

**Cleveland Chamber Collective:
“Travelogue” at Disciples’ (Ap. 12)**

By Kevin McLaughlin



The Cleveland Chamber Collective’s “Travelogue” at Disciples Christian Church on Sunday afternoon April 12 traced a set of journeys — some literal, some inward — across a compact, varied program. What held it together was a shared interest in motion: landscapes, folk traditions, and time itself.

Director Ty Alan Emerson was an amiable emcee, introducing each piece and serving as an efficient stage crew of one. The program’s range — captivating,

sometimes far-flung — reflected careful curation, and he deserves praise for bringing it together.

Robert Manno’s *Three Scenes from the Mountains*, written in 2012 and inspired by the view from his home in the Northern Catskills, opened the afternoon with pastoral charm. In “The Wind on the Water,” flutist Linda White, clarinetist Alix Reinhardt, and pianist Eric Charnofsky conjured the scene, the piano rippling under shifting breezes of flute and clarinet. “The Meadow at Dawn” brought a hush, with flute and clarinet trading gentle phrases as if the world itself were just waking up. “The Forest at Night” was a haunting depiction of moonlight through branches, a sense of being alone but not unwatched. Music hung in the air like mist, lingering a moment before drifting away.

A set of selections from Béla Bartók’s *44 Duos* was expertly played by violinist Emily Cornelius and violist Brian Slawta. Written in the early 1930s as pedagogical pieces, the Duos draw on Eastern European folk materials Bartók collected and transcribed. These

are not simple arrangements. The tunes are reshaped, harmonized, and sharpened into sometimes thorny little musical essays. Cornelius and Slawta approached the pieces earnestly, even when they turned playful.

In “Pillow Dance” and “Mosquito Dance,” they found humor in Bartók’s off-kilter accents and clipped phrasing. “Fairy Tale” and “Harvest Song” were more direct, the melodies speaking with minimal inflection. By the “Transylvanian Dance,” the music took on a bristly edge, the instruments locking into tight rhythmic unison. The set formed an arc: miniatures beginning in the countryside and ending in the composer’s workshop.

After intermission, the repertory turned up the difficulty. David Lang’s *Lend/Lease* (2008), for piccolo and tuned wooden batons, is a study in strict unison for two dissimilar instruments: piccolo and sticks of wood cut that morning. White and percussionist Dylan Moffitt played with astonishing discipline. The interest lies in the alignment of parts, and in how breath and wood can produce such an agreeable blend on a single line. *Vive la différence et l’unité!*

Moffitt remained onstage for the premiere of his own *Relatively Speaking*, encouraging the audience to sit in a circle onstage, around a small, amplified clock. He began seated, ocean drum in hand — a tambourine-sized frame filled with ball bearings — building an improvisatory solo against the clock’s steady tick. As the rhythms grew restless, he rose and moved around the circle.

The premise that time is both fixed and elastic was clear, but what made the piece compelling was Moffitt’s control of pacing. The clock’s pulse held its ground as his gestures stretched and contracted around it. On the ocean drum, he summoned broad, rushing sounds and crisp, percussive strikes. He returned to his seat, fingers moving with remarkable speed. The wirelessly amplified clock — its workings explained only afterward — was a sly bit of stagecraft. Moffitt’s performance was a quiet *tour de force*.

Daniel Kessner’s *Sonatina Bassa* (2008) returned the program to a familiar three-movement form, played without pause. Linda White, now on bass flute, and Charnofsky played with the ease of longtime colleagues. Kessner — marking his 80th year and once Charnofsky’s composition teacher — writes with a gentle jazz inflection. The outer movements have a relaxed mechanical tread, while the central Adagio lets the bass flute stretch out. The instrument remains rare on concert programs, but White made a clear case for it, drawing mystery and agility from its full range.

The program closed with Margi Griebeling-Haigh’s *From a Train Window* (2012, rev. 2018), a single-movement trio for violin, viola, and cello. Inspired by the shifting perceptions of a train journey, the piece alternates truncated gestures with flowing

passages. Cornelius, Slawta, and Jeff Singler suggested hesitation at the outset — short figures, brief pauses — before momentum took hold.

As the “train” settled, the ensemble found a steady pulse, lyrical glimpses flashing by amid mechanical patterns. Griebing-Haigh’s writing is descriptive but not literal. Even without the program note, it impresses as a finely made piece. As the motion slowed and textures thinned, the music eased into a calm that felt less like arrival than continuation.

“Travelogue” covered a fair amount of ground in an hour and a half. By the end, it offered not just a series of stops, but a sense of journey.

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