

GUITAR REVIEW 129

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Windstrum Duo

Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

April 24, 2004

reviewed by Paul Cesarczyk

To say that the concert given by the Windstrum Duo as prize winners of the Artists International Debut Chamber Music Award was a *debut* is somewhat misleading. Flutist Heather Holden and guitarist Bradley Colten have been active in the New York City area for some time, and are certainly not new at presenting well rounded, well executed, and well attended recitals—qualities present at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall on Saturday, April 24th, 2004. The program, an overview of contributions made to the repertoire by living American composers (Piazzolla was the exception) was beautifully crafted, at times electrifying, reflective, and always engaging.

The concert began with the evocative strains of *Barbara Allen* from Robert Beaser's *Mountain Songs*. The opening solos allowed both musicians to appear on stage as if from another world and slowly merge lyrical lines before blasting into the *House Carpenter*, a fun, jovial setting with the driving motion of bluegrass music. Sometimes subtle, at other times blatant, the colors and moods produced by the duo were always captivating and never unconvincing. In *House Carpenter*, Mr. Colten set down a superbly unrelenting ostinato texture over which Ms. Holden crafted a rhythmically vital melodic line.

Windstrum gave Duncan Nelson's *Romances* for flute and guitar a fine world premier performance. Written for the duo, *Romances* is an easy-going and charming if inconsequential work with a particularly effective last movement, which was played with wit and humor to the delight of the audience. More substantial fare closed the first half in the form of Joan Tower's beautiful masterpiece *Snow Dreams*. A minimalistic meditation on a gesture first heard on the guitar, *Snow Dreams* drew from both performers an amazing energy. This is a challenging work, but Ms. Holden's full-bodied and supple tone brought out the vigor of this nuanced and textural work.

Windstrum opened the second half with courage, giving Ned Rorem's rarely heard 1977 work *Romeo & Juliet* a dedicated and unapologetic reading. The wide emotional weave of this long and disjointed work was handled with intelligence and, most appealingly, with a mind toward structural cohesion. Mr. Colten in particular was a strong champion of the piece, gliding easily between the solo and duo sections, his sound generously filling the guitar friendly Weill Hall with an imaginative lyricism. Finally, two movements from Piazzolla's *History of the Tango*, *Café 1930* and *Bordel 1900*, came alive with vibrant and colorful phrasing to close out the recital. The slower *Café* was infused with a mix of sensuality and thoughtful elegance. Although it opened on shaky ground, it didn't take long for the duo to regroup and conclude the concert with the earthy ferocity of *Bordel*. The encore, a slightly off-beat arrangement of *Tico-Tico* brought the capacity audience to a well deserved standing ovation. GR