

# Spotlight

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Sentinel

## Cabrillo Festival/Ending on a high note

By PHILIP COLLINS

The Cabrillo Music Festival concluded its 20th season Sunday evening with an ecstatically received world premiere of Lou Harrison's Third Symphony, magnificently conducted by Dennis Russell Davies.

The audience rose en masse to applaud and applaud the ebullient music that had moved them so.

And, as if the premiere of a new Lou Harrison symphony weren't enough, renowned piano virtuoso Keith Jarrett blew the stems off Bartok's Second Piano Concerto in the first half of the program. Also performed was the U.S. premiere of Stravinsky's orchestration of Two Movements from "Sleeping Beauty" by Tchaikovsky and "Siegfried Idyll" (1870) by Richard Wagner.

The concert began with Wagner's tender orchestra movement, one of the few non-operatic works that he composed.

"Siegfried Idyll" conveys some of Wagner's most enhancing qualities. Davies moderated the layering of the gentle arching recurrent melody with supple gestures. Through Davies' movements, one was able to discern the shaping and nuance of each phrase. The ensemble of winds and strings brought forth the sumptuous magic of Wagner's affection.

Bartok's Second Piano Concerto (1931) is a work of harsh austerity. Written at a time when piano music was solely appreciated for its sumptuous, rhapsodic qualities, Bartok hit with what many considered barbarism. Bartok revealed that the piano is essentially a percussion instrument — an extraordinarily expressive one. Jarrett's music has long utilized the extreme dynamics of the

instrument. His keen virtuosity and rhythmic precision make him well suited for the challenges of this concerto.

The opening movement was an exuberant Allegro dance of piano, winds and percussion. With many sections of contrasting material, the movement kept up a relentless pace of change. With each return of the main theme, the piano statement seemed to grow more complex. No matter how hairy it got, Davies and Jarrett remained in perfect alignment throughout the chase.

The second movement was embraced with a recurrent hushed choral played by muted strings. These sections of repose framed relentless piano solos. Jarrett's abilities were summoned forth in the final allegro. In this movement, the pianist must play incessantly, fighting cross accents in the orchestra while scrambling the length of the keyboard in calculated panic. Jarrett was well-prepared for this challenge and met it with sureness and exactitude. In fact, the overall performance was impeccable and deserving of the cheering ovations that followed the final sweep.

Sunday marked the first U.S. performance of "Two Movements from Sleeping Beauty" by Tchaikovsky/Stravinsky featuring concertmaster on solo violin for the second. Tecco carried the melody of the Entr'acte with eloquence. The movement was broad and provided plenty of elbow room for the soloist. Stravinsky's orchestrations were masterfully realized in a style appropriate to the music.

The final work on the program was the world premiere of Lou Harrison's Third

Symphony (1982, with the ink still wet). Of all this country's composers, there is no other who has so genuinely and extensively tendered and mixed the musics of different cultures and made them his own. Harrison's Third Symphony, like the majority of his output, juxtaposes and welds centuries and continents with his extraordinary gift of melodic sense. The work is cast in the grand traditional symphonic form of four movements.

The first movement opens with a bold contrapuntal pronouncement by full orchestra followed by sparse texture through which the theme unwinds into solo strings and winds, eventually settling in a transparent madrigal intimacy. The thread of motion is never lost because of the theme's insistency through textural changes. The forceful opening statement is repeated and again unwound, this time to the movement's completion.

The second movement Harrison calls a "Scherzo area," and consists of a little suite of dances, each dedicated to friends of the composer. The first section is "A Reel For Henry Cowell," a jolly Irish step in which a single melody prevails throughout, accompanied by spoons and drums. The second, "A Waltz For Evelyn Hendrikson," is a lilting endearment. Delicate timbres create a transparency through which the music softly speaks. The third piece is "An Estampie For Susan Summerfield." The Estampie was originally composed for organ and premiered by Summerfield. Virgorous counterpoint flows over a constant drum accompaniment that resembles the sensuous accents associated with belly dancing.

The third movement Largo Ostinato is

the symphony's fulcrum, the pearl of the oyster. Music that had been culminating inside the composer since 1937 was obviously well worth the wait. A gentle, slow-rocking bass figure (absconded from eternity) cradles the movement, sustaining an atmosphere of restless tranquility. Over this ostinato we first hear distant calls echoed among the brass and winds. They soon recede, only to become an everpresent memory in the voice of the bass ostinato.

Within this mysterious terrain long dreamlike melodies of solo violin and winds altercate with upwardly winding clouds of vibraphone, horns and celeste. Following an abbreviated return of the opening brass calls, the movement closes with a final ascent into the distance.

The final allegro is the largest movement. In a rich counterpoint fabric often involving as many as five separate lines, Harrison achieves a remarkable clarity of texture. From the moment this movement embarks until its gallant final tutti blast, inexhaustable variety and exuberance are sustained through deft manipulation of orchestral weight.

The contrasting shape and character of the numerous melodies accounted for much of the movement's success. However, the unabashed optimism coupled with its strong sense of purpose endowed the entire symphony with qualities too seldom expressed by today's composers. The music spoke to its listeners, unfettered by concerns of compromise or innovation.

Quite simply it was the voice of a great composer speaking as only he knows how, which is very eloquently.