

Composing Under the Radar For Orchestra and Imagination

Absolute declarations are a dangerous business, but it seems safe to say that Louis Andriessen is the world's best-known living Dutch composer, maybe even the best-known Dutch composer, period. Mr. Andriessen, who now occupies the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall, has been one of the most influential figures in contemporary classical music since the

MUSIC REVIEW

STEVE
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mid-1970s, a point made by the American Composers Orchestra in a concert just over a week ago, kicking off a Carnegie Hall series in Mr. Andriessen's honor.

That those points don't automatically equate with popular recognition was evident during a concert the excellent ensemble Asko/Schoenberg presented in a Zankel Hall that looked barely half full on Friday night.

Reviewers tend to shake their heads in remorse when esteemed artists are neglected. The real pity here, though, was not that a critic's sense of rightness was thwarted but rather that an explosive display of virtuosity, imagination and wit was seen and heard by so few.

Mr. Andriessen's "Zilver," which opened the program, was unusually direct. From an opening motif in which a gleaming flute line ascended over contrary peals on a vibraphone, the work played on the tension between stately chord progressions and unpredictable, increasingly brisk rhythmic outbursts.

A Dutch taste for extravagant comedy, dry and otherwise, came in Martijn

The Andriessen series concludes with a performance by Ensemble ACJW on May 10 at Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall, (212) 247-7800, carnegiehall.org.

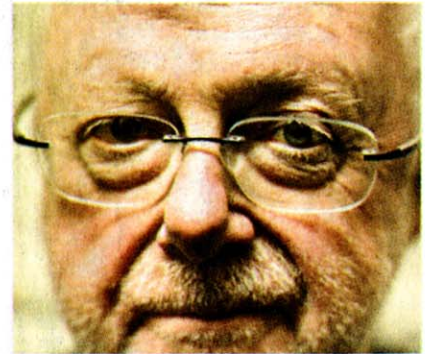
Padding's First Harmonium Concerto. Dirk Luijmes put the wheezy keyboard instrument through its paces in the three-movement piece, huffing through Bachian finger exercises and somber lines while surrounded by a dizzy clamor enacted with breathtaking economy and precision.

In the first movement a synthesizer produced a junk-box ruckus worthy of Spike Jones. Percussion effects redolent of gastrointestinal distress made the second movement sound like the woozy aftermath of a bad Italian meal lubricated with too much cheap red wine. A snare drum's patter and exuberant trumpet whinnies enlivened a perky finale; in one hurtling upward run Mr. Luijmes literally ran out of keyboard.

Reinbert de Leeuw, who elsewhere conducted, played piano in his "Im Wunderschönen Monat Mai" ("In the Lovely Month of May"), a cycle of 21 Schubert and Schumann songs ingeniously reworked for singing actress and ensemble. Named after the first song of Schumann's "Dichterliebe" (Op. 48), Mr. de Leeuw's cycle intentionally alludes to Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire," whose prickly opening motif appeared as a sleepy cocktail-piano riff at the start.

The German actress Barbara Sukowa crooned, cooed and otherwise declaimed in a manner closer to Lotte Lenya's world-weary affectation than to Schoenberg's arch Sprechstimme. With broad strokes and flamboyant gestures Ms. Sukowa ably conveyed a dramatic arc. But printed texts provided for the songs — mostly familiar selections from "Dichterliebe" and Schubert's "Winterreise" — were useless in a room darkened to allow for moody stage lighting.

Afterward some audience members sprinted up to Weill Recital Hall, where



CHAD BATKA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Louis Andriessen *Works by this Dutch composer were featured on two Carnegie Hall stages on Friday evening.*

they mingled with downtown-nightclub habitués for performances by the Dutch vocalist Greetje Bijma and the English saxophonist Evan Parker, presented as part of the Andriessen series.

Ms. Bijma, to put it simply, is among the world's most marvelous singers, with a limitless imagination, razor-sharp reflexes and peerless control. Accompanied by Mr. Andriessen's basic but spirited piano playing, she ranged through spontaneous mezzo-soprano arias with stratospheric asides, flamboyant folk songs in invented languages and uncanny duck honks and chipmunk chirps. During one selection Ms. Bijma evoked both the parched sound of Billie Holiday's later years and a warm, sympathetic muted-trombone obbligato. The brevity of her set was its only cause for regret.

Mr. Parker followed with unaccompanied soprano saxophone improvisations, using circular breathing techniques to whirl tiny melodic and rhythmic cells at inhuman length. Though daunting at first, his needle-tipped pinwheels reward close attention. Under their monomaniacal surfaces, constant shifts of timbre, density and overtones conjure worlds teeming with life.