

he testify, and I begin to suspect he's Western. In fact, he's from Richmond, but a remark about singing in choir leads me to the thread that connects it all: his desire to bring people together, his humility, his lack of rock-cool. Massey is a Christian. "There's not much overlap between these two circles; my church friends aren't too adventurous musically," he says with rue. Later, he asks, "Look, would you put in there that you asked [if I'm a believer] point blank? I don't want it to look like I'm beating one over the head with it."

At the first Punk Not Rock gathering, about 25 people, mostly music scenesters in their 20s, sprawled on the floor and a few chairs. Dominguez played three short piano pieces by Erik Satie, after which Jean Cook (violin), Joel Rose (keyboards), and Tunde Oyewole (bass) world-premiered "Good Morning Rubop," written by Travis Morrison of the local rock band Dismemberment Plan. After the simple, surprisingly Romantic piece—Morrison's first nonrock effort—Jean Cook, with her sister Mia Cook on cello, played a Ravel sonata, which Jean Cook intro-

duced as "an intelligent conversation between the two instruments."

The discussion that followed seemed more open-minded and less knowledgeable about 20th-century music than I'd expected. Morrison talked about his difficulties transposing his score for strings—Jean Cook had bailed him out. This topic opened a debate over the importance of knowing how to read and write music and the range of notational systems. John Cage came up then, but never mentioned were Karlheinz Stockhausen, Steve Reich, John Zorn, Elliot Sharp, or any of the other composers whom

adventurous rock fans generally stumble upon in their explorations.

Massey describes Jean Cook as the "ringer" of the salon. She has been playing violin since she was 4 and was raised on classical music. She bought *Thriller* when she was 10 but generally didn't listen to pop music until college. She still mostly goes to see the rock bands "of people I know," though she played recently with indie chanteuse Edith Frost and art-rock guitarist Henry Kaiser. Her only musical prejudice is the preference for complexity instilled in her by her training. "Classical music has plenty of

emotion," she insists, "just not so much sex as rock music."

Massey calls Jean Cook his mirror image, because he grew up on Journey, the Clash, U2, Gang of Four, and heavy metal (while singing in church choirs), and then discovered the Estonian composer Arvo Part in a college class. He's found a few other 20th-century composers he loves, calling postmodernist Charles Ives the original rock-classical hybrid: "Ives combines hooks and complexity like a mother-fucker." Massey spent 10 years in a power trio called Jettison Charlie—which left him feeling constrained. "You can only express one or two emotions with a power trio: rage and sadness," he says. "I wanted something more nuanced, to expand the palette."

Previous attempts to graft classical music onto rock created overblown Frankenstein's monsters like Yes and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer. The fact that Massey is most drawn to 20th-century music may save him—and his salon—from such a fate. Furthermore, he points out that "ELP and those groups tended to be bombastic and full of themselves; there's got to be some way to do it that's understated and unpretentious." He adds that bombast comes in lots of flavors: "For years people compared Metallica to Wagner—the effect that they get is real similar."

The August crowd, twice the size of July's, fanned itself quietly through a program of subdued, decidedly unbombastic music stretching back a millennium. The Cook sisters played ninth-century plainsong chants adapted for cello and violin by David Arbury, the bass player with the Better Automatic and a 15-year veteran of the National Cathedral Choir. Arbury's five short-shorts for piano were the only items on the program newer than early 20th-century Bartók (the program opener, played by Jean Cook). Doug Wolf presented the organ piece by French composer Jehan Alain that he had adapted for string quartet, played by his brother James and three older music freelancers, who stood out in the day-job-holding indie-rock crowd.

Massey again led a Q&A when the music ended, asking everyone who had played, written, or arranged for details about their musical backgrounds and paths. Violist Pat Smith explained that she substitutes for members of the National Symphony Orchestra, plays weddings, does country-western session work—anything that pays. "I've made a living playing music for 20 years," she explained. "I just keep lowering my standard of living."

Norm Veenstra of the all-guitar band Tone attended both salons and said after the second, "I recognize a lot of faces. Bob's created a forum for this group of us who go to the shows at Library of Congress and saw Arvo Part at the Washington National Cathedral, and are also musicians."

Massey is prepared to lead that tribe out of his living room if it grows too large. He'll keep moving toward the porno promised land, where classical, techno, hip-hop, and metal live side by side. During our conversation, he asks, eyes upward, "Where in the record store do you file Kronos Quartet covers of Hendrix? Why does there have to be this category called rock 'n' roll? Why do you have to name the music that comes out of your gut?"