

Two minds play as one in upcoming concert

By Brock Weir



The duo of Alessio Bax and Lucille Chung started off as a romance and now the couple is bringing their synchronized talent to the Aurora Cultural Centre on Friday as part of the Great Artists Piano Series. Photo by Lisa Marie Mazzucco You have to be in each other's heads, minds, and brains; a solo but with two people.

That is the strategy of Lucille Chung and Alessio Bax when they take to the stage this Friday at the Aurora Cultural Centre for a very intimate program of music. Two Pianos, Four Hands is a familiar concept to classical music enthusiasts, but the couple will bring an added sense of intimacy to the equally intimate venue, sharing the same piano as they tackle some of the modern classics.

Their story begins as a love story when the two met at an international competition in Japan in 1997, (Which Alessio won, Ms. Chung points out.) and after keeping in touch, romance blossomed by 2000. Three years later, they experimented with the two pianos, four hands concept and are now taking things to the next level.

"The final result has to be just like a solo, only it is two people," says Mr. Bax. "You have to be in each other's heads, minds and brains. We're not playing separate pianos, so it is much more intimate than any collaboration I can think of. You can have a ballet and a piano and each one is their own instrument. Sharing the same instrument makes it very challenging, but it helps that we know each other so well musically and personally."

This sense adds an added intimacy to the music, although they say it is not necessarily conscious, simply springing out of the relationship they enjoy. It also helps that their musical styles, although different, are complementary, just like the artists themselves.

"I am a bit more of an extrovert than Alessio is, but he keeps everything grounded and makes sure everything works well, and it is a nice combination," says Ms. Chung. "Normally we play solo most of the time, but this was a great vehicle to showcase our talents together. The repertoire is so vast, varied and quite intimate so it just fits quite well."

"We love to travel together and experience things together. Normally we travel apart for our solo careers and this is just another way to spend time together!"

Friday's program will include Stravinsky's Petrouchka, solo performances by Rachmaninoff and Ligeti, and three Tangos by Piazzolla performed as a duet.

?I think this will be very special for a lot of people to experience not just classical music, but also experience people playing intimate works to very symphonic works like Petrouchka up close in a small venue,? says Mr. Bax. ?You will see in the Stravinsky our hands are on top of each other. It is a miracle our fingers don't get twisted!

?In a big hall, you lose that closeness, but in a small venue you would be able to see, hear and feel every emotion. It is going to be a roller coaster of emotions and you get to experience it very close.?

Attendees will also be able to witness a bit of a high wire act as they tackle their own arrangement of the tangos. Although they are their own arrangements, there is also room for a bit of improvisation which adds some excitement to the show.

?We haven't written it out and it is improvised every time,? says Ms. Chung. ?For us, it is a thrill to play every time because it is different. The harmonic base is there so that doesn't change, but it is all the things that come on top of it. The harmony keeps us in line and then we can have the freedom within that harmonic base. Of course, it is a challenge every time!?

Adds Mr. Bax, ?It is not something we do with anything else. A Jazz musician will have no problems doing that. I think coming from the classical side, we're not trained to do that and I think it makes it especially exciting.?

Ms. Chung and Mr. Bax will appear at the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday, April 12 at 8 p.m. The concert is part of the Great Artists Piano Series, courtesy of Aurora's Norbert and Bonnie Kraft. Tickets are \$30 for adult and \$25 for seniors and students and they are available in advance at the Centre (22 Church Street) or over the phone at 905-713-1818.