

NEW YORK MUSIC DAILY

A Far Cry Bring Their String-Driven Elegance Back to Central Park Under Friendlier Skies

by delarue

A little over a year ago, [A Far Cry](#) played the first [Naumburg Concert](#) since 2019, to relaunch the annual series of Central Park performances which had run uninterrupted for 114 years until the 2020 lockdown. This blog joked at the time that the chamber orchestra stormed back into action – something of an understatement. In a decade of covering concerts in all sorts of thunderous and near-thunderous conditions, that was, shall we say, the most immersive of them all. After awhile, the hundred or so of us who stuck around for the whole thing would break out laughing when yet another thunderclap exploded overhead, and what felt like a bucket of summer rain would be dumped on us.

Tuesday night, the group picked up where they left off under similarly ominous skies with an alternately lilting and lulling series of imaginatively voiced string orchestra arrangements of Bartok's Lullabies For Children. The ensemble had the most fun with the bouncy, minor-key Hungarian folk-flavored numbers, ornamenting them with plucky pizzicato and acerbic accidentals. Interspersed among them were traditional tunes from the Canary Islands and Japan arranged by A Far Cry violinist Alex Fortes, along with a cantabile miniature by Emily Irons

Next up was [Franghiz Ali-Zadeh's](#) Shyshtar: Metamorphoses for String Orchestra, in an arrangement expanded beyond the original version for twelve cellos. Tectonically shifting, persistent unease drifted through an allusive chromaticism reflective of the composer's Azeri heritage. A strutting Bartokian edge gave way to hazy suspense that grew more surrealistically foreboding with a series of gentle downward glissandos. They took it out by digging in for a buoyantly wary march. Maybe it wasn't the optimal segue, but what a gorgeously bracing piece of music!

Fortes also contributed a new arrangement of the famously mystical, hymnal third movement from Beethoven's String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Op. 135, which the group approached steadily, soberly, and a little on the fast side. With its lushness and sweep, it left the crowd breathless. Fortes has arranged the whole quartet; hopefully we'll get to hear all of it someday.

By the time the intermission was over, the skies had cleared for a similarly sweeping take of Dvořák's Serenade for Strings. There seemed to be extra deliciousness from the low strings in the cheerful sway of the first movement; likewise, the waltzing second movement was steely and robust, the third especially vivace, yet with an uneasy undercurrent. The group resisted any temptation to simply roll with the lullaby quality of

the fourth movement, opting for symphonic grandeur, then dancing through the conclusion. The final piece on the bill was Castles, a baroque-tinged piece with a carefree chorale by one of the ensemble's own, bassist Karl Doty.

This year's series of Naumburg Bandshell concerts continues on July 26 at 7:30 PM with perennial favorites the Knights and colorful violinist Lara St. John playing Mendelssohn's Scottish Symphony plus works by Avner Dorman. Enter at 72nd St.; get there early (like, an hour, at least) if you want a seat.

SEE: <https://newyorkmusicdaily.wordpress.com/2022/07/14/afarcryjuly22/>