

YORK **Faculty of** Administrative Studies

New music by Ex Tenebris

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On Sunday February 5th, the composer's group Ex Tenebris presented the second concert of their 1988/89 season at the Music Gallery. This concert of new music featured the talents of guitarist Rachael Gauk, and pianist Barbara Pritchard.

Both instrumentalists are in the first phase of their professional careers, albeit with solid academic training and performance credits already behind them. The programme consisted of solo pieces for each instrument and one duet.

The programme opened with Ex Tenebris member Omar Daniel's Prologue for Piano and Guitar. This four-movement suite exhibited some deft writing for piano, as the sparse textures assigned to the keyboard provided for a compatible association with the timbre of the classical guitar. Pritchard and Gauk proved to be sensitive to the intimate atmosphere Daniel seemed to be striving for.

Real Life: Notes From T.O. composed by Deborah Austen received its premiere at this concert. This work consisted of three movements, with the outer movements containing thematically-contrasting lyrical and aggressive material. The inner

movement was an exploration of timbres available to the piano without actually utilizing the keyboard. Pritchard used various techniques such as strumming strings, knocking the soundboard, and damping the strings while playing the keyboard, to achieve percussive effects.

The next piece on the programme was by German composer Karl Leinz Stockhausen, one of the eminent figures in the musical avantgarde. Spiral for soloist and shortwave radio examined the reaction of the soloist - in this case guitarist Guak - to a variety of signals coming from a short-wave radio. This involved explorations of various tunings, and the preparation of the guitar with various wooden and metallic objects. Gauk was able to draw a wide variety of unexpected sounds from her classical guitar. The chief drawback to this piece was its length - eight to nine minutes would have been a sufficient amount of time to convey the intent of the piece, but enduring this fifteen minutes was asking a bit much.

Anne Silsbee's Doors (1976) was another journey into a variety of soundscapes. This work explored harmonics activated by the use of the sostenuto pedal on the piano. Different pianistic techniques such as forearem arpeggios, and drumming the strings were the main materials of the piece. Audience interest rapidly diminished however, possibly because of the incomprehensible array of ideas.

The last two works of the evening proved to be the most musically edifying. In Leo Brower's Le Decameron Noir (1981) - a threemovement guitar works consisting of an intricate weave of lyrical vignettes. Central American rythms and pastoral sections - Gauk proved herself to be a sensitive, technically accomplished performer, capable of producing a rich, warm tune.

Howard Bashaw's Hosu for piano (1988) was the single work on the programme which allowed Pritchard to demonstrate her immense musical resources at the keyboard. The painting of the "beautiful lake in the mountain" required the mastery of a wide variety of pianistic gymnastics, to which Pritchard added a sensitive touch, a vast dynamic range, and a sense of broadness in her phrasing which resulted in a breathtaking overall effect.

The next Ex Tenebris presentation will be at the Music Gallery on April 22 and 23.





