

Syndicate for the New Arts: triple bill at the Bop Stop (April 9)

by Mike Telin



Variety is the spice of life and on Saturday, April 9 a large crowd gathered at the Bop Stop to hear a triple bill performance that demonstrated how much variety exists within the confines of contemporary music.

Presented by the Syndicate for the New Arts, the evening kicked off with Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Particles* (2007). Beautifully performed by Syndicate percussionist Ben Rempel and harpist Caitlin Mehrtens, the work's quiet, ethereal lines seemed to float through the room.

Bassist Austin Lewellen joined his Syndicate colleagues for Costa Rica-born composer Julio Zúñiga's *24* (2014). Harmonics in the bass accompanied by the light tapping of fingers on a tam-tam open the contemplative work. A loud snap pizzicato introduces a musical argument between the three instruments until the quiet resumes. Bowed harp strings and the sounds of a metal gate that needs to be oiled (played by Rempel) fade away as the piece ends. The trio performed with panache.

Patchwork, Noa Even (saxophone) and Stephen Klunk (drum set), began their set with Nate May's *Fun With Teeth* (2015), which the composer describes as "death metal wrapped in a pink ribbon." Loaded with multiphonics and jazzy riffs, the work is engaging in its multiple personality disorder, and Even and Klunk skillfully brought it to life.

Eric Wubbels *Axamer Folio* (2015), consists of 25 short sections with no pre-set order, form, or duration. Although the performance was excellent — the duo were completely locked into the work's complicated rhythms, and Klunk's cadenza was great — in the end, *Axamer Folio* overstayed its welcome with its continuous high multiphonics in the soprano sax and repetitive motives.

New York City-based trumpeter Peters Evans rounded out the evening with a 31-minute free improvisation that was jaw-dropping amazing. Producing a beautiful tone as smooth as ice, he also possesses an internal metronome most musicians can only dream of having. Evans is also keenly tuned into structure: he seemed to know exactly where he wanted to go with each section and when to move on to a new idea, of which he had no shortage. One could write more, but the accolades would become tiresome. This was free improvisation at its best.

The evening concluded with Syndicate founder and electric guitarist Joshua Rosner joining all the evening's musicians for a collective performance of Pauline Oliveros' fascinating *Thirteen Changes*.

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