

# Flutist scaling way to professional career

By Chris Burchard  
Staff Reporter

Sitting in the auditorium of the Lied Center for Performing Arts last Tuesday night was like standing in the middle of a Nebraska field beneath one of those huge power transformers that drapes electricity across the state.

The low hum of expectancy and murmur of conversation mingled with the dissonance of the orchestra as it tuned its instruments. A number of stragglers searched for their seats.

Then, at 8 p.m., without pomp or fanfare, Alison Brown took the stage, flute in hand.

After a brief cackle of applause the crowd became silent. This is what it had been waiting for. The conductor tipped up, instruments came to position, and Brown began to play.

"I was very comfortable, not nearly as nervous as I thought I'd be," Brown said after the concert. "Things went great to begin with, that helped."

Things went great, indeed. Brown, a graduate assistant of flute and theory at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, placed second that night in the finals of the J. Edmunds and Thelma Miller Young Artist Competition.

The competition, now in its 15th season, accepts applicants from seven states including Nebraska. Of the 24 original applicants, eight were admitted to the semifinals, and three, including Brown, went on to the finals.

The other finalists included Kelley L. Mikkelsen, a cellist from Sioux Falls, S.D., and Jeffrey Savage, a pianist originally from Scottsbluff. All three soloists were accompanied by the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra, conducted by music director Robert Emile.

Brown began the competition with the Concerto for Flute and Orchestra by Carl Nielsen of Denmark. In this complicated piece, the solo flute and other instruments portray contrasting personalities in dialogue with one another. The soloist's suave and gentle flute, for instance, converses with the clarinet and violin. Then, crude outbursts from the bumbling trombone spark spirited objections from the soloist.

Brown played the concerto masterfully, moving through the piece with impressive technical skill while interacting smoothly with the orchestra's beautiful accompaniment.

"I thought I contained my nerves very well," she said. "There was maybe one time when I thought, 'Wow, there are people out there.'"

The crowd, estimated at 1,700 people, applauded vigorously after her performance, as did the members of the orchestra.

John Bailey, assistant professor of flute at UNL and Brown's instructor, liked what he heard, too.

"She played beautifully," he said. "I think she peaked at that performance, which is exactly what you want to do in front of a large group of people... Yeah, I'm very proud."

Mikkelsen, playing a violoncello more than two centuries old, turned in a rousing performance of Earnest Black's Schelomo for Cello and Orchestra, garnering her first place in the competition. Savage took third place with Tchaikovsky's intricate and moving Piano Concerto No. 1.

While the judges deliberated, the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra premiered "Shamanic Dances," a 1991 work by Randall Snyder, professor of theory and composition at UNL.

After the concert Brown was one big smile.

"I'm very happy," she said. "I didn't care what place I got. I went backstage to my dressing room and just basically said 'Yeah!'"

Brown, who grew up in Hays, Kan., was introduced to the flute in the fourth grade by her father, an assistant professor of woodwinds at Fort Hays State University. Three years later, she was playing with her high school orchestra.

In the summer of her junior year in high school, while at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Mich., Brown said, "Something clicked inside me. I just knew what I wanted to do."

Apparently her intuition proved correct. In addition to the award she just received, Brown has acquired a long list of accomplishments, including being a Hays Arts Council Soloist with the Hays Symphony Orchestra,



Shaun Sartin/DN

Alison Brown, a graduate assistant of flute and theory at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, won second place in the J. Edmunds and Thelma Miller Young Artist Competition last Tuesday.

a finalist in the Jacksonville-MacMurray Young Artist Competition, and a Kansas Governor's Scholar. She also played first flute in the opera orchestra at Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony near Eureka Springs, Ark.

Brown received her undergraduate degree as a flute performance major from the University of Illinois. She came to UNL's School of Music last June, passing up such institutions as Ohio State University, the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Louisiana State University and Northwestern University.

Her decision to attend UNL was due to the presence of Bailey, whose

credentials and personal interest in her abilities impressed her, she said.

Brown will receive her master's degree from UNL next May.

"Right now I'm just looking at my lovely schedule and how much I have to do," she said.

Until she graduates, Brown said she plans to continue assisting undergraduate flutists, attending her classes, entering other contests and auditioning for symphony positions. Brown said she may have a recital in late May.

In the future she said she hopes to land a seat with a professional group such as the Boston Symphony or the

Metropolitan Opera, but she said she would be more than happy to work with the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra.

If a professional career doesn't work out right away or if no flute positions are open when she graduates, Brown said she would consider pursuing a doctoral degree.

"But at this point in time I can't imagine writing a thesis," she said.

After Tuesday's performance, it's hard to conceive that Brown would have any problems at all.

"I feel good about everything," she said, "like I gained some respect."

