

Exploring Asylum Hill – HartBeat Ensemble Virtual

by
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In this time of the pandemic, we have to take comfort wherever we can find it, and the luxury of finding quality entertainment at whatever price you can afford,

available whenever it's convenient for you and to be enjoyed more than once, is a big part of that comfort.

HartBeat Ensemble, under the direction of Artistic Director Godfrey Simmons jr. has risen to the challenge of producing content for the community that both continues the HartBeat tradition of creating provocative theater that connects the community beyond traditional barriers of race, gender, class and geography; and overcomes the COVID limitation preventing live performance. He even goes beyond the obstacle of a small screen substitute for a live theater performance by engaging performers who might not otherwise be able to come together to connect via Zoom.

My first experience with these Digital Productions was *Play Like A Girl: Brandee Younger*. I especially appreciated having a female musician of color interview another female musician of color to get a really great interview event that goes right to the heart of what it's like for them. Brandee, and Charmagne, couldn't have been better to introduce this series. That Brandee is black and female, a classically trained harpist who plays jazz, puts her nearly in a class by herself. Her musicianship completes the task. Her over-the-top vibrant personality is the icing on the cake. Charmagne as a Neo-Soul, Jazz, R&B, Swing, and Blues vocalist is perfectly suited to ask the questions that let Brandee express herself.

I can only imagine what this interview/performance would have been like live, but knowing I can go back and enjoy it a few more times goes a long way toward healing that regret. I'm especially please to see that this series, *Play Like A Girl* has at least two more events, with names I also don't recognize. It's a great way to be introduced to new talent to add to anyone's list of favorites.

I especially liked the production effort that went into this first offering. The interview acoustics were what you would expect from a zoom call. Different rooms, different mics, less that great quality for the interview, but that made the three musical performances all the more spectacular, because each was recorded in a different space, but each received the professional quality that the music deserved.

For more offering from HartBeat go to <https://www.hartbeatensemble.org>