

Pianist Kathryn Woodard crafts exotic program at the Crow Collection

By OLIN CHISM
Staff Critic

Last week was one for new or unusual music. Over to the west, James Galway and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra programmed pieces unfamiliar to their audiences. At the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Bradley Hunter Welch are playing a brand-new organ concerto. And at the Crow Collection of Asian Art, pianist Kathryn Woodard performed a highly unusual program of Asian-flavored music Thursday night. Except for the fact that the air-conditioning system provided a constant background rumble, the Crow Collection seemed just about ideal for music from China, Korea, Indonesia and Uzbekistan. Ms. Woodard played in front of a handsome 18th century Indian residence facade, Rajasthani style, and marble kiosks and other art objects from the East accented the performance space.

The program, titled *Musical*

CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEW

Crossroads, was a lesson in variety. Although all the composers except one were from Asian countries, the styles and moods covered a broad spectrum. Huang Ruo's *De-fluent* was fast, energetic, almost Bartókian. Qu Xiao-song's *Ji No. 3* was reflective, atmospheric, a kind of musical counterpart to an Alexander Calder mobile. Aziza Sadikova's Suite for Piano was downright pretty to a Western ear.

The three pieces from *Images II* by Debussy were the only European music on the program, but even here there was an Asian connection: The French composer was fascinated by Javanese music, which inspired these works.

Some of the music was originally for other instruments or written in imitation of them. For instance, Ge Gan-ru's *Ancient Music* included a movement called "Gong" and another called "Qin" — a kind of zither. *Ji No. 3*

was written for another Chinese zither, while I Nyoman Windha's *Birds of Paradise* was for a Balinese gamelan.

Ms. Woodard performed them on a prepared piano, whose sound was altered by the insertion of material between the strings. The result was exotic and highly appealing. You could almost imagine that you were hearing a zither or a gong.

Music by Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky and HyeKyung Lee rounded out the program.

Ms. Woodard proved to be both a formidable technician and a sensitive artist. The pieces for prepared piano require long stretches to reach the innards of the piano and the keyboard at the same time. Where to put the printed music is another problem.

Ms. Woodard was once a student of Jo Boatright, co-founder of Voices and a person who's no stranger to prepared pianos.

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