

**Local 4 presents an engaging variety of music
by women in final concert of *She Scores***

by Stephanie Manning



After a year with no shortage of pre-recorded performances, watching musicians play together live and unmasked — even through a computer screen — feels like a breath of fresh air.

Though there was no audience in the room, the energy was palpable as the musicians of the Local 4 Music Fund's *She Scores* concert series came together on Sunday for an afternoon of music at the Pilgrim UCC. The third and final concert of the series, livestreamed on Facebook and Local 4's website, featured works by four living women composers, each with a unique approach to contemporary music.

Each piece was preceded by a video introduction, the majority of them filmed by one of the musicians about to perform it. The exception was composer and pianist Emma Donkin, who not only introduced her piece *Incandescence*, but also performed it with flutist George Pope and clarinetist Gunnar Hirthe.

Though the acoustic at Pilgrim had a moderate echo, the microphone placements were largely able to mitigate it and create a good balance among the trio. Donkin's playing provided a steady foundation for the two woodwinds as all three players traversed fiery, contemplative, and hopeful moods across the three movements.

Preceding Donkin's piece were two captivating works by Nancy Galbraith and Natsumi Osborn. Galbraith's *Rustic Breezes*, which opened the concert, combined Baroque and contemporary elements through the use of both ostinato patterns and extended techniques. Flutist George Pope, cellist Jeffrey Singler, and harpist Emily Laurance created a great blend that accentuated the work's beautiful, pastoral feeling.

Osborn, a 2021 Oberlin College and Conservatory graduate, was inspired to create *Veiled Expanse* while contemplating the nature of dreams, as well as the works of

composer Claude Debussy and artist Salvador Dalí. Lush harp lines from Laurance supported a gentle flute melody from Mary Kay Robinson, while violist Lisa Whitfield provided an intriguing counterpoint that set up the suspenseful second section, a “nightmare” which gained intensity until a clear, solitary note from the flute cut through the clouds.

Violinist Andrea Belding-Elson, violist Esther Nahm, and cellist Jeffery Singler were joined by narrator Eric Charnofsky for the final piece, Melissa Dunphy’s *Captain Samuels Speaks To The Sea*. Charnofsky’s lines were spoken from the point of view of Samuels, a real 19th-century sea captain who commanded the clipper ship *The Dreadnought*.

Richly orchestrated for the three string instruments, the piece explores Samuels’ complex relationship to the ocean. In the second movement, the captain deems it “My Fickle Mistress,” with competing melodies from the strings that feel like waves crashing against the sides of the boat. The musicians gave their all to the celebratory dance of “Miracle Ship,” which built with joyous excitement as Samuels detailed the building of his beloved *Dreadnought*.

Charnofsky gave a passionate performance in his role as narrator, commanding the stage while he spoke without drowning out the music. Throughout it all, the trio maintained great communication, frequently making eye contact as they confidently moved the piece along.

The finale, underscored by a mournful cello line, was wistful and reflective. Reminiscing about his time as captain, Samuels laments to the ocean that the technological advancements are rendering his beloved ship obsolete. “How I long to hear your comforting whispers say to me — eternity lies ahead!”

Published on ClevelandClassical.com June 30, 2021.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)