

Subject: [Fwd: REVIEW OF EDGEFEST XII Enjoyed talking with you after your set at the Firefly club. JoSz]

Date: Tuesday, November 11, 2008 8:50 PM

From: Andrew Drury <andrew@andrewdrury.com>

To: Jason Hwang <jkhwang@comcast.net>

Category: Spontaneous River

Did you get this? I talked with the author for a while after our set...  
He gives us a nice paragraph quite a ways into the article.

----- Original Message -----  
Subject: REVIEW OF EDGEFEST XII Enjoyed talking with you after your set  
at the Firefly club. JoSz  
From: "Caroline Szeremet" <cszeremet@insightbb.com>  
Date: Tue, November 11, 2008 3:08 pm  
To: andrewdrury@andrewdrury.com  
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REVIEW OF EDGEFEST XII, "RITE OF STRING", 15-18 OCTOBER 2008  
By Joseph B Szeremet

Edgefest XII began with David Lynch, Edgefest's founder, receiving a well-deserved cheer as he took the Concert House stage at 7p, Wednesday, to introduce this year's opening performance. Guy Klucevsek, new music composer and accordian virtuoso, was making his third appearance at Kerrytown. This time with a version of his Bantam Orchestra (quartet) that included three talented local musicians: cellist Katri Ervamaa, violinist Alicia Douda and bassist Andrew Kratzat. Playing compositions from his 1996 "Stolen Memories" release, Klucevsek revealed himself as a "new music" Chopin. In his previous appearances Guy, while always lyrical, had established his jazz chops. But this night's performance was pure, entrhralling poetry. The set finished with an upbeat cabaret tune sung by Monica Swatout-Bebow, whose unique voice and personality charmed the audience.

Deanna Relyea, KCH Executive Director, invited edgepass holders across the street to the furniture building for a free buffet before the 9:30p performance by Trio X. As in prior years Edgeheads and musicians were treated to a gourmet buffet and nice selection of wines and beers. Edgeheads renewed friendships from prior fests and time quickly ran out before we were back in the Concert House as Trio X took the stage.

Trio X was introduced by Bob Rusch, Editor of Cadence Magazine, who was traveling with the trio on its 10 years anniversary tour. The group had driven overnight from a performance in up-state New York and their performance at KCH was going to be recorded for later release on CIMP. Trio X is legendary reedman Joe McPhee supported ably by fellow artists Dominique Duval on bass and Jay Rosen on drums. As was announced by McPhee during the set, the trio's music is improvised on the stage. The trio does not play composed music and it does not rehearse. What it does, however, is improvise on standards. Thus, half way through an intensely rhythmic piece with a Caribbean beat we began to hear notes and lines from Sonny Rollin's "St Thomas".

Likewise McPhee led us through a maze of notes and runs that slowly revealed "Motherless Child" and "Secret Love", Doris Day's signature song.

Giving his cohorts a rest, McPhee performed a fascinating extended technique piece on soprano saxophone. While swirling the sax around, he found the instrument's harmonic resonance and then began humming in harmony. Except for the forgoing, however, the remainder of the set was lackluster. The set was relatively short and it was apparent that Trio X had less energy than past performances, probably due to its grueling travel itinerary.

Thursday's fest began at 5:30p with a "Fringe at the Edge" performance at Argiero's Italian Restaurant. Local artist Ken Kozora, a talented multi-instrumentalist, accompanied by cellist Christina Sears Etter, entertained a receptive audience with original compositions. Ken is a virtual one-man band who played a trumpet, guitar and Zen drum enhanced with a synthesizer. And Christina played a strong cello that gave the duo an appealing acoustic sound. Into this mix entered an attractive woman dancer who swirled and tap danced around the small floor space, improvising on the duo's compositions. The audience, including some unsuspecting diners, was treated to one of those rare events I would describe as "a happening". Sorry if you missed it.

The Edgeheads walked a block to the Gallery on Braun Court for another Fringe performance. Piotr Michalowski, reeds, and his frequent collaborator Mike Kouhry, violin, were joined by Chicago visitor Fred Lonberg-Holm, cello, for a set of "pure improvisation". The small gallery was filled in anticipation and the audience was not disappointed. Creating music spontaneously without composition, without rehearsal and without even a melody line is most difficult and requires more than virtuosity. This spontaneous trio easily conversed its way through several pieces and had the audience glued to their seats. At the end of this set I felt that the Fringe performances were surpassing the imported performances.

