

Stunning Concert in a Barn



Brilliant artist, lovely music, a magical setting and a packed house. This was some extraordinary playing that we heard last Saturday in the charming renovated old barn at Fisk Farm tucked away in the southwest corner of Isle La Motte. Presented by the Isle La Motte Preservation Trust, were superb musicians who have played globally as well as to full houses at Carnegie Hall, and here we were, all able to get within a few feet of them to witness the sibling bond that makes this cello and piano duo so unique. Even individually their skill level is top notch with 24 year old pianist, Silvie Cheng, having completed a performance degree at Manhattan School of Music where she now teaches, and her 17 year old brother, cellist Bryan Cheng having won acceptance into the highly competitive Berlin University of the Arts to study alongside some of the most elite young musicians in the world. It was hard not to think of a young Yo Yo Ma and make the comparison with this brilliant, mature, but modest 17 year old who clearly played both to enjoy himself and to also please his audience, with all the signs of a great musician in the making.

The all French program permitted a range of styles to be presented from the dance-like movements of a baroque sonata by Francois Francoeur to the deep emotional and sometimes tempestuous passages of Caesar Franck and the popular love poem *Après un Reve* placed happily between them. The sound of Bryan Cheng's 1754 Italian cello was a pleasure to savor. From the moment he laid arm-weight into his bow to make the instrument speak you could sense the entire audience caught between gasping and holding back tears. It was that powerful.

These two young people had also developed and previously recorded a slide presentation that took the audience to pertinent cities of France in order to place the particular piece in the right setting. Most of us were so wrapped into watching and sharing the emotional musical skills and ideas of the musicians that the visuals drifted away into the background.