

Building an audience for modern music

By Corinne Abalt
staff writer

Talk to Barrett Kallellis, composer and music director of the Detroit Contemporary Chamber Ensemble and it makes no sense at all to turn a deaf ear to 20th century composers.

Kallellis, who this year established home base for the ensemble at Christ Church Cranbrook, specifically the Guild Hall, said, "After three years in downtown Detroit, given the nature of the music we play, we found that most of our audience is from out here."

For the second concert of the season at 3 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 2, the Ensemble will be joined by the Lafayette String Quartet. The program will include "Heaven to clear when day did close," for string quartet and tenor saxophone by David Maslanka with sax soloist James Dawson; a string quartet by Israel Knaflitz, a quartet by Peter Sculthorpe; and a work for clarinet and string quartet by Paul Chihara with Fred Ormand, clarinet soloist.

"There is a widespread canard that 20th century music is incomprehensible or painful to the dentist," said Kallellis. "That's not the kind of music we put on. That dissonant music spoiled audiences for enjoying some very fine musicians writing very fine music today. I don't want to hear ugly music any more than you do."

"We're the only group whose sole repertoire is 20th century music, particularly by living composers."

KALLELLIS SAID HE likes to have the composers at the concerts to tell the audience how the work was put together, what was in the composer's mind during the writing and what the work was meant to accomplish.

"There's a whole vast repertoire of music most people don't know exists," he said adding that he doesn't understand why audiences want to hear the same work played over and over when listening to the works of good modern composers can be so exciting and stimulating. In literature and the visual arts most people enjoy the moderns as well as the classics, much less the case in music.

Being an award-winning composer himself, Kallellis said, "A composer's music has to be heard, that's the critical test for any artistic product. We are providing a forum for people to hear living, breathing works of art and there's a lack of talent. Composers today are finding their own language."

"What we're trying to do here is attract an audience to hear the best of what modern composers are doing," he said.

Three composers will be present at the March 8 concert to hear the Detroit premieres of their works — Leslie Bassett, Glenn Buhr and Michael Torke, Prix de Rome winner.

"Young Persons Guide to New Music" is the title of the April 5 concert and composer Ned Rorem and his music will be featured on May 10.

Kallellis said of his own music, "I try to compose a significant piece every year and once every two years I will stick one of my own pieces on the program."

HE RECEIVED A Creative Artist Grant of \$5,500 from Michigan Council for the Arts last year. It was one of two of this kind awarded from more than 450 applicants.

Kallellis said that because the Ensemble and the programming is widely recognized, he receives a lot of scores and tapes in the mail for consideration.

"A lot of times," he said composers will write pieces that have logistical problems, they will kind of shoot themselves in the foot.

He explained that often times a composition will require hiring a lot of extra performers for a very small segment of the program and that's hard to justify on a limited budget.

"We do solos, duos, trios, quartets quintets and ensembles for 7-10 people," he said. "Most of the professional musicians I know are very open-minded and receptive to new music."

Kallellis is excited about building an audience of people who want to continue to grow by moving beyond the familiar.

Individual tickets are \$7, \$4 for students and seniors.



Air brush purchase takes some evaluation

AFTER HOURS of rehearsing my lines and reasons why I wanted an airbrush, I finally hesitated. "Mom, I need an airbrush," I said. "Well, I thought you liked using a comb." "A comb?" I repeated aloud with a puzzled look on my face. "Oh, no," I said with a grin. "I need an A-I-R BRUSH — for art. It's sort of a little spray gun type of thing with a button and a bottle and you — well, I'll show you a picture." So here I am 20 years later trying to describe an airbrush and "sort of a little spray gun" still comes to mind.

Most airbrush manufacturers make the same basic brushes, and it is important to compare them accurately.

"Applies to apples and oranges to oranges," as the used car salesman say. Usually there is a bottom-of-the-line brush, which is an "external mix" design. In other words, the force of the air blowing out the tip causes a suction, which pulls the

paint up from the bottle or color cup. Then the paint becomes atomized by the force of air.

THIS MIXTURE of paint and air takes place outside of the airbrush so compare only external-mix air brushes.

Now we take a giant step when we move to the "dual action internal mix" line of brushes. The internal mix means that the mixture of paint and air takes place within the airbrush.

The dual action means that you depress the button for air and pull the button back for paint. The less you pull back, the less paint and the finer the line. The more you pull the button back, the more paint and the wider the line.

SO HERE, COMPARE only the dual-action internal mix airbrushes. I would like to point out, too, that there is one more feature to confuse the issue. You must compare "slow feed" to "slow feed" and "fast feed" to "fast feed."

artifacts
David Messing

to "fast feed."

"Slow feed" means that the supply of paint is slow, which allows you to get in close and paint tiny restricted areas, which is often the case in photo retouching.

"Fast feed" is more the basic requirement for airbrushing, which allows you the ability to do very small work and by merely pulling the button back, you can cover large areas.

There is one top-of-the-line turbine airbrush, which Paasche offers. Its basic operation is that the air pressure drives a small turbine causing a fine needle to go back and forth.

ON THE BACKWARD stroke, it

satte and so hardy, I always say you can almost spray cement out of it.

IF YOU ARE 16 to 110 and loved your "H" set, then move up to the "VL" set, which is \$35. This set includes about \$40 in extras that no other company offers.

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An experienced artist can paint hair lines with "VL," but the supply of paint is rapid. After you have

tried or considered the "VL," look to the "V." Although it is less versatile, it is sure fun to paint with and, because of its slow-feed quality, is usually easier to use. A "V" set costs about \$75.

David Messing has been an art teacher for 10 years and is the owner of the Art Store and More in Livonia and Plymouth. He welcomes questions and comments from readers. They can be directed to him in care of this newspaper at 38251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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