew into a New Orleans-style dirge.

Mr. Shepp's bluesy "Funeral," composed in 1963 after Medgar Evers's death, was by turns fierce and lush and tender, with the spirit of such Charles Mingus pieces as "Haitian Fight Song." After a saxophone solo that shifted between cutting and elegaic tones, Mr. Shepp moved to the piano, an instrument he rarely plays in public; accompanying the band, he used a brusque attack and full-sounding chords reminiscent of McCoy Tyner.

The remaining selections were composed by Mr. Goldstein. "Soweto Stomp" was a vamp overlaid with solos — by a raucous Ray Anderson on trombone, a songful Henry

Threadgill on alto saxophone, an aggressive David Murray on bass clarinet — sandwiched between statements of the African National Congress's anthem. The bassist Fred Hopkins carried all three pieces; Denardo Coleman, on false-sounding electronic drums, could not find a swinging beat.

After intermission, Mr. Goldstein played a violin solo dedicated to the civil-rights activist Rosa Parks. It was nonmelodic but hugely dramatic, with wailing and sliding high notes, clear tones growing raspy and abrasive, fast passages seemingly wrenched from the violin. Mr. Hopkins joined him halfway through, add-

ing counterpoint to the play of textures.

The final piece, "... that hung like fire on heayen," was the least successful. Program notes said it was built on a computer-tape adaptation of the tones and rhythms of Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech; in concert, it was a roiling group improvisation, with germs of thematic material showing up now and then. If the computer tape was playing, it was inaudible. As a finale, Mr. Shepp sang the spiritual "Free at Last" with the full band, which also included Deidre Murray on cello, Borah Bergman on piano and Joseph Celli on English horn and musette.

THE VILLAGE VOICE, Jan. 22, 1986

MUSIC

Free at Last, Free at Last: This musical celebration of the "life and work" of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was conceived by Malcolm Goldstein, composed by Goldstein and Archie Shepp, and will be performed by an 11-piece band including Shepp, David Murray, and Henry Threadgill. January 24 at 8, the Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street, 255- 5793. (Giddins)