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Matthew Haimovitz (Amber Davis)

MUSIC REVIEW

## An evening of exploration from a master cellist

The Boston Globe

By Jeremy Eichler, Globe Staff | April 20, 2007

Contemporary visual art and contemporary classical music often inhabit strangely distant universes, even though connections between them are numerous. The New Gallery Concert Series aims to make these connections explicit by presenting the two arts in dialogue.

Founded in 2000 by the pianist Sarah Bob, it's a refreshing series of modest scale but of vivid imagination. Concerts take place in an intimate space at the Community Music Center of Boston, and Wednesday night the series hosted its first benefit, a solo performance by the cellist Matt Haimovitz. It was atypical for the series because there was no specific visual tie-in, but audiences got a sneak preview of photographs by Emily Corbató that are linked to this season's final concert on Thursday. That program features the premiere of Montserrat Torras's work "Music on Photography," inspired by Corbató's work.

Choosing Haimovitz for a benefit program sends a distinct message, as this Montreal-based cellist is one of the most adventurous classical musicians out there, and his recital was heavily tilted toward the new. That said, exploration often takes root more deeply when grounded in the familiar, and Haimovitz opened his program with Bach's D Minor Cello Suite. The playing was both expressively free and delicately nuanced, with some surprise

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pizzicato interpolations thrown in along the way.

Over the course of the evening, Haimovitz spoke with the audience in a folksy performance style he has honed over months of playing in non classical venues around the United States. Following the Bach came Ned Rorem's "After Reading Shakespeare," a demanding series of nine single-movement responses to passages from the plays or the sonnets. It's music of great theatricality, and Haimovitz responded in kind, navigating huge leaps of melodic line, sotto voce asides, and wailing soliloquies in the instrument's highest registers.

Next was an absorbing piece written for Haimovitz by Lewis Spratlan and titled "Shadow." As the composer himself explained, it plays on the idea of music casting its own shadow or hiding within one. The second movement was most explicit in its contrast of darkness with light. It is impishly titled "Rambo - Rimbaud" and transforms highly aggressive outbursts into tender music of richness and fantasy.

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Roughly two hours after the program began, and about when most recitals would be over, Haimovitz confessed he was tired. He explained that he had also been rehearsing James Yannatos's Cello Concerto. (He plays the work's premiere tonight with the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra.) So he did what just about no cellist would do in this situation: He plunged into Gyorgy Ligeti's fiendishly difficult solo cello sonata. It was an electrifying performance that showed deep fluency in this challenging musical language, surely informed by his experience of studying the work directly with Ligeti. The small audience was thrilled, and, one imagines, so were the organizers of this worthy series.

Jeremy Eichler can be reached at [jeichler@globe.com](mailto:jeichler@globe.com). ■

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