

PAMPHLET

REVIEW

June in Buffalo

WELCOME CYMBALISM

Glitch lightens mood at arid performance

By HERMAN TROTTER
News Music Critic

ONE OF June in Buffalo's resident groups, the New Millennium Ensemble, took the stage of Allen Hall on Wednesday evening in a program of works by eight of the resident composers. Most were probably premieres.

The ensemble consists of flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion. Bradley Lubman conducted five of the works.

With all this new music to prepare, it's understandable that there might be glitches in the performance, one of which formed both the conclusion and a highlight of the evening. In the final percussive broadside in Andrew Rindfleisch's "Fanatical Dances" percussionist John Ferrari whacked a cymbal so hard that it flew off the stand and landed on the floor with an extra crash, to general laughter.

Candidly, the evening could have used a few more moments of levity. Although the performances were generally excellent, much of the music was both difficult and arid. Consequently, I have a stronger memory of how hard the musicians worked than of any musical satisfaction they delivered.

The five works for full ensemble were generally earnest, energetic and deadly serious, but they also tended to be rhetorical, unspontaneous and perfunctory. In other words, dull. Thinking back, it's hard to differentiate these works one from another.

The three smaller pieces seemed to have more character. David Lefkowitz's Quartet for violin, cello, flute and piano was poised and purposeful, moving relentlessly on ostinato figures, quasi-Oriental flavors, punctuating jabs, and stalking piano lines.

Margaret McAllister's Quartet for flute, clarinet, violin and cello, was the most spacious piece on the program, with quiet, reflective, pondering clarinet solos, gestural in demeanor, and the central part a sort of stuttering atonal conversation among the instruments.

Jeffrey Kowalkowski's "Aufhebung" for violin and marimba offered the a fine textural contrast. Violin lines which were either fast and angular, naively tuneful, or turning harsh in mercurial changes, all partnered by soft-malleted marimba trills and runs.

Greg D'Alessio's "Later Still" seemed little more than a continuum of agitated, random noodling. Laura Schwendinger's "Fable" opened and closed elegantly, like Faure updated to the 1990s, but had a darker, more turbulent main message, and Susan Harding's "Earliest Sky" was subsumed in heaving dynamic changes.

Richard Festinger's "A Serenade for Six" was predominantly prickly and pointillist in texture, and chattery in line, with a drifting, cogitating slow movement at its center, while Rindfleisch's closing "Fanatical Dances" featured periodic barrages of percussion and waves of energy with disembodied atonal expanses. The fanatical aspects were obvious, but anything dancelike eluded my ears.

Young composers display a mixed bag of skills

By KENNETH YOUNG
News Contributing Reviewer

The second concert in the University of Buffalo's ongoing series of contemporary music featured the usual mixed bag of new works by younger composers as well as a ringer by one of the old guard, Milton Babbitt.

Babbitt's piece, performed by Curtis Macomber, was one of the more demanding — both for the listener and the performer. "Melismata" is an extended soliloquy for solo violin — discursive, gestural and a bit quirky, as if the instrument had suddenly come alive and discovered its own voice without reference to stylistic information. So it talks to itself, explores its own idiomatic language, a kind of "violinspeak" that is never able to organize, realize a mood or communicate with anything but itself.

Pieces written for a soloist with tape-recorded sound sometimes end up being concertos for synthesizer, but Charles Norman Mason's "The Artist and His Model" for cello with tape balanced the quick and the dead quite nicely, making the resulting collaboration a highly charged rhythmic excursion. The reflections and extensions of ideas worked smoothly between soloist Jonathan Golove and the taped sound, with well-paced variety in a driving tempo carriage that wound up with an ethereal harmonic fade — very effective.

"Portraits and Prayers" by Rodney Lister was a sort of suite for two violins, with outer movements in a rather romantic polytonal style flanking three inner movements using folk tunes as the basis for variation. Skillful writing here, even as "Amazing Grace" disintegrates and is resurrected in fragmentary allusion in the finale. The performers were violinists Macomber and Karen Bentley.

On the second half there were three virtuoso works for various instruments, starting off with a furious little piece for solo bass, "Scherzo alla Franciscana" by Claudio Pompili. Soloist Robert

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June in Buffalo

Concert 2

Monday evening in Slee Hall,
University at Buffalo North Campus.

Black flailed away mightily at his instrument — a barrage of percussive thumps and squeaks, tailpiece indignities and harmonic shrieks that delighted the crowd.

Wieslaw Rentowski played his own "Albebragen" on the Fisk pipe organ, a colorful panorama of episodic display with very little connective tissue. Dong Tsoe's "Sudden Reconstruction III" was sudden indeed, with pianist Kathleen Supove an absolute wild woman in her tear-'em-up tone clusters with Cyrus Stevens' slashing violin — an effective contrast in a dripping fade-out.

