

**Mark Kaplan, Violin & Yael Weiss, Piano**  
*new music at the National Gallery of Art in DC*

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**Violinist Mark Kaplan**

Violinist Mark Kaplan and his estimable pianist-collaborator Yael Weiss were at the National Gallery of Art on Sunday for the first of a three-concert series presented in honor of the museum's current Jasper Johns exhibition. For their program, they chose 20th-century music of Roger Sessions, Joel Feigin and Elliott Carter that, in one aspect or another, reflected Johns's artistic beliefs that the process of creation itself gives art its meaning and that common objects can be worthy subjects.

In the common-objects camp were the first two pieces. Sessions's Duo for Violin and Piano in four movements of alternately sweet and bouncy but always accessible music just toys with dissonance. Feigin's more adventurous "Veränderungen" ("Transformations"), a threnody for a departed friend with its programmatic depiction of the process of death, is couched in an almost classical structure of variations. Kaplan and Weiss approached both of these with a light, almost distant touch that preserved, with transparent textures and rhythmic momentum, an aura of serenity.

Carter's 1974 Duo for Violin and Piano is squarely in the-composing-process-justifies-itself camp. He has assigned one set of intervals to the violin, another to the piano. At no time do the two instruments attack a note at the same time (although their sounds overlap), and the violin plays the part of a free spirit while the piano keeps the music anchored in space and time. It's not an easy piece to listen to but it's never uninteresting, and Kaplan and Weiss played it with the kind of comfortable coordination that projected a sense of both freedom and control.

The concert was performed in the gallery's East Building Auditorium, whose splendidly warm and intimate acoustics were a welcome change from the echoes of the usual Garden Court venues.

-- Joan Reinthaler