

## Cleveland Composers Guild at Drinko Hall, CSU (Oct. 13)

by David Kulma



It was another fascinating afternoon of recent music by members of the Cleveland Composers Guild at CSU's Drinko Recital Hall on Sunday, October 13. Opening the Guild's 60th anniversary season, the concert featured chamber music by eight local composers in the usual explorative potluck format.

Scott Michal's tongue-in-cheek *Pour un Chat Mort* for solo harpsichord began the afternoon. Painting five short pictures — including a kitten on the keys, an “Insanely Short Lament” and a Ravelian “Pavane” — Michal's music in

Matthew Bickett's confident hands highlighted the pinging sound of the instrument with engaging melodic lines and pouncing rhythms.

Written for trombonist James Albrecht, James Wilding's *Ballade* fuses a melancholy and meditative opening with a frantic dance that builds to an exciting conclusion. Wilding's lush piano textures in his own hands and Albrecht's beautifully round playing gave this enjoyable work a deft reading.

Composed to celebrate answered prayers, Robert Rollin's *Eli Ata* is a set of variations on the Chassidic song *You Are My God*. The lovely tune is a constant throughout the piece within a changing, elegiac tonal context. Violinist Galo Arboleda Solorazano and pianist Caitlin Rhoades ably played this praise song.

Matthew C. Saunders wrote *And I Live With the Fiction that I Never Get Mad* for baritone Loren Reash-Henz, on a poem by Janice Reash, the singer's grandmother. Ironically meditating on how television is sadly more absorbing than a spouse, Saunders creates an emotionally impactful setting. Reash-Henz's rich tone and clear understanding

of the text, and the careful collaboration of pianist Ben Malkevitch underlined the well-considered poetry.

Focusing on a resonant diatonic universe filled with double stops, Ryan Charles Ramer's *A Simple Child* is a memorable string quartet in four sonorous movements. The composer's lovely melodies and gorgeous chords were given a healing atmosphere by the Renovare String Quartet — violinists Ann Yu and Minju Kim, violist Esther Nahm, and cellist Rebecca Shasberger.

Margi Griebeling-Haigh's *Rhapsody* for violin and piano follows the story of her daughter's and son-in-law's meeting, relationship, and ultimate marriage. The composer's luxurious Debussian sound world culminates in a virtuosic and resonant celebration. Violinist Peter Otto and pianist Randall Fusco gave an exciting and passionate performance.

*This Morning Is Beautiful* by Margaret Brouwer is an aria for tenor and piano from her oratorio *Voice of the Lake*. With a text by the composer in which her character realizes that a beautiful color on the water is actually pollution, Brouwer colorfully paints the steps from rapture through shock to a final lament. Tenor Brian Skoog sang the beautiful lines and melismas with lovely clarity while pianist John Simmons colorfully handled the rich backdrop.

Sebastian Birch's *Life in a Day* ended the concert with an amazing bang. In the sure hands of the Cavani Quartet — violinists Annie Fullard and Catherine Cosbey, violist Eric Wong, and cellist Kyle Price — Birch's three movements went from insectoid-sounding extended techniques through a beautiful paeon to an exciting, forward-driving finale.

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