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# Percussion ensemble to play alumni works

by Ann Marie Stanley  
Special projects editor

Today's music lovers often say they are envious of the audiences who had the thrill of hearing the premiere of great classical works in the past.

But tonight Wichitans have the chance to be present at the premiere of two brand-new pieces at the Wichita State University Percussion Ensemble concert, 7:30 p.m. in Miller Concert Hall.

"The exciting part of the concert is the premieres," said WSU professor of percussion J.C. Combs. "It's somewhat different to find two premieres on a program; it's like returning to the days of Mozart or Bach."

The Percussion Ensemble, comprised of WSU percussion majors, will be the first to perform pieces written by WSU composition student Helmut Burkhardt and WSU alumnus Philip Parker, instructor of percussion at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville.

Burkhardt's "Combattimento" uses a large battery of percussion instruments, said Combs, and will feature WSU professor of piano Paul Reed. Burkhardt is a student of WSU professor of music theory-composition Walter Mays.

"He (Burkhardt) displays a real understanding of how these instruments work; he's got a real grasp of how to use the colors of these instruments," said Combs. He added Burkhardt wrote for some rarely-used percussion instruments as well, including Javanese gongs and almglocken, or pitched cowbells from Bavaria.

Combs said Parker's piece, Concertino for B-flat Trumpet and Percussion Orchestra, is the third of Parker's works to

be premiered at WSU. Parker's first two pieces were performed at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York immediately following their WSU premieres.

"I've been lucky enough that he has just sent them (the pieces) to me," said Combs, who added Parker was also a student of Mays about 12 years ago.

The Concertino will feature WSU instructor of trumpet Leslie Linn as soloist as well as WSU's instructor of harp, Ann Roush.

"He (Parker) likes to use harp," said Combs. "He understands the fact that sustained instruments complement very well the more attack-oriented instruments, like xylophones."

"He really knows how to mix the instruments," added Combs. He added that the combination of trumpet and percussion dates back to the ancient tradition of using the two as "war instruments" and later, in the Classical era, of pairing the trumpets and kettledrums in symphonies.

However, Combs said the trumpet and percussion were not confined to these traditional roles in the Parker's Concertino.

"The trumpet was once used for fanfare," said Combs. "In this piece it's often lyrical and haunting. Percussion was once bombastic; here it's serene, in the background, until it comes forward in a stirring, exciting fashion."

The program also includes ragtime music by the Marimba Band and several other pieces featuring various and sundry percussion combinations.

Chris Arpad, senior percussion major, said Percussion Ensemble is popular among WSU percussionists because of its reputa-



Senior Mark Lewis plays the marimba.

Photo by Ron Kroening

tion for fun, unique concerts.

"Dr. Combs always puts on these great big extravaganzas; everyone wants to be a part of it," said Arpad. "That's what audiences have come to expect from Percussion Ensemble: the unexpected."

Combs said he was "always shooting for new directions" in which to take the Percussion Ensemble.

"I try not to establish a tradition, and if I do, I try to break it as soon as possible," said Combs.

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