

Two outstanding concerts

We went to two concerts on Saturday and Sunday and listened to three genius musicians, two of them playing western and folk music, the other classical piano literature.

Tim Weed was featured in the first of these two concerts. Tim is an established performer. When he is not concertizing for people like us, he works in Hollywood, playing background music for films and doing some composition and arranging. He plays all stringed instruments and a few others, and his performance is better than anybody has a right to expect.

One of my favorite numbers that Tim plays and sings is "We No Peel Nopal No Mo," and is a fond recollection of old times in a Mexican village. "Nopal" is a term for the lobes of a cactus that are good to eat, once the skin and spines are removed.

The process of peeling them apparently brought families and

neighbors together, a sort of social custom. The song is excellent, and will be on a CD to be published soon by Soul House.

Tim shared his concert with Mark Robertson-Tessi, a young man who has earned several masters degrees and is now a doctoral candidate specializing in cancer detection and research.

Besides these academic accomplishments, Mark plays eight-string mandolin remarkably well, with ad-lib fills and harmony, and very fast picking. One gets the impression that Tim is constantly "pushing" him just a little, as if to test the limits of his ability to respond. Insofar as we could tell, Mark met every challenge with full success.

Tim's playing appears effortless, no matter the speed or complexity. His voice is good, too, and he sings a lot of songs that we

assume are his own compositions, plus a few standards such as "Route 66." We also were pleased to hear songs by Lalo Guerrero, a gifted Chicano musician who has never been fully recognized.

Tim sang a traditional song used in the annual "Day of the Dead" parades, which in English is "All Souls Day." Other songs were "Long Tom," about hidden stills in Prohibition days and the 10-gauge shotgun with a 40-inch barrel that the bootleggers used to keep intruders away; "Cannon Ball Rag," "Count Your Blessings," "Katie Hill" (In this Tim led Mark a merry chase), "One Stone at Time," "Under the Banyan Tree" and a fine solo by Mark, inspired by his cat, "Luigi." There were more songs, interesting and musical. Tim Weed played banjo and guitar. He is



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equally good on both. Mark played mandolin throughout, exploiting his remarkable ability to improvise. The two men, Tim and Mark, sang in harmony, a very good sound.

It was an outstanding concert. We are sorry for those who missed it.

Our next report concerns a concert in Bisbee, a production in the "Love of Music" series sponsored by the Bisbee Women's Club.

The artist was a talented young man of Indonesian ancestry named Aryo Wicaksono. He is handsome and speaks well in colloquial American English with no trace of foreign accent.

Wicaksono looks rather slight, which makes the tremendous power of his hands and arms absolutely startling. He began the Bisbee concert with J.S. Bach's Toccata in F Sharp Minor, one of the most challenging of Bach's seven toccatas. Since "toccata" origi-

nally meant "light and fast" this composition makes clear the change of meaning to "elaborate concert piece."

Wicaksono immediately demonstrated a technique that would rival that of the best-known piano soloists, a mastery of the keyboard that is nearly unique.

His next offering was W.A. Mozart's Sonata in F-sharp minor, K310.

Composed just after Mozart's mother died, this sonata is full of sorrow and sometimes rage. His father had been late in notifying him, and his concert tour in Paris was disappointing. There are sudden outbursts of volume and unusual harmonies. Wicaksono's fortissimos are almost frightening! Even Chopin's Nocturne in c-minor, which one might expect to be placid and dream-like, had its startling moments.

The program continued with etudes by Scriabin and Rachmaninoff, then two tunes by Indonesian composers, stimulating and memorable.

A highlight in the program was Franz Liszt's arrangement of "Liebestod," Isolde's aria in the Wagner opera "Tristan and Isolde." This was the most expressive number in the concert, an outpouring of the emotion Isolde was expressing in her solo.

The finale was the "Mephisto Waltz" by Liszt. Liszt was accused in his day of being helped by the devil in his phenomenal piano technique. This may have been a sly jab at such accusers, but it is a fine and challenging piece of music, worthy of its famous composer.

This had been a noteworthy concert, a musical triumph by a young man of exceptional talent who has already earned himself a place of distinction among great pianists. During the second week in November Wicaksono will be featured on KUAT with a full-length interview and a solo. The program will be repeated in January '09 on both TV and radio.