

International cast

NEW YORK Not one of the players at an October concert of Finnish music was Scandinavian, but that didn't stop them from giving a memorable performance. **Dennis Rooney** reports

In between the first and second programmes described above I heard an all-Finnish programme in Scandinavia House's Victor Borge Auditorium (17 October), played by five musicians from the Sonos Chamber Orchestra: violinists **Jorge Ávila** and **Shih-Hung Young**; violist **James Hogg**; and cellists **Katherine Cherbas** and **Peter Sachon**. All are New York-based freelancers. Not one is Finnish or even Scandinavian. Furthermore, it was their first joint appearance as a chamber ensemble. If it was a tryout, though, it must be counted a successful one. The programme was challenging, with two North American premieres. Einojuhani Rautavaara's quintet *Les Cieux inconnus* (1997) had four unmarked movements (in effect, Allegro, Adagio, Moderato and Allegro) cast in an extremely listener-friendly style tinged mostly with Gallic hues but also having some Hindemithian pages. It was the best-played work on the programme. Pehr Hendrik Nordgren's two-movement Quintet op.110, cast in two Adagio movements, the second of which is substantially longer, has a far more forbidding musical visage. Rhythmically and texturally complex enough to require a conductor (Sonos's Music Director, Erik E. Ochsner), the work betrayed little overt desire to entertain. Cherbas was cellist in Sibelius's *Voces intimae*. Her warm, full tone anchored the ensemble with distinction. It was a tonally mellifluous foursome but will gain in both elegance and brilliance as they continue to play together. As it was, their expressive good intentions were undermined by small lapses in pitch and accent.

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