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Kimig-Studer-Zimmerlin String Trio – *Im Hellen* (Hat[now]ART)

Conjectured boundaries between improvisation and composition have long been fodder for fierce contention. Offering as good a distinction as any, Steve Lacy once famously opined that musical creation with the former is bound by the moment while the latter allows for the leisure of temporal largess. Some find such separations superfluous. Others base their musical identities on it. The Swiss-German String Trio comprised of violinist Harald Kimig, cellist Alfred Zimmerlin and bassist Daniel Studer is deeply aware of this history. Collectively versed in the rigors free improvisation, the three players have also plied their talents in classical settings and even the outer reaches of jazz (Kimig was a member of Cecil Taylor's augmented Feel Trio). The music on *Im Hellen* is very much in that first category and results from the players honing a tripartite attack that is often mesmerizing in its accuracy and intensity.

Nine pieces add up to three quarters of an hour with the smallest and most subtle of gestures adding up to often oblique assemblages of sound. On the opening "Im deutlichen Morgen" scrapes, knocks and diaphanous squiggles flutter and dance along discordant trajectories. Kimig, in particular, is able to thread fibrillating lines so fine as to seem almost filament thin. With "Was Wiesel wissen" piquant pizzicato drops join sporadic arco rivulets in a performance laced with microtonal energy that is as much about the spaces and silences between what is played as the actual sounds produced. "Out of Reach" hovers and hums at the edges of audibility for much of its duration. Rubbed strings result in quietly overlapping drones that exude palpable tension while keeping the decibel count reliably curtailed.

While restraint and minimalism are integral attributes to trio's methods the program isn't all micro-gestures and deferent asides. "Unter Kinnhöhe" rises in both volume and density through a prickly and fleeting exchange of pitched volleys. "Safran im Februar" assembles from forest of worried and stuck strings with Studer in particular kicking up a thicket of racket that is at once abrading and bracing while Kimig saws away unceremoniously above him in an aggressive display that tests the tensile strength of his strings. "Hinüber oder vielleicht" hints at melody with instruments negotiating a lugubrious trajectory of crosshatched lines. Throughout it all the aforementioned boundaries comfortably blur and dissipate into arbitrariness such that what's left is music in an unalloyed state of mutual agreement and formation. In other words, it's exactly the sort of alchemy that invites active embrace by curious ears.

Derek Taylor