

## A LOT OF NIGHT MUSIC

## YEA AND NAY ON GRAND AVE.

BY ALAN RICH

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## Zip

Notes on an uncommonly splendid week at Zipper Concert Hall — and what a valuable asset to musical life that handsome, small room has become!

The second in the reborn Monday Evening Concerts drew an almost-capacity crowd, despite there being not a familiar name on the program. Steven Stucky, who curated, had chosen well; what was most compelling was the spread in styles, from the academic/contrapuntal (James Matheson, Sean Shepherd) to the youthful/kicky (Andrew Norman) to three short works (Philippe Bodin, Ana Lara, Brian Current most of all) in which the voice of an original composer with something important to say could be clearly heard. The performances, by members of XTET led by Donald Crockett, all of them locals, offered further assurance that if it should happen that serious composition manages to survive, it will be properly performed. I particularly liked Current's *Faster Still*, the final work, an exhilarating study in changing tempos, with

a killer part for solo violin (Moses Pogossian). In our previous chat, Stucky had described the piece as "Elliott Carter writing arpeggios," which stops short of dealing with the energy of the piece, the startling jolts in its changes of pace. (Alternating Current, perhaps?) The composer lives in Toronto; he is worth watching, even from afar.

The best of Susan Svrcek's "Piano Spheres" concert the next night dealt with worthwhile nostalgia, music from the '50s, '60s or thereabouts in styles bygone but still vivid. She began with our old friend Ingolf Dahl, once of USC: the *Sonata Pastorale* of 1959, neo-classic, jazzy here and there, thoroughly charming. A set of short works by the great loner Carl Ruggles was just as thoroughly uncharming. Later came a clutch of Polish works: a set of miniatures by Artur Malawski from 1947 and, at the end, the 1953 *Sonata No. 2* by Grazyna Bacewicz, powerful, defiant music by one of the most significant composers to break through Stalinist dogma in post-WWII Poland.

On Friday, the Calder Quartet, which has been in residence at the Colburn School this season, drew the largest crowd I've ever seen at Zipper, and for good reason. Even more amazing, the near-capacity audience held its absolute silence during the Calder's stunning performance of the Shostakovich Quartet No. 15, that heartbreaking work constructed of six continuous near-pianissimo movements in a bottomless pit. The crowd was young, some very young, and whoever assembled it should hire themselves out to other organizations in town who present serious concerts of quiet music. The program also included *Arcadiana*, a set of delicious, slinky bits by Thomas Adès — "each an evocation of paradise," says the wicked composer, and a perfect comedown from the Shostakovich — as well as the second of Beethoven's "Razumovsky" Quartets, delivered rather harshly at first (why leave out the first-movement repeat?) but with the slow movement entirely the "contemplation of the starry sky" that Beethoven himself noted. These Calders, all four USC-taught and -mellowed, are ripening into one of our prime resources.