

Many fine performances - Re-discovering the charm of duets

Encounters with musical instruments, like encounters with people, bring unexpected happiness and new possibilities. This current season, we were blessed with various concerts for duets.

The ultimate same instrument duet was the Bassoon Duo Recital (April 22, Kitara) where Tomiko Natsuyama of Sapporo Symphony Orchestra and Yasuyuki Higahiguchi of Kyoto City Symphony Orchestra with fine piano accompaniment by Akiko Gamou, gave a lively and full dialogue of two bassoons.

Anne-Sophie Mutter's Violin Recital (May 31, Kitara) - Violin Sonata No.35, sometimes referred to as "Piano Sonata with Violin accompaniment", or sometimes as "Piano Sonata". It was interesting and thrilling to hear the lively exchanges between violin and piano, vying for leading roles in the same musical piece and understandable why the piece is sometimes called a duo sonata.

Live concerts allow us to enjoy such lively exchanges on the stage. The unusual collaboration between a majestic organ and a small violin completely blew away our fixed ideas of chamber music. This was the Organ Summer Night Concert (June 6, Kitara) with Maria Magdalena Kaczor, resident organist of Sapporo Concert Hall, and Mayumi Ohira, concert master of Sapporo Symphony Orchestra. In Bach's violin Concerto No.1, the organ sounds made perfect harmony and partnership with the violin melodies which form the counterpoints of the piece. Obviously, this did not happen by chance, but was rather a work of art produced by two superbly talented musicians with a natural feel for each other's music.

This conviction was strengthened by following pieces such as Albinoni's Adagio and the Hungarian Dances No. 5 by Brahms. Kaczor's expansive organ sounds were full of delicacy and blended superbly with Ohira's violin, and the result was a performance equal to any duet.

Furthermore, in the organ solo recital which formed the first part of the concert, we were able to simultaneously enjoy the gorgeous sound effects of the "Baroque Age synthesizer" and the well-tempered, precise rendition of the voice parts. Frankly, the writer has never heard such moving sounds from this organ until up to now. So it is with great regret that I have to write that Kaczor's term will be ending at the end of August. I shall eagerly await her remaining recitals with great anticipation.

Lastly, an unique attempt from the vocal repertory. At the Bible and Opera (April 27, Sapporo Sun Plaza Hall), one was made aware of the need to reconsider the relationship between music and Christianity. There are many Bible stories adapted in operas like Samson and Delia by Saint-Saens and Salome by Richard Strauss. At a time when understanding different cultures is becoming ever more important, it is good to cast a thought to the meaning of stories from the Bible through music, apart from the different dimension of faith.

Photo: From Organ Summer Recital where Kaczor (right) and Ohira gave well-balanced duet. (photo by Shunichi Funado)

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