

## **Barrie Concert Review – Saturday May 12th, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. - 4th PIANOFEST - *Glorious Four-Hand Masterpieces***

Submitted by Sandra Ruttan, Musician and Music teacher



### **Pianofest 2018: A celebration of sound and talent**

On Saturday, May 12, the Barrie Concert Association presented its fourth annual Pianofest at Hiway Pentecostal Church. This is a bonus concert given to purchasers of tickets for the next season of Barrie Concert Association concerts, and it features young, “up and coming” pianists. This year there were four performers performing, in pairs, works for four-hand piano.

The first duo consisted of pianists Pearl Chen and Carlisle Beresford. Both started studying music at the age of three. In their teens they ended up studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow, where they both distinguished themselves winning competitions, awards and scholarships. In particular, they won, together, the Conservatoire’s prize for piano ensemble.

It was easy, given Saturday night’s concert, to understand why. They opened the concert with a delightful rendition of Debussy’s “Le Petite Suite.” In the first movement, “En bateau” the clarity of the sonorities was like looking into crystal clear water. In “Cortege” light-heartedness and mystery, both, flowed from their expressive palette of sounds. This was followed by a whimsical “Menuet” and a poised and playful “Ballet.”

A four-hand piano transcription of Mendelssohn’s “Hebrides Overture” beautifully showcased the rich lower and liquid high registers of the Shigeru piano. The four movements of “The Pines of Rome” introduced the colours and cacophonies of birdcalls, then somber, hollow chords like Gregorian chants and tolling bells. The third movement introduced constant motion like a breeze moving through branches, and the last movement conjured up a march along the Appian way, first heavy and ominous, then exciting and exuberant. All of this was delivered with beautiful clarity of tone and texture, technical fluidity, compelling expressiveness and a charming unity of ensemble.

After a brief intermission, pianists Chris Au and Antoine Laporte took the stage. Like Chen and Beresford, they too have earned numerous awards and are rising stars in the world of classical music. Sonata for piano, in D major, by Mozart was first on their program and demonstrated

immediately a range of expression that went from elegant to spacious to rollicking and humorous, all delivered with precision and technical brilliance. The Fantasia in F minor, by Schubert, was captivating with its haunting melodies, beautifully controlled, at times seeming to come “out of thin air.” However, the final piece they played truly “stole the show.” “Le Boeuf sur le toit” by Darius Milhaud is a madcap combination of silent movie style ragtime, Brazilian tango, surreal sounding polytonality and the physical antics of the performers who switched their seats at the piano as they played. All of this was carried off with great aplomb and technical brilliance.

Hearty applause and a standing ovation communicated the audience’s pleasure in hearing these talented and dedicated performers.