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Onstage at Wertheim Concert Hall, Morton Subotnick was seated, his Apple laptop ready to launch a performance of *Until Spring*.

Unfortunately, no sound was emerging from the six speakers placed around the hall's perimeter. A technician appeared baffled, and for several minutes silence and a polite, awkward confusion reigned. "Should I reboot?" the composer asked.

Mozart likely never had to ask that question, but for the father of electronic composition, live power is the medium and lifeline to his art. Since his *Silver Apples of the Moon*, written in 1967, Subotnick has been the leading figure in the constantly evolving field of electronic music.

The composer was in Miami Saturday evening for a visit to Florida International University, where he participated in a concert spotlighting his inventive and engaging music.

With an emphasis on electronically produced, reprocessed and manipulated sounds, Subotnick's "instruments" have evolved markedly over the years: from the Buchla synthesizer he helped develop for *Silver Apples*, to the commercial MIDI computer programs he utilizes today.

An Arsenal of Defense, written in 1982, represents Subotnick at his most edgy and astringent. It's scored for viola and "ghost box"; the violist's live performance is transmitted into the box (now a laptop computer) and immediately reprocessed and transformed by the composer into an array of sounds, building a mounting, mechanistic fury.

Laura Wilcox proved a deft and uninhibited soloist. The violist handled the bowed filigree and instrumental demands for harsh chordal attacks and percussive effects as surely as the theatrical elements' jerky head movements and surprised facial expressions.

After FIU professor Kristine Burns came to the rescue and solved the connection problem, Subotnick offered the second part of his *Until Spring*, played from CD. It was with this 1977 work that Subotnick said he found his footing in electronic composition. The series of percussive electronic patterns caroming around the room created a striking assortment of rhythmic riffs and colors, even working in cat-like meows.

The excerpt from Subotnick's *Until Spring Revisited* offered an even more freewheeling panoply of amplified, multi-directional cascades and hues.

With his neatly trimmed beard and leather jacket, Subotnick, spry and energetic at 72, looked like a hip, digital Zen guru as he performed "live," calmly conjuring forth an audacious barrage of unearthly sounds. Anything but dry or forbidding, Subotnick's witty music proved consistently engaging, the composer smiling at the controlled chaos he was producing via his laptop, mouse and amplified vocal descants.

Works by FIU faculty members Kristine Burns and Orlando Jacinto Garcia were also heard.

Burns' inventive Session for solo CD uses outtakes from a clarinetist's recording session to work up a kind of rhythmic bumper pool: The musician's spoken words and occasional expletives are combined with the engineer's comments and brief clarinet notes. The accelerating tempo is built into an insistent counterpoint as words and music ricochet around the 5.1 speaker setup.

Garcia was represented with his *como los colores del viento nocturno* (like the colors of the evening wind).

Though no direct programmatic inspiration exists, there is something nocturnal and melancholy about this music. Scored for live viola and taped violin on CD, the work reflects Garcia's spare, haunting style. Wilcox brought a plaintive sweetness to her viola phrases and a nuanced degree of shading and expression; her sensitive doubling on wind chimes conveyed the shimmering delicacy and quiet beauty of Garcia's music.

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