

Review**Violinist Miranda Cuckson —
CMA @ Transformer Station (April 1)**

by Mike Telin



If you don't know violinist Miranda Cuckson, you should. Cuckson, who has firmly established herself as one of the foremost interpreters of contemporary music — especially on the east coast — presented two area concerts last week at LCCC's Signature Series (March 31) and CMA@ Transformer Station (April 1). I heard the Transformer Station concert.

Miranda Cuckson, who admits to having accumulated quite a bit of repertoire, admirably arrived with not one, but two concerts' worth, nine works in total and including some of the most technically and physically demanding compositions in the contemporary solo violin canon.

Although soft spoken and slight of frame, Cuckson is a commanding performer with technique to spare. She possesses a bow arm that would be the envy of many violinists. She also has an instinctive ability for making sense out of the most abstract musical structures and conveying them to the listener. Throughout the performance her intonation was impeccable and her sound rich and focused no matter what dynamic level the music required.

All of these qualities were in evidence from the program's opening work, Iannis Xenakis's *Mikha S* (1976). Though relatively short, the piece packs a punch with its steady stream of glissandos, and like most of Xenakis's music, is very abstract. However, Cuckson aptly brought out the work's expressive qualities.

Georg Friedrich Haas's *de terrae fine* (2001) is, in a word, intense. His use of microtonality makes the work a challenging aural experience, but in the hands of a player with the interpretive prowess of Cuckson that experience became magical.

Pierre Boulez's *Anthèmes I* (1992) is a beautiful and subtle work which Cuckson performed with elegance and sparkle. And it is in complete contrast to Christopher Burns's *come ricordi, come sogni, come ecchi* (2011). Based on a work by Luigi Nono and composed as eight etudes, the atmospheric piece asks the performer to vocalize, giving the music a haunting quality. Cuckson's performance was mesmerizing.

The final work on the program, Brian Ferneyhough's *Intermedio alla ciaccona* (1986) is overwhelming due in large part to the number of notes the performer is required to play. Somehow, and without breaking a sweat, Miranda Cuckson brought the unruly piece into impressive focus. There really is a *ciaccona* lying beneath the whirlwind of phrases. This was an amazing conclusion to a stunning concert and the opportunity to hear it in the intimacy of Transformer Station's second gallery space made the occasion even more special.

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