

Science, music mix in OR

Delightful new concert series debuts at museum

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 Music and science have always had the kind of relationship one has with one's strange cousin. You know there's a connection, but the resemblances aren't obvious.

Isotone, a delightful new concert series that premiered at the American Museum of Science and Energy on Sunday afternoon, aims to change that perception.

With the inspiration of Scott Eddlemon, a Juilliard-trained musician, as well as an entrepreneur in the field of medical physics instrumentation, Isotone's opening concert featured contemporary works written for percussion and violin.

Eddlemon and his equally talented violinist wife, Susan, performed all of the pieces on the program, along with Susan Eddlemon playing Bach's Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001, written in 1720 as the first in a set of six sonatas and partitas Bach composed for unaccompanied violin.

It was played in tribute to Albert Einstein, a lifelong violinist who loved playing Bach and to whose memory the concert was dedicated.

If this doesn't sound like anything other than a conventional classical music concert, Eddlemon's own composition, "Bagatelles for Electric Violin, Percussion and Van de Graff Generator," would have made your hair stand on end, something the generator effectively does for anyone who puts a hand on it.

But instead of being just a novelty thrown in as a joke, Eddlemon used the generator's clicking and electrical sparks as an effective rhythm instrument. And, just for fun, he also used a fluorescent light bulb instead of the usual wand.

David Loeb's early 1970s "Sonata for Violin and Percussion," which opened the concert, had the kind of serenity one might experience during a night of lying quietly on a blanket watching the stars.

Spare and minimal, the work made one listen to the beauty of the intervals during which sound decays after the note is initially struck.

Especially wonderful was a brief section for lovely, melodic violin harmonics and very gently played glockenspiel.

In addition to the glockenspiel, the work also included Eddlemon playing marimba, xylophone, tympani, bongo drums, cymbals and tom tom with an array of mallets and in combinations that could have kept an octopus busy.

The concert also featured the world premiere of Knoxville composer Mark Harrell's "Dialogue for Violin and Percussion," commissioned by the Eddlemons for this concert.

Moving outside his usual approach to composition, Harrell structured "Dialogue" in the 12-tone system. One could hear in it glimpses of the music of Arnold Schoenberg, who invented the tone row system.

The opening of "Dialogue" made one think of Schoenberg's gorgeous "Verklarte Nacht."

Beginning simply, but becoming increasingly complex, it is a satisfying piece that was thoughtfully played, none of it more so than the beautiful, melodic closing passages.

