

## Caldecott Medalist Chris Raschka Talks About His Inspiration



Photo by Catherine Wink

Who is Sun Ra?

How could anyone even have that name?

Sun Ra was the kind of genius who comes into the world now and then and refuses to accept the way the world is handed to him.

People said, “Your name is Sonny Blount, Jr.”

He changed it to Sun Ra.

People said, “There are different kinds of music. There’s pop music. There’s classical music. There’s jazz. They’re different. Don’t mix them.”

Sun Ra mixed them together to make music no one had ever heard before.

People said, “If you want to be a successful musician, you have to work for a big record label. You have to have a promoter. You have to have a manager to tell you what to do, where to go, what to play.”

Sun Ra made his own records on his own labels. He told people about his music his own way. He played where and when it suited him.

People said, “You’ve got to have a lot of money to run a big band.”

Sun Ra led an enormous band, with dancers, singers, drummers, and, of course, instrumentalists, with whom he traveled around the entire world, and he never had a lot of money.

Sun Ra lived life the way he wanted to, and nurtured and taught a following of devoted musicians and listeners.

Still, it’s true that many people haven’t heard of Sun Ra because he went his own way. But Sun Ra is worth knowing. He was a musical genius, often pioneering musical practices that we take for granted now, like electronic music, world music, chance music, and sampling. His music will last for the ages. He is an inspiration to anyone who seeks the courage to live a life in dedication to art and culture.

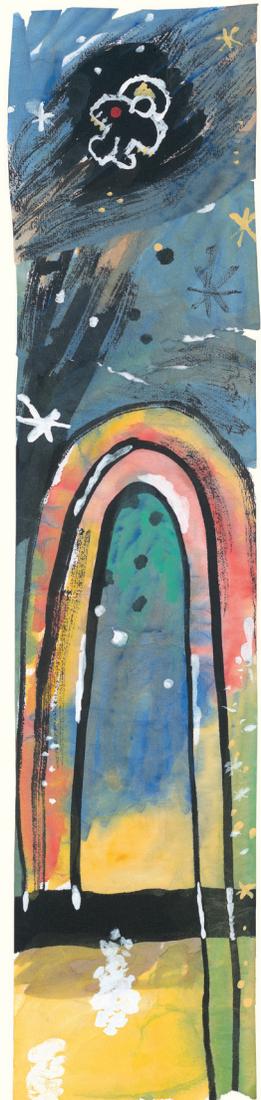


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