

**Blogs posted by students at  
UPenn, in response to the  
March 18 performance of the  
iFiddle Concerto in Philadelphia**

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user=culturecrit&comment=orchestra#193593](http://www.haloscan.com/comments.php?user=culturecrit&comment=orchestra#193593)

After the first two pieces of evening I felt satisfied, after Neil Rolnick's iFiddle I felt rewarded. Todd Reynolds debuted Rolnick's concerto last weekend in Philadelphia and roused the somewhat dreary audience with his first note. The piece was lively but not exhausting and its energy could be felt throughout the theatre. This was aided partly by Reynolds whose body movements and expressions seemed to bring the music alive. The fade-out from Reynolds to the rest of the orchestra was executed very well, clearly in part due to Rolnick's musical ability. The rest of the orchestra carried the momentum built up by the lead violin and proved their worth. After a five second pause which I thought was the end, iFiddle surpassed its first half in terms of beat and energy of the music much to the satisfaction of the crowd. The influence of technology on the piece was evident from the start with the primary sound effects from the electric violin to the background mixing of music and beats. Had I not watched this performance live it would have been difficult to separate these different components. This was however one area I was disappointed in. With a name such as iFiddle I expected to see more technology being used in the performance whether in the form of a DJ or another. As a fan of a wide range of genres I found myself disappointed when the intermission came signaling the end of this piece, however for the less adventurous I could see the applause coming as the relief of much annoyance and dissatisfaction Akiel Ghany | Email | Homepage | 03.24.06 - 5:02 pm |

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In anticipation of attending my first professional concert, I was fooled by the title "Tech and Techno," part of the Orchestra Underground Series, which served as somewhat of a misnomer. As ignorant as it may seem, I prepared myself for a new-age show complete with turntable scratching and a modernized ensemble. Instead, a full orchestra comprised of seasoned musicians dressed in concert attire performed for me. However, aside from aesthetics, I was also baffled by the unique incorporation of technology in the compositions. Instead of an overbearing use of technological devices, they were subtly woven throughout the music. In particular, Neil Rolnick's iFiddle, featuring Todd Reynolds, displayed a pleasant mix of technology within the orchestra. iFiddle was an interesting experience. Initially I was quite confused by the use of synthesized "cyborg chatter". As a person who relies heavily upon visual stimuli, it was difficult to determine where each noise came from. I was frustrated that I could not locate where the synthesized rapid robot sounds were coming from. Each time the peculiar sounds would chime in, I would embark on a frantic search for the origin of this brief message from "R2-D2." However, after little success, I decided to close my eyes and simply listen to the assortment of sound waves and vibrations produced by the orchestra and synthesizers. It became apparent that Rolnick had not integrated technology into his music to make a point, but simply as another way to extravagantly express himself musically. Rolnick was able to elaborate upon his music with technology serving as another instrument. The machine noises produced by a synthesizer emphasized the idea that music is what you make it to be. Overall, the composition was a great musical piece complete with passionate solos, august entrances and grand crescendos. However, it was the electric violin that added new dimensions to the concerto. The "rippling" effect that the electric violin produced a soothing and peaceful effect that is hard to achieve without technology. More importantly though, Rolnick successfully added a rhyme, rhythm and melody to a previously mundane computer sound and transformed it into music that danced and sang along side Reynolds' exquisite violin. Jared Lee | [Email](#) | Homepage | 03.24.06 - 1:40 am |

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"A Fresh, Funky iFiddle" A combination of computer digitalization and symphony refinement, Orchestra Underground: Tech and Techno destroys musical boundaries and explores a new dimension of technological innovation—sound. Mixing street beats and jazz rhythms with structured scales and harmonies, the performance introduces a compelling midpoint that promotes a future of digitally enhanced sound. Neil Rolnick's musical concoction, iFiddle Concerto, seamlessly combines the refined symphony with contemporary flavor. The scene resembles a traditional orchestra layout. Music stands, a semi-circle of chairs, and a baby-grand piano assume their respective locations. Musicians clad in pressed black apparel thumb through pages of sheet music and manually tune their polished instruments. Even the conductor formally enters the stage, demanding a sophisticated applause, and assumes the noble position facing his subjects. Together with Todd Reynolds, electric violinist, he drives the audience through the melodious phrases of iFiddle Concerto, a repetitive piece centered on iFiddle eccentricities. But these formalities fall victim to cutting-edge principles. Even before the conductor taps his baton he activates an electric switchboard, beginning the journey into Rolnick's cyber-like composition. The iFiddle, Reynolds' cyborg violin, propels the trek from a screechy rebellion, through emotional jazz pulses and b-bop tempos, to digital-get-downs and back again. Explosions prompt transitions of beats and styles ranging from steady staccato notes to syncopated rhythms. While these varying tempos leave you toe-tapping in your seat, Rolnick's menagerie of computer-enhanced and authentic sound mystifies skeptical viewers. By presenting unidentifiable and compelling sounds, Rolnick challenges the live audience to identify the source of particular noises, to distinguish the difference between the authentic and the digitalized. Failure to do so illuminates Rolnick's genius of iFiddle Concerto. A seamless connection between electric violin and orchestra, between computer and instrument, and between generations of musical composition, iFiddle Concerto adds technological spice to the orchestra. Christina Marconi | [Email](#) | Homepage | 03.23.06 - 11:55 pm |