Two of Atlanta’s prominent chamber music ensembles presented their final concerts of the season this week.

The Atlanta Chamber Players performed music by Quantz, Harbison and Bach on Tuesday at one of their favorite haunts, the New American Shakespeare Tavern on Peachtree Street. The occasion was also the final concert of cofounder and pianist Paula Peace as the group’s artistic and executive director after 38 years at the group’s helm.

As such, it might have seemed unusual that there was no piano present. Instead, the only keyboard was a small digital harpsichord used for the two Baroque works of the evening, the Trio Sonata in D major by Johann Quantz and one of the few secular cantatas by J. S. Bach, “Schwight stille, plaudert night” (BWV 211), popularly known as the “Coffee Cantata.”

A large ensemble by ACP standards was brought on board for the occasion: four guest vocalists — sopranos Beverly Blouin and Arietha Lockhart, tenor Richard Clement and baritone William Killmeier — and seven instrumentalists — flutist Todd Skitch, oboist Elizabeth Koch Tiscione, violinists Helen Kim and Ken Wagner, violist Catherine Lynn, cellist Brad Ritchie and contrabassist Gloria Jones — in Paula Peace (center) is stepping down after 38 years as the artistic director of the chamber players. (Photo by Nick Arroyo)
Sonic Generator’s Tim Whitehead plays the toy piano. (Photo by Mark Gresham)

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Story’s moral: since “cats do not give up mousing” it’s only natural that women will not give up their coffee.

On Wednesday evening, Sonic Generator performed at Erikson Clock in the Castleberry Hill District. The musicians staged themselves at the far end of the space, completing pre-concert prep and closing windows after substantial rain began to fall.

Helen Kim and Brad Ritchie, who had both played in the ACP concert the previous night, performed in this concert as well — with flutist Jessica Sherwood, clarinetist Ted Gurch, percussionist Tom Sherwood and pianist Tim Whitehead — in a decidedly different repertoire.

The entire group performed the opening work, “Cycles,” the first completed movement of “Cycles lesles et Desordre” by Daniel Wohl, in its U.S. premiere. Sonic Generator premiered it during their tour to Metz, France, earlier this year. It’s the first installment of what will be an hour-long work to be choreographed and performed with dance company GloATL.

Flutist Jessica Sherwood was featured in the world premiere of “Chatter Box” by postminimalist composer Marc Mellits, accompanied by Tom Sherwood with a set of electronic audio “stack boxes” created by Andrew Beck.

Jason Freeman’s “Lullaby for Growing Old” for solo toy piano was given its world premiere by Tim Whitehead. It’s a simple piece really, played live in this context. But Freeman’s concept is that the music should evolve over time. It was released the same day as part of a streaming EP project, “Grow Old,” to address the philosophical question, “Why can’t music grow old with us?” Freeman’s cloud-based digital audio will be regenerated daily by software so it changes subtly in the short term, and dramatically over a course of years.

The ensemble divided into two trios to wind up the evening with two wildly episodic works by the eclectic John Zorn. “The Tempest” (2012) was performed by Gurch and both Sherwoods, then Kim, Ritchie and Whitehead teamed up for “Amour Fou” (literally, “insane love”) from 1999, the oldest work on the program.

The entire concert proved one of genuine tensile strength from beginning to end:
riveting repertoire compellingly performed.