

# New-music concert juxtaposes East, West

By DAVID STABLER  
of The Oregonian staff

Since moving to Portland from Boston a few years ago, Jeffrey Payne has challenged concertgoers to acquire bolder listening habits.

On Friday, he led his new-music chamber group, Fear No Music, in a program called "Pacific Rim Century." Selections ranged from traditional Japanese music for the shakuhachi, or bamboo flute, to John Cage's witty and famous Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano.

The music, while not unified in any overt way, showed care in its juxtapositions of East and West musical traditions.

Larry Tyrrell demonstrated the range of the shakuhachi with music originally played by wandering Buddhist monks during the 16th through 19th centuries. By skillful overblowing and shaking of his head while playing — to create vibrato — and through fast trills and small "hooks" to the start or finish of a note, he evoked ancient worlds of sound.

"Mei" by Kazuo Fukushima, a composer who impressed Igor Stravinsky in the 1950s, appeared to be an attempt to duplicate that delicate sound on the Western flute. Despite fine playing by Pam Butler Ryker, the bland tones suffered by comparison. Still, the contrast was enlightening.

Cage's notorious prepared piano first appeared in 1942, when the composer was casting around for a

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way to increase the piano's percussive effects. He inserted magazines, newspapers, ashtrays and baking pans between the strings, creating exotic thumps and buzzes that pleased him no end.

Payne used nuts, bolts and pieces of rubber for his "fake" percussion ensemble. Clever taps and pings emerged under his efficient hands.

Unusual effects were also part of Chinese composer Chen Yi's "Near Distance," written in 1988. Yi, who won a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, and a 1994 commission from the prestigious Fromm Music Foundation, establishes contrasts of textures, volume, tone as an important element of the work.

Conductor David Charles Abell made her intentions crystal clear by leading an ensemble of clarinet, flute, violin, cello, piano and percussion with bold, precise strokes.

Cellist Mariam Finkelstein, clarinetist Mary Kantor, percussionist Joel Bluestone and Payne were most effective in creating intensity that had both direction and purpose.

The concert was a listening lesson worth remembering.

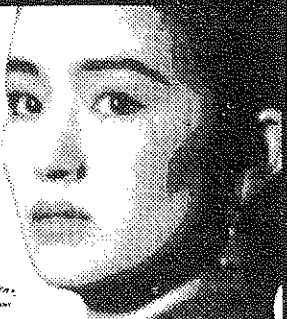


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