

ARTS

Petrowska plays piano perfectly at Music Gallery

By BRUCE STASYNA

While last Saturday's temperature enabled sportier road machines to cruise with their tops down, the evening promised heat of a different order.

The Music Gallery provided a unique musical climate as the Canadian Electronic Ensemble presented "Keyworks," a showcase of new music composed for piano, synthesizer, tape, computer and other electronic indulgences. This all-Canadian music concert featured virtuoso pianist Christina Petrowska, ensemble player and soloist extraordinaire.

Petrowska, an artist-in-residence at York's Department of Music and long-standing champion of 20th century music, demonstrated her exceptional abilities. Although there were no premieres on the program, most of the works were composed in this decade, and the entire repertoire was new to Petrowska.

"I Have Come Through," composed by James Montgomery — artistic director of the Music Gallery — was the first work of the evening. This piece for piano, tape and ring modulator opened with cascades of descending two-handed successive figures, which Petrowska performed

effortlessly. This was followed by the perhaps unnecessary prepared-piano section which involved striking the piano-frame with a screwdriver (multiple-head no less), while scraping the strings with a flat metal plate, producing a fingernails-on-the-blackboard effect.

Further bell-like sonorities and lyrical sections provided a potent contrast to the opening, while an intense buildup of sound followed by a wonderful antiphonal section brought the piece to a close.

Steven Gellman was probably the most 'popular' composer on the evening's programme; he was named composer of the year by the Canada Music Council in 1987. Gellman's "Keyboard Triptych," which is to be included on Petrowska's next record, is truly a virtuoso work. The triptych consists of an Invocation, Toccata and Aria, and requires the performer to play the piano and DX7 synthesizer simultaneously. Clean and well-placed clangorous piano chords, with perpetual motion sections performed at breakneck speeds, once again illustrated Petrowska's technical accomplishments.

These feats were not an end unto themselves. Petrowska's skills —



PIANIST CHRISTINA PETROWSKA, a York artist-in-residence performed at the Music Gallery last Saturday

awesome as they are — simply allow her to get on with the real job of interpreting the music. Gellman's "Triptych" was a synthesis of Romantic piano virtuosity and modern keyboard technology: Franz Liszt meeting Keith Emerson.

Paul Dolden's "Measured Opalescence" presented musical challenges of a different nature. Composed for tape, piano and optional percussion, the pianist had to memorize a number of different tempos and rely on subtle, sometimes inaudible, tape cues in order to stay in sync. The

piece was marked by aggressive piano playing and effective rhythmic interplay between piano and tape. Petrowska thoroughly succeeded in achieving an ensemble effect with the pre-recorded material.

Composed in 1983, David Jaeger's "Quivi Sospiri" is a 'tone poem' depicting a scene in the third canto of Dante's *Inferno*. There is total darkness inside the gate of Hell — no visual images. This trio for piano, DX7 and computer opened with an eerie ensemble effect, the piano developing a Bartokian pitch series

for the first theme while the Lyrical chromatic weaves provided the basic material of the second theme.

The second section of the piece was driven by a computer 'heartbeat' over which piano and synth alternated musical ideas.

Although all of the pieces in the program had distinctive structural foundations, Jaeger's composition was the first which developed coherent material. Free movement between tonal and atonal material contributed to the surreal atmosphere of the piece — "Dante describes the sounds he hears: Such sighing . . ."

"Srivox Filonga," the single work which didn't feature Petrowska, was a solo synthesizer piece composed and performed by former Santana/Sun Ra keyboardist John Celona.

Last on the program and second for Celona, was his "Music for Portable Instruments IV." This "study in motion," with its minimalist, new age leanings, provided the listener with an easy end to an otherwise demanding program. Petrowska returned for the piece as a synth player with Celona and Henry Kucharzyk.

Billed as a concert by the Canadian Electronic Ensemble, the performance featured Petrowska on centre stage, who gave the works their vitality. She is the first to admit that acoustic/electronic collaboration is not her favourite area of performance, yet she commanded attention while playing. The music was performed as if there was nothing else to live for.

