

Anagnoson and Kinton

Piano Duo Sparkles in KCCA Concert

The piano duo of James Anagnoson and Leslie Kinton may be in its 30th year, but, judging from the concert at the Kelowna Community Theatre Wednesday, there is nothing stale in the partnership. If anything, their performance was even more memorable than the last time they were here, in 2001.

Kinton and Anagnoson probably have quite different personalities, but seated at their respective keyboards, they are as evenly matched as you'll ever find: both have dazzling technique, both display consummate artistry, and their togetherness is such that it seems a single brain is controlling their collective fingers. Their virtuosity is truly astounding.

I suspect the duo's success, as well as its longevity, lies not just in the equal pairing but also in the partners' mutual respect. It seems that the pianists genuinely admire each other and that neither musician has the slightest need or inclination to upstage the other.

Another aspect that endears the duo and increases the audience appreciation is the commentary before each number. Anagnoson and Kinton take turns explaining and illustrating the next piece. Their fascinating remarks prove that, also in this regard, they are indeed equals.

The program opened with Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos in D major. In his prefatory remarks, Professor Anagnoson contended that Mozart always achieved the maximum effect with a minimal outlay of resources. Anagnoson also was incredulous that Mozart did this without ever erasing or changing any notes. The duo's realization of the master's concept was deeply gratifying; I'm sure that Wolfgang Amadeus himself would have been delighted with the performers and their interpretation.

Taking the concert to intermission was Anton Arensky's Suite No. 1 for two pianos. Professor Kinton explained and demonstrated some of Arensky's musical devices. Not just a gifted composer, Arensky must have been a fantastic teacher as well, numbering Rachmaninoff, Gliere, and Scriabin amongst his pupils. I was particularly taken with the middle movement of the suite, a graceful waltz, played and loved by countless pianists.

The second half of the concert began with a pair of dances for one piano, four hands--one piece from each of Antonin Dvorak's two sets of Slavonic Dances. Pianist Anagnoson explained that, although four hands are used in both instances, a single piano promotes monochromatic interdependence whereas two pianos provide independence of expression and colour.

To close the program, Kinton demonstrated some of the polyrhythmic complexities in George Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. I came away with new respect for this popular concert piece. The partners "redistributed" the solo and orchestra parts such that each of them was alternately soloist and accompanist.

The packed house demanded and finally got an encore: Camille Saint-Saens' rollicking finale to The Carnival of the Animals, as arranged by Anagnoson and Kinton themselves.

The Kelowna Community Concert Association has done it again, giving us another fabulous performance of great music--at a bargain-basement price. KCCA, I don't know how you do it, but just don't stop.