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Music Appreciation 9:30 TR

Concert Review Paper

Layers of sound, of imagination—a smooth alto saxophone, an undulating marimba. Not many would consider a concert that featured these two instruments, but the result is beyond description.

Such a concert was held at Red Rocks Community College, at five o'clock P. M. on Wednesday, February 8th. The faculty recital featured Jennie Dorris on marimba, and Scott Turpen on alto saxophone. The small audience, mostly modestly dressed students, quietly trickled in and sat down, shuffling through papers and pulling out pencils. Just before the performance, I noticed that Mr. Turpen warmed up on his instrument, running up and down a few scales, while Ms. Dorris arranged her sheet music on a row of music stands placed before her marimba. Once everyone had been seated, Ms. Dorris stood at the front of the room and welcomed the audience, introduced both herself and Mr. Turpen, and gave a brief overview of what they would be performing that night.

From this performance, the piece I most enjoyed was a work for solo marimba, played by Ms. Dorris. The piece was called *Michi*, composed by Keiko Abe. The music was beautiful; the long phrases seemed to flow and ebb, creating a very dreamlike quality. The rhythm was syncopated, and the song seemed almost polyphonic; during many instances, harmonizing notes crossed each other in a flowing counterpoint, creating a thick, undulating texture. The dynamics were wide: the piece began in pianissimo, growing in loudness. Often, a note would be heavily accented, ringing out above the underlying melody. The music would speed up and slow down repeatedly, adding to the rippling, dreamy feel. The form of this piece is rather interesting; both the beginning and end of the work are left

to the musician's interpretation, while the body of the piece is an undulating flow of two main ideas, presented many times as ritornelli, surrounded by variations.

The performance and interpretation of this piece were, I think, very well done. Ms. Dorris' improvisations at the beginning and end of the work were beautiful, and seamlessly flowed with the rest of the music. She also used dynamics very effectively—the dynamics are, I believe, one of the most important aspects of this piece. I would not have changed anything about this piece; I greatly enjoyed it.

The very last piece of the performance was a work for both alto saxophone and marimba—*Divertimento*, composed by Akira Yuyama. Before the piece was played, Ms. Dorris described the more challenging aspects of the piece, such as very complex harmonies and difficult sections. Mr. Turpen intervened to point out the fact that at one point in the piece, Ms. Dorris would be using six mallets as opposed to her usual four—a difficult skill to master.

Throughout the piece, the marimba and saxophone would play separately, and then come together, with the saxophone playing the melody, and the marimba providing diverse accompaniment. The rhythm was very syncopated in most areas, flowing in others. There was one main theme that was repeated throughout the piece (ritornello), and many variations of each section. There were moderate dynamics near the beginning of the work; as the piece progressed, parts became loud (*forte*), then would suddenly grow extremely soft (*pianissimo*), in a decrescendo. The piece had a very forceful, almost abrupt, ending.

The piece was accompanied by a short video, created by visual artist Kendra Fleishman. The video was to correspond with the musical piece, and, as the program notes, written by Jennie Dorris, explain, should express “the surreal nature of childhood and adolescence.” I found the video to be disjointed, confusing, and very distracting from the music; I did not much enjoy the combination. I believe the

piece—which was well played on the part of Ms. Dorris and Mr. Turpen—would have been much more enjoyable if the visual aspect had simply not been presented.

Despite the last piece, I greatly enjoyed the overall performance. I had never imagined music played by such an interesting instrumental combination as an alto saxophone and a marimba, and I find that the result is very pleasing to the ear. I would most certainly like to attend another concert by Ms. Dorris and Mr. Turpen, and I would recommend a performance by these artists to a friend or family member. The sound of these two instruments combined is creative, unearthly, almost dreamy; as a music lover, I had a fabulous time at this concert.