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## Fred Ho and the Afro-Asian Music Ensemble: Black Panther Ballet Suite ■

Music Events: NYToday Pick, Classical/Opera,  
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The saxophonist, composer and political activist Fred Ho presents this multimedia work-in-progress, which draws from the legacy of the Black Panther movement for inspiration. As Ho sees it, the work is not so much a history or documentary drama of the Black Panthers as it is a continuation, through music and imagery, of their revolutionary perspective on race, economics and politics in America.

Like many experimental artists of recent years, Ho is interested in recontextualization, the placing of well-known sounds and images in new settings in order to comment on them. His musical score, for example, refers to 70's urban soul sounds such as wah-wah guitar and acoustic congas, but juxtaposes them against the odd meters and harmonies of contemporary avant-garde composition.

The recontextualization continues with Scott Marshall and Paul Chan's computer-generated "set," a graphical display that Ho calls a "living newspaper"; the "set" attempts to reimagine archetypal images from American history. In one instance it uses the famous photograph of American soldiers planting a flag on Iwo Jima to allude to the alleged torture of Abner Louima.

Also like many recent experimental artists with impulses toward the political left, Ho seems to be simultaneously repulsed and fascinated by the power of technology. He uses digital machines, invented in an economic system he decries, but he places them in an artistic setting in an effort to alter his audience's perceptions of how they might be used.

What is most intriguing about the manipulation of technology in Ho's piece is that the video imagery is not static; it can change and react, as if it were an additional member of the band. This lends the entire project — not just the musical score — a living,

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breathing quality. The digital technology, like the more archaic technology of instrument valves and levers, becomes humanized by that most fundamental of jazz attributes: improvisation.

On Friday, Ho and his group will present an open dress rehearsal especially geared for children; after Friday's performance they will be on hand to discuss the making of the "Black Panther Ballet Suite" and where the project is headed. — Michael Kramer