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## Arts

### Considering Schnittke, Artist of the Profound

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It is tempting, if a bit grandiose, to think of Alfred Schnittke as a kind of Mahler for the 21st century. Like Mahler, Schnittke fashioned a distinctive individual voice from a free-ranging mix of disparate idioms: "polystylistic," he called his music. And as with Mahler, Schnittke's reputation should only grow as listeners discover the accessible depths of feeling beneath his complexities as well as his simplicities. His reputation is already large in Eastern Europe, as several panelists noted in a Schnittke discussion presented last Wednesday evening by the Lyric Chamber Music Society of New York.

"He is one of the greatest humanists who ever worked in the art of music," the conductor Kurt Masur said. "His music can have a bitter taste yet confront you with the truth of life, the tragedy of life, the poetry of life, the humor of life."

As if to bear out those remarks, the Schnittke concert that followed included two of the composer's profoundest creations: the Second String Quartet, one of his many works drawing on music of the Russian Orthodox Church; and the Piano Quintet, written to commemorate the death of his mother.

The Moscow String Quartet, for which the Second was written, gave thoroughly committed readings of both works. Tigran Alikhanov, a brother of the group's first violinist, Eugenia Alikhanova, played the quintet's piano part, rudimentary but, in the end, utterly uplifting.

The quartet also offered Schnittke's "Canon in Memoriam Igor Stravinsky," and Ms. Alikhanova and Galina Kokhanovskaia, the second violinist, played "Moz-Art," both engagingly. With advocates like these, Schnittke stands to make his way in the world sooner rather than later.