We rushed to the concert house for an 8p performance by Mark Feldman, violin, and Sylvie Courvoisier, piano. It was a highly anticipated performance by this acclaimed husband and wife duo. Feldman is a well known Zorn collaborator but his wife, a classically-trained version of Marilyn Crispell, is lesser known. The performance proved the virtuosity and composition genius of both. They performed high-energy chamber pieces with Mark burning up the strings of his axe and Sylvie plucking strings and hammering out sustained notes at both ends of the keyboard. The performance was flawless and left the appreciative audience edified.

After a short break the audience retook their seats for a performance by Tony Malaby's Cello Trio. Malaby on tenor and soprano saxophones led Fred Lonberg-Holm, cello, and John Hollenbeck, percussion, through several new compositions that allowed them to display their amazing improvisational skills. Throughout the set Hollenbeck was a dynamic force similar to Cleaver and Rainey, but he extended himself beyond the drum kit by using creatively a variety of percussive instruments and devices. Likewise, Lonberg-Holm energetically attacked the cello with a variety of techniques and his improvising genius. Malaby deserves credit for letting his partners, whose creative juices were obviously flowing, play the dominant role during this satisfying set.

Friday's first event was a 7p Fringe at the Edge performance by the Angry Ape Quintet. The quintet is composed of Danny Lochhead, alto sax; Greg Lingren, alto sax; Scott Brown, bass; and Doug Stuart, bass. The drummer

was a no-show. Once this group started playing it became apparent that its name was misleading. What the audience heard was talented young musicians playing a refreshing redux of west-coast-cool chamber jazz. The two nimble saxophonists played intertwining melody lines while the two bassists artfully strummed complementary rhythms. This well-rehearsed ensemble put on an extraordinarily fine performance, demonstrating that west-coast-cool line of jazz is still worthy of exploration. We reluctantly left the set to rush across the street to the Concert House for the next performance.

At 8p the String Trio of New York took the stage. James Emery, guitar; John Lindberg, bass; and Rob Thomas, violin, are the current members of a renowned group that has existed for 31 years. The trio played its new release on Black Saint entitled "The River of Orion: 30 Years Running". The music, composed by Emery, was haunting chamber jazz that varied between a string quartet and a swing trio sound with various twists and oddities added to suggest a mythical river. The composition and adherence to it, with limited improvisation, were the foci. The second part of the set was entitled "Journey Platz", another impressionistic work, but composed by U of M graduate John Lindberg. It drew more on the virtuosity and improvisational skills of the trio. The audience enjoyed the journey and having witnessed the new works of such accomplished artists.

Next we trekked to the Firefly Club for two performances, the first by the Edge Quartet lead by Jason Kao Hwang, violin virtuoso/composer, with an illustrious crew of Ken Filiano, bass; Andrew Drury, drums; and Taylor Ho Bynum, cornet. The pieces, played to perfection, fell within the "new music" genre, but well inside the jazz tent. Highly composed with numerous attention-grabbing changes and complexities, the pieces still provided ample opportunities for improvising by this talent-heavy crew. Special mention must be made of first-time visitor Taylor Ho Byrum who impressed veteran Edgeheads with his mastery of cornet technique. Overall it was one of the finest performances of this year's fest.

The last of the evening's performances was by the Flatlands Collective. This ensemble was led by Dutch saxophonist/composer Jorrrit Dijkstra who is currently Chicago based. The remainder of his sextet was made up of well-known Chicago-based stars: James Falzone, clarinet; Jeb Bishop, trombone; Fred Lonberg-Holm, cello; Jason Roebke, bass; and Frank Rosaly, drums. Again the audience heard highly-composed pieces played by a highly-competent ensemble with sections of improvisation, but with a Dutch impressionistic twist reminiscent of Willem Breuker. For some Edgeheads Dijkstra's occasional injection of electronica tended to diminish a performance otherwise well received, including some impressive improvising by clarinetist James Falzone.

At noon on Saturday many Edgeheads and musicians turned out for the annual Edgefest parade around Kerrytown. The weather was beautiful and the farmer's market was packed with shoppers and vendors. Cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum was the leader and other musicians included Jorritt Dijkstra, sax; James Cornish, cornet; Ken Kozora, trumpet; Jeb Bishop, trombone; and Andrew Drury and Gerald Cleaver, percussion. (David Lynch, clarinet, was a no show.) Also joining the parade again this year were students of a middle school music class who brought an assortment of percussion instruments for everyone to use. Following instructions and a short rehearsal the group struck up a New Orleans street-band sound and marched off, causing quite a stir among shoppers and pedestrians surprised by the

quality of music coming from this ragtag-looking ensemble. After stopping at three points along the way to perform improvised pieces the parade ended up back at the concert house lawn. There the participants were treated to as much Argiero's pizza as they could eat. The youngest participant was Arthur Stuart Lopatin who was only a few months old. If you weren't there you can't claim to have played along side any of the named musical greats.

