

Contemporary Music

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ALEA III Concert at HC Musically Gratifying Event

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Gazette Music Critic

Last night's concert of contemporary music performed by ALEA III at Holy Cross College proved to be one of the more musically gratifying and rewarding events of this season.

The group, in residence at Boston University, is directed by Theodore Antoniou, internationally known composer-conductor. True to their pledge, the group of young musicians performed a program that was selective and adventurous.

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Representing works written within the past 40 years, the five works performed were *Five Greek Dances* by Nikos Skalkottas, *Quartet* by John Heiss, *Chamber Concerto* by Shirish Korde, *Rune* by Joyce Mekeel and *Folk Songs* by Luciano Berio. They reflect the different compositional styles of today's composers.

In general, contemporary music has been the least received of the arts. Much of the concert-going public still regards music past Debussy as inaccessible and strange.

A Way of Listening

Because new music sounds different, we have yet to develop a way of listening to it. In fact, we tend to listen with the same ears that we listen to Beethoven and Mozart.

But the richness and inventiveness that resides in music of the past is also present in music of today. Last night's program successfully contributed to expanding any present notion of what modern music should and does sound like.

The Skalkottas and Berio work shared common elements. Both made use of folk material.

The first, with its flavorful melodies and rhythmic patterns gave the impression of a movie sound track. And the last keeping the tunes of familiar songs such as *Black Is The Color...* and *I Wonder As I Wander...* in fact, the composer furnished a harmonic and melodic background that was at once bold and intriguing.

Vivid Contrast

In the Heiss work, the matching of tonal colors by flute, cello, clarinet and piano was exact and precise. There was vivid contrast between the short melodies and the varied styles of articulation.

In comparison to the Mekeel and Korde work which approached 19th century Romanticism in mood, the Heiss work came across as more cerebral. *Rune* of Mekeel is written for flute and an unusual combination of percussion instruments such as keylon xylophone, Almsglocken and tuned gongs. The section that featured these instruments was jazzy and light.

Shirish Korde, a faculty member at Holy Cross wrote the Chamber Concerto for 10 instrumentalists. Clarinets, and bass clarinets, oboe and english horn, a standard flute and the larger sized flute, violin, viola, cello and double bass, as well as xylophone, vibraphone piano and gong combined to create a spectrum of instrumental color.

As each instrument closely matched one another, the reverberation produced still another colorful expanse of sound. The particular low sounds of the bass clarinet including the clicking of the keys provided contrast to the more active melodic figurations in the work.

Each of the work would be an asset to any program. However, just as in any other music, the quality of playing needs to be of a very high level. Last night, it was.

And the audience of almost 200 was visibly absorbed in listening and watching the performers at work. For them, the concert created an excitement about contemporary music.

CONCERTS: OMNIBUS SEASON FINALE

The final program of this season's Omnibus concerts of new music at Boston University will feature George Crumb's "Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death" and Gunther Schuller's Double Quintet, among other things, in performances conducted by that master of all things musical and modern, Theodore Antoniou. Crumb, the contemporary composer who probably boasts the widest popular following, will be in attendance, and Spiros Sakkas, whom Antoniou characterizes as "unique," will sing. The concert is tonight at 8 in the Boston University Concert Hall, 855 Commonwealth av.

Richard Dyer
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Critic's Choice
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