

## No Exit and Patchwork combine at SPACES (Apr. 27)

by David Kulma



Surrounded by eclectic new art in Ohio City's SPACES gallery, No Exit and Patchwork came together on Friday, April 27 to sound the musical cutting edge. With half the works from 2018 and most of the composers under 40, this night was a

cross section of current trends in the world of new classical music.

No Exit's powerful clarinetist Gunnar Owen Hirthe opened each half with solo works by Evan Ziporyn. Like Henry Cowell and Colin McPhee before him, Ziporyn has built his compositional world connecting with other musical cultures. *Four Impersonations* (2002) explores how a clarinet might sound like a Japanese flute (shakuhachi), an East African lyre (nyatiti), or Balinese gamelan. With a beautiful vibrato, Hirthe shaped each of the distinct movements with conviction. *Tsmindao Ghmerto* (1994) tackles Georgian Orthodox chant by asking the performer to sing while playing bass clarinet. Mimicking polyphony, Hirthe had to hum screamfully while he played harmonious multiphonics or quickly flipped between two notes. It was like a fascinating, euphonious, barking seal.

Continuing No Exit's tour of their early commissions, violinist Cara Tweed, violist James Rhodes, and cellist Nicholas Diodore revisited Derrik Balogh's *Fantasia: si tu veux* from 2009. Inspired by a phrase on a Picasso painting in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Balogh took the line "if you want" as license to write as he imagined. And the audio producer / composer's string trio runs in multiple directions: leaping melodies over buzzing trills, a Bartók-infused furious jaunt, and calmer duos. After the players convincingly explored each of the ideas, remembrances began to peek through. Passing

up multiple possible endings, Balogh found a fulfilling one that repeatedly built to intense tremolos.

The full complement of No Exit — adding pianist Nicholas Underhill, flutist Sean Gabriel, and percussionist Luke Rinderknecht — premiered Christopher Stark’s *ved sjøen*. Its three movements paint the ocean as Stark viewed it while living “by the sea” in Bergen, Norway. Focused around open fifths and quasi-minimalist textures, the first two movements explore high-pitched flecks interrupted by full ensemble sweeps and a slowly descending, mystical chord brew that warbles and bubbles. The final movement takes a jaunty idea from Grieg to build beautiful, shockingly spliced minimalisms. Stark has a glorious ear for color, but the quick, unexpected ending finishes the enjoyable savoring too early.

Patchwork’s contribution to the evening was the world premiere of Osnat Netzer’s *Zwang und Zweifel*, which shows the discombobulated pain of choosing between two terrible life options, either of which will rip you apart. Noa Even’s tenor sax and Stephen Klunk’s drumset are the right brand of funky noise for these distressing feelings. Netzer’s use of a huge range of extended techniques for both players — pops, rolls, whistles, and slams — grinds through many powerful timbres to create the desired tormented, rigid chaos.

The full No Exit ensemble closed with Victoria Cheah’s new *We waited for each other on aim*, which refers to AOL Instant Messenger — a chat service popular in the early 2000s. The sometimes ravishing aural aura of timed drones — buttressed by silence — successfully painted the timeless boredom and anxiety of missed digital connections.

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