

By Alex Avakian

October 14, 2008

Last Friday, a UFO tumbled from the sky and crashed near the outskirts of Schenley Plaza. The... Last Friday, a UFO tumbled from the sky and crashed near the outskirts of Schenley Plaza. The silver disk-shaped spaceship was quickly enshrouded by yellow tape, and mysterious agents dressed in black suits kept passersby at bay, offering only vague explanations as to what was going on. Despite what the odd men in black claimed, they were not 'fixing a pothole,' or tending to a 'crashed weather balloon.' 'I didn't believe anything they said,' said Pitt alumna and Squonk Opera director Jackie Dempsey. 'It seems like a big cover-up.' But don't worry: It is indeed all just a cover-up for Squonk Opera's live musical-singing-dancing-light-up-extravaganza show, 'Astro-Rama.' 'Astro-Rama' is a multimedia concert, with live, original music accompanied by lasers and other visual stimuli. The show portrays sending out a message about mankind to aliens in an attempt to elicit a response. Dempsey also claimed that there would be an opportunity to participate in the message if audience members bring their cell phones. 'I think it'll be pretty spectacular,' said Dempsey. 'I think it will be funny, a little silly at times, a little serious at times. If people want to participate in both composing and broadcasting a message about humanity to the cosmos, I think they should come. It should be a wonderful way to spend the evening, especially in this beautiful park.' Inside the fictitious alien ship, Dempsey found blueprints for a huge satellite dish, which is assumed to be able to broadcast messages to aliens and the rest of the cosmos. 'So we thought they're telling us to build this, so we built it in a couple other cities, and we've sent a couple messages out to the universe. We haven't heard anything back yet, but maybe in Pittsburgh we will,' said Dempsey. Dempsey is a Pittsburgh native from Plum Borough. She received her undergrad in music from Pitt in 1988. About half of the ensemble received either their undergraduate or masters from Pitt. In addition to playing the satellite, Dempsey also plays piano, keyboard and accordion in the 'Astro-Rama' band, along with five other musicians and six on-stage actors. Squonk Opera is a Pittsburgh-based group of performing artists whose unique multimedia performances are known for their blend of art, music and theater. They've performed shows in more than 200 venues across the United States since their creation in 1992. Squonk Opera's goal is to make opera more accessible and modern with the unique elements they bring to their performances. So what is the message sent from the cosmos? For that you will have to come to the Schenley Plaza at 8 p.m., or a repeat performance on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. The event is free to all, and the show is literally right in the middle of the Schenley Plaza lawn, between the Cathedral of Learning, the Hillman Library and the Carnegie Library. The finale of the show will include a section of the Cathedral being illuminated as well.

Privacy Preferences

Options

© 2025 •

by •

Save Preferences

Privacy Preferences

I Agree