

MUSIC REVIEW

Forget the Violin and Keyboard; Listen to the Plumbing
 Sometimes new music has a low-tech side, too.

By ALLAN ROZINS

Wak Auf

Wak Auf was premiered at the Greenwich House of Music in New York City, June, 2001. It was commissioned by the Down Town Ensemble and featured Tom Chiu on violin, Daniel Goode on clarinet, Skip LaPlante on percussion and Elise Kermani on computer.

Elise Kermani, whose graceful playing on an electronic keyboard contributed an appealing texture to the Chiu and La Plante works, offered her own "Wak Auf" after the intermission. Bach's "Wachet Auf" cantata provided the structural model for the work, although in Ms. Kermani's piece the chorales became full ensemble movements, the recitatives were short instrumental solos and the duets were exchanges between bass and violin or violin and clarinet, rather than vocal soloists. Fleeting glimpses of the Bach were heard on a recording, processed beyond recognition and used mainly as embellishment, or as part of the vivid sonic atmosphere that Ms. Kermani created.

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There is something charming about a new-music concert in which the instrumentalists are playing music that is not new music. It is a kind of musical time travel, a way of connecting the past with the present. In this case, the past is the 18th-century German cantata "Wachet auf dem Haupt der Achille" by Georg Philipp Telemann, and the present is the 21st-century New York City concert hall. The work is a collaboration between Elise Kermani, a composer and keyboardist, and Tom Chiu, a violinist. The piece is a reworking of the cantata, with Kermani's computer-generated sounds and Chiu's violin playing. The work is a blend of old and new, of tradition and innovation. It is a testament to the power of music to transcend time and space.

I. Choral

00:00
00:30
01:00 Computer

hop and generate a setting of Bach's Cantata #74a, I. Choral

01:30 (violin and bass) using low pitches, play repetitive notes done in the key center of A

VII. Choral

20:00 ICDI based on earlier duet key center of Eb

20:15

hop a V.I. cadence from part VII, Choral of Bach's #74a

20:30 Cl, Bass, Vln, computer in just intonation
 20:45 Cl, Bass, Vln on program notes and holds in unison
 21:00 In Cl, B, Vln
 21:30 Out
 21:45 In
 22:00 Out
 22:15 All in, computer begins to fade sound

22:30 No Playing
 23:45 Computer begins to fade sound
 24:00 Cl, Bass, Vln, computer in just intonation
 24:15 Vln leaves the performance space with violin and guitar
 24:30 Cl, Bass, Vln, computer in just intonation
 24:45 Cl, Bass, Vln, computer in just intonation
 25:00 Cl, Bass, Vln, computer in just intonation

24:00 END

II. Recitative (clarinet solo)

04:10 Clarinet drumming
 chorale
 bassoon
 clarinet
 of one full tone,
 and program
 using program
 key center of A.

"And at midnight there was a cry made,
 Behind the threshold cometh yet one
 in most low, and they that were ready went
 in with him to the marriage
 and the door was shut."
 -Matthew 25:10

WAK AUF
 Elise Kermani
 2001

VI. Duet

Vln.
 a gentle and specific duet speech

Cl.

17:00 Violin begins duet speech, clarinet follows
 17:30 Clarinet begins to waver in material from scene, violin enters, third time waver
 the 3 improvises lead into a section, beginning the musical work 25:00
 25:00 ending together on key center of D.

III. Duet (bass and violin)

05:30 Vln in key center B
 06:30 Bass imitates Vln
 Begin knocking sounds
 Bass and violin merge and play in unison
 06:46

IV. Choral

key center of C/D
 07:30
 07:40 Bass in
 08:40 Computer in
 hop a section from part IV, Choral
 with low scale

10:10 an string either in first solo, all the volume down
 Bass fade out
 11:30 Vln and Cl in
 13:30 Bass in
 14:30 Vln and Cl Out
 15:00 Computer loop end, Bass continues
 alone to D/G

V. Recitative

15:30 Violin solo - key center D/G
 becoming progressively more percussive