

## MUSIC REVIEW

# Women's Works and a 'Tempest' at Bargemusic

By Allan Kozinn

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The neoLIT Ensemble, founded in 2008, is one of the newest additions to the parade of contemporary-music groups in New York. Like most such ensembles, this is a flexible bunch: the full roster includes mezzo-soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano, with the musicians playing in whatever combinations their programs demand. At Bargemusic on Wednesday, the group performed without its singer.

NeoLIT also has a specialty. All its players are women, and as its program biography puts it, the group is “especially devoted to the presentation of works by women composers.” But that is evidently not an exclusive mandate. Though the program it originally announced was devoted fully to women, a last-minute change brought Paul Moravec to the lineup and gave over the entire second half of the program to his “Tempest Fantasy.”

Even so, the first half offered music by six composers working in a variety of styles. The opening piece, Alexandra du Bois's “Soleil sur Mer” (2007), was commissioned by Bargemusic, and Ms. du Bois paid tribute to the floating concert hall by naming both movements barcarolles, after the gently rocking 19th-century boat song form.

Actually, neither movement sounds much like a classic barcarolle, and the two bear little similarity to each other. The first, subtitled “Brouillard” and meant to evoke fog, is slow, gloomy and not especially memorable. The second, “L'Été,” is bright-hued and lively, with a birdsonglike theme that stays in the ear.



neoLIT Ensemble, a contemporary music group, with the cellist Aminda Asher, above, in a program at Bargemusic last week.  
Stefan Cohen for The New York Times

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's *Divertimento* (1983) for flute, clarinet, violin and cello begins and ends with gestures bearing Beethovenian echoes, but within that frame the music is vital and inventive. The second movement in particular, a vigorous *Allegro*, begins with a rhythmically steady pizzicato figure, shared by the violin and cello; the flute and clarinet briefly weave an inviting line around it.

Ms. Zwilich's work presented an updated, freewheeling look at Neo-Classicism. Barbara S. Buckley's *Quintetta* (1953) offered a purer view, its three movements carefully chiseled and beautifully compact.

In "Dust" (2001) Belinda Reynolds used spare, dark-hued cello and clarinet timbres to create a starkly meditative memorial to the victims of the attacks of Sept. 11. Erin Svoboda, the clarinetist, and Aminda Asher, the cellist, gave a beautifully focused, melancholy account of the score. Amelia Lukas, the flutist, played "East Wind," Shulamit Ran's gracefully chromatic 1987 showpiece for solo flute, with a fine balance of virtuosity and poetry.

The first part of the program ended with Tania León's "Parajota Delate" (1988), a rhythmically zesty vignette in Ms. León's signature blend of folkish and formal styles.

Mr. Moravec's "Tempest Fantasy" (2002), the work for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 2004, is based on the Shakespeare play and uses its central characters Ariel, Prospero and Caliban as the subjects of the first three movements, with

“Sweet Airs” and a Fantasia filling out the set. Mr. Moravec’s writing is always accessible and transparent, and the ensemble responded to its easygoing, picturesque charms with a cheerful, energetic performance.