

Hoddinott played sensitively

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Music Critic

Alun Hoddinott's early training was as a violinist and as a composer he has written a great deal of music for stringed instruments. But performances of Hoddinott's string music have been conspicuous only by their absence from this year's Contemporary Music Festival. Of the ten works by the contemporary Welsh composer that are being performed this week, only one of them contains parts for strings, an aspect of the Festival that to some extent misrepresents the nature of the composer's work and which again brings to the fore the fact that as a general rule one does not hear string players at KSU perform twentieth century music, let alone music by living composers.

If this is typical of the situation in other academic institutions in this region, it represents a tragic future for music performance and education in the midwest.

The exception that focused attention on the lack of string music to be heard during this week's Festival was the sensitive interpretation given by Ralph Winkler, Warren Walker and Frank Sidorfsky of the *Nocturnes and Cadenzas for Clarinet, Violin and Piano, Op.35* that was performed as part of the chamber music concert in

All Faiths on Tuesday evening.

For all the extroverted cadenzas that separate the concerted sections, this is predominantly a work of subdued delicacy and considerable tonal beauty. The trio gave the work a loving performance with Ralph Winkler in particular making a striking contribution with the violin cadenza and his quieter solo passages.

The concert opened with a dramatic and powerful interpretation by Margaret Walker of the equally powerful and dramatic *Piano Sonata No.5, Op.57*. This is a fearsome, large-scaled work, redolent with similarities to the tone world and soundscapes of Bela Bartok, not only in the percussive sections, but also notably in the delicate tracery of *Aria I*.

Margaret Walker took the work by storm, producing as big a piano tone as I have heard in *All Faiths*. The *Sonata* can surely have had few more committed or persuasive interpreters.

Playfulness was the theme of *Rondo Scherzoso* for trumpet and piano which was performed by Christina Whittle, piano, and trumpeter Craig Parker. This is a relatively brief, ebullient composition, all busy-ness, with a short arioso middle section, which Craig

Parker played with sensitivity and flair.

Wind instruments were again onstage for *Divertimento for Oboe, Clarinet, Horn and Bassoon* which brought to a close this concert of the relatively early works by Alun Hoddinott.

The *Divertimento* is a characterful composition which is symmetrically designed, with five short movements centered on a pleasant *Variations* section. Indeed, the form of the work is a visible display of the notion of symmetry which, from the works that have been heard so far this week as well as those that are available on recordings, appears to be one of the primary concerns of the composer. This seems to be so, both within movements and between movements. Another aspect of this formal concern may be heard in Professor Hoddinott's frequent use of musical palindromes.

The wind quartet of Sara Funkhouser, Frank Sidorfsky, Bernard Buster and John Titterington made the most of the fast, rolling figures of the second *Scherzo* — a *scherzo* that seemed related in its effect to both the *Moldau* and the *Wasps* while still retaining its own strong identity — and of the final, fun march.

It was, indeed, a neat performance.