

GUSTO

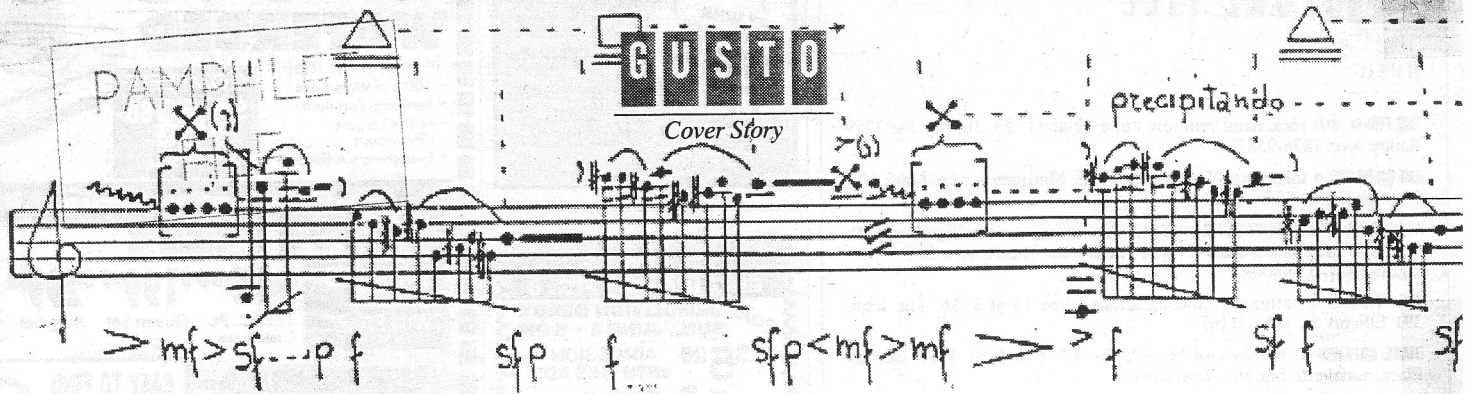
PAMPHLET
FILE

THE BUFFALO NEWS/June 4, 1993

The shock of the new (musically speaking)

UB's David Felder

Page 18



The shock of the new

*June in Buffalo series brings the best new composers to Buffalo
- and you're invited to hear their work*

By **HERMAN TROTTER**
News Music Critic

IT MAY COME as a surprise to some readers to learn that as a new-music center, Buffalo has a world-class reputation that is very well known and much admired in citadels of contemporary music as widespread as Darmstadt, Germany, and Tokyo.

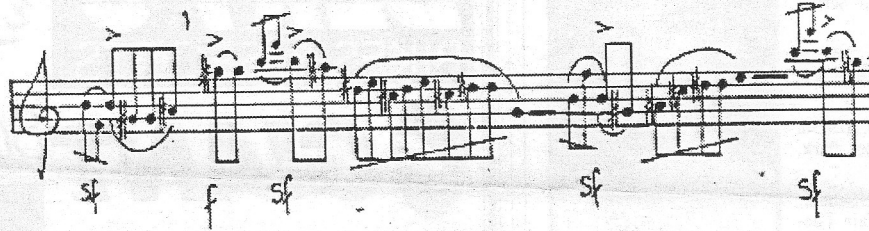
"New music" is a very broad term that refers to what might loosely be called the lineal descendants of classical music, although elements of folk, rock, jazz and other musical forms are often metamorphosed into its line and texture.

Among the many genres under this broad umbrella we find such divergent 20th century styles as minimalism, neoromanticism, serialism, electronic music, a recent trend called "the new complexity," and many other, uncategorizable styles by composers of quite individual voice.

"New music" has a far smaller public following than mass-hyped popular music forms. But Buffalo is a big frog in this lesser pond, and makes a far greater international splash in that art form than it does in pop music.

What makes all this pertinent is the opening on Monday of an important week-long event called June in Buffalo, sponsored by the music department of the University at Buffalo.

It's tempting to call June in Buffalo a festival, but that wouldn't be quite right, because most music festivals aim to attract a large listening public to concerts, most often with some defining slant or unifying bias.



June in Buffalo, on the other hand, welcomes anyone who wants to come and listen to its largely free series of concerts. But it exists primarily to serve younger composers on the way up.

And what will June in Buffalo present to these young composers and the specialized audience its performances attract?

As far as those emerging composers are concerned, June in Buffalo's artistic director, UB Professor David Felder, offered this explanation.

"We have a very demanding situation here," Felder said, "with 30 younger composers meeting in small, three-hour master classes, workshops and seminars, presenting their work for evaluation by a senior mentor, along with commentary and dialogue with their peers. This is a way for all sorts of critical and far-ranging compositional issues to be raised."

