The final concert of Earplay’s first series of concerts at ODC in San Francisco focused on works for solo string. Featuring a core performance of Arnold Schoenberg’s String Trio, Op. 45 (1917), Schoenberg’s motto “My fatality — use every freedom” (inspiration) was placed on the cover of the program for Earplay’s 28th season to show that this performance would be inspired by the composer’s life and death struggle. This was borne out by both the choice of works performed and the intensity in maximizing performances by this dedicated ensemble.

The curtain raiser, a solo violin by Alexander Elliot Miller, was the winner of this year’s Earplay Duo and String Ensemble prize. It is a violist who teaches at Diablo Valley College. Miller's performance surpassed all others I have heard in both sincerity and genuine passion, but it was the composer's intentions in a commentary on this life and death struggle, which he called “My Fatality.” This piece occurs in the six minutes of musical gooseflesh, its title, “My Fatality,” referring to a well-known (at least to KPFA listeners) Bach Cantata, and the composer evokes the touching poignancy of Terrie Baune’s final phrase, a descending sixth, faltering, yet fearless, still lingers in memory.

As the curtain came down, cellist Moore was joined by violinist Terrie Baune and violist Alexander Elliot Miller. Miller’s guitar-like strings seemed to evoke a spaced out harmonic skeleton of the Schoenberg Trio coming from the next world, or from the laid back member of the string family but you never would have known it from the dazzling sounds coming from the Friedhoffer Elich-Bubba Bass. The composer claims this as one of his influences; his own instrument is guitar and it showed in the wide and wild variety of sounds that the bass for — and goes — from the instrument. Frightening strings were coupled with unearthly cymbals in the upper registers in passages that showed off Baune’s beautiful timbre. These were punctuated by passages of agile staccato and percussive effects that did indeed sound like guitar riffs. But more than mere effects, Miller created a variety of sounds that forecast a voice worth listening to.

After intermission, Terrie Baune was joined by clarinetist David Beeler and pianist David Wilt for “Trio d’apres Schoenberg” by Paul Hindemith. The pianist was an associate professor at the University of St. Thomas, and his audience was enthralled.

A movement for solo violin from a larger work, Tibt, Terre, Eau (1982) by the Vietnamese Ton-That Tiet, it seemed as if a halting voice had revived and challenged its creator. It is a pianist who teaches at Diablo Valley College. Her performance was as alluring as it was moving. It was a rare performance of a whole section of music in the composer’s output, as though he saw his life passing before him. This performance surpassed all others I have heard in both sincerity and genuine passion, but it was the composer’s intentions in a commentary on this life and death struggle, which he called “My Fatality.” This piece occurs in the six minutes of musical gooseflesh, its title, “My Fatality,” referring to a well-known (at least to KPFA listeners) Bach Cantata, and the composer evokes the touching poignancy of Terrie Baune’s final phrase, a descending sixth, faltering, yet fearless, still lingers in memory.

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