

Review

Matteo Fedeli: “A Stradivari for the People” at Reinberger Chamber Hall (April 28)

by Guytano Parks



Cleveland's Severance Hall was included in the eight-city American tour of the Antonio Stradivari 1726 "Ex Adams Collection" violin played by Matteo Fedeli with pianist Andrea Carcano. Presented by The Consulate of Italy in Detroit commemorating the Year of Italian Culture in the USA 2013, the program of short pieces served well to show off the rich qualities of the coveted instrument. Fedeli is councillor, associate founder and has been first violinist of the Academy String Concert Orchestra of Milan since 1995. Known as "the man of the Stradivarius," he was a charming and enthusiastic ambassador, providing spoken program notes from Reinberger Chamber Hall's stage.

Opening with *Danse Hongroise* by Rachmaninoff, violinist and pianist Carcano at once revealed a close and sensitive collaboration which prevailed throughout the entire evening. Fedeli drew a full-bodied tone from the instrument which was most impressive in its lower register, making the most of contrasts between the rhythmic and the lyrical. *Après un Rêve* — a dream of romantic elopement with a lover — is one of Fauré's most famous songs and indeed the violinist became a singer, sensitively phrasing and breathing with subtle nuance and heartfelt emotion.

The violin's capabilities for brilliance and projection were demonstrated by an exciting reading of *Danse Macabre* by Saint-Saëns. Both violinist and pianist met all of the technical challenges admirably. Fedeli's insightful analysis was hardly needed in order to understand the piece's legend as their playing evoked eerie and vivid images; the dance of death, skeletons, a rooster's crow and other elements were effectively and colorfully conveyed.

Andrea Carcano had an opportunity to display his pianistic gifts in two transcriptions, the first being Turandot's *Fraungemach Elegy No. 4* by Busoni. Brilliant scales and runs, crisp dispatchment of chordal figures plus a keen sense of balance and texture adorned the *Greensleeves* melody. Ginzburg's transcription of *Largo al factotum* from *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini was teeming with wit, humor and bravado.

The duo stirred up quite a bit of nervous energy by way of the turbulent second movement *Allegro* from Franck's Sonata in A major. Waves of sound spewed forth from the pi-

ano, but never overpowered the violin. The quieter, reflective sections played with a sense of spontaneity were lovely. Again, Fedeli played with the sensitivity and phrasing of a singer, full of expressive detail and inflection, while Carcano was the consummate collaborator, adding lush color and atmosphere as well as rhythmic propulsion.

Paganini's *Cantabile*, notable for its long, legato lines and dramatic leaps, proved to be the perfect piece in which to further illustrate the gorgeous tone quality of the Antonio Stradivari 1726 instrument. The radiance of the notes in the highest register was heavenly. Paganini is usually associated with pyrotechnics, but this piece served as a soothing respite; the calm before the storm as the musicians then delved into John Williams' diabolic *Devil's Dance* from the film *The Witches of Eastwick*. All the stops were pulled out during this fiendish romp.

Six short popular dances comprise Bartók's *Danze Rumene*, the concluding work on this program. Fedeli and Carcano played with a strong sense of rhythm and character, bringing out the work's inherent gypsy qualities. The violin writing in this five minutes of exotic music includes just about every trick and technique of the gypsy fiddler. Exciting!

Kreisler's *Liebeslied* served as the perfect encore to this program of pieces which illustrated the magnificence of the Antonio Stradivari 1726. Fedeli descended from the stage, strolling through the audience without missing a beat and pianist Carcano was with him musically every step of the way. And the ever-present body (violin?) guard was within a few short steps as well, keeping close watch as everyone leaned over in their seats to behold the instrument as it went by. It may be of interest to note that the printed program was a souvenir photographic replica of the "Ex Adams Collection" violin, front and back.

Published on clevelandclassical.com May 7, 2013