

Meet the next generation of Canadian composers

What: Generations 2008, with Ensemble Contemporain du Montréal

Where: Phillip T. Young Recital Hall, University of Victoria

When: Last night

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Times Colonist

Generations 2008 is less a formal concert than it is a guided introduction to a diverse group of up-and-coming Canadian composers. Which is why this review of last night's performance will skip the star rating.

Each of the four composers from across Canada took the stage to explain musical aspects and meanings behind

their pieces, performed by the Ensemble Contemporain du Montréal.

The eight-piece ensemble is led by founder Véronique Lacroix. An established conductor, she is also known for fostering up-and-coming contemporary musicians and interdisciplinary performances.

The Generations project is a composition competition in its fifth year. It gives composers a chance to work through a piece with the ensemble and then tour it from Newfoundland to B.C.

Such projects gain even more importance this year as cuts to arts programs and a serious trimming of new music on CBC

Radio Two have made Canadian new music less accessible.

The Generations program features two former University of Victoria composition students.

Fuhong Shi, 32, came to UVic after graduating from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. She is now pursuing her doctoral studies in composition at the University of Toronto.

Her piece, *Kaleidoscope*, explores the relationships between nature and musical expression, featuring a beautiful piccolo solo by Jocelyne Roy at the beginning and end. Fuhong explained the solo is meant to mimic the sounds of cicadas singing in autumn trees.

Michael Berger, 28, also a UVic graduate (presently pursuing doctoral studies at Stanford University) presented his piece *Skeletons* as a "metaphor of the decaying remains of memory as it passes through time." Not exactly easy-listening, Berger's repeating motifs and the resulting layers were an interesting challenge to the imagination.

Brian Harman, 27, who is completing his doctorate at McGill, presented *Gregarious Machines* — which confronts how technology affects our lives.

A cell-phone schtick, electric guitar and interesting percussion — balloon-pop, slide

whistle and wind chimes — contributed to an indiscernible clash of sounds that were pleasantly affective in relaying the cacophonous symphony of daily life with technology.

One of the highlights of the show was Scott Good's *Shock Therapy Variations*, which takes improvisational inspiration from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and John Coltrane — never a bad thing.

Good, 36, who completed his Doctor of Music degree at the University of Toronto in composition, is now the composer in residence at the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. The most pleasurable part of this piece is

the interplay between classical traditions and other styles of music like rock and jazz. A shredding electric guitar solo, rocking drums and Good freestyling on the trombone give an edge, while the ensemble maintains the feel that this is a meticulous composition. It's a daring juxtaposition that works.

UVic has its own reputable new and experimental music composers and music ensembles. Catch Sonic Lab this Friday at 8 p.m. at the Phillip T. Young Recital Hall. Music by Wolf Edwards, Cassandra Miller, Christian Hébert and André Cormier.

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