



Barrie Concert Review – Saturday March 17th, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. - Violinist Emil Israel Chudnovsky and Pianist Eric Himy

Piano and Violin Duo Wows Audience in Spectacular Program

Submitted by Julia Jacklein

Julia Jacklein is a piano teacher, composer, choral musician and

visual artist.

Pianist Eric Himy and violinist Emil Israel Chudnovsky wowed Barrie audiences on Saturday evening with a program of beautiful and technically demanding works by Franz Schubert, Henri Vieuxtemps and Maurice Ravel. In spite of their very late arrival at the venue (due to issues with GPS), both musicians proved their true professional spirit in the ease with which they stepped onto stage without the benefit of pre-concert preparations.

Violinist Chudnovsky introduced each composition with informative and entertaining comments. His opening words explained a “pet theory” of his, to the effect that Schubert may have been Mozart reincarnate. Musically speaking, the first piece on the program, Schubert’s Violin Sonata in A Major, Op. Posth. 162, does show a heavy debt to Mozart in its songful melodies; but equally evident is Schubert’s anticipation of future developments. The first movement is a dialogue between the piano and violin, which presents a wide range of colouristic shadings. The second movement is at times lilting, at other times sad and wistful, while the third movement explores the full sonorities of Romanticism with wonderfully unpredictable harmonies. The final movement gives both instruments ample opportunities for virtuosic display.

Following a brief and unexpected solo piano interlude (a short work by Debussy, to commemorate the 100 anniversary of that composer’s death), both musicians were back on stage with Schubert’s Rondo Brilliant, Op. 70. In their performance of this lively and demanding composition, they achieved a sense of even greater togetherness than at first. Their deep connection with the music, and their sense of sharing a secret joke while playing, was a pleasure to observe. The music seemed to sparkle and flow, by way of numerous exciting detours, from a Classical-era sound, through Romanticism and Impressionism, almost into the 20th century. At its close, the audience was up on its feet: a well-deserved standing ovation prior to intermission.

The concert resumed with the rarely performed Violin Sonata Op. 12, by Henri Vieuxtemps – a 40-minute showstopper in which the composer pays homage to Beethoven, using musical motifs from Beethoven’s famed violin Concerto. Particularly beautiful in this composition are the use of violin sonorities and the piano’s full chordal passages. The music closes with a scherzo-like theme, highly demanding for both players. Again, the audience was up on its feet.

The final number on the program was Ravel’s Tzigane, in which he deliberately aimed to write a piece with as many challenges in the violin part as possible. After a cadenza-like opening from the violin, followed by gentle pizzicato accompanied by grace notes in the piano, the musicians were off on an extraordinary musical jaunt, certainly involving a remarkable number of challenges for the violinist, but likewise not easy for the pianist.

It is unusual to attend a concert where there are three standing ovations, but this was the case on Saturday. Himy and Chudnovsky closed with a gentle lullaby as their encore, a lovely close to the evening.