

De Kooning movements

[for marimba and clarinet]

Written with funds provided by Kobe Shinbun Foundation for Makoto Nakura.

Lately, I have been looking at the work of Willem de Kooning, who came to the United States from his native Holland to later become one of America's most representative twentieth-century artists. I have always been impressed by the brutality, the energy, the dynamic forms, and the synthetic power of de Kooning's work, and have now composed a piece that, through its exploration of the dramatic power of rhythm and bold instrumental gestures, seems to conjure for me the experience of flipping through the pages of a printed catalogue of de Kooning's paintings. A journey that allows me to savor with each stop a graphic, perfectly assimilated and electric concoction of Matisse, Picasso, German Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism, and total abstraction.

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Two pieces from Manuel de Falla's "El Amor Brujo," accented by Palmer's bright clarinet, were standouts, but the program's highlight was "De Kooning Movements," composed in 2001 by Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez for Nakura and Palmer. Competing lines for clarinet and marimba darted across each other in sharp counterpoint and hiccups of sound that ended in a raucous shriek. Every note of it aptly suggested the painter's controversial style.

L. Peat O'Neil

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