

Georgian Music November 4, 2018

Songs of Norway



Photo-BoHuang



Tomasz Adamski Photography

Submitted by Julia Jacklein - Julia Jacklein is a piano teacher, composer, choral musician and visual artist.

On Sunday afternoon, violinist Jeremy Bell and pianist Shoshana Telner treated an appreciative audience to Edvard Grieg's three sonatas for violin and piano. According to the composer himself, these sonatas each represent distinct periods in his development. All three works are remarkable for their unique use of texture and tonality, and particularly for the composer's deliberate evocation of the Hardanger fiddle, a Norwegian folk instrument.

First on the program was Grieg's First Violin Sonata in F Major, Opus 3, which creates a sparkling atmosphere in which folk elements are clearly discernible. The exciting first movement sets the stage for the soulful second movement, which nevertheless has plenty of lighter moments in which the composer makes reference to the sound of the Hardanger fiddle. The music at times called to mind Scottish dance music; in fact, later in the program, Bell mentioned Grieg's Scottish heritage, the influence of which no one could doubt when listening to this music. The sonata's final movement makes adventurous use of tonality and compositional techniques; especially interesting is the incorporation of a fugato. Both performers played with passion and conviction, allowing listeners to closely follow the charming dialogue between their instruments.

The Second Sonata in G major, Opus 13, notably starts with a moody G minor introduction before moving into the more sparkling key of G major. The composer skillfully combines both lighthearted and more somber elements, unifying them through their common folklike character. These contrasting moods were expertly brought to life by Telner and Bell. In the second movement, a drone in the violin part suggests a folk dance. Here the composer intrigues the listener by his repeated and unexpected forays into different keys. In the third movement, the drone appears in the piano part, while the violin leaps with excitement; throughout this sonata, both performers realized the composer's demanding requirements with great sensitivity and flawless technique.

The Third Sonata in C Minor, Opus 45, written 20 years after the Second Violin Sonata, reflects the composer's greater maturity when the music was written. Of the three violin sonatas, it is perhaps the one that exhibits the greatest expressive range. The first movement draws in the listener in with its sense of drama; the second movement charmingly combines pathos and humour. The violin part features numerous special effects and delightful pizzicato moments, ending with a very high drawn out note. When this final violin note filled the sanctuary at Bethel Community Church, the spellbound silence of the audience was palpable. The last movement gives the audience a glimpse of an almost expressionistic world of sound, with its hollow-sounding fifths and its juxtaposition of different tonalities.

Throughout this diverse and exciting program, both performers demonstrated their flawless musicality, leaving an enraptured audience behind them.