

CHAMBER MUSIC

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*Imaginative harpsichordist
Vinikour makes persuasive
case for instrument and its
music*

Ronen Chamber Ensemble Program: *Trio Sonata* from J.S. Bach's *The Musical Offering*, Royer's *Suite in C minor*; Stephen Blumberg's *Gyre*; Nielsen's *Woodwind Quintet*
Guest Artist: Harpsichordist Jory Vinikour. Location: Circle Theatre Wood Room.

By Charles Staff

In a recent interview about his appearance on the Ronen Chamber Ensemble series, Jory Vinikour, perhaps unintentionally, gave the impression that he believed himself to be one of the finest harpsichordists around today. After hearing him in the opening of the Ronen season Tuesday night in the Circle Theatre Wood Room, I'm inclined to agree.

Though born in 1963, Vinikour, a dimpled little fellow, looks more like vintage '76. But he demonstrated that he's a big musician and a mature artist first as a continuo player for the *Trio Sonata In C minor* from J.S. Bach's *Musical Offering* and then, right before and after intermission, in two widely different solo works: Pancrace Royer's *Suite in C minor* and *Gyre*, which American composer Stephen Blumberg wrote for him only a couple of years ago.

Like most French keyboard works of Royer's period, the early 18th century, the music is heavily

ornamented but Vinikour made me realize something, perhaps for the first time that this sort of stuff isn't ornamented so much as it is actually music about ornamentation. And Vinikour can execute all of them.

The end of the suite, a march, provided a showcase for Vinikour's nimble fingers, just as strong and agile in the left hand as the right, and for his imagination. Obviously he finds the sounds of the harpsichord beautiful and he persuades the listener that he is right about that, too. And the Wood Room is perfect for the instrument, neither churchy nor too large.

In the program notes, Blumberg described his *Gyre*, which takes its name from a poem by Yeats, *The Second Coming*, as focusing on a swirling figure and forming, by the end, a "proportional relationship of three to five to seven." And that's fine if you were there for mathematics, but music was the aim of the evening.

Blumberg may be a composer who backs into his works, from theory to practice rather than from practice to theory, but Vinikour's performance carried conviction. And like the organ but unlike the piano, everything sounds "right" on a harpsichord. The dissonances, the tritones and the Webernesque distinctive figurations all worked.

In its small way, the concert was everything a concert should be: Each piece a tribute to the composer who wrote it, each performance a tribute to the musicians who played. Certainly that was true of the Bach, which featured violinist Philip Palermo and flutist Karen Moratz in the leading roles and cellist Ingrid Fischer Bellman and Vinikour in the supporting parts, the continuo.