But in addition to the interaction with their colleagues and senior advisers, the composers will also hear their works tested in the crucible of live performances, to which the public is also invited.

For this wider audience,

Monday's 8 p.m. concert in Baird Hall on the UB North Campus will raise the curtain on seven days of events, including nine concerts and 37 new compositions by 34 young composers and their four distinguished faculty mentors.

Many of these works will be receiving their world premiere performances.

June in Buffalo will close on June 13 with a 4 p.m. Slee Hall concert by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

This is the only concert for which there will be an admission charge, a modest \$5. Publicists call this "a crazy, wild one-hour concert, followed by an equally crazy and wild free beer and hot dog fest outside Slee Hall."

June in Buffalo was the 1975 brainchild of the late Morton Feldman, then the Edgard Varese Professor of Music at UB. Feldman's idea was more along festival lines, to present, largely as retrospectives, the work of distinguished contemporary composers. Younger composers were invited to attend lectures and master classes and to absorb what they could from the elder statesmen.

During its original incarnations, Elliott Carter, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage and George Crumb were among the composers so honored. But the funding for this activity dried up, and following the 1980 festival, June in Buffalo was put in mothballs.

The importance of June in Buffalo's activities on the national music scene, however, was not lost on David Felder, then a festival organizer and faculty member at California State University, Long Beach.

So when Felder was offered a position at UB beginning with the 1985-86 academic year, it was the opportunity to revive June in Buffalo that tipped the scales in Buffalo's favor and brought him here. As he approaches his eighth installment of the rejuvenated June in Buffalo convocations, Felder is very pleased with the progressively higher caliber of composers attracted to Buffalo.

"For us," Felder said, "it's especially gratifying to have had so many applicants from Europe, Asia and South America. Not only does this allow us to present the work of important emerging composers from

other musical societies to the Buffalo audience, but also to create a whole different flavor to the week's activities, with interaction of composers from around the world. It's a really important goal for the festival."

Felder was understandably reluctant to single out any younger composer as "most outstanding," but did mention a few to illustrate their geographical diversity.

"We have two Italian representatives of the 'new complexity' school," he said, "Luca Belcastro and Massimo Botter, both here with their interesting works."

He described "new complexity" as a relatively recent development in composition, largely a reaction to minimalism, in which extraordinarily thick textures and busy linear progressions predominate. Examples previously heard hereabouts would be Michael Finnissy's "English Country Tunes" for piano, played here by the composer in the North American New Music Festival three years ago, and Brian Ferneyhough's string quartets played by the Arditti Quartet in the Albright Knox Art Gallery.

"We have two Japanese composers," Felder added, "or from Tokyo named Atsushi Yamaji, and another from Tokyo but living in Paris, Atsuhiko Gondai, so there's a marriage of two different musical cultures. We also have English and Australian composers named Luke Stoneham and Lesleigh Thompson."

Felder also observed that there will be four premieres of works by local Buffalo composers.

"There'll be a new work by Michael Zajonc called 'Maxwell's Demon,' Vincent Ham-

ner's brass piece titled "Coincidental Excursion," and a new student here named Sooran Jeong will hear her "Derivation" for the first time. Then Richard Bailey will unveil the work with the longest title, "Since the Old Dictators Were Dying We Took Turns Being on Top."

Paul Elwood is not only a composer-participant, but also an administrative associate for June in Buffalo. He may also be contributing the oldest and quirkiest composition to this year's concert menu, along with its most bizarre performance. The work is "Edgard Varese in the Gobi Desert," a 1983 concerto for Velcro tap dancer, piano and percussion, in which the composer will be the soloist, wearing Velcro-soled shoes.

"It's like negative tap dancing," says Elwood, "because you have to lift your foot off the Velcro floor pad, rather than strike the floor, to make a sound, which varies from slow ripping noises to snaps. There's even a Velcro cadenza in the third movement."

Velcro tap dancing? The possibilities boggle the mind!

In discussing just how new the music played during June in Buffalo will be, Felder estimated that 90 percent of the works this year will be either U.S. or world premieres.

Faculty members working with the young composers this year, in addition to Felder, include Charles Wuorinen, Bernard Rands, Donald Erb and Harvey Sollberger.

"The most important criterion I look for in picking these faculty composers," Felder said, "is credibility as a composer with an international reputation who would attract younger composers because of their history of mentoring. We have to choose people who are vitally interested in what young composers are doing. Not all successful composers have this kind of interest in their younger colleagues, and a big reputation does not necessarily go along with a desire or interest in teaching. So there are some famous people we pass over.

"The ones we've selected, in turn, had elders who did the same for them, and they're continuing the tradition, considering it a part of their duty to the profession to advance the careers of younger composers."

Felder reserves special praise for the musicians who are per-

forming during June in Buffalo's concerts.

