

**GOLDSTEIN Live Scoring to Fred Jüssi – The Beauty of Being • William Goldstein (pn) • NEW GOLD 0100** (Download: 63:43) Live: Arvo Pärt Centre, Tallinn, Estonia 11/21/2022. Distributed by theorchard.com

Filmed at an Industry@Tallinn&Baltic event, “Music Meets Film,” part of the Black Nights Festival, this album—titled *Goldstein in Tallinn: Creating the Score Live in Concert*—was William Goldstein’s live scoring to the film *Fred Jüssi – The Beauty of Being*. Not just that, Goldstein was seeing the movie for the first time while creating his score. Previous experiences with this composer have been positive: the fabulously entertaining original soundtrack to *Hero in the Family*, the brilliant Goldstein/Pei-Wen Liao collaboration on the New Gold label (both *Fanfare 45:5*, the latter a celebration of *chinoiserie*), and *Remembering Mariupol* (also on New Gold, reviewed in 45:6).



The film is impossibly beautiful, not only in its actual filmic imagery but also in its messages. The narrator talks of how we all as humans have our individual paths to take, and we see birds flying free, and the snaking course of a river through a forest from above. Jüssi claims to have no goals in life: Instead, he trusts his course; or as he puts it, he follows the chime of his inner ear. He meditates on silence, and what it means to different people (and how complete silence can take one to a very different state of mind), and on finding what is “truly yours” amidst Nature’s glory. Jüssi hears music in the sounds and speeds of flow of rivers; he sees a cosmos in a droplet of water and realizes that he, too, contains universes. “My church is the forest,” he says; the importance of seasons also is emphasized, as is Nature’s obverse side of storms and destruction. Meditations on moonlight are similarly evocative: “Moonlight contains all the moonlit nights of my conscious life,” he says. Inevitably, perhaps, there are meditations on death, especially through the prism of a childhood experience, and a vision of and a later meeting with a Wise Woman who helped him understand the vision’s significance. How a society treats Nature, he says, speaks volumes about it as a society; this appears to be part of the film’s core message.

Here, we have an improvised film score by William Goldstein: The event in Tallinn, Estonia, focuses on creating music in real time. It is somewhat unique: Gabriela Montero did something similar at the 2021 London Piano Festival to Chaplin’s 1917 film *The Innocents*. However, Montero’s performance was to a film to which she had previously improvised, also using some known material mixed in with her original scoring. Goldstein, on the other hand, sees the film for the first time, starts playing with the first frame of picture, and creates a completely original 65-minute score in 65 minutes.

Another difference is that Goldstein likens his process to conversation (in an introduction to his Tallinn performance as viewed on YouTube). Goldstein basically translates his feelings in response to the film into music. Prior to the film, he had seen only one minute of footage to get a “feel” for it, and nothing more. The Internet Movie Database (IMDb) describes Jaan Tootsen’s film about Fred Jüssi as being “about fruitful idling. A hymn for living slowly. As Fred Jüssi puts it: sometimes you just have to be sinfully slothful, and all by yourself.” Whereas in the film we hear a soundtrack, in the release we hear only the piano music, so we miss the beauty of the language and indeed some electronic effects. That said, what we gain is the clarity of Goldstein’s thought. So, in the opening of “The Beauty of Being,” he opens up a vast pitch of space from high to low, which he fills with music that is haunting and reflective. Whenever the bass tolls we are taken back to that opening, but recontextualized into a warmer environment.

The piano is beautifully caught; the crystalline sound around three minutes in is simply lovely as a pure sonic experience. The title of the next movement, “At the Arvo Pärt Centre,” hardly conveys the hopeful beauty of the music. Goldstein’s music of this ilk seems to encapsulate the film’s question of “What is this light we live in?,” while “Environmental Immersion” takes us indeed to something of an immersive sonic space. There is something tentative about the opening of the “Spiritual Reflections,” and something markedly Debussyan as the music progresses (even to the extent of some implied distant “bells”). Single-line melodies glisten for “Under the Moonlight.” This new simplicity to Goldstein’s music is most effective. A Chopin nocturne-like aura enfolds the penultimate “Philosophic Poetry” before “Meditation and Awakening” finds a place of ineffable peace.

While the original soundtrack, as it were, as presented here is beautiful, and it is clear Goldstein is incapable of making an ugly sound on a piano (his touch is glorious), the full-film experience takes it to another level. This is serene, lovely music, played by a master. There is something positively immersive about the experience.

**FANFARE: Colin Clarke**