

# THE REHEARSAL STUDIO

A PLACE TO EXERCISE IDEAS BEFORE WRITING ABOUT THEM WITH GREATER DISCIPLINE.

TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2021

## Earplay Streams Premiere of “Second Survival”

Last night Earplay launched the streaming of the eighth installment in its First Mondays series of video performances. The music performed was Linda Bouchard’s “Second Survival,” which lasted roughly twelve minutes. The video was made in conjunction with the world premiere of this composition, which was written under a commission by the Fromm Music Foundation. The performance took place on March 20, 2017 at the ODC Theatre.

The music itself is a revised version of “Systematic Survival,” which Bouchard composed in 2009. The composer described the piece as “about the wonder I feel at our ability to endure and to persevere in the face of challenges – and to create unlikely systems to sustain ourselves through the journey.” This is the sort of language that usually provokes me to display the Spock-like gesture of the raised eyebrow.

The notes that Bouchard prepared for the performance fared much better when she was writing about the music, rather than herself. The piece was performed by all seven of the Earplayers, since it was scored for alto flute (Tod Brody), bass clarinet (Peter Josheff), violin (Terrie Baune), viola (Ellen Ruth Rose), cello (Thalia Moore), and prepared piano (Brenda Tom); and Brenda Tom conducted. Much of the score involves interplay between the winds and the strings, often with rhythms that seem to teeter on the edge of synchronization. The piano, on the other hand, provides a continuo of sorts, synthesizing percussive gestures with the unconventional sonorities of muted strings.

To go back to the Bouchard quote, the attentive listener is likely to respond to this auditory experience with a sense of wonder. However, the listening experience is not necessarily one of the journey that the composer had in mind. Rather, it is a panorama of highly innovative sonorities, which allows the listener to allow his/her attention to peregrinate among the sources of those sonorities.

In many respects the video facilitates that peregrination, allowing the viewer to observe who is doing what as the performance progresses. Unfortunately, that video is the product of a single fixed camera, meaning that there are significant limitations in what one sees. Tom, for example, is almost entirely obscured, visible only when she rises to play the piano from its strings, rather than its keyboard. On the right-hand side of the image, Brody’s body is clearly visible, but at an angle that takes in only the mouthpiece of his flute. Josheff, on the other

STEPHEN SMOLIAR



The author's construction of his reality of self!

ABOUT ME

STEPHEN SMOLIAR

Still trying to "liberate the mind from fear, superstition and pettiness."

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hand, is mostly obscured by Brody except for occasional glances of his bass clarinet.

My guess is that the video was not originally intended for public release, serving more as an archival document of the performance, to be consulted should another performance be scheduled. That said, I have to say I would be only too happy for such a follow-up performance to take place, since I was otherwise engaged on the evening of the world premiere. In such a context I would find this video as valuable a resource for listeners as for the performers; and, if the viewing may feel a bit frustrating from time to time, the listening experience remains thoroughly engaging from start to finish.

POSTED BY STEPHEN SMOLIAR AT 7:14 AM 

LABELS: CHAMBER MUSIC, KEYBOARD MUSIC, MUSIC

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