

Cabrillo Music Festival, August 2005

A vivid, innovative Cabrillo Music Festival opens

By Phyllis Rosenblum

SENTINEL MUSIC CRITIC

[...] Friday night's concert, "Dazzling Dutchman," featured Marijn Simons, visiting from the Netherlands, as both performer and composer. The 22 year old virtuoso violinist opened the program soloing first in his own work, 2002 "Secret Notes, Violin concerto No.2," and again in James MacMillan's 2002 violin concerto, "A Deep but Dazzling Darkness."

"A Ti Te Toca," written in 2003, was a work for two pianos and orchestra (not a "concerto," says Simons) and featured brilliant soloists Paul Barnes and Emily Wong. The program also included Frank Zappa's delightfully humorous 1992 "Be-Bop Tango."

After his clever and intimate remarks, Simons wowed the audience with his playing, simultaneously passionate and precise.

His own musically sensitive concerto layered varied sounds one atop another to create complex sonic tapestries. Eric Bradler's accordion (yes, accordion!) with rhythmic chords and melodic fragments, blended surprisingly well into the orchestra. Unusual pairings — such as Kristen Halay's sweet-toned piccolo with contrabassoon created fresh sounds.

"A Ti Te Toca" (It's your turn) impressively portrayed five genres of Latin music, from a dramatic variation of the song, "Sandunga," colored compellingly by the pain and beauty in the life of Frida Kahlo to the work's final "Mambo," a rollicking romp, which was repeated as an encore, and played again at the family concert Sunday.

In MacMillan's "A Deep but Dazzling Darkness," Simons' impassioned playing gave his violin a human voice, a protagonist struggling in a hostile world. The work, set mostly in somber moods, included a chilling "march macabre," vividly portrayed by the Orchestra's brasses.

Cabrillo Festival opener brings together Frank Zappa, Latin elements

By Josef Sekon

Register-Pajaronian, Watsonville

[...] Friday's concert, aptly titled "The Dazzling Dutchmen," featured four works, two by the young and very talented Marijn Simons, one by the Scottish composer James MacMillan titled "A Deep but Dazzling Darkness" featuring Simons as violin soloist and one titled "Be-Bop Tango" (1992) by Frank Zappa. The two works by the 22-year-old Simons were "Secret Notes," a world-premiere orchestral version of his Violin Concerto No. 2 (2001-02), featuring Simons as violin soloist, and "A Ti Te Toca (It's your Turn)" for two pianos and orchestra.

All of the works presented by the Festival Orchestra are given ample rehearsal time and consideration of the compositional details is finely honed under the careful ear and watchful eye of Alsop.

Simon's works were well-crafted and demonstrated his compositional skill and overall

talent as a performer. Following the percussive opening of the Violin Concerto No. 2, the work flowed into an active “moto perpetuo,” developed texture, then evolved into a quiet, static second movement and a light and jazzy third movement. All three were interesting, well-realized and certainly well performed.

[...] “A Ti Te Toca” was the most enjoyable work of the evening and featured Paul Barnes and Emily Wong on pianos. The name of the piece refers to a Latin jazz expression used when a band member takes a solo. The work is based on five Mexican and Cuban folksongs: corrido, mariachi, sandunga, salsa and mambo. The “mariachi” was perhaps the best work of the entire concert. The fine orchestral balancing, diverse flavoring of Darius Milhaud’s caricatures, a bit of quasi- Aaron Copland and a hint of Ravel’s “Bolero” developed, and the piece ended by resolving dissonance into consonance. The work was so well enjoyed that the mambo section was performed as an encore, complete with audience participation in the count-down of “Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete, ocho, Maaaambo!”