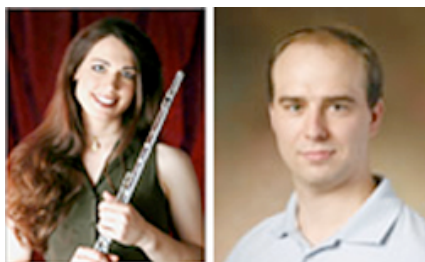


Review**Canton Symphony principals
strike an exotic chord (January 11)**

by Tom Wachunas



The January 11 Casual Series chamber concert by the Canton Symphony Orchestra at Cable Recital Hall was an utterly fascinating aural adventure. Principal flutist Katherine DeJongh and principal percussionist Matthew Beck combined their remarkable skills to deliver a captivating program of works with scintillating textures, intriguing melodies, and infectious rhythms.

Two of the seven works on the program were duets for flute and percussion: Henri Tomasi's *Le Tombeau de Mireille*, and Lou Harrison's *First Concerto for Flute and Percussion*. The Tomasi piece, with Beck steady on drum and DeJongh pure and piercing on piccolo, is at many points a frolicsome dance, at others a slow, solemn march. The performance conjured the spirit of medieval troubadours traversing the French countryside.

The very short Harrison concerto, composed in 1939, is comparatively less stark and far more rich in its array of percussive effects which were unconventional for their day. Here Beck, along with playing a set of graduated drums, included a Nigerian ankle rattle and lead pipe as part of his arsenal. The slow middle movement was more cumbersome and ponderous than poignant, though the outer movements were performed with notable vigor, as indicated by the composer's notations – "Earnest, Fresh and Fastish" for the first movement, and "Strong, Swinging and Fastish" for the third.

Mr. Beck's solo performance of *Third Dance for Marimba* (1989), by Thom Hasenpflug, was a thoroughly delightful demonstration of the instrument's sonorous versatility and otherwise a tour-de-force of technical virtuosity. But the evening's most satisfying works were the duets for flute and marimba.

Foundations (1997), by Josh Gottry, was infused with hypnotic passages wherein Beck's facile touch allowed the instrument to sound a gentle pulsing or subtle drone over which DeJongh's articulate flute alternately hovered and soared with lilting energy. Likewise, *Due Northwest* (2009), by Michael Culligan, was a splendid vehicle for spritely lyricism and crisp, rhythmic counterpoint between the two superbly gifted musicians.

The spirit of the World Music genre was evident in varying degrees throughout the entire program, as in Astor Piazzolla's *L'Histoire du Tango*. And the first movement of that work – *Bordel 1900* - was certainly a hot and frisky enough selection (with the original

guitar part very effectively played on marimba) for closing out the concert. Interestingly enough, though, the most compelling and riveting performance came earlier in the program with Gareth Farr's 1996 work, *Kembang Suling: Three Musical Snapshots of Asia*.

Here, the uncanny unity of sound between flute and marimba was like a haunting whisper in the opening *Bali* movement. Then, as if slowly emerging from a shimmering mist, the pulsing music became an increasingly intense battle of sorts between the instruments as each vied for supremacy. In the second *Japan* movement, once again the marimba became a ghostly drone — a tonal shadow that beautifully complemented the breathy, marvelously sliding flute notes. The final *India* movement was a breathtaking and complex journey into intertwined pentatonic melodies and rhythms.

Journey indeed, it was a work that embodied all of the evening's best aspects with consistent intensity — mesmerizing and joyously exotic.

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