

NewEar gives humble accordion the respect it is due

By PAUL HORSLEY
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MUSIC REVIEW

NewEar Contemporary Chamber Ensemble

■ **Reviewed:** Saturday, Nov. 9 at
St. Mary's Episcopal Church

■ **Attendance:** 125 (approx.)

that fully "connected." That's unusual for newEar.

The best thing about the concert was the fascinating artistry of accordionist Lydia Kaminska, who made this much-maligned instrument sound more like an organ

than like something to accompany polkas.

In Chiel Meijering's swirling "No Pain, No Gain," Kaminska's left hand wove fiendish ostinato patterns while the right hand played both melody and filigree. Jan Faidley was the agile saxophonist. Unfortunately Meijering's episodic piece went overboard with repetitive patterns, to the point of brain freeze.

More numbing still was Marc Monnet's "Chansons impreuves," which featured soprano Julia Scozzafava uttering an interminable French text *one syllable at a time*, with tiny pauses between each note. Her perhaps overly "disembodied" vocal sound was accom-

panied by equally spare lines in the bass clarinet and string bass. Monnet's attempt at hypnosis through verbal fragmentation sounded more like sixth-grade French class.

Jacob Ter Veldhuis' "Insonnia," which also featured Scozzafava, set a Salvatore Quasimodo poem to splashy, dramatic and vaguely tonal gestures. It did not fashion its own musical structure on the poem, however, so that when it ended abruptly the audience didn't know whether to clap or not.

There were two premieres on the program, both by newEar members. Ingrid Stoelzel's "On Common Ground" for percussion and piano was light-hearted minimalism with episodes instead of

"process." Paul Rudy's "Scrum" — for bass clarinet, saxophone, accordion and organ — purported to be about rugby. It was fashioned around a series of loud, high trills (whistles?), the last of which bottlenecked into a long, single pitch.

I was yearning for a happy ending to this concert, but for me the drunken "Scrum" failed to deliver a coherent argument, partly because there was no audible thematic or motivic material for the ear to hold onto.

Come on, guys, we're only human. Help us out here.
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