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CLASSICAL: Counter)induction: moving on while looking back

By Marjorie Roth on Apr. 18th, 2007

Fans of Canadian author Robertson Davies know that a successful artwork represents a true "reconciliation of the root with the crown." On Friday, April 20, the Canandaigua Lake Chamber Music Festival offers a concert exploring that theme in contemporary music. "Homages and Overwrites," a program featuring a mix of new works in dialogue with the masterpieces that inspired them, will be performed by New York City-based chamber music ensemble counter)induction. Friday's concert initiates the second cluster of events in CLCMF's 2007 series, "Encounters with New Music."

Counter)induction is a collaborative new music ensemble consisting of five instrumentalists --- Benjamin Fingland, clarinet; Blair McMillen, piano; Sharon Roffman, violin; Jessica Meyer, viola; Sumire Kudo, cello --- and two composers, Kyle Bartlett and Douglas Boyce. According to violist Meyer, the ensemble's unusual name comes from Austrian philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend. He coined the term "counter-induction" to suggest alternatives to conventional scientific method, in order to liberate science from assumptions that hindered new discoveries. In much the same spirit, counter)induction takes an unconventional approach to the genre of chamber music. The group explores new works, new styles, and unusual instrumentations, while redefining the term "concert" to suggest dialogue and discovery, shared by audiences and performers.

But unconventionality doesn't imply that counter)induction throws old-fashioned performance values to the wind. Meyers promises that CLCMF's audiences "will hear high-energy, virtuosic performances by musicians dedicated to helping audiences perceive music in new ways." Edward Klorman, co-artistic director of CLCMF, affirms counter)induction's technical virtuosity and musical range, adding that the group is renowned for its "dynamic, engaging style of presentation, bringing audiences directly into the music by sharing the background of the works." Friday's concert, he notes, will feature two world premieres, with the composers present to discuss their compositions.

The program's first juxtaposition of old and new comprises two etudes for piano by Claude Debussy (d. 1918), and *Etude II* for clarinet and piano by Douglas Boyce (b. 1970). The thread connecting these works is the expectation that an etude will pose a special problem for the performer. Debussy's pieces offer a tongue-in-cheek exploration of pianistic technique. Etude No. 1, "Pour les cinq doigts," traces the transformation of a simple finger exercise into a somewhat nervous dance. Etude No. 6, "Pour les huit doigts," ponders the relationship of fingers to thumbs, and black keys to white. Boyce's *Etude II*, excerpted from an as-yet-incomplete set of etudes for all possible combinations of cello, clarinet, and piano, challenges the performers to enter the realm of composition, making decisions about the structure and order of events as the music unfolds.

Next comes the andante of Gustav Mahler's (d. 1911) unfinished *Piano Quartet*. Only sketches exist for a scherzo, and Russian composer Alfred Schnittke (d.1998) took up as the basis for his "appendix" to Mahler's original work. Schnittke's *Piano Quartet* is at once an independent and coherent expression of his own "polystylistic" aesthetic, and

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Counter)induction plays three concerts this weekend.



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a continuation of the late Romantic gestures and Viennese manner of its model.

Although the *Fantasiestücke* for clarinet and piano by Robert Schumann (d. 1856) are not overtly programmatic, their imaginative character was not lost on Romanian composer György Kurtág (b. 1926). In *Hommage á R. Sch.*, the listener encounters many of Schumann's old and familiar "imaginary friends" (Florestan, Eusebius, Master Raro) in the company of some unexpected new ones (Kafka and Guillaume de Machaut). Kurtág's work contains many allusions to the past, and a fine evocation of Schumann's deeply personal Romantic style.

Kyle Bartlett's (b. 1971) *Teratography* for violin, viola, cello, and piano ends the program. She describes it as "a monstrous love-child," juxtaposing her "comfortably familiar sonic vocabulary" with the "uncomfortable constraints of rock song form." Bartlett notes the "endless forward motion" of her music, and the "continuous variation following the logic of dreams, or of the breath" that marks her compositional style. *Teratography* strives to transcend the limitations of its rock-song models, but Bartlett promises to not to abandon its root --- be sure to listen for traces of The Who and King Crimson.

The **Canandaigua Lake Chamber Music Festival** presents **counter)induction** in concert Friday, April 20, 7:30 p.m., at the Canandaigua Baptist Church, 5026 North Road, Canandaigua, \$15-\$25. An interactive family concert takes place Saturday, April 21, 11 a.m., at Strong --- National Museum of Play, 1 Manhattan Square, concert free with museum admission. The group also performs a community concert Saturday, April 21, 7 p.m., at Newark Senior High School, 625 Peirson Avenue, Newark; admission is free. For more information visit www.lakechambermusic.org, or call 800-838-3006.

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