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## Where Composers Lend Their Voices

By **ALLAN KOZINN**

The American Composers Alliance, founded in 1937 by [Aaron Copland](#) and others, publishes new scores, maintains an important archive of American music and provides other forms of support for composers and new music. But its public face is the annual festival it has presented at [Symphony Space](#) since 2000: a lively, dogma-free celebration of mostly recent work by composers old and young.

The [ACA June Festival 2010](#), inexplicably called "Sudden Music," opened on Tuesday with a staging of John Eaton's "Curious Case of Benjamin Button." But multiple-composer programs are the meat and potatoes of this festival, and at the Leonard Nimoy Thalia Theater on Wednesday evening, three groups — the [Wet Ink Ensemble](#), [Lunatics at Large](#) and the [Kolot Ensemble](#) — offered a pleasingly eclectic program, including works by seven composers, each in a different style.

Several composers performed as well. [Kate Soper](#), who sings with the Wet Ink Ensemble, presided over her "Door" (2007), an exquisitely quirky setting of six poems by Martha Collins. Ms. Soper's vocal lines combine a childlike lightness and playfulness with a modified form of Sprechstimme, and her accompanying ensemble — electric guitar, saxophone, flute and accordion — alternately follows the vocal line and envelops it in inventive, contrapuntal textures.

Ms. Soper and a differently configured Wet Ink (this time piano, accordion, clarinet, flute, saxophone, violin and percussion) also performed Matthew Welch's "Symphony of Drones, No. 1" (2001), with Mr. Welch conducting. The work's title is appropriate in the sense that each of its movements is built on a steady underlying pitch or chord. But it is also misleading: anyone

lulled into expecting a proto-Minimalist meditation would have been startled by the wild, amusingly cacophonous outbursts that drive the piece.

Lunatics at Large, a more staid ensemble than its name implies, kept the neo-Romantic interplay in Raoul Pleskow's bracing "Dialogue for Piano and Three Instruments" (2009) firmly in focus. In Frederick Tillis's "Spiritual Fantasy No. 8, 'Go Down Moses'" (1984, revised 2009), a piano trio, the group deftly created the sense of atmospheric mystery as Mr. Tillis dissected and explored the popular theme.

Mark Zuckerman's "On the Edges" (1996), a solo piano work given a vigorous reading by Peter Vinograd, applied an almost ragtime sensibility to Bachian themes and suggested an otherworldly common ground between those distant influences.

"On the Edges" was the program's only solo work, unless you count a short electronic tape piece, Robert Fleisher's "Loretto Alfresco" (1970). Dating from Mr. Fleisher's teenage years (he was born in 1953), "Loretto Alfresco" is endearingly low-tech: its sounds are drawn entirely from recordings of a friend striking pots, pans and other items, which Mr. Fleisher sped up, slowed down and overlaid to create a rich, tactile texture.

The Kolot Ensemble closed the program with Clarice Assad's "Cirandada, Clássicas Cantigas" (2010), a vibrant, gear-shifting fantasy on Brazilian melodies and dance rhythms. Ms. Assad, a charismatic singer, led the ensemble, with support from Keita Ogawa, a percussionist clearly versed in the nuances of the styles Ms. Assad touched on.

*The festival runs through Saturday at the Leonard Nimoy Thalia Theater at Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway, at 95th Street; (212) 864-5400; [symphonyspace.org](http://symphonyspace.org).*