

Cellist Darrett Adkins: solo recital on LCCC Signature Series (Sept. 28)

by Daniel Hathaway



Nothing seems to exemplify classical music during the COVID era quite so much as performances by solo cellists — often J.S. Bach solo suites, and usually broadcast online from the safe havens of musicians’ homes.

Now that live concerts are beginning to proliferate, it was delightful to hear Oberlin cello professor Darrett Adkins ring a change on the solo suite format with his *Hypersuite No. 3* on September 28 in the Cirigliano Studio Theatre at Lorain County Community College. His program opened the new season of Signature Series performances in Elyria, and was dedicated to the memory of Eva Hornyak.

The idea of the Hypersuite Series dates back to 2003, when Adkins first conflated a Bach solo suite with contemporary cello music inserted between Bach’s dance movements. Doing that, he writes in his program notes, “achieves a synergy that is both startling and revelatory,” and “makes a bold connection between modern masters and Bach’s genius.”

On Tuesday, Adkins played Bach’s sixth and final suite with interpolations by Su Lian Tan (*Langkawi: Mythology II*), Philip Cashian (*Drift*), Mislav Weinberg (Adagio from *Cello Sonata No. 1*), series curator Jeffrey Mumford (*amid pockets of billowing radiance*), and Elliott Carter (*Figment 2: Remembering Mr. Ives*) tucked in between the Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Saraband, Gavottes (I & II), and Gigue.

The idea of contrasting contemporary movements with those of JSB is pregnant with possibilities, and being of varying length and degrees of development, some of the interleavings create a stronger dynamic than others. Mumford and Carter (Mumford's teacher) added the most consequential content to the Hypersuite.

Because Adkins interrupted the progress of the Hypersuite with spoken comments after pairs of movements, you had to wonder if the conflated work might have made a stronger impression — that is, sparked more contrasts and comparisons — if the suite had been played straight through, letting the music speak for itself.

In any case, Darrett Adkins' playing was superb: controlled and flawless in execution but full of energy and emotion. And hearing Bach played live face to face beats Zooming six ways from Sunday.

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