

Concert aims for self-discovery

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By Jay Bickford '17 | Contributing Writer

Photo courtesy of hollyroadfeldt.com



Artist-in-Residence and pianist Holly Roadfeldt is the second featured artist of the New Music Lafayette Series

New Music Lafayette, a program from the music department seeking to introduce the Lafayette community to contemporary classical music and composers, had its second program of the year on Wednesday. The performance featured pianist Holly Roadfeldt, a highly accomplished member of the Lafayette musical faculty.

Exhibiting the music of several modern composers such as Charles Peck, Kala Pierson, George Crumb, and Lowell Lieberman, the concert served to highlight the growing diversity and an increasing appreciation for the arts within the musical community.

Speaking at a pre-concert discussion about the program were three composers whose music Roadfeldt performed. The composers discussed their music as well as the theme of this particular event, "Metropolitan Identities."

"Holly met each of these composers via Twitter, and after exploring their music on their websites decided she wanted to promote their music as best she could," Kirk O'Riordan, Assistant Professor of Music and Roadfeldt's husband, said. "[These composers] got her thinking about how a composer's identity is reflected in his or her music. This concert, then, is an attempt to explore that issue."

The theme serves as an exploration of what it means to come from a metropolitan background, as each composer was from either New York City or Philadelphia.

"Certainly, my identity has been built as a New Yorker," composer Kala Pierson said when asked of the connection between her hometown and her piece, "Radiate." "But I never felt I fit into the stereotypes. I hope that the expansiveness and mindfulness [of New York City] can be felt by the audience."

Christopher Cresswell described his piece, "Nocturne No. 1," as more of an exploration than a statement.

"I don't know what effect place has on my music. I think about it a lot – exploring these issues," Cresswell said.

George Crumb, composer of "Makrokosmos," the thirty-minute long centerpiece of the concert, was not present in the theater. Yet Roadfeldt's playing made Crumb's presence real and alive. The elegant and lengthy piece challenged typical conventions of what piano music can be. The entire audience noticeably jumped when Roadfeldt cried out in the middle, a vocal addition that gave the piece a pulse-pounding effect. Also unique was having the pianist use the entire piano, from reaching over and plucking the strings in the instrument by hand to tapping on the piano.

Though relatively young, the New Music Lafayette program is expanding at a tremendous rate, from only one concert last year to four this year. This performance is notable for being the only one of these performances to feature a single performer, as Roadfeldt plays the entire time without stopping.

Roadfeldt brought passion and grace to the program. She seemed genuinely enthusiastic for not only the music, but for the composers, all of whom she has personally come to know while preparing for the concert.

The next program, New Music Lafayette III, takes place on November 25 at 8:00 p.m., and features The Lafayette College Contemporary Music Ensemble.

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