



The Birmingham News

Prolific guitarist Parkening returns to Stephens Center next Sunday

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Guitar virtuoso Christopher Parkening last wowed Birmingham audiences in 2001, when he soloed with the Alabama Symphony in a concerto by Elmer Bernstein. Next Sunday, it'll be just Parkening and his guitar on the Jemison Concert Hall stage.

A student of Andres Segovia, the 58-year-old musician has recorded 20 albums, two of them with soprano Kathleen Battle, and twice has been nominated for Grammy awards. His latest recording endeavor, a collaboration with baritone Jubilant Sykes, will be released in the fall.

An autobiography titled "Grace Like a River" is scheduled for release in June, and will detail Parkening's retirement at age 30 to a Montana ranch, spiritual transformation, fly-fishing exploits and return to the concert hall. He has also established a guitar competition and written a method book.

Parkening is touring with a colorful program that spans four centuries. Listen especially for the Spanish and Latin numbers by Brouwer, Piazzolla, Villa-Lobos, Albeniz and Rodrigo. He'll also reprise Carlo Domeniconi's "Koyunbaba," which he played for an encore at his ASO appearance. The Birmingham Music Club event starts at 3 p.m. at the Alys Stephens Center. Tickets are \$10-\$60. Call 975-2787.

Lockington to conduct ASO:

After arriving in the United States in 1978, British conductor David Lockington played cello for three years in the New Haven and Denver Symphonies. Only then did he become a conductor, and he has since led some high-profile American orchestras, among them the Baltimore, St. Louis, Houston, Detroit, Seattle and Indianapolis Symphonies. This weekend, he adds the Alabama Symphony to his growing guest list.

The Music Director of the Grand Rapids Symphony conducts a Masterworks program in Darius Milhaud's "Le boeuf sur le toit," Haydn's Symphony No. 104 ("London") and Schumann's Symphony No. 4. Concerts start at 8 p.m. at the Alys Stephens Center. Tickets are \$13-\$65.

Get a jump start on the concert Friday at 11 a.m. at an ASO Coffee concert, which features the Haydn and Schumann symphonies. Tickets are \$22. Call 251-7727.

Duo premieres five works:

Birmingham Art Music Alliance has proved time and again that the experimental and avant garde are still healthy and relevant.

These steadfast modernists are surviving the onslaught of what many classical music marketers perceive as audience-pleasing (therefore tonally conservative) new music. Instead, they stage a refreshing mix of world premieres, off-the-beaten-track oddities and multimedia works.

Monday's concert at Birmingham-Southern College offered five premieres and two works with live computer processing. The performers were two of Birmingham's most prominent new music devotees, one the violinist Karen Bentley-Pollick.

BSC's Dorothy Hindman contributed "Monumenti," a duo inspired by Cindy Sheehan's anti-war protests in which images of confrontations, arguments, periods of repose, humor and ridicule were easy to conjure from the two opposing instruments.

Charles Norman Mason, completed "Entanglements" in Rome recently, where he is fulfilling his Rome Prize obligations. An intricately scored duo, its acoustic string timbres are imitated and expanded by computer-generated sounds in snappy rhythms, balanced by eerie sustained tones.

Bentley-Pollick commissioned Czech composer Jan Vcar to write "Homage to Fiddlers," a bold, dramatic work with lively rhythms and a hint of Bartok. Tracy Mendel combines lyricism with tension-producing repetition in "Lines After Neruda and Gismonti," but the work's connection with its title is vague.

Projected images of melting timepieces, family photos and outer space propelled UAB composer Michael Angell's Sonata for Cello and Tape, a work that oozes nostalgia and surrealism.

An amplified Bentley-Pollick accompanied herself in "Fiddle Faddle," as Troy, N.Y., composer Neil Rolnick manipulated a feed of her live performance with a computer. Easily the most technologically advanced piece on the program, it was also the least adventurous, its Gershwin-esque language and suggestions of fiddle tunes softening the experimental bite. Michael Huebner is fine arts writer and classical music critic for The Birmingham News.

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