

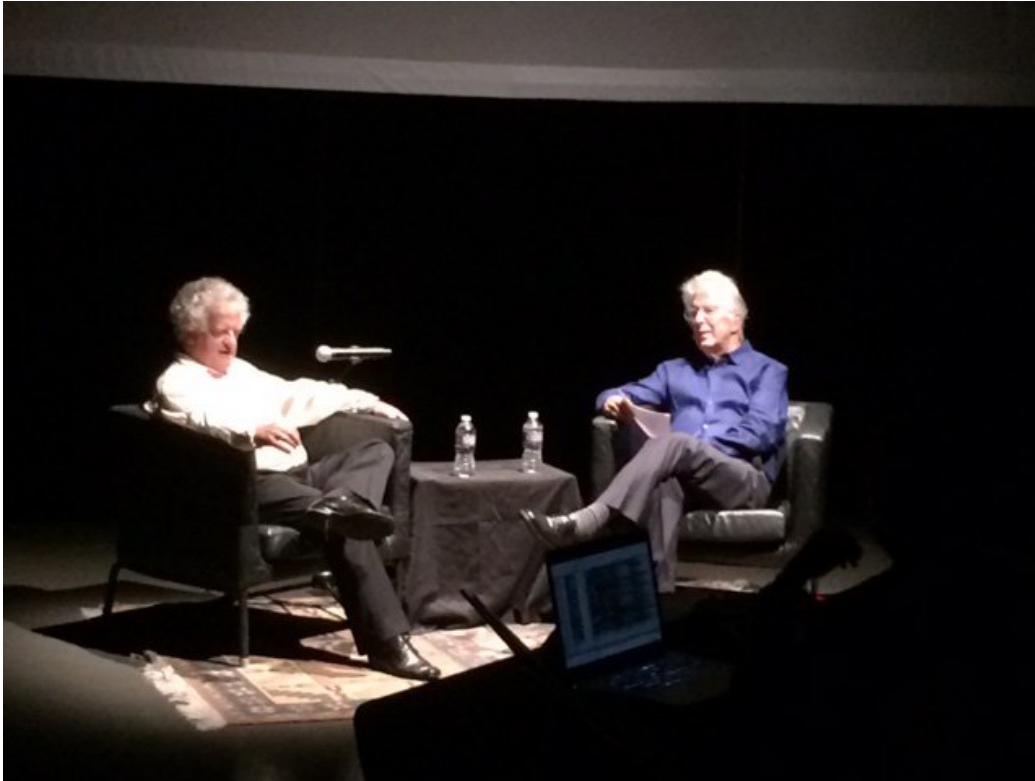
Arditti, Reynolds talk amongst themselves

ArtPower opens season with world premiere of new Reynolds work performed by Arditti



[\(/staff/james-chute/\)](#)

By [James Chute \(/staff/james-chute/\)](#) | 12:09 a.m. Sept. 26, 2015



Irvine Arditti (left) and Roger Reynolds in discussion at Friday's ArtPower season opener at UC San Diego.

As ArtPower's executive director Jordan Peimer told the audience at Conrad Prebys Music Center Friday, he couldn't imagine a better opening to the 2015-16 ArtPower season than composer Roger Reynolds and British violinist Irvine Arditti.

Reynolds, the distinguished Pulitzer Prize-winning UC San Diego faculty member, needs no introduction to San Diego audiences. Arditti, the founder and first violinist of the Arditti Quartet, is in a class of his own when it comes to the performance of new music.

It hard to think of another violinist who has been a more consistent and compelling champion of contemporary composers. Arditti's name is associated with numerous masterworks of 20th and 21st century music.

ArtPower gave them a forum Friday to discuss Reynolds' new work, "Shifting/Drifting," which he composed in collaboration with Arditti, and to present the first public performance of the complex, 19-minute piece for "violin and computer musician."

It was undoubtedly unintentional, but the opening of the discussion between Reynolds and Arditti proved to be an analogue for the piece itself.

Reynolds and Arditti came out from the back of the stage already in a casual conversation, sat down, and continued talking (although Reynolds did most of the talking) as if the audience wasn't even there. Only later was the audience brought into the discussion.

That's what "Shifting/Drifting" sounded like: a private discussion between violinist and composer. Arditti's performance was masterly, and the extreme care and thought Reynolds put into the work was evident, but ultimately, the piece pretty much kept to itself. And like most conversations you overhear, it had little impact .

Like much of Reynolds recent music, the computer component (realized by computer musician Paul Hembree, whose tentative opening proved unsettling) is a key element of the piece. "Shifting/Drifting," however, brings the computer front and center in a way perhaps unprecedented in Reynolds music. It's not an extension of the soloist (as in some of Reynolds other music), it's an equal, or more often an overly dominating, partner in the conversation.

And although there was a human being attached, and the computer part was based on recorded samples of excerpts of Arditti playing material from an earlier Reynolds work for solo violin, the computer part had a mechanical, disconnected quality, as if it was speaking from some alternative reality.

Arditti brought what humanity he could in an intense, committed interpretation, but his periodic outbursts weren't enough to break through the computer's haze of sound and connect with the audience.

You couldn't help wondering as well if there may have been too much collaboration in this piece, which Arditti and Reynolds worked on for two years. Arditti called it the most intense and prolonged collaboration he has ever had with a composer in his 41 years of working with hundreds of composers.

Is it possible these two musicians with highly individual, distinct musical personalities somehow flattened each other out? More likely, these two close friends just really savored talking to each other. Somehow, we also need to feel part of that conversation.

© Copyright 2015 The San Diego Union-Tribune. All rights reserved.