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Preview

Violinist Miranda Cuckson to appear both at LCCC and Transformer Station next week

by Mike Telin

Called "top-notch in all respects" (*Sequenza 21*) and "an artist to be reckoned with" (*Gramophone*), violinist and violist Miranda Cuckson is highly acclaimed for her performances of a wide range of repertoire, from early eras to the most current creations. "The core repertoire is still very much a part of me as a musician, but I feel I need to relate to the time that I am living in," the engaging Cuckson said by telephone when asked why she chose to follow new music as her career path.

"I also just have a bit of an adventurous streak in terms of discovering new means of expression and new ways of making sounds and ways of playing my instrument. And the more I got into that the more fascinating I found it."

On Monday, March 31 as part of Lorain County Community College's Signature Series and on Tuesday, April 1 as part of the CMA@Transformer Station Series, Miranda Cuckson will present concerts featuring adventurous music for solo violin. Both performances begin at 7:30 and each features different repertoire. "I perform a lot of pieces throughout any given season and because I do a lot of new music and there is always new stuff being written, I do accumulate a lot of repertoire."

Cuckson finds it very meaningful and exciting to feel that she's at the forefront of keeping music moving forward. "It's not just preserving all of the amazing and wonderful things that were created in the past. But this music is still developing and achieving great things. I love being part of that."

She also says on her website that she is enthusiastic about the role that she plays as a performer in the collaborative creative process. **"**I put that on my website because it is something that I feel strongly about, that is, my role in things. Of course what the composer does is central to everything, that's obvious. But I think that performers have it in themselves to communicate and unleash what is in a piece, so it is very much a partnership."

Cuckson believes that a great interpreter has the ability to look at a piece and recognize how to bring out the contrast of character or the structure of a piece in order to make it more coherent. "In technical terms they can look at a piece and know how to use the in-

strument to bring something across and these are all specific skills and talents that the interpreter brings to the music. I have a lot of experience working with composers and the ones who are musically sensitive and imaginative, they recognize when they're working with great performers. And most composers know what it take on the side of the performer."

Regarding the recent resurgence of the composer/performer, Cuckson said, "I'm supportive of the performers who are also composing, which of course takes us back to earlier eras when everybody was both a composer and a performer. I think that is a very healthy thing. But I don't think that just because you decide to write a piece that it necessarily makes you a composer or suddenly a greater musician then you were before. In general I don't compose. I feel that my greatest strengths and contributions really are as an interpreter of music."

Cuckson went on to comment about the works on her two programs in detail.

Lorain County Community College Signature Series

Pierre Boulez's *Anthèmes* (1992). "We could go on and on about his greatness and I know that everyone knows him in Cleveland. I just saw a very recent interview with him that was posted online a few days ago and he's remarkably lucid and so intelligent. It was very inspiring. I love playing this piece. It has that crystalline sparkle to it that is often in his music. His music has a particular kind of elegance and pacing to it that I really enjoy. I'm glad I get to play it at both places."

Ursula Mamlok's *Aphorisms* (2009). "It was interesting to speak to her because she knew Roger Sessions and Ralph Shapey, whose music I was also working on. I think her music is beautifully crafted. She writes a lot of smallish pieces and this piece is five short movements. Her expression tends to be very condensed and concise with a tremendous amount of charm. I'm delighted to have a chance to introduce the piece to audiences."

Jeffrey Mumford's *an expanding distance of multiple voices* (2005). "I've worked with Jeffrey on a number of his pieces and just last year in a concert at the National Gallery in Washington DC that included this piece. A couple pieces from that concert were recorded live and are on his new CD. I've always enjoyed playing pieces of his."

Michael Hersch's *in the snowy margins* (2010). "He is one of my longest associations with a composer. I've played almost all of his violin music, as well as recording a CD of it. I'm producing his chamber opera at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in June so this is another step in our collaboration. He's a wonderful artist and a lot of fun to hang out with although his music is very serious. But I find it has a spirit about it that is energizing."

Paul Desenne's *Sonata* (1998). "He's Venezuelan but lives part of the year in Boston. He is an active cellist and works with El Sistema. I've known him for a little while but this is the first piece of his that I've played — although I have performed it a few times. It's filled with dance rhythms and sounds improvised. And as a sting player he knows how to make the most of things without going into any unusual techniques."

CMA at Transformer Station Concert

Iannis Xenakis's *Mikka S* (1976). "This is a great piece, and relatively short, but he really packs a punch in the four minutes. There are a lot of glissandos but it's amazing how expressive that can be. And like a lot of his music it is very abstract but also very visceral. It kind of just grabs and shakes you."

Georg Friedrich Haas's *de terrae fine* (2001). An Austrian composer of spectral music (somehow we skipped Mr. Haas).

Pierre Boulez's *Anthèmes 1* (1992) is the only piece included on both programs.

Christopher Burns's *come ricordi, come sogni, come ecchi* (2011). "Chris studied with Brian Ferneyhough, but his music is much more spare. I know that he is very fascinated by Brian's music. He wrote this piece based on a work by Luigi Nono. The material is literally taken from the Nono and he developed it into these eight etudes. Each one only lasts a couple minutes but they're very much a homage to the Nono. But like all of Chris's music it's very focused on subtle details. And very atmospheric."

Brian Ferneyhough's *Intermedio alla ciaconna* (1986). "Sometimes you can get overwhelmed by all of the notes, but once you know all of them, there is tremendous atmosphere in his music. There is always a lot to be found there musically but it just takes a little longer to learn the notes. [laughing] I aim for getting the highest percentage of correct notes possible. I am kind of a stickler for that sort of thing. But nonetheless it is a reality that you're not going to play every single note. But his music always has tremendous dramatic moments and color that just pop out at you."

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