

K-W Chamber Music Society

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To: Whom it May Concern

From: Jan Narveson

June 24 at KWCMS Music Room: Recital of flute and piano music by Patricia Creighton, flute, and Peter Allen, piano

Patricia Creighton, flute, and Peter Allen, piano, are a well-known team who have been performing as a duo for many years now. With her long tenure as Principal Flute of Symphony Nova Scotia (formerly Atlantic Symphony), she has ample experience - and it shows. Among flutists we have heard in the Chamber Music Society over the years, she stands out as one of the very finest. Her sound has that lovely, full and round sound in the lower register, retaining sweetness up into the highest regions, and her voicing and fingering are simply impeccable. And her partnership with her pianist is similarly excellent, both in pure ensemble and in dynamic adjustment, never overpowering his partner despite the ample power of the Steinway employed in this recital.

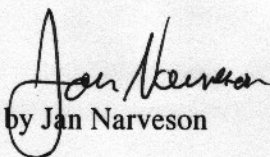
The concert opened with the familiar and great sonata of Bach in g minor. (But which Bach? Apparently some think it was Carl Philip rather than his father, to whom it had long been credited. Their program lists the younger one, to some surprise.) Whoever wrote it, it's a legendarily beautiful work, and the performance is with a modern silver flute and grand piano, this performance was altogether masterful. Examples: the nicely delicate but firm and clear piano lines in the opening allegro; perfect matching of flute to piano in this rapidly undulating movement; great breath control -- very nice! The beautiful adagio movement was sweet and warm, and the delicacy of the piano work here really something to write home about. The melody line rises to a level of restrained passion, and the ascent to this was impressive. In the very lively finale, both partners have to be really on their toes to make it work without awkwardness, and this pair really "aced" it. In fact, both were able to work in a few trills despite the rapidity of the line. Too, a bit of drama was worked in when phrases were repeated - very nice. By the end of this performance, the proverbial hairs on the back of my neck were on their way up. One treasures an account at this level.

A little out of the way was the sonata Undine of Carl Reinecke, one of the very few romantic-era sonatas to survive in modern recital practice. And it is a lovely work, enabling the artists to show their affection for romanticism without overdoing things. The opening allegro, for example, was a

model of tastefulness, with the very busy piano part kept under excellent control; the flutist has many a passage of display level, and these too were brought off beautifully without ostentation. The intermezzo was charmingly whimsical, the andante wistful, and the finale, which has more than its share of virtuoso showoff for both players, was nevertheless thoroughly musical. Very, very impressive!

Peter Allen contributed two solo piano items. Haydn's sonata HXVI:50 is one of his most often played works - for good reason, to be sure - and Allen made it a fine display of the qualities that endear this composer to so many (including this writer). It too is in fact quite a taxing piece at the digital level, and no difficulty presented any problem for this expert performer. We again enjoyed the fine dynamic control and shading that had been evident in his duo work, such as the carefully controlled crescendo in the development section of the allegro. Haydn's frequent touches of humour got their due, too. In fact, the whole piece presages Beethoven to a quite extraordinary degree - he obviously learned more from Haydn than he let on! Everything about this performance proved attractive - it was deft, alert, and sparkling. Good show! For a thoroughgoing contrast, next came the Rachmaninoff Prelude op. 32 #4, one of his pensive little essays, beautifully done. Rachmaninoff's arrangement of the prelude from Bach's sonata in C for unaccompanied violin turns that work into an orchestral showcase - interesting! Here Allen kept the rhythm steady despite all, bringing out the grandeur in this conception. Very impressive!

The finale was Poulenc's 20th-century masterpiece for flute and piano, the only duo work on the program conceived for just such instruments as were employed here. There's a fine sultriness about its opening - allegretto malincolico, indeed. But it's sprinkled with catchy little interjections, several of which call on top-drawer capabilities from the flute player, to which Ms. Creighton responded with aplomb. The slow movement is just called "cantilena" but Poulenc might as well have added 'malincoloco' to this one too, a nostalgic lament. This pair captured the essence of the movement with uncanny rightness. The finale flits about as if to shake off the former moods, and does so except for a slight pause, but then returns to gallic merriment. Thus ended one of the very finest flute and piano recitals in memory. This husband and wife team do indeed make beautiful music together.



This review was written by Jan Narveson