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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2012

Hearing Voices



[Continuum: Finding Voice](#)

October 12, 2012

[The Music Gallery](#)

Toronto, Ontario

[Christopher Butterfield](#): *Music for Klein and Beuys* (1987)

Anne Thompson: bass recorder

Carol Lynn Fujino: violin

Paul Rogers: bass

Laurent Philippe: melodica

Rob MacDonald: banjitar

Sanya Eng: harp

Ryan Scott: percussion

[Nikolai Korndorf](#): *Cazone Triste* (1999)

Sanya Eng: harp

[Linda C. Smith](#): *Brush Line* (2004)

Anne Thompson: flute

Max Christie: clarinet

Carol Lynn Fujino: violin

Paul Widner: cello
Laurent Philippe: piano
Ryan Scott: percussion
Marion Newman: mezzo-soprano
Brian Current: conductor

Martijn Voorvelt: *Frederick's Doctor* (2012)

Christopher Mayell: tenor
Anne Thompson: flute
Max Christie: clarinet
Carol Lynn Fujino: violin
Paul Widner: cello
Rob MacDonald: guitar
Sanya Eng: synthesizer

Martijn Voorvelt: *Petit Air II / Fredrich's Tagebuch* (1998)

Marion Newman: mezzo-soprano
Anne Thompson: flute
Rob MacDonald: guitar
Adrian Gross: mandolin
Sanya Eng: harp

The Continuum Contemporary Music ensemble started off their 2012 season with a strong voice. Or at least a collection of strong voices that balanced out a program of music carving out a wide path of expressive territory. Each piece was exquisitely well rehearsed and presented in a manner that allowed the ears to hear all the way inside the music. Even as the subject material would switch from haunting beauty to complete madness.

The second half of the concert consisted of the Martijn Voorvelt pieces, presented as a continuous work of musical theater. Continuum had spent the last week working directly with the composer to realize the drama *Frederick's Doctor* and their dedication to the macabre absurdity made for a flawless production of material that was often challenging and brittle. The setting of Doctor Morell Mackenzie's often graphic accounts of the botched diagnosis and surgery upon German emperor Frederick III's laryngeal cancer were occasionally a bit hard to take. Especially given Christopher Mayell's incredible dead-pan delivery. The sense of madness in his text could nearly be tasted in the back of my throat. As this gave way to Marion Newman's performance of a voice robbed of its ability to communicate, the balance of humor and despair was simply delicious. Having the flute player and mezzo-soprano delivering text in rhythmic unison was a particularly striking sonic effect. Especially as the performance transitioned to the vocalist lip-syncing to Anne Thompson whispering through her instrument. It was a brilliant set of pieces that won over my normal aversion to theatrics.

To my ears, the most stunning work on the program was Linda C. Smith's *Brush Line*. An achingly beautiful work built out of luminous, horizontal strokes of warm sounds along a cold landscape of silence. The constant reference to colors in the text added to the sense of sound painting with their vibrato-less delivery.

Cazone Triste is a virtuosic solo harp piece that gently gives way to song. Sanya Eng's voice eventually shifting into the foreground as she plays to reveal a beautiful sound. The simplicity of her voice balanced well against the confidence of her playing.

The opening work, *Music for Klein and Beuys* by Christopher Butterfield, set the whimsical-yet-serious tone that anticipated the Martijn Voorvelt experience of the second half. The combination of bass recorder, melodica and banjitar with a percussion part the often consisted of tearing and wadding up newsprint never took on a sense of gimmick as the musical textures proved to be substantive. Written as a memorial to Yves Klein and Josef Beuys, it is a wonderfully unpretentious and warm piece of art music.

Overall, there aren't enough superlatives to lavish upon an evening such as this. An inspired sequence of great pieces of music performed well. Continuum has set high expectations for the season that follows this concert.

Devin Hurd at 12:41 AM

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