

Duo B!z'art

A PROFESSIONAL piano duet is a rare phenomenon to encounter in Orkney and we have to thank Orkney Arts Society for featuring Geoffrey Baptiste and Andre Roe (otherwise known as Duo B!z'art) in a programme of music for this combination by French and Russian composers.

They started with Bizet's *Jeux d'Enfants* suite, a group of 12 pieces each describing a particular game. This was not an easy choice as each piece needs its own character to be established in the space of about two-three minutes and every "game" is different from its neighbour. The rippling *Swing*, the stop/start of the *Top*, the gently rocking *Doll* were clearly established instantly and we passed on through the pictures of, for instance, *Trumpet and Drum*, *Blind Man's Buff* and *Little Husband, Little Wife* (a lively pair in this rendering) to the triumphant finale of the *Ball* – a spirited gallop taken with effortless panache at breathtaking speed by this talented pair.

Having warmed us all up nicely, they then took us into a world of serious piano duet writing with Rachmaninov's *Six Pieces op 11* dating from 1894. Rachmaninov's solo piano writing often sounds as if the pianist had more than two hands, so with four at his disposal he made the most of the

After a well-earned interval, the players swapped ends and continued with Debussy's *Six Epigraphes Antiques* in its original format as a duet instead of the more frequently solo version which pops up from time to time. Composed thirty years after the Rachmaninov, it also consists of six movements which evoke mysterious pictures with titles such as *For a Nameless Tomb* or *For the Egyptian Woman*, leaving us to make of them what we will.

What was followed by Faure's *Dolly Suite*, again six movements taking us back to childhood. Here we were on more familiar ground, especially those of us old enough to remember *Listen with Mother* with its signature tune *Berceuse*, the first of the six. Once again the duo dealt with it briskly, no sentimentality here, and continued through the varying moods of each piece. The suite was dedicated to Regina-Helene Bardac, the Dolly of the title, and one can only be grateful that she inspired



a suite which has been such a gift for duettists ever since.

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Just when we might have imagined that life was complete, Duo B!z art introduced us to the works of Nikolai Kapustin, a Ukrainian-born composer who worked in Soviet Russia and, astonishingly, wrote in a style reminiscent of Gershwin of all people! His *Sinfonietta op 49*, composed for orchestra in 1986 and later reworked for piano duet, is high-powered stuff and it was given the works by this remarkable pair. The *Overture* got us going, the *Slow Waltz* and *Intermezzo* gave us breathing space and then the *Rondo* whirled us

to an exhilarating climax to finish us off! This is remarkable music and for those of us to whom the name Kapustin is so far unknown there is a variety of his music available on YouTube. Enjoy!

As an encore, we were given a piece by another jazz-oriented composer, Constant Lambert, with a nocturne described as 'black music for the white keys', a delightfully frothy sweetmeat to send us home with happy memories of a very successful evening's music-making. Our thanks should go to Duo B!z'art for opening our ears to this unusual repertoire and to Orkney Arts Society for yet another successful promotion.

THE ORKNEY Japan Association were crazy about kimonos over the weekend, with a range of events focused on traditional Japanese robe designs and modern adaptations.

The love of this traditional Japanese garment was shown through a display at Orkney Library and Archive on Saturday, as part of the Kimono: Kyoto to

Catwalk and Orkney project

There was also a sold-out illustrated talk and demonstration from kimono specialist Dr Saeko Yazaki, followed by a panel discussion.

The Orkney Japan Association has thanked everyone who came to these events on Saturday.

OJA are planning more kimono events for 2025.



Dr Saeko Yazaki from Glasgow University, Robyn Ward from the Consulate General of Japan in Edinburgh and Kanako Mano from Sakura Kitchen, together at Kirkwall Library.



Rachel Alexander putting the finishing touches on her kimono, which is on display at the library for the next few weeks, together with the research she did for her project.

NORTHLIGHT Gallery is calling on artists to submit their work for an exhibition in aid of Orkney Rape and Sexual Assault Service (ORSAS). The Stromness gallery is asking for submissions of handmade cards and small artworks on the theme of kindness.

These will be shown for Fair Saturday Scotland on November 30.

Fair Saturday is a global movement that aims to create a positive social impact following Black Friday, the greatest expression of consumerism.

Artists and cultural organisations from across Scotland and all around the world will get together in a global movement with one requirement: to support a social cause of their choice through their event.

For the past six years Fiona Grahame and Martin Laird have collaborated to make exhibitions for Fair Saturday in Northlight Gallery, beginning in 2018 with *Woman's Suffrage — a work in progress*.

Tuesday, November 25 is the deadline to bring exhibits to the gallery.

For further information, call Cary Welling 851194.