

Husband and Wife deliver

By NEVILLE BOWMAN

Special to *The Daily Courier*

Timing is everything; at least most of the time.

Take two pianists, two pianos, and 20 fingers, add a lot of very complex rhythm and melody, and timing becomes critical. The piano duo of Elena Martin and Jose Meliton gave the full audience at Kelowna Community Theatre an intense clinic on timing, all wrapped up in an evening of traditional and not-so-traditional Spanish music.

The uniqueness in this concert was not in having two pianos - we've had as many as five before. The uniqueness lay in the intricacy of the interweaving melodies and rhythm, the constant, almost imperceptible swapping between Martin and Meliton. Combine that with the fact that many of the pieces were Elena Martin's original compositions, and you have a husband and wife team that delivers music like no other.

As a pianist myself, I know the challenge of maintaining synchronicity with other musicians at a steady tempo. For two pianos, often doubling each other, while playing complex rhythms and fluctuating tempi, the connection they have is remarkable.

The music itself was beautiful (To me, the best pieces of the evening were Elena's own compositions). I suspect the audience was expecting something a little more fiery rather than the more traditional Spanish music, but they seemed to warm to it well, especially when Elena explained the story behind the music.

Spanish music, like much of old world music, always has a deeper emotion and meaning behind it that doesn't always translate well, but Kelowna audiences always like a lively beat, and the crowd favourites were a Pasodoble, the Jota, and Sol Y Sombra, all intense upbeat numbers which got toes tapping.

That having been said, some of the slower pieces were truly storytelling, beautiful melodies that pulled in the listener.

Criticisms?

The difficulty and precision of the music required that Martin and Meliton were reading intensely the whole time, a necessary element, but one that eliminated any more relaxed interplay with the audience or each other. This at times made it more of a cerebral recital as opposed to a fun celebration of Spanish music.

And, yes I've said this before, the old Yamaha piano at KCT really was pushed to its limits a few times by Jose Meliton, sounding tired and even out-of-tune next to the newer grand. Perhaps in the future Kelowna can find something for pianists of this calibre to truly shine! (OK, I admit, I'm biased, piano playing is my main job.)

What we heard from Martin and Meliton was nothing short of a wonderful and interesting musical journey through Spanish music and life. Love, sadness, joy, politics, it was all there, translated through hands and hammers. I look forward to hearing more of Martin's compositions, and the stories behind them.

Neville Bowman is a pianist, actor, and composer from Kelowna.