

Deseret News

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By **Edward Reichel**

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Canyonlands New Music Ensemble, Dumke Recital Hall, Tuesday

Composer Lee Hyla finds his inspiration in many sources, including rock and jazz. But instead of letting his music be dictated by these "non-classical" idioms, he skillfully incorporates them into the musical fabric of his works. That has allowed him to develop his own unique musical language, a style that is sophisticated, complex, expressive, visceral and, quite frequently, fascinating.

Hyla was at the University of Utah this week as part of the Maurice Abravanel Visiting Distinguished Composer Series. Capping off his visit was a performance of three of his works by the Canyonlands New Music Ensemble Tuesday in Dumke Recital Hall.

The three works span a decade of his creative life, from 1992 to 2002, and are quite representative of who he is. The first of his pieces on the program was "We Speak Etruscan," played by Laura Carmichael, bass clarinet, and Marco Blackmore, baritone saxophone.

It's an absorbing piece based on two things — sustained tones that delineate it and angular passages that are almost chaotic. Carmichael and Blackmore gave a compelling reading of the work that captured the intensity of expressions and the unfolding drama between the two instrumentalists.

"At North Farm," scored for voice and bass clarinet, is a much more expressive piece, although it does have its moments of conflict. The two different parts are interestingly woven together, and their interplay is what makes this piece work. Carmichael and soprano Julie Wright Costa performed it with lyrically tinged expressions that were passionately intense.

The final piece by Hyla, "Amnesia Redux" for violin, cello and piano, closed out the concert. It was commissioned for Triple Helix, which premiered it in Boston in 2002. It's a relentlessly driven work that's made up of disparate sections that all seemingly come together and somehow coalesce by the end. Of the three works, this was the most mesmerizing. Hyla builds a forceful piece out of small musical ideas, and even though "Amnesia Redux" is fairly short at around 12 minutes, it feels much longer owing to the intensity of the thematic material.

Violinist Lynnette Threadgold, cellist Noriko Kishi and pianist Kristofer Michaels gave a vibrant and colorful reading of the work. Their performance was insightful and wonderfully articulate and polished.

There were three other works on the program as well — Stan Link's "In Ida's Mirror" for amplified flute and electronics; Iannis Xenakis' "Charisma" for clarinet and cello; and Brian Ferneyhough's "Cassandra's Dream Song" for solo flute.

Flutist Carlton Vickers was phenomenal in Ferneyhough's piece, which calls for a performer of extraordinary technical and musical abilities. Vickers certainly delivered, giving a tour de force performance that was magical.

The same was true for the way in which Carmichael and Kishi played "Charisma." Exploiting the extreme ranges of both instruments and extremes in dynamics, Xenakis' piece is charged with unbridled power and kinetic force, and the two instrumentalists captured that easily, giving a stunning and hypnotic performance.

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