

The Virtuosos CHENG² (Squared) Duo



Tamara Jaynes (left) and Francisca Brouwers at reception



Inga Lill Jones (left) and Hettie Stevens Plunkett welcome us and introduce our stars

Then came Bryan Cheng – only 16 years old (!) – performing with gusto, first, the mysterious “Toccatà for Solo Cello” by the avant-garde American composer George Crumb and, next, the “Moses Variations on One String” (adapted for the cello) by Niccolò Paganini, a truly virtuoso piece evocative of the human voice. Mr. Cheng’s brilliant performance was a remarkable feat of musicianship!



(l. to r.) Elisabeth Pouchous, Mamiek Damijati, Silvie Cheng and Bryan Cheng

(Photos by Mamiek Damijati, Victoria Zabala and Aaron Blomme)

It was the closing event of this season: an evening concert by “Cheng Squared Duo”, organised by the EFTA Group in the Residence of the Canadian Ambassador to the E.U. on Avenue Franklin Roosevelt in Brussels on Monday 30th June 2014. In the spacious reception room, packed to the doors, the Canadian siblings Silvie Cheng (piano) and Bryan Cheng (cello), charmed the audience with a virtuoso performance of chamber music spanning several decades, countries and styles.

The joy of making music was there from the start! In addition, the young musicians displayed their communicative talents by introducing the pieces on the programme on a personal note, with humour and ease.

Sister and brother played Robert Schumann’s “Fantasiestücke Op. 73 for cello and piano” - colourful fantasy pieces by the German romantic composer – followed by one of Prokofiev’s last works, the “Sonata for Cello and Piano in C Major, Op. 119” –composed in the Soviet era for cellist Rostropovich and intended as a celebration of the triumph of the human spirit. Parts of this composition were rightfully described by the performers as ‘fireworks’!

After the intermission followed Johannes Brahms’ “Klavierstücke, Op. 76” - five romantic character pieces for piano solo. Silvie Cheng, 23 years old, who had proved a sensitive and attentive accompanying pianist in the first half of the programme, here emerged as a solo pianist in her own right. She performed the pieces in a lyrical and moving way.



Bryan and Silvie

Of course an *encore* was bound to happen! This turned out to be Huang Huai-Hai’s 1964 composition “Horse Racing” - a ‘fun piece’ originally composed for the Chinese instrument *Erhu*. The piece was performed in Carnegie Hall in 2013 by pianist Lang Lang and his father in a piano/*erhu* version. This evening it was played by the duo, of Chinese descent, in a piano/cello version, as an exhilarating race to the end of the concert, culminating in general applause. As Inga Lill Jones, head of the Group, had remarked in her welcome speech, the language of music is a language all of us understand! (See <http://chinablog.cc/2009/03/horse-racing-on-the-two-strings-of-erhu/>.)

A big thank you goes to Ambassador David Plunkett and his wife Hettie Stevens Plunkett for hosting a wonderful musical evening, including a generous reception. Due to their sponsorship all proceeds of the evening, including the profits of the tombola, will benefit our association.

“Cheng Squared Duo” (pointing to the *product* of a quantity rather than the *sum*) will travel on to a festival in Italy accompanied by their dedicated and supportive parents, making the most of their school holidays by performing at various venues. We wish them all the best!

Chapeau to the EFTA Group for organising a very special event!

Annette de Neree tot Babberich
Dutch Group