editorial | JEFFREY SAYS

Music gives me a serious emotional charge. It's that charge that leads me to spend hours in close study of every piece I perform: I want to know every note, rhythm, and historical tidbit about the composer because it heightens my emotional connection to the work. When I finally perform a piece, it might be the thousandth time I've played through the work and the hundredth piece by that composer I've performed.

But for most audience members listening to me perform a work, it's the first–and often only–time they'll hear this music. And it might well be the only work by that particular composer they have ever heard. Can I expect an audience to "get it" on one hearing when it takes me months of study and practice to understand a new piece?

How about program notes and pre-performance talks? Both are great ways of conveying information to an audience. But honestly, does it *really* help an audience listen with greater emotional understanding to a Bartók piece if they learn that Bartók made extensive use of numerology in the composition, and that the second theme is just the first theme in retrograde inversion?

In one of my college courses, we analyzed Anton Webern's Variations for solo piano–a famous work of twelve-tone music–and discussed the work's ingenious use of tone rows and counterpoint. We made charts and graphs showing the structure and construction of phrases. It was all very mathematical. I passed the course–I'm good at math–but I didn't develop a love for Webern's music. A few years later, I came across an edition of the Variations that included extensive performance annotations by the composer. *Not one* of Webern's comments had to do with tone rows or counterpoint. *All* of his comments had to do with the poetics of the work. He wrote things such as "warm and heartfelt," "a subdued plaint," "with exalted pathos." The take-away lesson for me: composers–good composers, at least–want their music to tug at your heartstrings, not your pre-frontal cortex.

Photo by G:N Photography

Sometimes I am asked why BDDS features funny season themes, concert titles, mystery guests and miscellaneous humorous schtick. Studies have shown that if audiences are bombarded with facts, they tend to approach the music they hear intellectually. If, however, they are given some excuse to laugh, they are primed to engage with the music emotionally. We want you, our audience, to have an authentic emotional response to the music we program–and we want never to present anything that could be confused with a math lecture.

And besides, it all makes for fantastic serious fun. And what's not to like about that?

Jeffrey Sykes, artistic director of BDDS.

RAVES FOR BDDS

"By night's end we had drunk all we could with our ears...an aural carousing with everything but the hangover."

–Gregg Hettmansberger, *Madison Magazine*

I must say that many of the most memorable performances of chamber works I have ever heard have been at BDDS programs, and chief among them was Tchaikovsky's glorious string sextet, the Souvenir de Florence.

–John Barker, *Isthmus*

It's too easy to come up with metaphors that extend the Mixology theme – we can raise a glass to BDDS's musical accomplishments, compare the group to a wine that's aging well, or note that like a good cocktail, their performance is complex and multi-faceted, a little sweetness here, a little unexpected punch there. So be it. All of those things are true.

–Jess Courtier, *77 Square*

Photos by Dick Ainsworth

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH ANTHONY DI SANZA AND DANE RICHESON

Leonard Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story,* an audience favorite at this summer's festival, was a challenging piece to put together. On the practical side, we needed to find two compatible concert pianos and figure out how to squeeze them and two percussion set-ups onto the small stages at The Playhouse and Hillside Theater. Meanwhile, the musicians had to work out an arrangement of the original orchestral score for two pianos and percussion. While pianists Jeffrey Sykes and Randall Hodgkinson had a published duo piano version to work from, the percussionists, Dane Richeson and Anthony Di Sanza, were on their own. I asked Anthony how he and Dane went about putting the percussion part together.

"We started with the published percussion parts from the orchestral suite from which the duo piano version is derived. We knew that Dane would play primarily drum set and I percussion: xylophone, vibraphone, chimes, bass drum, bongos, and tam tam. We did not want to copy what others had done, but were also not shy about taking an existing idea and tweaking it toward our aesthetic. The arranging continued well into rehearsals, as we regularly made adjustments to our parts.

"Once we had made most of the decisions, I had to reassemble my printed part using old-fashioned cutting and pasting and writing by hand, which took about eight hours. Dane took the orchestral percussion score–about 30 pages long–and highlighted what he played. Since I had to play both xylophone and vibraphone and did not have time to turn pages at both instruments, I had to write out the music when part of it was played on the xylophone and part on the vibraphone. I then had to jump back and forth between the two parts. This can be very confusing and often there is as much practice involved in simply being able to make the transition between parts without getting lost as there is in learning the notes. You can be sure I will keep this part for some future performance as I do not want to re-invent this particular wheel!"

–Samantha Crownover

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HOW TO SHOUT "MAMBO" AT THE RIGHT TIME

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–Feel the Beat Audience Member

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To become a BDDS volunteer, please contact Samantha at (608) 255-9866 or crownover@bachdancinganddynamite.org

Anthony Di Sanza and Dane Richeson.
Photo by Dick Ainsworth

THIS SUMMER'S FREE FAMILY CONCERT LIVED UP TO CHAMBER MUSIC WITH A BANG!

Our program at Overture Center was called "Feel the Beat" and featured lots of percussion by Dane Richeson and Anthony Di Sanza. With pianists Jeffrey Sykes and Randall Hodgkinson, they performed excerpts from *West Side Story's* Symphonic Dances by Leonard Bernstein and Béla Bartók's Sonata for two pianos and percussion. By dividing the audience into four sections to clap or vocalize different rhythms , Stephanie and Jeffrey illustrated how the beat can consist of interlocking rhythmic patterns. They even taught everyone to shout "Mambo!" at the right time in Bernstein's Symphonic Dances. Another highlight was the percussionists' improvisation on Latin themes using a drum and a beat box. Equally fun to watch were the kids in the audience, grooving to that beat and cooling off with Shirley Temples after the concert!

– Samantha Crownover

BDDS thanks the people and organizations that provided funding for this outstanding event: CUNA Mutual Group, the Law Office of Murphy Desmond, S.C., Overture Center, and the Powers-Wolfe Family Fund.

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