Hunkamooga's lit covers new ground

By HOWARD KAMAN

Mondo Hunkamooga
no. 7, Dec. 1988
Proper Tales Press

What is "Mondo Hunkamooga"? I don't know! I only know that it's the name of a terrifically useful guide to the world of small press.

Mondo Hunkamooga is a rarity — a guide into territory where few have ventured. Indeed, it seems that everybody involved with the magazine, including those who write letters to the editor, are members of a small, tightly knit literary group.

However, the magazine is not snobbish. Although it reviews only small press publications with a tiny family of contributors, it is pleasant, accessible reading that tempts one to join its community.

The most notable feature of this issue of *Mondo Hunkamooga* is an interview with York professor and author, Frank Davey. In this fascinating profile, Mary Jankulak delves into the workings of Davey's poetry as a critique of the banal representations of society. In Jankulak's interview, Davey comments on how he came to view life as "postcard" representations.

Also in the magazine is an introduction to *SwiftCurrent*, Canada's electronic literary bulletin board. In this article, author and *Mondo* editor Stuart Ross discusses the value of this database to the literary community, and includes instructions for logging on to the board.

The rest of the issue consists mainly of reviews. Although many will find the titles obscure and unknown, often the books are readily available. You only have to know where to look.

Travelling Light, by Marshall Hryciuk, a book of haiku poetry, gets a positive review from Kevin Connolly, who says that it is the first book of haiku, in a long time, that he hasn't "outright hated."

Connolly also offers a perceptive analysis of Paul Hoover's style in a review of his *Idea*.

Following the book reviews, several lit magazines are examined in the same constructive manner. Publications like *Alabama Dogshoe Moustache* and *Fist In Your Face* offer a unique alternative to the standard magazines, and are given the same careful attention as the books.

If you are willing to hunt it out, this unique literature can be found eventually. And *Mondo* itself can be picked up at This Ain't The Rosedale Library, Book City (Yonge St. location), and a few other stores.

Ross also does his readers a favour by offering a publisher's directory at the back of the magazine, listing the addresses for all the small presses mentioned in the issue.

From Jim Smith's opening tribute to the late bpNichol, to Ross's hilarious in-joke, the "Mondo Fun Korner," the seventh issue of *Mondo Hunkamooga* is a thoughtful, entertaining look at the small press scene. Have a Mondo good time!

Venomously pleasing Arsenic

By LAUREN GILLEN

Arsenic and Old Lace
Directed by Fred Thury
Vanier Dining Hall

Arsenic and Old Lace, a tried and true classic graces the dining hall of Vanier College until this Saturday. With a group of dedicated young actors, a marvelous set and some talented direction, this well-known comedy is a crowd pleaser.

Written by Joseph Kesselring, this horror/comedy centres around Abby and Martha Brewster (Stacey Cohen and Joanne Natale), two charming elderly ladies who turn out to be mass murderers. The play takes place in Brooklyn, New York in the early '40s.

While *Arsenic and Old Lace* is generally considered to be an amateur-proof play, this particular production owes part of its success to a cast who has made fun a priority. Often their light-hearted vitality helps ease over spots where poor timing and overacting detracts from potentially funny scenes. Director Fred Thury makes each scene picture-perfect, making sure that there is never a dull visual moment on stage. Stacey Cohen and Joanne Natale work well as a team, creating



HOW MANY MURDERERS IN THIS PICTURE?

some wonderful comic scenes as well as having a clear understanding of their characters. Scott Garbe and Kevin E. Ross as Mr. Witherspoon and Dr. Harper steal scenes and make their small roles shine with their natural sense of comic timing.

The final credit must go to Scott Garbe for his set and costume design. His attention to detail (especially in the set) gives a sensation of

grandeur that one seldom expects and almost never sees in an amateur production. Garbe's talents are a much-needed commodity in the theatre.

Arsenic and Old Lace will be showing in the Vanier Dining Hall until January 4. Tickets are \$5 for students and seniors and \$8 for adults. For reservations, contact Vanier College at 736-5192.

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