

### **Standing Wave: Concert 3**

Sunday, April 2, 2001

Vancouver East Cultural

Centre

In the aptly titled "Concert 3," the Standing Wave ensemble proved themselves to be one of Vancouver's best-kept musical secrets, one waiting to be told. In a program on such stylistic diversity that traditional performers would be fumbling to keep up, these musicians demonstrated ample reserves of soloistic and ensemble virtuosity.

Virtuosity was a required element in Brian Cherney's *Echoes in the Memory*, a trio for clarinet, cello, and piano. A moody and demanding work, the composition lacked an emotional dimension, getting mired in the romantic notion of the tormented artist. Dark, obscured counterpoint, and violent accented gestures characterized the restless searching of all six movements, never allowing the listener to discover the "rose-garden" implied in the T.S. Eliot poem that inspired the music. Extended techniques on all of the instruments expanded the orchestrational palette of the piece, and were played with great vigour, particularly François Houle's success on some fiendishly high clarinet writing.

Ingenious orchestration and unconventional playing also characterized George Crumb's *Dream Sequence (Images II)*, reaffirming the importance of this unique and wholly original American composer. Cyclic sound events shifted and recombined in a surreal texture, performed very delicately, and supported by an almost subliminal chordal ostinato on offstage crystal glasses.

Vancouverite Jacqueline Leggatt's *The Big Fugue* had little to do with fugues, and more to do with canons,

but was a fascinating work of textural clarity and simplicity, and seamlessly blended composed and improvised elements. The piece toyed with phasing effects, bluesy phrasing, and pointillism, before cycling back to the unison material from the opening.

*Waves*, by Montreal composer Serge Arcuri, was an equally compelling, but much denser work, giving the quartet of cello, clarinet, piano, and percussion an almost orchestral presence with the skillful addition of a taped electroacoustic part. The waves referred to in the title were translated as episodes of rhythmic playing alternated with slower, free textures, and the piece was just building a nice head of steam when it, unfortunately, gave up and ended.

The programme's featured premiere, Nikolai Korndorf's *Merry Music for Very Nice People*, had an unexpected theatricality, even daring to break the fourth wall. Self-consciously playful, and often kitschy, the piece's weakness stemmed from the fact that the ensemble members are better musicians than actors. Percussionist Laurie Lyster had the most success in the dramatic aspect, and left many people wondering if the piece had begun yet, as she jovially chatted with the audience while setting up her gear. The music itself had a charming simplicity, and overall the work was a success, as the audience discovered that a concert of "serious" music had been infiltrated by some light-hearted fun.

With programming that reflects the diversity of contemporary composition, and presentation that is consistently musical and energetic, Standing Wave proves that new music is alive and kicking, and ready to be discovered.