"A lot of people have contributed to these festivals since I've been running them," he said. "We don't have, either within the festival or the music department, the luxury of a resident ensemble as in the heady days of the Creative Associates.

"So the most important contributions are made by the players. During the course of the week there will be about 30 musicians who come from all over the world, work very hard and are paid very poorly, far less than what these artists usually receive.

"And a lot of the same great performers keep coming back year after year, like violinist Karen Bentley, percussionist Kirk Brundage, bassist Robert Black and flutist/composer/conductor Harvey Sollberger. They have a tremendous commitment to the art form and a belief, on some level, that working with young composers is very important to the vitality of the musical idiom. Without their commitment this festival simply would not happen."

Each year June in Buffalo attracts more attention and more out-of-town press. Why?

"Well," Felder replied, "we expect Paul Griffiths of the New Yorker magazine will be here for about five days, and he's coming for a number of reasons. First, he's well-aware of Buffalo's longstanding reputation as an important new-music center. In addition, it's a wonderful opportunity for him to get concentrated exposure to new work he hasn't heard before, to hear so many composers from so many cultures who simply haven't been heard in New York. And if he wants, he can tune in on the dialogue between these experienced and younger composers.

"We also expect coverage by Rob Nelson of the Christian Science Monitor, and it's likely that members of the Rochester and Toronto press will be on hand for many of the events."

In wrapping up his observations, Felder took a wistful look backward.

"Seven years ago, when we revived June in Buffalo," he said, "this was the only place in the country doing this kind of thing. Now there are several imitators, one even called May in Miami. I suppose we should be flattered."

What to listen for

The complete listing of June in Buffalo concert dates, times and venues — all free, except where otherwise noted — is as follows:

June 7, 8 p.m., Baird Hall — Works for solo instrument or duo by Jose Luis Castillo Rodriguez, Ken Steen, Christopher Kaufman, Mikel Kuehn, Lesleigh Thompson and Amy Williams.

June 8, 4 p.m., Baird Hall — Guitarist David Starobin and Meridian Arts Ensemble in works of Vincent Hammer, Mario Davidovsky, Michael Starobin, Ira Taxis, John Halle and Frank Zappa.

June 8, 8 p.m., Slee Hall — Works for solo instrument or chamber ensemble by Luca Belcastro, Hye-Jeong Hwang, P.Q. Phan, Arlene Sierra and Pieter Snapper.

June 9, 7 p.m., Allen Hall — Works for varying chamber ensembles by Jeffrey Ryan, Atsuhiko Gondai, Nicholas Hopkins, Christopher Morgan Loy, Paul Osterfield and Laura Schwendinger.

June 10, 4 p.m., Baird Hall — Double bassist Niek de Groot and Trio Phoenix in works of Luciano Berio, H. Lai, Boudewijn Buckinx, F. Nieder, M. Patch, Sooran Jeong, Edison Denisov, Nicholas Maw and P. Robinson.

June 10, 8 p.m., Baird Hall — Music for solo piano, voice and/or chamber ensemble by Donald Erb, Brian Banks, Amilear Vasques Dias, Kurt Sander, Julian James Wachner and Atsushi Yamaji.

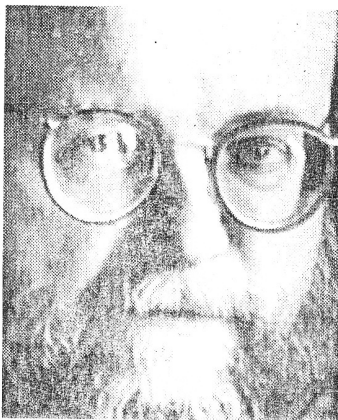
June 11, 8 p.m., Slee Hall — Music for solo instrument, computer, voice, chamber ensembles and what's described as a "Velcro tap-dancer" by David Felder, Paul Elwood, Massimo Botter, Richard Bailey and Bernard Rands.

June 12, 8 p.m., Baird Hall — Music for solo piano or chamber ensembles by Harvey Sollberger, Paul Elwood, David Periera, Michael Zajonc, Davy Temperley and Jason Uechi.

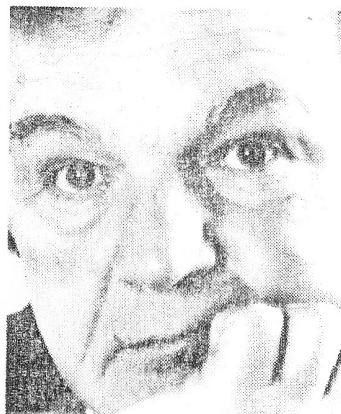
June 13, 4 p.m., Slee Hall, \$5 admission — Jesse Levine and Charles Wuorinen conduct the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in David Felder's "Betwween," with percussionist Steve Schick, and Wuorinen's "Bamboula Squared."



Bernard Rand



Charles Wuorinen



Don Erb