

No Exit: Here and There Part 2 “Concert à la miniature”

by Mike Telin



At a time when just about everything is being scaled down, the one-hour concert sans intermission has become the norm, which is, quite honestly, a good thing. In their latest pre-recorded concert that debuted on November 27, No Exit takes things a step further. At 30 minutes in length, “Concert à la miniature” features solos and duos of five minutes or less, and the engaging diversity of the program coupled with stellar performances by members of the ensemble is a testimony to the cliché

that good things come in small packages. Click [here](#) to access the performance on demand.

First up is Kaija Saariaho’s captivating *Aure*. This brief feast of emotions is exquisitely played by violinist Cara Tweed and cellist Nicholas Diodore. The upclose, but not intrusive camera shots make the performers’ solid techniques — high harmonics in the violin and left-hand pizzicatos in the cello — as much fun to watch as they are to hear.

Introducing Betsy Jolas’ *Episode Second: Ohne Worte*, flutist Sean Gabriel says the work “challenges traditional ideas of pitch, sound, rhythm, and melody.” Written in 1977, it sounds traditional in 2021, but Gabriel’s fluid performance of this charming piece full of long, slow moving lines is a pleasure to hear.

Defined by a juxtaposition of long tones and technical flourishes, Charles Delaney’s *...and the strange unknown flowers...* for unaccompanied flute finds Gabriel in his

element. His ability to make sudden shifts in tempo and motivic sequences gives the work an attractive arc.

Speaking of arcs, *Arc-en-ciel* (Rainbow) from György Ligeti's first book of etudes, is steeped in French impressionism with colorful ascending and descending lines. And pianist Nicholas Underhill possesses the technique and imaginative mind to bring the hues of the rainbow to life. Again, the camera work captures the complexity of the piece — there's so much that needs to be said in three and a half minutes.

Underhill feverishly wraps everything up with a commanding performance of Leo Ornstein's *Sucide in an Airplane*. We hear the engine revving up with growling tremolos in the piano's low register. As if experiencing turbulence, the music is accented by pounding, often violent chords and trills until an abstract chord gradually fades into silence.

The production qualities are superb, and No Exit's artistic director Timothy Beyer brings his own understated humor to his opening remarks. Is there a better way to spend thirty minutes?

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