



UVM Music Department Presents-

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On Friday, the University of Vermont Department of Music presented a classical concert by Brooks Whitehouse on cello and David Feurzeig on piano. Each with considerable musical credits and commendations, the duo began the show with a piece by Leos Janáček entitled "A Fairy Tale." Feurzeig then left the stage to let Whitehouse perform Feurzeig's original piece, simply called "Sonata for Unaccompanied Cello." After a brief intermission, the two closed the performance with Felix Mendelssohn's Sonata no. 2 in D Major. The performance was held in the department's recital hall, and through the intimate setting, the performers connected with the audience, welcomed them to listen, and played a wonderful concert.



Knowing that the audience would likely know little about Janáček, as the composer is rather obscure, Whitehouse gave a brief introduction to the piece that primarily described Janáček's approach to what Whitehouse called "the language of music."

Whitehouse related that Janáček heard music similar to the way a child hears a language it does not understand; the child can understand the moods, the emotions, and can sense the overall feel of the conversation, but cannot understand the exact words that are being said. Janáček said that in this way he would try translate human speech patterns.

With this approach to music at the forefront of the audience's mind, the duo promptly began the piece. The music instantly captivated the audience and was truly brilliant from the onset. The piano went through flowing, beautiful parts, backing an opening section from the cello that was felt somewhat somber. The energy the two musicians shared was notably clear and seemed to spread through the audience. To consider any audience member being bored during the Janáček is ludicrous; it was completely entrancing.

Next, Whitehouse performed what was undoubtedly the highlight of the evening: Feurzeig's original solo cello piece. This time, Feurzeig gave the introduction, beginning with mentioning Bach's six cello suites, which Feurzeig claimed to be the "apex" of unaccompanied cello. He said that during these pieces, the cello, which is not generally considered to be a solo instrument, never sounds alone. Instead, it sounds big enough to fill the room and delivers the power of many instruments. Feurzeig told the audience that while he never felt as if he was trying to better Bach, he did take that philosophy and had applied it to his own work.

Upon finishing with introduction, Feurzeig left the stage and allowed Whitehouse to perform. Within the first three chords, the effect that Feurzeig had described was fully realized and did not let up throughout the duration of the piece. Even though Feurzeig utilized many more effects and developments than Bach (Feurzeig pointed out that he had advantages over Bach, since the instrument has undergone an evolution during the centuries), the sense of the cello being alone, rather than unaccompanied, never came out. Feurzeig's modern piece utilized the cello's ability to create harmonics, which can often sound slightly scratchy and thin, to contrast sweeping, resonate chords. Themes presented themselves throughout the movements, at times sounding uneasy and atonal (emphasized by Whitehouse plucking the strings opposed to using his bow), while at other times sounding very emotional, sometimes quiet enough to hear the rosin on the bow. Finally, the piece seemed as if it would end with a sense of being in a comfortable place, coupled with a sense of peace. Instead, this peace was completely interrupted by powerful, intrusive passages. These passages, while entirely unexpected, found a way to vanquish any feeling that the cello could not be a powerful enough instrument for a solo performance. Whitehouse ended with a, epic, final a stroke of the bow that caused the audience to burst into a standing ovation. It was clear that the audience felt that Feurzeig's musical ability was nothing short of towering.

After the intermission, the duo played a sonata by Mendelssohn. This piece, while being a great example of music by a great master, could not stand up to the previous performances. It seemed strange that the duo would end on a piece that seemed to stray from the music that they had played, as it did not seem possess the emotional power that the two other pieces had conveyed. While being a fantastic piece, it seemed lackluster in comparison to the Feurzeig's and Janáček's music.

All together, UVM presented a concert that was truly great and exceedingly inviting. The players were approachable, human (Whitehouse frequently mentioned and joked about his bowtie before the last piece) and enjoyable to watch. Any lovers of classical music should certainly look up more information on [Janáček](#), and should absolutely jump at the opportunity to witness any music by Feurzeig, as it will surely be mind-blowing.