

REVIEW

Snopek's works intrigue the ear

Composer-performer
joins friends on stage

By **ELAINE SCHMIDT**

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Sigmund Snopek III gathered a few friends and gave a concert Sunday evening at the Miramar Theatre.

Snopek and company performed music that he wrote within the last four years, including two premieres, calling the program "Sigmund and the Sopranos." Each piece was performed by the person for whom it was written.

The evening's standouts were the song cycle "The Ancient Rhythm," sung by Leslie Fitzwater and accompanied by pianist Jack Wilson, and a piece for solo clarinet, titled "Towers, Effigies and Spirits."

Snopek's vocal music is fascinating. It is largely through-composed, with music wedded to lyrics. Each song is a little journey unto itself. He sets lyrics using compositional devices such as text painting to bring even very short selections to life, and demands some drama from the singer performing the piece.

A bit of drama was part of what made Fitzwater's interpretation of the five songs of "The Ancient Rhythm" work — that and a polished, tasteful delivery and an obvious affection for the pieces. Wilson brought some lovely sounds out of an instrument that could have used a tuning, and proved a tremendously sensitive accompanist.

Christopher Zello performed the premiere of "Towers, Effigies and Spirits," a solo clarinet piece that spanned the instrument's registers and demanded some fairly technical playing.

The piece's "Effigies" section is actually a series of musical vignettes. Some of the vignettes are quite short and some quite humorous. The vignettes, together with the piece's other two sections, create an intriguing whole. Zello managed the piece's technical passages easily and made interesting music of it all.

The solo flute piece "Breakfast in Africa," performed by flutist Marie Sander, is a colorful reflection of an outdoor restaurant in South Africa, full of shifting, syncopated rhythms.

Christine Thomas gave a tasteful performance of the song cycle "Four Songs of Pessoa," accompanied by Snopek. Annie Denison gave a cabaret delivery to the cycle "Feeling Is Like the Sun," accompanying herself at the piano. Kelly Fadeski struggled with the cycle "Songs of the Portuguese Fields," accompanied by Wilson.

Don Stimpert performed several of Snopek's short piano works, including "Sixties in Blue" and the very brief "The Miniature Chorale." Snopek performed several pieces as well, including his whimsical "Daughter Dance," based on a wistful repeated theme, the legato "Sleeping Cat," and an almost folksy, homespun tune called "The Potter."