

Duo Amal kicks off PianoDays @CLE (July 24)

by Jacob Strauss



On Sunday, July 24 the piano team of Yaron Kohlberg and Bishara Haroni — Duo Amal — kicked off Piano Cleveland’s PianoDays @CLE in Gartner Auditorium at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Kohlberg and Haroni, who first performed together at a peace conference in Oslo in 2011, began their concert with a pillar of the piano four-hand repertoire, Schubert’s *Fantasia in f*. With Haroni playing the lower part and Kohlberg the upper, they

negotiated the keyboard with nimble choreography, highlighting their adroit musicianship and amicable collaborative spirit.

Moving to two-piano literature, the Duo presented a lively performance of Darius Milhaud’s *Scaramouche* — a charming work in three movements. The first, “Vif,” takes the name of the piece seriously, in its clownish character. Kohlberg and Haroni enjoyed themselves, smiling at each other during every humorous phrase. The clown is in love with a flower during “Modéré,” watering it with his nose, and the Duo played with tenderness and fluidity. The “Braziliera,” with its locomotion switching between the two performers, was fun and festive.

And when the first half concluded with Alexey Kurbatov’s arrangement of Khachaturian’s “Sabre Dance,” from *Gayane*, it was as if the pianos were dueling.

The program continued with Kurbatov's arrangements of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance* — Haroni commanding the melody — and Khachaturian's Adagio from *Spartak* — with Kohlberg taking the lead.

The concert came to a conclusion with Rachmaninoff's dreamlike *Suite No. 1* for two pianos, which was expertly played. The Duo took their time, savoring every delicate moment and dynamic shift in the four-movement work. The "Barcarolle" floated beautifully, while "La nuit...L'amour" was filled with promise and passion. "Les Larmes" led to an ominous and powerful performance of "Easter Bells."

The audience awarded Duo Amal with enthusiastic applause, and Kohlberg and Haroni returned to the stage for an encore — an arrangement of the final movement of Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1*.

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