

Pianist blends nanotechnology with music

November 15 2007



If the hard science of nanotechnology took on the soft curves of classical music, what would it sound like? The two will come together at a concert Friday, under the nimble fingers of pianist Milton Schlosser, a University of Alberta music professor.

Schlosser, based at the U of A's Augustana Faculty in Camrose, is premiering a series of 'nanosonatas' written specifically for him by American composer Frederic Rzewski. The work, entitled *Nanosonatas, Volume 1*, was commissioned by Schlosser through the U of A's

Humanities, Fine Arts and Social Sciences Research grant program.

The composition reflects Rzewski's interest in biomolecular nanomachines. He essentially compresses the form of 20- to 40-minute, 19th-century sonatas into seven three-minute segments which challenge music-lovers in exciting new ways, Schlosser said.

"You are left having to refocus your expectations of what music is. It challenges the notion of art as always pretty," he said. "The melody becomes pin-pointed, and listeners are going to have to remember states of being, moments of sound."

Each tiny piece in the 21-minute work stores a wealth of musical ideas. It is challenging to perform, he admits. Not surprisingly, "every note counts."

The nano-notes are inspired by a friendship Rzewski struck up with a physicist who also happened to be an amateur pianist. Rzewski, who will visit Augustana Campus in February, set out to compose a reflective piece after his physicist friend showed him a video of a rotating nanomotor - a device that is 300 to 500 times smaller than the width of a hair.

"In terms of sound, the music of the first nanosonata imitates the changing pace of the nanomotor," Schlosser said. He describes the entire collection of nanosonatas as avant-garde with a touch of the abstract.

The blending of technology and music bridges the chasm between art and science, Schlosser said. "It also shows on a human level that technology has to have its expression in the arts as well."

Source: University of Alberta

Citation: Pianist blends nanotechnology with music (2007, November 15) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-11-pianist-blends-nanotechnology-music.html>

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