

## **De Kooning Movements II**

[for chamber ensemble]

Written with funds provided by the San Francisco Arts Commission for the  
Left Coast Ensemble

I have always been impressed by the brutality, the energy, the dynamic forms, and the synthetic energy of Willem de Kooning's work, and have now composed a piece that, through the exploration of the dramatic power of rhythm and bold instrumental gestures, hopes to conjure the experience of observing de Kooning's paintings. It is a journey that allows me to savor with each stop an electric concoction of Matisse, Picasso, German Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism, and total abstraction.

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### **Review:**

#### **De Kooning Movements II**

By Jules Langert

San Francisco Classical Voice, Oct, 2001

Trust a new-music ensemble to come up with an interesting and unusual format for a concert. The Left Coast Ensemble's recital at Yerba Buena Forum Sunday combined discussion and performance to the benefit of composers and audience alike. First the group performed three newly-commissioned works by San Francisco-based composers; then the composers were interviewed onstage by violist/composer Kurt Rohde, one of the performers; next (after intermission), questions from the audience to the composers; and finally a repeat performance of the whole program. Through the interaction, the audience gained some sense of who the composers were and what they were trying to do. The discussion also, of course, gave the listeners an idea of what to listen for the second time through.

*De Kooning Movements II*, by Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, was the most accomplished and engrossing work on the program. Scored for string trio, oboe, and piano, the piece took its cues from the gestural energy of the painter's style. Sanchez-Gutierrez fashioned a complex, ever-shifting landscape of sound loosely analogous to the pictorial space in a de Kooning canvas. The chords, multiple voices, and instrumental timbres of this musical space varied enormously, from transparency through different densities, sometimes restricted to a narrow band, sometimes encompassing a wide spectrum of sound. This flexibility was a potent expressive resource that the composer used to excellent effect.

The piece began with a few half- and whole-steps played by the cello, separated by long silences. From these notes, an ephemeral web of contrapuntal voices and sonorities emerged, expanding and contracting from moment to moment. Occasionally a melody came out of the vortex. Sometimes the sound was reduced to a single line; sometimes the music rose clamorously to engage all the instruments. It was like a force of nature.