



CONTEMPORARY MUSIC REVIEW

"Cozy Concert for Climate Concerns"

Sara Jobin

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Truth Is Inconvenient, Music Isn't

By Janos Gereben

... and then there was the concert against carbon dioxide.

Inspired by Al Gore's (and now Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's) environmental campaign, and the film [An Inconvenient Truth](#), opera conductor Sara Jobin and environmentalist Monisha Mustapha have organized the "Cozy Concert for Climate Concerns," an impromptu musical celebration of the national campaign for "cutting carbon dioxide 80 percent by 2050." The series began on Saturday evening, in San Francisco's First Unitarian Universalist Church.



**Musicians and the Audience
at the "Cozy Concert for Climate Concerns"**

Unusual as this concert was, its quick and sudden creation seems just as noteworthy. But Jobin had no choice in squeezing calls, invitations, programming, and rehearsals into a handful of days. The concert had to coincide with the April 14 national "Climate Action," organized by [Step It Up](#). The next event in the series is scheduled tentatively for July 7, on the occasion of the "7/7/07" Live Earth Initiative.

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The composers of the works on the program had time for more leisurely preparation, Jobin having "invited composers to submit entertaining and educational songs about global warming" in advance. There were five works presented, but the campaign continues, and there will be more to come. Performed before a small, but affectionately supportive audience, the concert featured a couple of agit-prop pieces, but others that were only vaguely or not at all connected with the theme. Mustapha explained that just as Gore offered "an alternative to denial or despair" in facing up to the consequences of global warming, the concert brought together like-minded people in a community of listeners sharing a musical experience.

The *Fashion God Blues*

The concert's most enjoyable work had a somewhat tenuous connection with the environment, sustainable only if Hurricane Katrina's devastation and the pitiful federal response can be linked to global warming. Brian Holmes' *Fashion God Aria* takes its text from e-mails and Congressional testimony by former FEMA Director Michael Brown. A vigorous, rollicking piece, reminiscent of a Victorian music hall, the song got a terrific performance from baritone Dale Murphy, backed by Holmes on French horn, Jobin on piano, child prodigy Nathan Chan on cello, and — yes — audience participation. Fighting global warming musically *can* be fun.

The more nonindulgent pieces came from Bill MacSems (*A Global Warming Quandary*) and Janis Dunson Wilson (*There Will Always Be Kids*), performed by mezzo-soprano Alexis Lane Jensen and Jobin. Berkeley composer Clark Suprynovicz offered three pieces of brilliant melancholy, a kind of measured heartache, from *Global Warming: Duets*, performed by soprano saxophonist Georgianna Krieger, with Lara Bolton handling the rather overwhelming piano accompaniment.

The last piece on the concert, entertaining but not germane to the issue (or anything else), was D.C. Meckler's *Mining Song*, set to a text from an English-language dictation program's attempt to deal with the original German of Heine's *Dichterliebe*, poems set to music more felicitously by Schumann.

Future concerts are in the works, and, if there is a deviation from the strictly local nature of this event, perhaps R. Murray Schafer's *Music for Wilderness Lake*, a prominent piece of "environmental music," will be on the program. Jobin & Co. would have their hands full with that one: Performed by 12 trombonists positioned around the shore, the piece is conducted from a raft in the middle of the lake, wildlife contributing to the work at random.

(Janos Gereben is a regular contributor to *San Francisco Classical Voice*. His e-mail address is janosg@gmail.com.)

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