# Faculty composers challenge views of classical music

## music PREVIEW

By Andrea Christensen  
Staff Reporter

Modern classical music is often thought of as didactic, over-analytical and just unpleasant-sounding.

But the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Faculty Composers' Concert tonight may help change that impression.

The 8 p.m. concert in the Johnny Carson Theater will feature music by Robert Chumbley, director of the Lied Center for Performing Arts, and Randall Snyder, professor of theory and composition.

"The audience for music of our time — music by living, breathing composers — is very small, which is unfortunate," Chumbley said. "What this concert is designed to do is to get some people in to hear a concert by living composers and to have a good experience with it."

To create a positive experience with modern music, the recital will allow the audience to

sit in a semicircle around the performers and ask questions and make comments about the compositions.

Chumbley's composition is a piano solo entitled "Homage to Keats." He explained that the piece is one of a series of homages to the English romantic poets Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth. The composition was inspired by Keats' poem, "Ode to a Nightingale."

"The piece is full of bird calls and carries with it some of the underlying tensions that Keats himself had as a poet and as a person," Chumbley said.

He said that he was not trying to recreate the events of the poem musically. Instead, he was trying to express the emotions of the poem through music.

"I didn't set out to be descriptive," Chumbley explained. "What I'm trying to do is to evoke the same emotions aurally that the poem evokes verbally, because I think that there is a dimension to aural experience that reading doesn't always give you. And, of course, as a musician, I respond to the poem on an auditory level."

"Homage to Keats" was composed in 1984,

and has been played by several pianists since then. However, tonight will be the first time Chumbley has played the piece himself in a recital. Chumbley said that as director of the Lied Center, he did not have as much time to practice the piano as he did before accepting the position. He expressed some nervousness about tonight's performance.

"I feel a little daunted by following in the footsteps of some very great pianists who have played this piece," Chumbley said. "I asked Randy (Snyder), 'If I play it once and I mess it up, can I play it again?' He said, 'Sure, play it twice.' I might do that."

The recital will include a period of questions and discussion between the audience and the musicians. Chumbley said he hoped this period would be used for more than a technical analysis of his piece.

"Sometimes people have a tendency with new music to want to over-analyze it, and I'd prefer that the first response be emotional and the second be analytical," Chumbley explained. "I would rather have an audience respond with their own observations or questions than tell

them what I expect them to feel."

Snyder, on the other hand, said he planned to introduce his compositions with a technical explanation.

"Understanding a piece of music intellectually makes it more interesting to listen to," Snyder said. "Some of this music is hard to understand at the first hearing, that's why I'm going to provide some explanation and some handouts before my pieces are performed."

Snyder's composition, "Refrains," is an abstract work in 15 short movements and will be performed by the Bachman Trio with Rebecca Van de Bogart, flute; Tracy Sands, cello; and Catherine Herbener, piano.

The premiere of Snyder's "Four Satirical Songs," a setting of four poems by Nebraska poet Kathleen West also is on the program. The piece will be performed by Margaret Kennedy, soprano and Shirley Irek, piano.

"I was very intrigued by West's poetry," Snyder said. "These are four poems that share a feminist viewpoint. They all make fun of the typical male-chauvinist viewpoint."

Tonight's concert is free of charge.

# Swervedriver takes listener on emotional, inspired ride

## Reviews



Swervedriver  
"Raise"  
Creation

Swervedriver's "Raise" inspires an emotional release similar to angry rock 'n' roll or fast driving.

From London, Swervedriver seems to be part of the new British "inva-

sion" of American by sounding like it's from Seattle or Pittsburgh.

Although "Raise" is not groundbreaking, it is yet another good release in a consistent invasion from Creation records. The LP is worth purchasing.

The term post-punk is ambiguous enough to encompass many of the college or alternative records released in the past 13 years. The energy, intelligence and remorse of its literal

definition, however, can be applied to the seeming musical anger of this LP.

"Raise" sounds like a "Blood And Chocolate" Elvis Costello singing with Dinosaur Jr. The songs have more driving doom in them, however, than the Costello songs with their variety or craftiness.

The references to cars, trucks and driving take the listener on Swervedriver's swerving, emotional and in-

spired ride as the group sings of scenes, friends and escape.

The downfall of this LP may be its lack of any outstanding songs. The musical mood of most of the songs seems to be the same, though the first three songs on the LP, "Sci-Flyer," "Pile-Up" and "Son of Mustang Ford" are more perfected versions of that mood and energy.

"Son of Mustang Ford" rocks hard and fast, raises the heart rate and

raises expectations for the remainder of the record. Although the next song, "Deap Seat," is nearly great, the LP never quite reaches that high again.

This group may have found itself in a repetitive musical rut driven mostly by a recurring emotional state of mind. Maybe in the future it will have a broader vision, though few invasion bands have succeeded.

—Mark Nemeth