

DSO tackles virtuoso new concertos by Kernis, Williams

[Mark Stryker](#), Detroit Free Press Staff Writer 6:23 p.m. EST January 22, 2016

"Co-commissioned by the DSO and three other orchestras and institutions, Kernis' Flute Concerto proved to be a corker Thursday night. It's a big piece, cast in four movements, lasting nearly 30 minutes and putting soloist Marina Piccinini and the entire ensemble through a series of athletic and technical challenges. Piccinini's solo part in particular was full of challenging leaps, passages that whizzed by at supersonic speed, and in the finale, strutting melodies where she was required to sing and play at the same time in the manner of Jethro Tull's flutist Ian Anderson. The concerto was more abstract, with more dissonance and density than much of Kernis' music, which tends to traffic in lush melody and easily digestible harmony. Here the dominant feeling was one of mercurial mood swings, as the flute skittered quickly between dreamy reveries, sprightly dances and intense furies. All proceeded smoothly, including a charming use of a mandolin, until the last movement Tarantella, where the drum set and "ride" cymbal beat and rock inspired bass lines stumbled like an awkward teen trying to dance. **Piccinini's gleaming virtuosity, including the variety of articulations and colors she drew from the flute, was a source of wonder.**"

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