



NEWS *from Young Concert Artists, Inc.*

Xavier Foley, *double bass*

 Oberon's Grove

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YCA Presents Xavier Foley



Wednesday February 28th, 2018 - **Young Concert Artists** presenting Xavier Foley, a 23-year-old double bass player who also composes. Mixing solo works of Bach and of his own writing with sonatas by Johannes Matthias Sperger and César Franck, **Mr. Foley established himself early in the evening with his prodigious playing: the Merkin Hall crowd seemed very taken with his musicianship and his personality.** In the sonata offerings, expert work at the Steinway from pianist Kelly Yu-Chieh Lin added immensely to the concert's success.

This was only the second time I've experienced a double-bass recital; the first was Gary Karr, playing many years ago in Hartford, Connecticut.

Xavier Foley, clad all in black with a spiffy bow-tie, commenced his program with Bach's *Cello Suite #1*. This very familiar music is always a pleasure to hear, especially in **a performance as rich in dynamic contrasts and finely-modulated transitions** as tonight's. **Mr. Foley's spacious, hall-filling sound, and the warmth of his deepest notes gave his playing real immediacy; in the *Courante*, he displayed lively agility.** Enjoyment of the *Suite* was unfortunately compromised by the prolonged ringing of a cellphone at just the wrong moment, and by various intrusions of coughing (inevitable during flu season, but still disruptive); Mr. Foley took it all in stride.



Next came the *B-minor Sonata* by Czech composer Johannes Matthias Sperger (1750–1812). Sperger was a prolific composer who wrote more than forty symphonies, numerous instrumental concertos (among them eighteen bass concertos), sonatas, rondos and dances, cantatas, choral works, and airs. He died in 1812 at the age of 62.

With Kelly Yu-Chieh Lin at the Steinway, the two musicians reveled in work which is by turns dramatic and melodious; the music made
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me think of Adolphe Adam's score for **GISELLE**. The bassist, in the opening *Allegro moderato*, must produce flourishes of coloratura in music which puts great technical demands on the player. Ms. Lin meanwhile brought rhythmic zest to her playing.

The second movement, aptly marked *Andante cantabile*, sings like a Bellini aria...and a gorgeous one, at that. A deep, rich cadenza from Mr. Foley led to a reprise of the initial melody, beautifully played. Continuing in an operatic vein, the final *Allegro* seemed like a *cabaletta*. At one point, some buzzy passagework made me think of the '*Flight of the Bumblebee*'. Mr. Foley and Ms. Lin were well-matched in their feel for this music.

Two works composed by Mr. Foley - *Irish Fantasy* and *The Falling Seagull* - followed. In the first of these, the vital energy of Irish folk dances could be felt. A low-range *agitato* motif and a pulsing passage carried the dance forward, with deep accents and lively tapping. At the end of Mr. Foley's vivid and vigorous rendering, his bow was pretty much shredded.

The Falling Seagull has the sound of old Chinese folksongs. Alternating slithering slides with sharp accents, and with rhythmic patterns that swirl up and down the strings, the music conjures up visions of a place half-a-world away. *The Falling Seagull* ends with a gentle fade-out.

Following the interval, Mr. Foley and Ms. Lin played the ultra-familiar César Franck's *Sonata in A-major*. It's a bit of an adjustment to hear this piece, so familiar to us in a violin context, played with the bass's much lower resonance. Ms. Lin's rhapsodic playing was most welcome, as was Mr. Foley's passionate involvement in the music. At times, the double bass seemed to have a mind of its own in terms of pitch, but the players swept on with rich melodic exchanges, making the very most of this music which can be so achingly lovely and moving.

As an encore, the duo played another Foley work, *Shards of Light*, in which the bassist left his bow on the floor and engaged us instead with his brilliant mastery of plucking.

Mr. Foley has been announced for appearances with **Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center** next season; I look forward to hearing him again.

~ Author: *Oberon*

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