On Mar 17, 2014, at 9:59 AM, MP wrote:

Hi, Bob!

Hope all is going well for you and your family and students.

I am leaving soon to judge a competition - Naftzger in Wichita.  I will be the wind and percussion judge and I want to make sure I’m familiar with all the rep for the instruments.

For the pieces below would you please tell me level of difficulty and any particular things to listen for.

THANKS SO MUCH!

Keiko Abe, Itsuki Fantasy for 6 mallets

Mayumi Sekizawa, I Hope....

Ney Rasauro, Concerto for Marimba

Zivkovic, Iliajs

Good morning M,

What a fun question, I think worthy of an article in one of the music publications!

Of the four pieces you mention, I know one very well (Rosauro) and a modest acquaintance with Zivkovic and the other two I really don't know, (The six mallet piece has been spoke of quite a bit, so I am aware of it through conversations and the other one (Mayumi Sekizawa, I Hope) I have never heard of piece or composer.

Although I don't know Sekizawa, I would bet the easiest of the 4 pieces is Rosauro. I believe you judged some movements of this with my student BG at MacPhail several years ago, probably five or six. (since he is graduating Peabody this year).

I would say Rosaruo should be note perfect and a high degree of rhythmic energy with obvious phrasing to please any instrumentalist. I consider Rosaruo a "beginning" concerto and it is quite possible for a gifted high school student to sound excellent on this piece. The other thing this piece has going for it is that it is so audience friendly and tuneful. So another words if a older student is playing, undergraduate or graduate level, it should be technically perfect.

Zivkovic is more demanding technically and is more of a really good undergraduate student or graduate student recital piece.None the less, rhythmic energy and phrasing is what needs to be a part of this piece and I personally would forgive a few note errors on this one.

Six mallets, wow, any observer is going to be impressed no matter what, it is cool to look at. If the performer is making it sound rhythmic and giving it a sense of "looking" easy I would say they are on the right track. It's likely it will be tricky to hear notes on this one, since you will be encountering some pretty "tight' harmonies.

Questions I would ask yourself include.

Did you like it

Were you engaged musically

Were the common musical traits apparent (dynamics, phrasing, rhythmic integrity and tone)

I would also feel free to advise you to use your sense of musicianship in regards to the mallets the performers will be using. Many times the the contemporary pieces -players will use to hard of mallet and create a biting, irritating sound especially in low register, a little of that is fine, overly so it's a bit crass and marimbists should guard against having to have much of a program based on that type of tone character.

Regarding tone (mallet choice) are you hearing more of the instrument bar sound or are you hearing the padded sound of the mallet hit the bar? Typically you want the sound of the bar to be preeminent. Another charachteristic of a wrong mallet is if you are hearing the thump of the floor in addition to hearing the marimba (to heavy and to padded of a mallet).

I bet Fernando Meza knows all of these pieces and might have an interesting answer for you as well. Your question came up at the last MacPhail Concerto contest. The percussion judge was asked the same question you are asking by the violin and voice judges... we're not sure what we should be listening for.... The advice given by the percussion judge (Paul Hill) was along the lines I am giving you, listen for the basic elements of any music making and you will not be wrong!

If there is time, I might view some youtube examples of the pieces and practice using your musicianship and trying to notice what is different between graduate degree type performers and high school type performers that will help you see what the quality issues are and what they sound and look like.

Well there you go, I think I do have a start of an article for publication.

I will look forward to hearing about your experience!