

Seymour Lipkin, Piano  
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Title: George Perle Memorial Concert  
Post by: David Starobin on June 02, 2009

This afternoon, New York City's new music community came out in full force to pay tribute to the late George Perle. Among the attendees at the packed Merkin Hall were dozens of composers, from the very young to centenarian, Elliott Carter. The program began with cellist Fred Sherry giving a lyrically opulent account of Perle's Hebrew Melodies of 1945. Leon Fleisher followed with a sober reading of Brahms' transcription for left-hand of Bach's Chaconne. Richard Ortner then spoke with great affection about both George and Shirley Perle and read an admiring letter from James Levine. Morey Ritt played Chopin's F minor Etude from Trois Nouvelles Etudes and pianist Michael Brown followed with Perle's superb Six Celebratory Etudes. Paul Lansky then spoke of his studies with George Perle, giving the audience a glimpse of Perle's great sense of humor. The DaCapo Chamber Players played the haunting Nocturne from Perle's Sonata a Quattro (I wish there had been time to hear this work in its entirety), **...and then pianist Seymour Lipkin followed with what was, for me, the highlight of the event: Perle's Short Sonata of 1965 is a wonderful work - a compressed three movement form that explodes with the kind of energy that one normally associates with Wolpe. Lipkin is a great pianist, and he gave a performance that crackled with wit and wisdom.... Bravo!**

Mark DeVoto followed with a wonderful synopsis of the events surrounding Perle's uncovering of the Berg Lyric Suite's vocal interpolations, and some of the history of Perle's long involvement with the third act of Lulu. Lucy Shelton and colleagues then performed the sixth (Largo desolato) movement of the Lyric Suite. Bethany Beardslee spoke about her involvement with Perle (they frequently read songs together) and the composition for her of Perle's vocal masterpiece, Thirteen Dickinson Songs. Lucy Shelton and Molly Morkoski then gave a gorgeous reading of three of those songs. Especially moving for me was "She bore it till the simple veins". Yehudi Wyner then summed up the attributes that make Perle's music so unique. Beginning with his appreciation of Perle's phrase and cadential strategies, Wyner presented an extemporaneous musical analysis that was cogent and wonderfully personal. The memorial ended with the Daedalus Quartet's reading of Beethoven's Op. 132, movements 4 and 5.

What was apparent throughout the event, was everyone's love for George Perle and the magnificent music that he has left us.