

HARMONIE (<http://www.muzikus.cz/casopis-harmonie>)

The American duo The Kenners, consisting of the phenomenal saxophonist Eliot Gattegno and the pianist and accordion player (also an able composer) Eric Wubbels, gave a recital of music by five American composers mostly of the young generation. Originally there were to have been two premieres on the program, but technical problems meant that in the end there was only one. *Tangled Loops* for soprano saxophone and piano by Jason Eckardt is based on the principle (and technique) of the loop. Irregular repetition and returns of the musical material are interlarded with contrasting musical elements. The saxophone part in particular is extremely difficult and so all eyes were on Eliot Gattegno, who in this opening piece immediately showed his excellent reputation to be justified. It was a performance worthy of the greatest admiration.

Pendulum III by Alex Mincek for alto saxophone and prepared piano was premiered at this festival recital. This piece too uses the principle of returns and repetitions (as is evident, the principle is very deeply rooted, integrated and also remarkably differentiated among American composers). The piece is conceived as monolithic, progressively rising and intensifying; the opening is based on one-tone rhythmic and timbre structures with initially timid but ever more active interjections of structures thicker in texture – these gradually come to dominate and towards the end increase in power. This was one of the few progressively, continuously graduating pieces in the whole festival program. Daniel Tacke, one of the youngest (if not the youngest – born 1985) composers in the whole program, was represented by the piece *a quiet and lingering violence* for alto saxophone, accordion and piano. The composer's rather aggressive commentary in the program brochure, ending with the sentence “There is great beauty in violence”, introduces, to one's surprise, a remarkably tranquil, delightful composition with no aspect of agitation let alone violent aggression. A cajoling basic melodic phrase continually repeats and returns in variations including the use of effective microtonal flexions. Performance of Tacke's piece brought welcome emotional relaxation for the duo after the two extremely difficult, extrovert compositions.

Clint McCallum's *In a hall of mirrors waiting to die* was also characterized in the author's commentary as exploring the emotional situations of terror, horror and morbidity generated in American film thrillers. Once again we witnessed a dazzling performance from the saxophonist, who in the introduction played extremely sustained notes produced with perfect circular breathing. Successively breaking into this come the frightening interjections of a thriller plot: like a moment of horror once experienced and still being experienced spreading out into endlessness, into timelessness, into the unbearable nothingness of human physiological time separated from timelessness by an abyss. An impressive, aggressive music as a legitimate reaction to aggression one went through. At such moments the stylistic basis of a composition is of little interest to the listener. At the end of the program the Kenners had planned to present a second premiere – a piece entitled *POS BTR* by Nicholas Deyoe. For technical reasons this was not performed and was replaced by another piece from the duo's repertoire – *Divertimento* by Charles Wuorinen. This last-minute substitute turned out to be the most problematic moment of the otherwise very well conceived program. The Kenners maintained their high standard of performance even this time – although in a piece with a rather off-the-peg style, which might be called (sit venia verbo) post-neo-classicism.

A2 (www.advojka.cz)

The American duo The Kenners, formed by the composer and pianist Eric Wubbels and the saxophonist Eliot Gattegno, was founded in 2004 and is oriented mostly on recent American composers. Their machine-precise, yet apt and sensitive interpretation aroused deserved admiration.