

Duo Yoo & Kim returns for wide-ranging Dranoff program

By Lawrence Budmen



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Duo Yoo & Kim performed Sunday for the Dranoff Foundation at Gusman Concert Hall.

Duo Yoo & Kim, the Silver Medal winners of the 2013 Dranoff International 2 Piano Competition, opened the Dranoff Foundation's concert series Sunday afternoon at Gusman Concert Hall in Coral Gables. Programmed and hosted by Erik Ochsner, the Dranoff's new artistic director, the concert was mostly devoted to rarely heard works from the byways of the duo repertoire.

Currently students at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England, Jaekyung "Jackie" Yoo and Yoon-Jee Kim demonstrated considerable ensemble and interpretive skills. The program was bookended by scores from Les Six, the group of twentieth

century composers who fused populist influences with French accented Neo-Classicism between the world wars.

Francis Poulenc's *Capriccio* is based on his secular cantata *Le Bal Masque* for baritone and chamber orchestra. This breezy riff on the sounds of the French music hall would make a fine ballet score. Perhaps because the duo was not fully warmed up, the performance suffered from less-than-perfect coordination between the players and sounded too percussive, this musical soufflé needing greater lightness and élan.

Similarly, in Darius Milhaud's *Scaramouche* Suite, the players' enthusiasm went into overdrive in a first movement that was too hurried. The pop sensibility of *Modere* was conveyed in a refreshingly straightforward manner, and *Brasiera* pulsed with infectious Latin rhythm.

Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* is best known in its original scoring for harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet but the composer transcribed the piece for two pianos even before the premiere of the original version. While the Impressionistic mist conjured up by the combination of flute and harp over strings cannot be totally replicated on keyboards, the composer's transcription is skillful and manages to preserve much of the atmosphere and subtlety of the more familiar instrumentation. Yoo & Kim handled the numerous changes of meter seamlessly and spun nuanced glints of color, the melodic lines deftly projected.

Turning to Schubert's *Allegro in A minor* for one piano, four hands, the duo seemed more at ease in this nineteenth-century repertoire. Avoiding the score's overt storminess, the players emphasized lyrical contrasts, recalling Schubert's classic lieder.

Paganini's 24th Caprice for solo violin has been the basis of many sets of variations by composers as diverse as Brahms, Rachmaninoff and George Rochberg. Witold Lutoslawski's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* has become a competition piece that any aspiring duo must master. In their best competition mode, Yoo & Kim gave a muscular, fast-paced reading.

Mozart, original and reinvented, took up much of the concert's second half. The Fugue in C minor is more often played in a version for strings but the composer originally conceived the work for piano duo. Although the players dispatched the piece at a lively clip, there were some slips and contrapuntal lines sounded indistinct.

Ferruccio Busoni's *Duetto Concertante* is based on the finale of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 19. Instead of giving the orchestral part to one keyboard, Busoni masterfully revoiced all of the instrumental parts into a new duo piece. This score is fiendishly difficult piece to bring off in performance but Yoo & Kim's svelte touch and stylish classicism encompassed Busoni's challenging writing.

Shostakovich's Concertino in A minor, written in 1954 for the composer to perform with his son Maxim (now a distinguished conductor), may have been the enterprising program's most worthy discovery. Set in the light vein of the finales from Shostakovich's two piano concertos, the piece abounds in a folk-inflected melody, a mock severe introduction and pensive chorale adding a touch of seasoning. Shostakovich's relentless virtuosic romp should become a two-piano standard.

The Dranoff Concert Series continues 8 p.m. January 22, 2014 at the New World Center in Miami Beach with Duo Yamamoto playing works by Bolcom, Rodriguez, Barber, Berg, Copland and others. 305-572-9900; dranoff2piano.org (<http://dranoff2piano.org>).

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