

## Ensemble Pamplemousse & MocRep at the Bop Stop (Nov. 6)

by Joshua Rosner

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Between the looming election and Cleveland's depressing defeat in the World Series, it can become increasingly appealing to remain home away from the noise of the city. But on Sunday night, November 6, a performance by Ensemble Pamplemousse and MocRep at the Bop Stop provided a well-needed refuge with a very different noisiness.

"MocRep, a Chicago-based ensemble (and no, we won't hold that against them), was a surprise addition to the program. They started off their opening set with two improvisations. In the first, Nick Maryhew and Zach Moore vocalized and pantomimed a drummer and a saxophonist. As Maryhew explored heavy metal drumming, Moore put down his invisible saxophone and joined back in on imaginary flute. The audience's laughter set the tone for a thoroughly enjoyable evening.

MocRep's Zach Good (clarinet) and Lia Kohl (cello) then took the stage to perform a short, tonal improvisation in three movements — slow, fast, slow. The most conventional in its use of instruments, it was also the most out of place. But it was still delightful, sprinkled with trills and traditional cadences.

Next came two performance pieces from MocRep. While Andy Ingamells' and Maya Verlaak's *Tape Piece* suggested a fully-developed electronic work for magnetic tape, Kohl and Maryhew approached each other armed with rolls of Scotch tape. The two proceeded to wrap each other into what looked like a very uncomfortable hug until each roll had been depleted. Then they began to snap the tape as they unraveled themselves. Then — Kohl and Maryhew repeated the process, first with masking tape, then with duct

tape. While sonically similar, the different strengths of the adhesives provided a gratifying result — and wads of used tape on the Bop Stop floor.

In *Clothing*, by Carolyn Chen, Moore and Good appeared wearing enough winter gear to ascend a mountain. As Ensemble Pamplemousse drummer Andrew Greenwald grooved along on the drumset, Moore and Good proceeded to remove clothing — a fur coat, ski jacket, sparkling sequined top, pairs of long underwear, bright red briefs, and a belt — then redressed themselves, throwing clothing at each other until Greenwald finished his improvised beat.

After a brief intermission, Ensemble Pamplemousse — Natacha Diels (flutes), Andrew Greenwald (drums), Jessie Marino (cello), David Broome (keys), Bryan Jacobs (live electronics and playback), and Weston Olencki (trombone) — took their places onstage. This unique composer/performer collective focuses on collaborative writing and virtuosic performance. In their roughly 50-minute composition, what started with Diels and Marino moving to sampled piano and electronic sound, morphed into a tapestry of piano chords, pizzicato cello, piccolo, and trombone, all electronically manipulated.

The piece as a whole was interspersed with additional choreography, moments of chaos and tranquility, and humor. At one point Olencki played trombone with a bassoon reed. Jacobs had built two instruments out of four slide whistles, which were played throughout the piece. Every so often the performers would speak to the audience in random snippets of a conversation beneath the electroacoustic wall of sound.

The last movement was a flute solo where Diels performed the equivalent of lip-syncing to a midi-track. (A projector displayed the words “flute solo” in case there was any doubt about what was going on.) “Flute solo” was followed by “flute solo in the park,” pantomimed against a background of a stock image of — a park. Subsequent variations included “in the park with George,” “Jurassic Park,” “in an airplane,” “with Ahmad Jamal,” “with Jacqueline du Pré,” and “with Charlie Brown’s mom.”

Sunday evening’s performance at the Bop Stop was not about sound, but rather how sound is conveyed to an audience. In academia, the performance of new music is not discussed as often as pitch, rhythm, or other sonic elements. Through humor, choreography, use of everyday objects, and thoughtfulness, hyper-complex sounds and unusual sonorities become significantly easier to digest. MocRep and Ensemble Pamplemousse are champions of this presentation of new music. They go beyond making great music and instead take care to give their audiences access beyond their ears.

Hopefully these two ensembles will make a return visit to Cleveland. Their performances are not to be missed.

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