Saturday evening concerts began with a 7p performance at the Concert House by Tamarindo. This was another trio led by saxophonist/composer Tony Malaby but with Norwegian Ingebrigt Haaker Flaten on bass and local favorite, now nationally acclaimed, Gerald Cleaver on drums. Unlike his cello trio performance Malaby played a more active and central role in this performance. His horn was prominent and exploring (a la Coltrane) throughout while his colleagues kept the underlying burn stoked. Flaten was so energetic that he held the audience in suspense to see if he could finish before shredding all the horse hair on his bow. He also overwhelmingly won the wet shirt contest. As usual Cleaver excelled and prodded Malaby to an outstanding performance, especially appreciated by the jazz purists among us.

At 9:30p Edgeheads and an expanded audience gathered in the second floor Kerrytown shops for the much anticipated performance by the Hamiet Bluiet Quintet. Little did we or anyone including the performers know that this performance would turn into one of those rare memorable "happenings". Bluiet brought with him from Chicago Harrison Bankhead, bass, and Fareed Hague, guitar, both renowned musicians. To supplement his ensemble he arranged for two local Congolese drummers, brothers Titos and Biza Sompas who teach African drumming at the University of Michigan, to be the percussionists. As it turned out the Sompas brought with them a third Congolese drummer. Bluiet ended up with a sextet that was weighted on the percussion side and the group had never played together. We came early and sat as the group rehearsed for the first time with the Congolese doing their traditional fast tempo drumming and Bankhead and Hague attempting to find some complementary meeting grounds. Meanwhile Hamiet tinkered with the sound system probably thinking to himself that the Congolese would follow his lead. When the performance started it quickly became apparent that the Congolese had come to play and that Hamiet and his trio would have to adapt to being sidemen to the Congolese rather than the other way around. The beauty and genius of Hamiet and his cohorts was that after a few attempts at control they relinquished it to the Congolese and the result was a spontaneous and fabulous concert that will never be repeated. Older brother Titos began loudly singing Congolese folk songs, playing a thumb harp and dancing. He then went into the audience and drew a large number on stage. In the meantime Hamiet found his groove playing melody lines from his "Africa/Island Song" (suspiciously similar to "St Thomas"). The party was going full blast at the 1 1/2 hour mark when the band stopped for a break. Hamiet and his crew were obviously pumped and eager to continue this magical party. So they were disappointed when Deanna announced that the set could not go on because the next performance was scheduled to begin at the Firefly Club. As the audience reluctantly took leave, Titos was playing his thumb harp and reciting poetry while Hamiet stood at his side like a street musician blowing supporting riffs on his baritone sax. It was an unforgettable scene.

The last performance of the fest was scheduled to begin at the Firefly Club at 11p but was delayed because the audience was on route from the Bluiet concert. After we filtered in, Prezents took the stage. Prezents appeared to be a onetime collaboration of talented equals consisting of David Torn, e guitar; Tim Berne, alto sax; Craig Taborn, keyboard electronics; and Gerald Cleaver, drums. The audience had great expectations based on the pedigree of the performers and their past performances. Although Torn was new to Edgeheads he is a renowned composer and performer. What followed was a challenging performance of electronica by Torn manipulating feedback from his electric guitar, Taborn keyboarding various synthesized sounds, Berne hard-blowing an amplified alto sax and Cleaver pounding out heavy rhythms on his drum kit. The objective apparently was to attain a high energy electronica sound incorporating saxophone and drums. This experiment worked in the sense of taking electronica into new territory but failed in connecting with the audience. The problem for the audience was that the sound was so over amplified that it became a wash and all detail was lost. I and others found that the only way we could discern notes being played on the guitar or saxophone was by pressing our fingers in our ears. It was a heroic effort but, unfortunately, did not attain the desired goal.

So ended Edgefest XII. The Edge performers and performances were at the same high level of prior Edgefests. The major improvement this year was the increasing number and quality of the Fringe at the Edge performances. The local musicians can take pride in the fact that they are performing on a par with many of the national and world class musicians who appear at Edgefest.

Deanna Relyea and the Concert House crew are deserving of kudos for all the work they did in preparing for and successfully executing this year's fest. Thanks to them the artists who perform this underappreciated art form have a great venue and Edgeheads have a haven where they can show their appreciation.

Savor Edgefest XII, but keep the ball rolling and look forward to Edgefest XIII.

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