

Preview

Chagrin Valley Chamber Music: Andrew Sords and Eriko Izumida in “Virtuoso's Showcase”

by Mike Telin



Violinist [Andrew Sords](#) has been described by global critics as “utterly radiant” and “exceptionally heartfelt and soulful.” Having appeared as soloist with over 100 orchestras and performed on notable recital series across four continents. Sords is recognized for performances of the standard violin concerti of the 18th and 19th centuries. In 2012, Sords was the sole recipient of the Pittsburgh Concert Society Career Grant.

On Sunday, October 13 beginning at 3:00 pm in Valley Lutheran Church in Chagrin Falls, the [Chagrin Valley Chamber Music Concert Series](#) presents Andrew Sords and pianist Eriko Izumida in “Virtuoso’s Showcase.” The program includes sonatas by Mozart and Elgar, Hubay’s *Carmen Fantasy*, Piazzolla’s *Grand Tango* and Bartók’s *Romanian Dances*.

Andrew Sords looks forward to Sunday's recital and the opportunity to reunite with his long time collaborator Eriko Izumida, “We’ve known each other since I was 14,” he said, adding that they first met because he needed a pianist to play a Beethoven sonata with him in high school. “She did a number of competitions with me and I continue to enjoy working with her. We have performed the Mozart we're doing on Sunday around thirty times together.”

Sords also looks forward to introducing audiences to the rarely heard Elgar sonata, recalling how he first heard it on his car radio. “All I could see was 'sonata' on the display. The screen didn’t finish the title and I ended up being twenty minutes late for lunch because I had to wait until it was over so I could find out what it was.”

Although Sords has always enjoyed listening to the music of Piazzolla, he was reintroduced to his music this past spring while competing on [Dancing with the Celebrities of Pittsburgh](#). “I briefly lived in Pittsburgh and played a couple of concerts there, so when I was asked to take part in the competition I immediately said yes because it was something different and I like doing different things. I did a couple of Latin dances and needless to say I didn’t win.” The competition did cause Sords to listen to a lot of Argentine

music, “This Sunday will be the first time I've played anything by Piazzolla other than *Oblivion*.”

Sords in no way thinks of Hubay's *Carmen Fantasy* as encore fluff. “I think that when Hubay transcribed works for the violin that everybody knew, like *Carmen*, those works were taken very seriously. Now they are tossed off and I don't think it should be that way.”

Although standard repertoire like Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms occupies most of his performing life, Sords's most recent solo recording, [*Transcendence*](#), is anything but standard. “I got a telephone call from a conductor friend of mine, Robert Franz, who works with the Houston, Boise and Windsor orchestras telling me that a composer/producer from the Oprah Winfrey network had approached saying that they needed a violinist who is not afraid to emote. And Robert gave them my name.”

Sords recalls the recording experience as being very different. “It was very New Age and I couldn't base it off of any other recording. But I thought that we do need to be a little more commercial as artists just to get a broader spectrum of people listening to us. And if someone first hears me on Amazon.com, the Oprah network or Sirius XM New Age and then they come to hear me play Elgar and Mozart, I think that's a good day.”

Did he have any reservations about doing a New Age recording? “Of course, but did I have reservations about it being too commercial of a project? No, not really, although it was out of my comfort zone. I wasn't working with a pianist or an orchestra, it was just me in the Cathedral with headphones on listening to the backing track. A couple of times I did think, what have I gotten myself into? And it was actually Franz who finally talked me off the ledge and said either do the recording or pull out of the project but make the decision and stick to it. So I did it and I'm glad I did it. It's making some money and that's always a good thing.”

Andrew Sords is also passionate about the role that art plays, or should play in society, but how much time does he spend thinking about this subject? “I am on airplanes a lot,” he says laughing, “and quite often I am by myself. I don't think about it analytically, I am more intuitive. But when I see how different groups of people of different demographics and backgrounds all react to live music it just reinforces the notion that we need live music. And it is more important than ever that children have the opportunity to hear an orchestra, to hold a violin and to have access to music lessons.”

And Sords takes every opportunity possible to bring music to all people, “This past Tuesday I played at Akron Children's Hospital. They have a new music program for kids who are terminally ill. It was very humbling to play for them, because they didn't know or even care who I was, but their eyes lit up when they heard the sound of the violin and for me that was so gratifying. It puts everything into perspective because we're always thinking about the recital program or difficult concerto, and will I get along with the conductor, but when you experience something like that it takes the edge off of everything.”