

Kent Blossom Music Festival's 2018 faculty series comes to a close (Aug. 1)

by Robert Rollin



Kent Blossom presented its fifth and final faculty series program in Ludwig Recital Hall last Wednesday, August 1. The evening's highlight was the gorgeous performance of Charles-Marie

Widor's *Sonata for Cello and Piano in A* by Richard Weiss, Cleveland Orchestra first assistant principal cello, and Joela Jones, Cleveland Orchestra keyboardist.

The intricate and graceful 30-minute composition sparkled. The performers tossed off the complex yet lush rhythms and phrasings in the first theme of the *Allegro molto*. Weiss's low register was especially beautiful, and his playing intensely expressive. Jones complemented his penetrating pizzicatos with crisp, high-register chords and flawless, fast accompaniment. Their doublings were in sync throughout.

The *Andante con moto* begins with beautiful chromaticism overlaying flexible rhythm. Later the piano's staccatos link up with cello pizzicatos to produce interesting syncopations. Jones' exquisite, arpeggiated accompaniment combined with Weiss's soulful melodies to create the complex, Brahmsian rhythms.

The soloists powered effortlessly through the energetic and intricate *Allegro vivace*, as Jones raced through difficult octave passages. Audience members leapt to their feet in appreciation of the rousing conclusion.

The contrasting encore, an arrangement of the *Notturmo* from Borodin's *Second String Quartet* (used in the musical *Kismet*), was superbly expressive. Snippets of both themes intermingled gracefully.

Marisela Sager, Cleveland Orchestra assistant principal flute, opened the program with a sensitive performance of J.S. Bach's four-movement *Partita in a for Solo Flute*, BWV 1013. Her velvety tone was a delight, and she performed the compound lines of the Allemande and the faster Courante with complete mastery. The descending sequences and the timbre of her low register were especially alluring during the slow Sarabande, and she skillfully spun out the Bourrée's fast sixteenths.

Sager's performance of Alberto Ginastera's chromatic-but-tonal *Duo for Flute and Oboe* with TCO assistant principal oboe Jeffrey Rathbun scintillated. Rathbun's full sound brightened the sprightly and surprisingly abbreviated first movement, titled Sonata, and Sager responded with canonic entrances.

The more lyrical Pastorale, also led by oboe, features lovely modal sonorities in homophonic texture, the intermittent grace notes adding emphasis on the downbeats. The Fuga raced happily through its syncopated counterpoint, sweeping to the ascending closing gesture.

Oboist Danna Sundet (Kent State faculty) joined hornist Alan DeMattia (TCO) and guest pianist Elizabeth DeMio (Cleveland Institute of Music faculty) for an effervescent performance of Jean-Michel Damase's 1990 *Trio*. Full, staccato chords and instrumental pairings characterized the moody Allegro deciso. After a short Andante, the lively and syncopated Presto scherzando included a cyclical return to the Allegro's staccato chords. The Molto moderato moved with ascending gestures in the horn and oboe to a haltingly chaotic Allegro, bringing the piece to a powerfully disjointed close.

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