

Review by Colin Clarke

WILLIAM GOLDSTEIN *Victims and Heroes. Andrea's Three-Note Musical Portrait. Survivor—Tlalit's Three Notes. Dancer in White* ². *Berlin Scherzo* ¹. *Seeking Cosmos. Danse Fantastisch* ¹. *Invention Romantique. A Prayer* ¹. *Eternal Hope* • William Goldstein (pn); ¹ Guy Braunstein (vn); ² Hanna Korostelova (dancer) • WILLIAM GOLDSTEIN no catalog number (Streaming audio: 45:45) Live: Rykestraße Synagogue, Berlin 1/20/2024. Available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ0-hnLqKts>

William Goldstein's real-time compositions have always been impressive. Most recently, I considered his *Musical Portraits* (*Fanfare* 47:2); previous to that, there was the original soundtrack to *Hero in the Family* (*Fanfare* 45:5), and music to the films *Fred Jiissi—The Beauty of Being* (46:5), *Remembering Mariupol* (45:6), and *Brushstrokes: The Intersection of Art & Music* (45:5). Goldstein's ability to bring his music to a variety of situations, whether film, art, or remembrance, adds a very human, indeed humane, aspect to his activities.

Goldstein in Berlin: A Real-Time Concert was given in front of a packed house of some 1,200 people at Berlin's Rykestraße Synagogue in January of this year. Intended as a German statement of support for Israel in response to the attack of October 7, 2023, the concert was organized by Florian von Heintze and the Jüdische Kulturtag Berlin / Jüdische Gemeinde Berlin (Avi Toubiana, Artistic Director). The concert is also available as videos on YouTube, which includes a danced component by Hanna Korostelova; the host for the evening was German actress Andrea Sawatzki, who also at one point picked three notes on the piano, from which Goldstein immediately composed her musical portrait. Violinist Guy Braunstein, former concertmaster of the Berliner Philharmonic, also contributed, as did one of the attack survivors, Tlalit Kitsoni, who again, like Sawatzki, picked three notes as a basis for a new piece. Only the last three tracks, *Invention Romantique*, *A Prayer*, and *Eternal Hope*, were not created in real time.

The first track, *Victims and Heroes*, immediately sets up an opposition in the most simple of ways, via ascending and descending scales. Goldstein can bring disparate elements—scalic, chordal, tonal, post-tonal—into one piece, and yet it all speaks convincingly. His instrument, too, is clearly a fine one: perfect in its high register, beautifully in tune, and with a bass capable of the most rock-like foundations. There is beauty here, yes, but a power beneath as well. It is always remarkable how the pieces emerge fully finished; the close is perfectly judged. The piece was inspired by projected images.

Those three notes picked out by the host bear fruit in *Andrea's Three-Note Musical Portrait*, a harmonically bittersweet piece that reaches almost Lisztian proportions of grandeur at its climax before melting into the most beautiful coda. *Survivor—Tlalit's Three Notes* is inspired by Tlalit Kitsoni's story as a survivor of the October 7 attack. Unsurprisingly, this piece is beautifully poignant and restrained, both heartfelt and heart-wrenching in equal measure.

Goldstein's pianism is fine indeed. The way he articulates the different strata of *Dancer in White* is particularly impressive in a sonic-only format. On stage, Goldstein explained that this was a new concept for both himself and dancer Hanna Korostelova, with no rehearsal. "It's going to be beautiful, you'll see, whatever it is," he says, and it is. The piece stands perfectly on its own, but the layer of beauty of movement is a definite plus. Another collaboration is in *Berlin Scherzo* with Braunstein, with shades of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* for sure. Braunstein plays with great authority, as one might expect; as a collaborative composition the work is remarkable, demonstrating two minds absolutely on the same metaphorical page. The emergence of full-fledged virtuosity from Braunstein is simply glorious, as is the way that melts into whispered Romanticism. The Braunstein/Goldstein collaboration continues with *Berlin Serenade*, which succeeds not only because of its on-the-cuff melodic invention, but because of how the two musicians respond to each other's subtle shifts of melody and harmony. Braunstein truly is a master of his instrument, and this surely is the perfect chamber music, born of the reciprocal joy of musical creation itself.

The solo piano work *Seeking Cosmos* begins, like the first piece, in a simple, scalic fashion (now slower), but expands outwards nicely in a neo-Romantic, almost filmic way. The appearance of an homage to Bach towards the end is a nice touch. In contrast comes the spikier, again somewhat Stravinskian, *Dance Fantastisch*, once again with Braunstein as co-creator. The close of the piece is mesmeric, almost on the boundary of audibility and perfectly controlled by both players.

The final three pieces are all short. An *Invention Romantique* for piano begins like so many inventions of the past (Bach is presumably a primary influence), dipping into and out of Goldstein's own plusher harmonies from time to time, and brilliantly performed throughout. For violin and piano, *A Prayer* begins like a slow sarabande, beautiful and proud, before the turn to *Eternal Hope*, Goldstein's rousing concluding gesture for solo piano.

This is a fascinating concert, varied, inspiring, and born from deeply humane inspiration. **Colin Clarke**

