

San Francisco Classical Voice

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC REVIEW

Broad Span

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By Miguel Galperin

A well-planned series of concerts dedicated to new American music should be an opportunity to relish diversity. In concerts all across the country Minimalism increasingly shares the stage with High Modernism, Free Improvisation and Post-Modern intentions. Two concerts on the Festival of New American Music, Tuesday and Wednesday in Capistrano Hall on the Sacramento State University campus, exemplified this. **These well-balanced and representative programs gave the audience an occasion to delight in differences. In fact, if the stylistic diversity to which the audience was exposed did not feel forced, it was because the myriad emotions elicited by the playing of the two involved groups — Pinotage and Eclipse — opened the door to something beyond style, in the wealth of human expression at large.**

Delicacy was one of the many human traits that transcended the stylistic realm, and it was especially emphasized in the interpretation that Pinotage gave Toru Takemitsu's trio, And then I knew 'twas wind, for Flute, Harp and Viola, the most ethereal of the pieces they programmed. Then came a work by Martha Ptaszynska that was impressive for its refinement of instrumental writing....

Among the high points of Pinotage's concert was Bernard Rands' Prelude: "...sans voix parmi les voix...." What most caught my attention was that it occupies that frail space between simplicity and profundity. This two-part effort (described in the program notes as a work in progress) combined elements of excitement with touches of melancholy. The roles that each instrument assumed in the Rand were always in character. Thus, the flute played frenzied lines while the harp was used to punctuate the texture with single sforzando notes. **The viola, also characteristically, was in charge of lyricism, which violist Claudia Lasareff-Mironoff managed with aplomb and expressivity.**

Pinotage

What made this piece special was the fact that its structure is much more complex than the two-part division suggests. In reality, this brilliant work is a collection of miniatures that come together to form a strange but still organic whole, as if different narrators joined in the telling of an interesting story.

Tuesday night's New American Music experience concluded with a solid interpretation of a fun piece: Elizabeth Start's Sign-Songs — Selections from Three Songs, Three Sign

Songs, and more Sign Songs. **As the title promised, this rhythmic piece was humorous and smart, and the tactful group of musicians did justice to it.**