

The Daily Courier

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Kelowna Community Concert Association continued their high standard of programming on Wednesday night with a stunning concert of piano music, featuring cousins Ian and James Parker. The Parkers, especially Ian, are well known to Kelowna audiences, this being the 3rd appearance by Ian in 2012. They are never a disappointment.

Top rated Piano Duos such as the Parkers are not really plentiful, making their appearance especially appealing. The programme, in my view, was a masterpiece of planning; most of the music was familiar (not a bad thing) and accessible, playable by any serious senior piano students. It was particularly exciting to hear them on two pianos, piano 4 hands and as soloists. They were brilliant in every combination.

The program opened with the Mozart D major Sonata for 2 pianos, a particular favourite of mine. Setting a perfect tempo, they made the most of the scintillating fast passages, along with subtle dynamics and elegant phrasing. Their articulate finger work brought the music to life, filling the theatre with joy.

James followed with a set of three solos: Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, 1st mvmt; Debussy's Claire De Lune and De Falla's, Ritual Fire Dance. He wove a spell of tranquility coloured with hints of drama. I felt, however, that some of the contemplative triplets were just a little rushed, creating an undercurrent of uneasiness. Perhaps that was his plan. The De Falla was full of colour, flash and dash showing his superb technique.

As a Duo once more, they ended the first half with some Slavonic Dances by Dvorak. Again, they were dealing with familiar music, but they gave it a wonderful new feel.

A Poulenc Sonata, with typically discordant sounds, opened the second half. The spiky quality and feel, mixed with sensational and sinuous runs were perfection. It was delightful.

Ian took the stage with his own arrangement of the ever popular Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue. The piano part alone is extremely demanding, when the orchestra is added it becomes a formidable challenge. His finger work was impeccable as was his mastery of the huge chords and rhythms, but at times even this was not enough to fully compensate for the lack of other instruments. It was, nevertheless, an emotional and absorbing performance.

Brahms' Hungarian Dances are always a crowd pleaser, especially when played with the flair and panache the Parkers brought to them

The Milhaud Scaramouche is a block buster requiring dazzling finger work, intricate rhythms and a sense of style and humour. Ian and James outdid themselves in every aspect, garnering enthusiastic applause.

The entire evening was a tribute, not only to their individual talents, but to their sense of rapport with each other, even in the beautiful Bach "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" which was their encore. One of the concert goers likened it to a sip of great ice wine after a gourmet meal. I concur.

Marvin Dickau is an Organist, Pianist and Conductor who has an A.Mus. from the University of Alberta. He has conducted choirs and small orchestras, given solo piano and organ recitals and accompanied many singers and instrumentalists in Kelowna and Calgary. He is currently Minister of Music at First United Church and Executive Director of the Kelowna Kiwanis Music Festival.