

Scientists, others hear protest concert

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About 2,000 Scientologists and Portland music fans gathered in downtown Portland's Tom McCall Waterfront Park Monday night for a free concert that was billed as part of a crusade for religious freedom.

Against a backdrop of the Burnside Bridge and a huge U.S. flag on which the cross of Scientology was superimposed, piano virtuoso Chick Corea and rock musician Frank Stallone performed.

Scientologists identifying themselves as having come to Portland from Canada, Britain, Mexico, Germany, France, Australia, Sweden and New Zealand joined hundreds of Portlanders in stretching out on the grass and listening to rock, jazz and popular ballads.

Television actor Jeff Pomerantz introduced Stallone's group after declaring, "Acting is what I do, but above and beyond that, always and ever, I am a Scientologist."

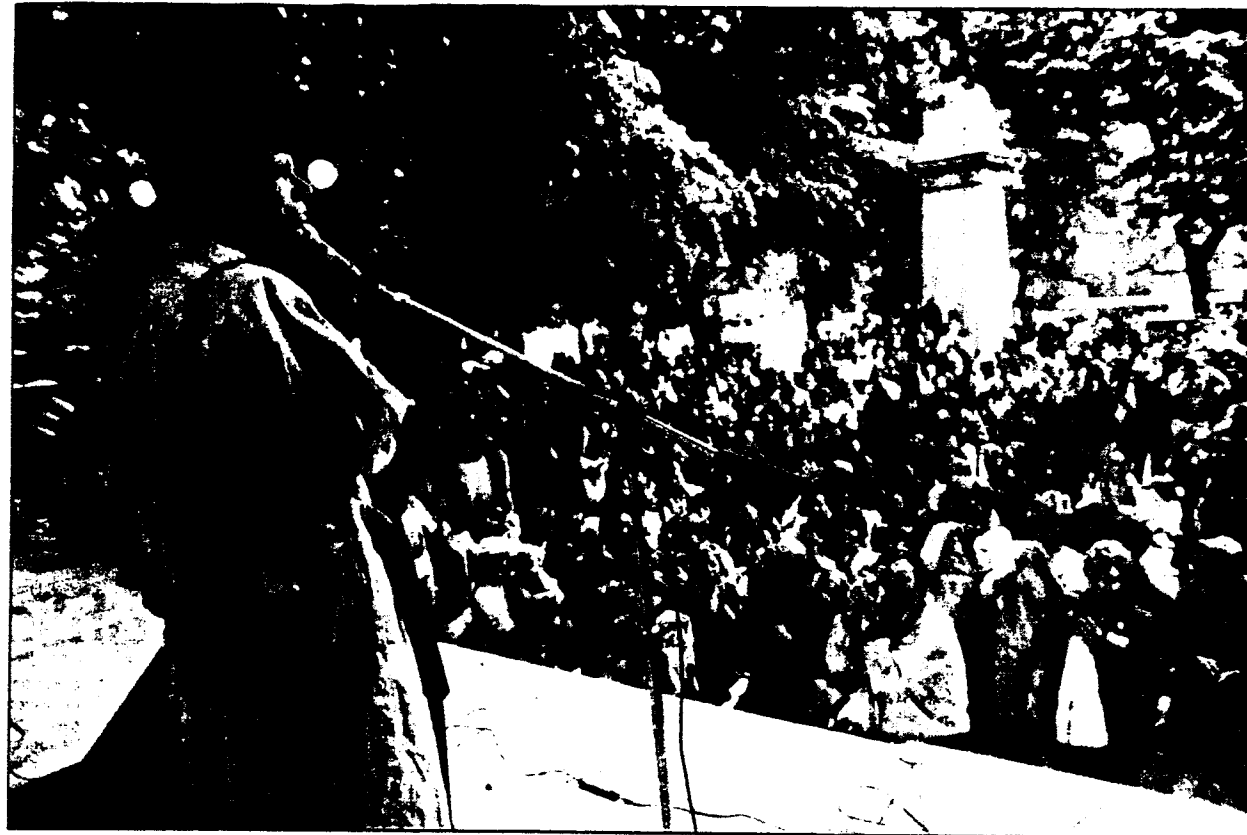
Alluding to the \$39 million judgment against the Church of Scientology on Friday in Multnomah County Circuit Court, Pomerantz said, "I am here because a great injustice has been committed against a basic inalienable right — freedom of religion."

Earlier Monday, Corea told an outdoor news conference and rally at Lownsdale Square that he had cut short a concert tour in Japan so he could "support my group here." He said he made five appearances on a 16-concert schedule and planned to return to Japan after he had done all he could in Portland.

"I haven't canceled a concert in over 20 years as a professional musician," Corea said to underscore what he said was the importance of his beliefs in Scientology and freedom of religion.

"I started to envision what it would be like if I couldn't think like I wanted," he said. "That's the great plus about living in America."

Scientology members are billing their protest of the \$39 million award in the fraud suit against their church and L. Ron Hubbard, the organization's reclusive founder, as a crusade for religious freedom. About 300 people greeted Corea at Portland International Airport Monday afternoon, some waving banners that proclaimed, "Religious Freedom Begins in Oregon."



The Oregonian/MICHAEL LLOYD

SCIENTOLOGY SUPPORT — Chick Corea, known for his inventive piano music, stands on stage in Lownsdale Park Monday and tells a

crowd of fellow Scientologists that he is in Portland to join demonstrations protesting a \$39 million fraud judgment against the church.

Church leaders have said that members from all over the world are descending on Portland and are prepared to stay as long as it takes to right what they perceive as a travesty of justice. Buses displaying flags of Canada and Great Britain and license plates from California paraded around Lownsdale Square Monday at intermittent intervals. In the park, supporters waved banners from Mexico and other countries, while "America the Beautiful" and praise of the U.S. Constitution boomed from the public address system.

Monday morning, approximately 1,000 Scientologists and supporters gathered in downtown Portland for the third day of public demonstrations against the verdict in the lawsuit brought by Julie Christofferson

Titchbourne, a Portland woman and former member of the church. Titchbourne, 27, said the church fraudulently claimed that membership would increase her intelligence quotient, eyesight and creativity.

Corea, who joined the church in 1968, called the process of making music "a very, very spiritual experience."

"That's probably why you see a lot of interest by performers and artists" in Scientology, he said.

Movie star John Travolta, looking tired, tousled and in need of a shave, was another celebrity who arrived early Monday to defend the Church of Scientology and back the growing protest of the lawsuit award.

Travolta, a private pilot, flew to Portland from Los Angeles in his own

jet and left about 2 a.m. Monday directly following his 10-minute news conference and quick huddle with church leaders and other Scientology celebrities at the Hilton Hotel. Prior commitments to the promotion of his new movie, "Perfect," dictated the timing of his short stay, a visit he said he made on his own initiative and at his own expense.

A Scientologist for 10 years, Travolta said he had never come out this strongly or visibly for the church. Having gained a reputation as a box office sex symbol for films, such as "Saturday Night Fever," "Urban Cowboy" and "Stayin' Alive," the 31-year-old Travolta said it had crossed his mind that his support of the demonstrators in Portland could hurt his career.

"For something that you feel saved your life a couple of times, you take the chance," he said, declining to elaborate his specific beliefs or experiences with Scientology.

Scientologists, who seemed to be arriving by the hour by plane, bus and car, were being housed by church members in Portland and in area hotels and motels.

The church over the weekend unsuccessfully sought to have the city of Portland rescind its ban on camping within city limits in order to accommodate a "tent city" in Tom McCall Waterfront Park, according to Jack McGowan, press aide to Mayor Bud Clark.

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