The finale was Rick Burkhardt's "Serenade After Rimbaud" for two flutes, two cellos and percussion, which showed some skillful organization without distinguishing itself from a hundred other percussion-driven contemporary ensemble pieces.

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ACE VENTURA (PG-13)	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:20 9:10
COPS AND ROBBERSONS (PG-13)	12:50 2:50 4:50 7:10 9:15
MONKEY TROUBLE (PG)	12:40 2:40 4:30
REALITY BITES (PG-13)	7:40 9:50
WHATS EATING GILBERT GRAPE? (PG-13)	12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
MAJOR LEAGUE 2 (PG)	12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
GUARDING TESS (PG-13)	4:50 7:20
THREESOME (R)	12:40 2:50 9:20

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		THE GETAWAY (R)	11:00
2	BRANDON LEE RAY LOTTA	THE CROW (R)	9:20 1:15
		NO ESCAPE (R)	11:15

"FUNNY, FULL OF ACTION."

- Caryn James, THE NEW YORK TIMES

MAVERICK



ENTERTAINMENT

FILE

June in Buffalo takes time out for tribute concert

By HERMAN TROTTER
News Music Critic

On Friday evening, June in Buffalo took note of the fact that the UB Center of the Creative and Performing Arts, which changed the face of music forever in the Buffalo area and for several years throughout the world, was founded 30 years ago.

Its first director, Lukas Foss, returned to hear one of his works and to play piano in another. Compositions by two other directors, Lejaren Hiller and Morton Feldman, were also performed while another former director, Jan Williams, participated as both percussionist and conductor.

This was a departure from June in Buffalo's usual format, but the tribute and the high caliber of the evening's performances made the diversion singularly appropriate.

Before sitting down to play his 1982 "Solo Observed," Foss dedicated the performance to the late Yvar Mikhashoff with the three eloquent words: "I miss him."

"Solo Observed" arises from a quiet, ostinato-like phrase which is interrupted briefly, developed subtly but extensively, and subjected to a slow accretion of both dynamics and emotional intensity. It reminded me of the the kind of riv-

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Concert 6, celebrating 30th anniversary of Creative Associates

Friday evening in Slee Hall, University at Buffalo North Campus.

eting listening experience Foss has generated many times in performances of such works as the Bach concertos.

After a couple of trips up and down the dynamic scale, vibraphone, cello and electric organ slowly feel their way into the ensemble, commenting on the proceedings and generating rhythmic figures verging on jazz riffs. After everyone else had cut off, the piano continued with a short, inconclusive phrase, as though it had a willful mind of its own.

Morton Feldman's "For Frank O'Hara" was the very antithesis of the Foss work — frail wisps of sound in delicate colors, projected in sustained tones or silences, and, except, for one raucous drum roll, never above pianissimo level. The performance by seven woodwinds, strings, percussion and piano conducted by Jan Williams was a model of sostenuto playing which kept the delicate fabric aloft and in perfect balance at all times.

Lejaren Hiller's 1984 "Fast and Slow," played by the Amherst Saxophone Quartet, represented another stark contrast, offering listeners the only conventionally consonant music of the evening. The "fast" movement was strong, insistent, rhythmic and full of guttural sonorities, evolving into a near-jazz jam ambience with loping lines over a firm, recurring three-note cantus, and always a sense of declamation.

The "slow" rejoinder is opened by the baritone in a motif that sounds like it's going to break out into "I Loves You Porgy." That's rather fitting, because the main thing preventing this music from sounding like a swing-era big band ballad is the biting harmony Hiller provided. It proceeds in questing phrases and sometimes groping lines, with a short, more loosely rhythmed central section. The quartet played this bracing, engaging music with impeccable ensemble and balance.

The program concluded on a joyous, unbuttoned and downright wacky note with Foss' "Paradigm," with Williams as percussionist also conducting an ensemble of electric guitar, violin, clarinet and double bass. It's in four movements, approaching slap happy musical mayhem at the outer extremes.

A constant, jabbing, rhythmic pulse propels the first movement as the musicians all belt out snip-pets of the declaration "Someone will be held responsible," an angry, shouting musical continuum with unearthly wails from a huge steel strip malleted by Williams.

The second movement is aleatoric prose, with words chosen randomly from provided lists to make up unpredictable phrases and sentences, all punctuated by wispy instrumental interjections, and as much silence as sound.

Williams' deft manipulation of the flexatone sets the tone for the purely instrumental third movement, made up of seemingly intentional weak chords and feeble, groping sounds.

But this was succeeded by the all-out bash of the final "Lecture" movement, with a long text about what constitutes safe music, shouted by all the performers, generating greater volume and cacophony than their instruments. At the end Williams whacked each musician's stand as a stop signal, but in the best Foss tradition he was ignored by guitarist Don Metz, who continued to play right through the applause and curtain call, eventually forced to a halt by a big bear hug from the composer.