

ENTERTAINMENT

Mostly Modern Festival Dazzles with Inaugural Year

by Jessica Pavias
for Saratoga TODAY

SARATOGA SPRINGS — The Mostly Modern Festival (MMF), a music festival celebrating and popularizing living composers, kicked off its inaugural year on June 8 at the Arthur Zankel Music Center at Skidmore College. MMF is the creation of Robert Paterson — acclaimed composer — and his wife, Victoria Paterson — celebrated violinist. Together, they have created a refreshingly unique and addictive musical experience that is sure to amaze.

The festival branched off of Paterson's original adventure: the American Modern Ensemble (AME) that was created in 2005. AME "spotlights contemporary music via lively thematic programming," as stated on their website. The ensemble also engages in numerous educational outreach programs — with some students either playing

or conducting alongside the professionals at MMF. Paterson and his wife wanted to create MMF because "we saw a need for (this kind of festival), particularly a need in this area of the United States. We wanted to create something that celebrates living composers and that focuses on them."

While the festival still dabbles in what Paterson calls "the old stuff," it is only to create context for the newer pieces.

"The new stuff is so refreshing and vibrant and has so much color and life. The composers are right here. The festival is about wanting to excite people," said Paterson.

On Sunday, June 10, the American Modern Orchestra, conducted by the strikingly talented Christopher Rountree, performed three pieces. They began with "Ground 'O," composed by Robert Beaser, followed with "Sympathy in Three Movements," composed by

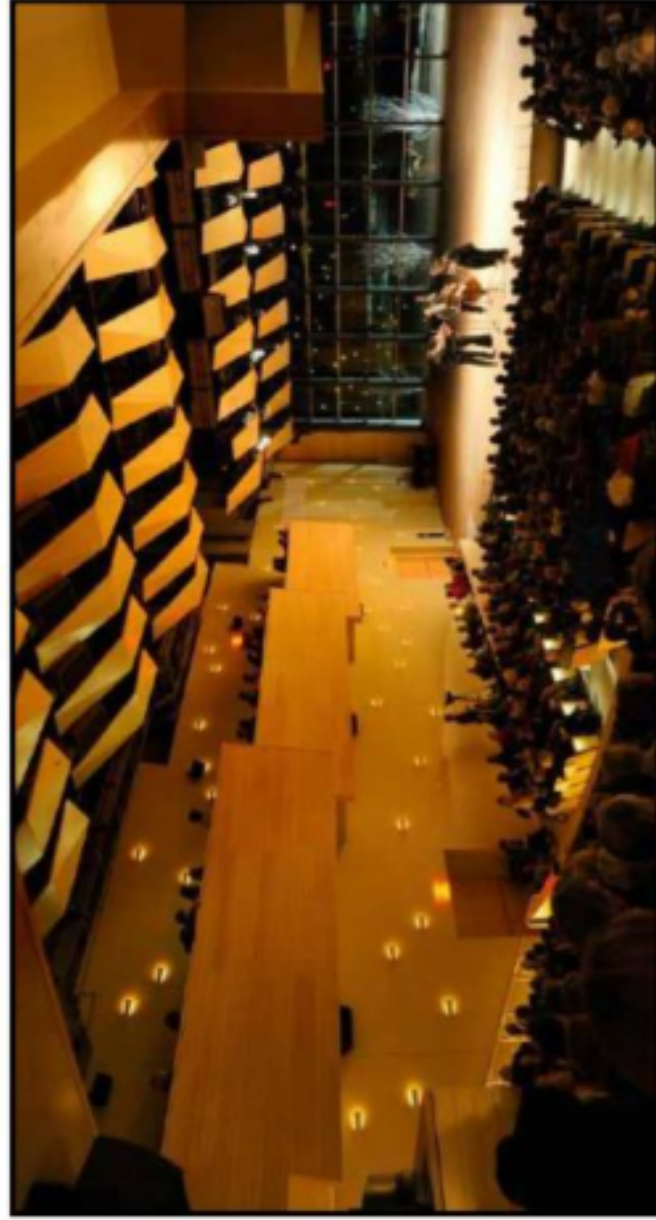


Photo provided.

Paterson. After intermission, the ensemble performed "Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta," consisting of four movements composed by the recently passed Béla Bartók.

The concert introduced pieces that were engaging and vivid, each compellingly new in their own ways — proving why this festival

is so exciting. After each piece, the composers were brought on stage where they were met with much deserved applause.

"To put it (simply): it's a love-fest," explained Paterson. "Every day we're wondering when the other shoe will drop. Things are going so well, we're wondering why something is not

going wrong. It's too good." Paterson is hopeful for the future of MMF and wants to see it become something of a tradition. His main goal is "to pack this house every single concert and to have people say 'this is what I do every season.'" If Sunday proved anything, it is that this dream could very well become reality.