

Review**"Stars in the Classics" cabaret
at Orange Village Hall (March 23)**

by Daniel Hathaway



A dozen young musicians were showcased on Sunday afternoon, March 23, when M.U.S.i.C (Musical Upcoming Stars in the Classics) presented its eighth Classical Cabaret performance in the council chambers of Orange Village Hall. The cabaret theme was reinforced by a program of generally light musical fare and a substantial array of food and drink made available to the large audience before, during and after the two-hour concert.

The weightier pieces came in the second half, when violinist Iryna Krechkovsky and pianist Kevin Kwan Loucks (who perform as the Krechkovsky/Loucks Duo and are based in Southern California) played the Debussy *Sonata* and were joined in Chausson's *Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet* by violinists Diana Pepelea and

Solomon Liang, violist Cynthia Black and cellist James Jaffee.

Playing a Strad on loan from the Canada Council for the Arts, Krechkovsky made a fine impression with her dark, even tone and captivating musical presence. Loucks was a fine musical partner (they're husband and wife in real life), playing with character, verve and fluency.

Earlier in the program, Krechkovsky and Loucks joined clarinetist Stanislav Golovin in a rollicking performance of the last movement from Paul Schoenfield's mischievous *Trio*, a Klezmer-inspired piece titled *Fraylac (Festive)* that required Golovin to produce some bent pitches and wild effects.

Later in the afternoon, the hard-working Loucks was back to collaborate with soprano Jung Eun Oh and baritone Armando Contreras in two Fauré songs and a Lehár aria (Oh) as well as Lehár's famous *Lippen schweigen* duet. Oh, a Harvard grad who juggles her career as a soprano with her training as an economist, sang with a bright, supple tone and added just enough acting to put her pieces across charmingly. Contreras, a senior at CIM, sang with a winning directness.

Contreras had previously appeared with pianist Alexander Kostritsa, lyrically singing Offenbach's *Ballade à la lune*, and choosing to downplay the sardonic side of Arnold Weinstein's verse in William Bolcom's cabaret song *Black Max*.

The concert began with Paganini's op. 5, no. 4 *Guitar Quartet*, really more of a virtuosic vehicle for the first violinist (with Diana Pepelea ably filling in for Paganini himself). Guitarist Krystin O'Mara finally got some prominent music to play in the finale, and the quartet was filled out by violist Cynthia Black (who bravely matched Pepelea note for note in some passages) and cellist James Jaffee, who provided engaging oral program notes. The piece seemed to need a bit more rehearsal time, but probably didn't deserve it.

Paganini was followed by more Paganini, as cellist Fedor Amosov tossed off with élan that composer's pyrotechnical *Variations on a theme from Rossini's opera 'Moses in Egypt'*, followed by Saint-Saëns's *The Swan*, with Kostritsa at the keyboard.

As the performers came and went during this varied feast of music, the audience in the octagonal room could enjoy panoramic views of Cleveland in March. Snow followed by sunshine followed by snow followed by sunshine. Sunshine won.

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