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## Don't Miss Another Soundings, The City's Most Surprising Classical Music Concerts

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By Wayne Lee Gay



Real life couple Marina Piccinini and Andreas Haefliger.

*Courtesy Nasher Sculpture Center*

Flutist Marina Piccinini made clear from her opening comments where Friday night's concert downstairs at the Nasher Sculpture Center was headed: toward those twelve minutes of ear-splitting energy otherwise known as Boulez's *Sonatine for Flute of 1946*.

Getting there was half the fun, in a program which was part of the always thought-provoking and memorable Soundings series, now in its fifth season of shattering pre-conceived notions of what classical music is—and doing so barely a block away from the bastion of traditionalism represented by the Dallas Symphony.

Italian-American Piccinini and her husband, German-Swiss pianist Andreas Haefliger, both renowned advocates of new music, looped around their destination of Boulez with an intriguing mix of (mostly) twentieth- and twenty-first-century music, beginning with the *Scrivo in Vento* ("I Write on the Wind") for flute alone, composed in 1991 by the venerable American champion of academic esotericism, Elliott Carter, who died in 2012 at the age of 103. Typical of Carter's output, this six-minute essay for flute alone makes no concession to immediacy or to the comfort and expectations of the listener, with manic swings from serenity to almost shrieking passion. Haefliger and Piccinini then turned to the Nocturne for

flute and piano of contemporary French composer (and Boulez protégé) Marc-Andre Delbavie, a work built around patterns and repetition in its evocation of the mystery and, well, creepiness of the night. Prokofiev's monumental *Flute Sonata of 1943*, in which one can easily hear echoes of both Prokofiev's radiant score for the fairy-tale ballet *Cinderella*, which he was also working on at the time, and the catastrophic war raging just a few miles away.

While Piccinini and Haefliger had bounced meaningfully around various forms of modernism before intermission, they cast their net a bit wider after intermission, beginning with British composer Thomas Ades' "Darknesse Visible" for solo piano from 1992, an intriguing reimagining of a gently mournful lute-song of English Renaissance composer John Dowland. Ades initially relies here on simply spreading the notes of the original on distant reaches of the keyboard to create an aura of dissonance and disjointedness, before moving on to a more subtle and convincing meditation. The duo moved without pause into the echt-romanticism of nineteenth-century French composer César Franck's famous Violin Sonata in A, here transcribed for Flute and Piano by Piccinini. Stylistically, this made sense, providing a detour into the opulent passions of the late nineteenth century before the explosion of the Boulez; in practice, one couldn't help longing for the dizzying breadth of the violin for which this music was intended, however wonderful Puccini's virtuosity as a flutist proved to be.

The duo finally arrived at the promised destination of Boulez's *Sonatine*, delivering that maelstrom of dissonance with satisfying brilliance. Based on a mathematical precision undetectable to anyone but a musical Einstein, the *Sonatine* may strike the listener as either intensely emotional or as completely devoid of emotion. Sixty years after its premiere, Boulez's music is no longer the undisputed music of the future, but one of many strands in what is, for all its problems and challenges, a marvelously eclectic musical universe. To hear a live performance of this seminal work was, however, one regards the music, an event worth experiencing.

Piccinini and Haefliger performed with tangible and remarkable devotion and virtuosity throughout the monumental program, their performance only slightly flawed only by Haefliger's tendency to occasionally, very quietly, hum along—an intrusion on the composer's text and the listener's attention that he should cure ASAP. This hardly undermined the powerful and thoughtful statement the program on the whole produced.