

Hilo Duo — Caroline Chin and Brian Snow — head to LCCC for Signature Series

by Jarrett Hoffman



A married couple and parents to a 2 ½-year-old and 4-month-old, violinist Caroline Chin and cellist Brian Snow also both teach at Bowling Green State University — and together make up the Hilo Duo.

On Tuesday, October 10 at 7:30 pm at Cirigliano Studio Theatre at the Stocker Center for the Arts, Hilo Duo will perform 20th- and 21st-century works by Richard

Carrick, Elliott Carter, Jeffrey Mumford, and Maurice Ravel. The free concert, part of Lorain County Community College’s Signature Series, is open to the public.

How do Chin and Snow feel about working together as Duo partners? “It’s always great to have a chance to perform together,” said Snow in an email, “and it’s especially enjoyable when we have a chance to play music that we love.”

And though Chin said that sometimes it’s best for them to work and perform separately so they can take turns holding down the fort at home, she added, “Brian is one of my favorite cellists, so it’s hard to turn down an opportunity to play with him.”

Chin and Snow will open Tuesday evening’s program with *Duo Flow* by Richard Carrick, a composer they got to know while they lived in New York City, where they freelanced until moving to Bowling Green two years ago. Chin spoke about that life change. “Brian was traveling frequently to the City for work until the summer of 2016, which made our transition difficult,” she said. “Now that we are both here full-time and maintaining a regular weekly schedule with our students, our daily life feels more rooted than when we lived there.”

Asked about a quote from *The New York Times* in 2012 — the Duo “maintain the frenetic performing and teaching schedules characteristic of New York freelancers” — Chin responded that in that way life has stayed the same. “After teaching full days during the week, we still ‘maintain the frenetic schedule’ of chasing a toddler and entertaining an infant at home. We get a ton of fulfillment out of those aspects of our lives, so we’re happy to be doing it. And maybe we’ll have some time to relax when our kids get a little older?”

The Duo has an important history with the next piece on the program, Elliott Carter’s *Tre Duetti*. The world premiere recording of that work was included on their album *Elliott Carter: Music for Violin and Cello*, cited by the publication *Sequenza 21* as among the 31 most memorable recordings of 2013.

“The most surprising thing about the *Duetti* is that they’re really crowd-pleasers,” Snow said, “something we don’t usually associate with Carter! They are like miniature distillations of his style, written very near the end of his life, and highly expressive and virtuosic.”

They’ll follow the Carter with a piece that’s new for them, Jeffrey Mumford’s *eight aspects of appreciation II*. “We feel like we have really taken to it,” Snow said, “and we’re excited to be able to perform it for the first time at LCCC.”

Snow called the program’s closing work, Ravel’s *Sonata for violin and cello*, “the greatest masterpiece written for violin and cello duo. It’s really thrilling to perform, and it’s also been hugely influential on other composers who have written for that instrumentation. If you listen carefully, I believe you can hear echoes of it in several of the other pieces we are performing.”

Navigating the combination of their marriage and their close professional partnership has been a challenge. “We feel so lucky to both be doing something we are passionate about at BGSU’s College of Musical Arts,” Chin said. “We work easily with each other and can always find one another to discuss any work-related items. However, it is really tough to leave work at work. We often continue to debate musical ideas after rehearsals are over or discuss current events at school over dinner...we really need to make an effort to stop working and just be parents to our two kids and dog.”

Moving the conversation toward contemporary music, I asked Snow what sparked his interest in the genre. “In high school a friend loaned me a cassette tape of the Kronos Quartet’s album *Black Angels*, which included George Crumb’s eponymous piece along with Shostakovich’s Eighth Quartet and some other really interesting music,”

he said. “For a kid who was into gloomy new-wave and heavy metal music, that cassette was a revelation. I was blown away by the atmosphere, intensity, and amazing and mysterious sounds in the Crumb, and was determined to seek out other music that had that kind of impact on me. Of course, the Kronos Quartet did so much to bring contemporary classical music into the wider culture, and that album in particular was so popular, that I’m sure many other people had a similar experience.”

What’s up next for Hilo Duo? “The next evening after our performance in Elyria, we’ll be at Central Michigan University performing some of the same music and working with the students there,” Snow said. “We’re also planning an album of contemporary violin and cello duos, including the Carrick and Mumford pieces we’re performing at LCCC, along with works by Sam Adler and Xenakis, and a new piece being written for us by BGSU composition professor Chris Dietz.”

And in the long run? “Continue to expand the repertoire for violin/cello duo — and do a lot of performing.”

Published on ClevelandClassical.com October 4, 2017.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)