

CUSP Concert Series: Hynds & Patchwork (Nov. 4)

by David Kulma



After their successful first Re:Sound festival last summer, the Cleveland Uncommon Sound Project (CUSP) opened their new concert series season at the Bop Stop on Sunday evening, November 4. Featuring Aaron Hynds and Patchwork, CUSP

continued its focus on combining local acts with more far-flung artists, and deepened its connection to the noise-based tradition of new classical music.

Nebraska-based tubist and composer Aaron Hynds works as an audio engineer, so it's no surprise that his 35-minute, semi-improvised *Transformer* (2018) combines his tuba playing with electronics. During the premiere on Sunday, Hynds mixed his amplified tuba noises, ranging from low gargles to almost Dolfy-esque high squeaks, with 8-bit computer-controlled sounds — sine tones and square waves alongside distorted delays of his tuba ideas.

The result — mainly made up of short gestures, plenty of silence, and substantial sections of unsettling buzzing drones and electronic glissandos — brought some strange aural images to mind: a whale in a bathroom, a '90s-era modem trying to connect to the Internet, hearing a low-flying airplane while lying underwater, or angrily rubbing a balloon. The electronics had a mind of their own, intruding on Hynds' constantly changing, technically demanding repertoire of tuba noises.

Patchwork — Noa Even on saxophones and Stephen Klunk on drum set — is the go-to local duo for exquisitely performed complexity, and their 50-minute set featuring 3 premieres showed off their collective prowess.

Erin Rogers' brand-new *Fast Love* (2018) let loose the composer's penchant for humorous ideas filtered through elaborate noise-based means. Its section titles are

borrowed from love-titled pop songs, but the sounds Even made — only some on her baritone saxophone — were almost primal in character. Klunk's rubber-headed stick dragged across a drum head created an equally odd sound. And how Even produced her multiphonic glissando is beyond my comprehension.

Two premieres — Jeremey Poparad's *Crisp Otter* (2018) and Aaron Myers-Brooks' *Four Grids* (2018) — shared a different aesthetic. Poparad's title comes from a humorous jazz meme, while Myers-Brooks describes his short movements as distortions of rhythmic grooves. Both mix a post-bop melodic style with elaborate, metal-influenced drumming. Klunk was in his element, playing with ecstatic precision, while Even provided the necessary cool with her well-phrased, disjunct lines. Poparad's single narrative built to a powerful, exciting climax, while Myers-Brooks explored different funky, raucous, and delightfully unhinged moods.

Having previously heard the two remaining works on the program, this concert gave me the opportunity for a second listen. This time, Osnat Netzer's *Zwang und Zweifel* (2017) struck me with its moments of calm amid a surrounding storm of crazed emotion — constantly shifting, and filled with musical screams and poundings.

Hong-Da Chin's *...time was not passing... it was turning in a circle...* (2016) begins with soft wire brushes and ends with the berating of a woodblock. In between, it cycles back on itself with microtonal sax loops and regularly slowing drum gestures. Klunk's fantastic ability to change feel on a dime and Even's precise handle on the many unconventional saxophone sounds made hearing these works again invigorating.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com November 12, 2018.

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