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Music in Review



John Marshall Mantel for The New York Times

Computer laptops were among the instruments in an American Composers Orchestra concert.

By THE NEW YORK TIMES
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[AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA](#)

Zankel Hall

The development of orchestral music has always been intermingled with technological advances, as a motley assemblage of instruments has evolved into a brilliant, versatile hybrid organism. But composers continue to dream up sounds that spark mutation. On Friday night at Zankel Hall, in a program titled “Playing It UNsafe,” the American Composers Orchestra was equipped with enough wiring and circuitry to qualify as bionic.

“Additions,” by Charles Mason, offered a nearly seamless integration of electronic and acoustic sounds foreshadowed by musicians in the lobby and CD players in the bathrooms. Jonathan Dawe used fractal geometry to distort themes from “Armide,” a 1686 opera by Lully, which he reset in a futuristic postwar Iraq. The work in progress sounded chaotic and even strangely dated, despite attractive timbres that included the santur, a Persian hammered dulcimer.

For “Tender Hooks” Anna Clyne fashioned a complex interdependency among Joshue Ott, a visual artist; Jeremy Flower, a computer musician; and the orchestra, with each component affecting the others. A bustling introduction conjured brilliantly flashing stellar phenomena, and a quieter passage suggested gossamer nebulae floating to serene woodwind lines.

In Dan Trueman’s appealing “Silicon/Carbon: An Anti-Concerto Grosso” members of the Princeton Laptop Orchestra used computers to manipulate sounds made by the acoustic ensemble while adding rhythmic patter and rubbed-goblet peals. The results sounded something like a shimmering moment from a [John Adams](#) orchestral score stretched out indefinitely.

Ned McGowan, a composer and flutist, proved there’s still plenty of life in old-fashioned virtuosity with “Bantammer Swing,” a playful, athletic concerto for his unwieldy contrabass flute. Jeffrey Milarsky, the conductor, deserves immense credit for keeping a complex program running

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smoothly. **STEVE SMITH**

PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

Weill Recital Hall

[Leos Janacek](#)'s career bloomed unusually late, and he was almost 70 when he wrote his String Quartet No. 1 ("Kreutzer Sonata"). The work had fine champions at Weill Recital Hall on Friday evening in the Pavel Haas Quartet, which has enjoyed success since its founding in 2002, collecting prizes and awards including this appearance in [Carnegie Hall](#)'s Distinctive Debuts series

Based in Prague, the group — Veronika Jaruskova and Maria Fuxova, violinists; Pavel Nikl, violist; and Peter Jarusek, cellist — is named after a Czech composer who perished in Auschwitz. Its empathy for Czech repertory was immediately apparent in its performance of the Janacek quartet, inspired by Tolstoy's novella "The Kreutzer Sonata."

With full-blooded passion and finely nuanced playing, the young musicians conveyed the yearning of the opening Adagio, the urgency of its bittersweet motif and the ironic joviality of the second-movement polka. Ms. Jaruskova played the finale's violin solo, marked "like in tears," with soulful pathos.

Tears were replaced by sunshine in Dvorak's smiling String Quartet No. 12 ("American"), played with graceful charm and lilting dynamic contrast, the second movement enhanced by Mr. Jarusek's voluptuous cello tone.

The performance of [Beethoven](#)'s String Quartet in A minor (Op. 132) suggested that the group needed a little more time to grow in this work. But its encore, the Largo from Smetana's String Quartet No. 1 ("From My Life"), was another showpiece for its tonal beauty and polish. **VIVIEN SCHWEITZER**

The next Distinctive Debuts recital is on Friday at Weill Recital Hall, with the violinist Christian Svarfvar and the pianist Anders Kilstrom; (212) 247-7800, carnegiehall.org.

TAKACS QUARTET

Zankel Hall

Lucid investigations of the standard repertory have earned the Takacs Quartet a sterling reputation, and a slightly rough-hewn, earthy quality that has emerged in recent performances has made the group even more compelling. The latest reminder came on Saturday night, when it completed a seasonlong survey of Haydn's Opus 74 quartets and the three string quartets of Brahms at Zankel Hall.

Haydn, of course, is a dietary staple for any quartet; Brahms, if less ubiquitous, is hardly exotic. Much to the credit of these players, nothing sounded less than fully energized and committed on Saturday.

Intensity and drama abounded in a lively account of Haydn's Quartet in G minor ("Rider"). Edward Dusinger, the first violinist, sounded slightly strident at times but offered sweetly spun embellishments during the Largo.

Brahms, usually branded a conservative, sounds like anything but in the Vivace of his Quartet No. 3 in B flat. The Takacs players sounded suitably impulsive in its mercurial shifts and rhythmic frictions. Geraldine Walther, the violist, brought a warm, throaty beauty to the Andante and was a strong protagonist in the subsequent Agitato. Karoly Schranz, the second violinist, and Andras Fejer, the cellist, contributed with dignity and heart.

After intermission the suave pianist [Jean-Yves Thibaudet](#) joined the quartet in Franck's Piano Quintet in F minor. Swept up in chromatic themes of surging romance, the players struck an ideal balance between rigor and abandon. **STEVE SMITH**

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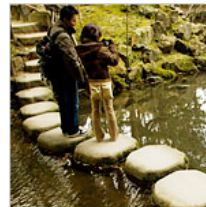


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