

Rogé duo succeeds under adverse conditions

Tuesday's concert at the Kelowna Community Theatre overcame numerous obstacles before ending in triumph. It was the Kelowna Community Concert Association's season finale featuring the husband-and-wife piano duo Pascal and Ami Rogé.

Ami Rogé has had a distinguished international career as piano soloist, accompanist, harpsichordist and chamber musician under her maiden name, Hakuno. For the past few years, she has joined Pascal Rogé in four-hands and dual-piano performances of the French repertoire.

Pascal Rogé is perhaps the world's foremost exponent of late romantic and impressionistic French piano music. He seems totally focused on interpretation, but to achieve the desired result requires also an exceptional touch. Both my wife and I were swept away by Rogé's masterful technique.

Arriving at the theatre, many of the Community Concert subscribers were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of Doreen Bowers since the previous concert. Doreen was the Association's Membership Chairman for the past nine years.

Rogé gallantly dedicated his first piece, Gabrielle Fauré's Nocturne (opus 33, no. 1), to Doreen Bowers' memory. He neglected to use the microphone until a chorus of calls from the audience made him aware of the communication breakdown.

Rogé then asked the audience to contain its enthusiasm until the intermission. True, that preserved the idyllic mood of the performance, but it also taxed the audience's attention span.

Pascal Rogé is a fantastic pianist and a superb musician, but he is not exactly what one might call flamboyant. His brooding over the keyboard for almost an hour of unbroken impressionism tested the fortitude of KCCA's loyal subscribers.

After the break, Rogé was joined by his wife, and the mood brightened perceptibly. Things proceeded beautifully through sets of pieces by Debussy and Ravel, and then the lighting technician turned on the house lights.

The Rogés had left the stage, so the audience got up and started to leave--even though the program indicated that the Sorcerer's Apprentice (by Dukas) was yet to come. Imagine the surprise of the artists returning to see their audience filing out of the auditorium!

Luckily the Rogés reappeared in time for most of the crowd to scramble back to their seats, and the Sorcerer's Apprentice was an unqualified success. Let us hope that henceforth lighting technicians ascertain positively where the program breaks are, and that they turn on the house lights only at those points.

Hats off to President Yvonne Topf, her dedicated executives, and their corps of volunteers, who have again delivered a superlative slate of concerts, and, despite spiraling costs, have somehow managed to hold down subscription prices. It looks to me that next year's series of concerts should again garner rave reviews.

Charles Velte is a former opera singer (1962-67) who holds a Master of Music degree in Music Theory from the University of Wisconsin (1961). He now leads a music appreciation group at the Society for Learning in Retirement.