

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS

[Style](#)

[Entertainment Guide](#)

[Movies](#)

[Television](#)

[Food & Dining](#)

[Travel](#)

[Music](#)

Taking On the 21st Century

by John Pitcher

Assume that there is a nuclear war, forcing future archaeologists to sift through the layers of rubble to uncover clues about American life and culture during the early 21st century. If all they find is a plastic Oscar Mayer Wiener wrapper and a Dr. Dre compact disc (these things probably have a half-life of about a zillion years, and some will surely survive the firestorm), then they might deduce a culture that subsisted on high-protein fast food and equally high-protein vulgar music. Actually, not a bad assumption.

Or they'll discover a charred copy of Mark Kuss's "The Show," a work for narrator and chamber ensemble that received its premiere at the 20/1 Century Consort's concert Saturday at the Hirshhorn Museum. Based on this post-modern smorgasbord--which includes a Brahmsian arrangement of the "Weiner Song" and a surreal and pastoral setting of some fairly vile Dr. Dre lyrics--one might conclude that we are a people of dry wit, lyrical sensitivity and penetrating irony,

Kuss's work--inspired by Donald Barthelme's writing in the New Yorker--offers a delightful critique of a consumer culture obsessed with trivial sensations. It's a theatrical piece, like Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat." and the Consort's lively performance successfully created a light carnival atmosphere. Bass-Baritone Peter Becker, who possesses a clear and resonant voice, deserves special mention for a wonderfully irreverent performance.

The concert featured two other premieres. Pianist Lisa Emenheiser Logan gave a powerful and exhilarating account of Jessica Krash's "Details at 11", a challenging and sometimes dissonant work that suggested the episodic flow of an evening newscast. And the Consort--which has a new name for the new century--performed Paul Schoenfield's Sextet with expressive warmth and energy.