

Review of Washington Musica Viva Performance February 5, 2005

To a sold out house at the Washington Musica Viva studio in Kensington, Maryland, Carl Banner (pianist) and Anders Lundegard (soprano saxophone) presented three engaging premiere compositions. Trio, written for Washington Musica Viva by Ulf Grahn, included the passionate young violist Kimberly Buschek. Grahn, a Swedish composer who in 1973 founded the DC-based Contemporary Music Forum and who attended the world premiere performance, said the saxophone acts as “a chameleon, sometimes sounding like the viola.” The landscape of this eighteen-minute atonal but lyric work alternates between dream and tangible reality. One hears tapping, stutter, tiptoeing, and ululation as if the composer had brought to life a primordial swamp teeming with restless fauna. Both composer and saxophonist Lundegard agree that the piece deserves another performance in order to fully develop the composition’s potential. Lundegard and Banner performed another world premier composition Pasos Gatunos by the DC-based composer Michael Strand. This three-minute tango whose name translates “catlike steps” opens with a laughing saxophone that sounds much like Klezmer music. Banner closed the evening with this call-to-dance composition as a bookend to the opening selection, Histoire du Tango by Astor Piazzola, a high-art tango composer whose popularity is growing in the underground classical world with recordings of his music by such groups as the Ahn Trio.

The third premiere, a first performance in the United States, was “Lost City” by Stefan Meylaers. Meylaers is a Belgian composer noted for his free atonality. In Lost City, the lyric composition presents as fluidly and soothingly as a lullaby. Lundegard and Banner’s performance fit hand-in-glove. Another remarkable composition on the program was George Walker’s Viola Sonata (first movement) played by Banner and Buschek. Violist Buschek proved her craft on this emotionally and technically challenging composition. Musica Viva known for its cross pollination of contemporary music with poetry and visual art rounded out the evening with a performance of an original gospel inspired song entitled “Brother” by singer-songwriter Kris Carter, an emotionally charged poetry reading of original poems by Edgar Silex, and a five minute tour by artist Marilyn Banner of her new wax and paint works based on “The Song of Songs” from the Hebrew Bible.

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