

No Exit begins tenth anniversary season with trio of concerts and collaborations

by Mike Telin



2018-19 marks the tenth anniversary of the always creative new music ensemble No Exit. And they will begin their season later this week by once again sharing a stage with Minneapolis-based Zeitgeist. “I’m just thrilled that they will be joining us for these opening three concerts,” No Exit Artistic Director Timothy Beyer said during a telephone interview.

“They are they an absolutely amazing new music ensemble but they’re also great collaborators — they always bring something wonderful to the table.”

The first concert on Friday, September 14 at 8:00 pm at SPACES will include world premieres by Christopher Goddard and Cleveland-based composer Ty Emerson. The program will also feature music by Joshua Rosner, Philip Blackburn, Jerome Kitzke, and Julius Eastman.

The two ensembles will move to WOLFS on Saturday the 15th. The 8:00 pm program will again feature works by Goddard, Emerson, and Blackburn. Rounding out the evening will be Frederic Rzewski’s *Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues* and the world premiere of *North Star* by Minnesotan Alexis Lamb.

The final concert on Monday the 17th in Drinko Hall at Cleveland State University will see the world premieres of Andrew Rindfleisch’s *American Monster* for Sinfonietta and Greg D’Alessio’s *Running with the Devil* for video/audio media. The program will conclude with Frederic Rzewski’s *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* The program is part of CSU’s Cleveland Contemporary Players Artist in Residence Series.

“Andrew Rindfleisch’s piece is going to be huge,” Beyer said. “It will feature No Exit, Zeitgeist, Ars Futura, Transient Canvas, and other performers — twenty musicians in all.



“Needless to say, we’re currently experiencing a time of great turmoil and tumult in this country. People on both sides of the fence feel that their idea of America is being threatened. I know that many composers and ensembles feel like they should stay clear of taking a side, professionally speaking that is. But we at No Exit are really pleased that we can in some way play a part in giving voice to artists like Rindfleisch and D’Alessio. I think that it’s important — dare I say, American.”

I spoke to Andrew Rindfleisch by telephone and began our conversation by asking him how he was able to bring together all of the ensembles.



Andrew Rindfleisch: I had a professional relationship with Zeitgeist in Minneapolis for many years, and went to one of their collaborations with No Exit as an audience member. I was talking to Heather Barringer, one of the directors of Zeitgeist, and they commissioned me to write a new piece. She said she was interested in one that had political overtones, and would address the current state of affairs. When I began to think about it, I knew that I would need a bigger ensemble, so I thought, No Exit and Zeitgeist collaborate all the time — let’s do that. I also thought that with Ars Futura here in Cleveland, they could join us, as could Transient Canvas from Boston.

Mike Telin: What made you decide to program the Rzewski?

AR: I talked to Tim Beyer and we thought that if we’re going to have a quasi-political theme, we may as well do the greatest political piece which is Rzewski’s *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*

It will add a bit of history to the concert and it’s still a relevant work and is significant to the piano repertoire. It’s always nice to have a piece like that on the program, especially if it’s by a living composer — there aren’t that many monumental pieces by living composers. So it is the perfect centerpiece for the concert.

MT: And you’re bringing in Geoffrey Burlison to perform it.

AR: Geoffrey and I go way back to Boston in the '80s. He's just a great new music pianist and very versatile in both jazz and classical repertoire. I worked with him all through the '90s on many projects. Whenever I get a chance to work with him I love to do it.

MT: Tell me about American Monster.

AR: It's in seven movements and it's happily an unusual instrumentation including four pianos and four percussionists. It is a reflection on the current American political landscape, and my perceptions of it as an unapologetically grotesque and corrupt enterprise. The movement titles reflect different aspects of the scene although I don't mention anybody's name. The middle movement is satirical and the finale is more serious reflection.

I have written some politically motivated pieces in the past that have been inspired by events that are specific to this time, but not confined to it. They could apply to any authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian world somewhere. I have never used names.

MT: Have you composed political pieces in the past?

AR: I have. Most have been real satire, but this piece is more serious. From my perspective, it's hard to make fun of what is going on right now, whereas six years ago it was easier to make fun of this or that.

The movement titles of American Monster are:

- 1) *An Immoral Stench Wins the Day*
- 2) *The Largest Crowds in the History of the Universe*
- 3) *March of the Cowardly Sycophants*
- 4) *Interlude: Reminiscence*
- 5) *Cruelty is Fun!*
- 6) *Supporters, Friends and Loyalists: Racists, Bigots, Homophobes, Neo-Nazis, Fox News, Regular Nazis, White Supremacists, Traitors, Right-Wing Radio Hosts, the National Rifle Association, Islamophobes, Neo-Confederates, the Ku Klux Klan, White Nationalists, the Republican Party, Evangelical Christians, the National Football League, Anti- Anti-Semites, Murderous Dictators, Authoritarian Governments, and Various Xenophobes*
- 7) *Enemies: Everyone Else*

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