



MAAA Chamber Music – Superb Piano / Violin Recital.

Two major sonatas for violin and piano formed the backbone of the recital given last Saturday in the Ardrishaig Hall by Andrea Gajic (violin) and Anna Rastopchina (piano) for the Mid Argyll Arts Association. On Tuesday, the duo completed their four venue ABCT tour by performing the same programme in Campbeltown for the Kintyre Music Club.

Beethoven's "*Spring Sonata*" came first in their programme. Immediately, we heard the tender, lyrical tones of the violin in the serene opening theme, repeated very soon by the piano, thus setting the scene for a masterly performance of this great work. The beautiful peaceful "adagio" second movement was followed by a short "scherzo" with Beethoven in a light, whimsical mood. The final "rondo", sunny in tone, kept both instruments busily employed, with the composer at his most creative. This was an inspired and deeply poetic performance, with the interplay between Andrea and Anna totally instinctive.

The second Sonata – *Brahms No.1 in G (op 78)* – was written shortly after the death of Felix Schumann, Brahms' godson, but, as Andrea explained in her pre-performance talk, it was a work of great tenderness rather than sadness and despair. The playing showed warmth and finesse in equal measure, with the violin playing magisterial at times. Pianist Anna Rastopchina is a musician of rare grace and fluency, whose confident and flawless technique provided Andrea with a perfect partner in this pastoral G major masterpiece.

Two shorter works complemented the "*Spring*" Sonata before the interval. First, a virtuoso Sarasate arrangement of *Chopin's Nocturne no.8 in D*, which received tender and eloquent treatment with fiendish double stopping for the violin part. It is always agreeable to be surprised by a new piece of music and the Schumann "*Fantasy*" did just that – a work rarely heard in which the violin urges the piano on to ever greater feats, with sonorous chords and lightning arpeggio passages to accompany the soaring notes of the strings.

After the interval and the Brahms sonata, a tour de force – Piazzolla's "*Grand Tango*", written for cellist, Rostropovic, and later arranged for piano and violin at the request of Gidon Kremer. The Tango idiom was captured to perfection. Piazzolla's astonishing piano score created a rich canvas of sound on which the violin painted its irresistible dancing patterns. A performance which totally converted the audience to the passion, rhythms and beauty of Argentina's national dance.

The applause for this superb recital was long and rapturous, and the large audience was then rewarded with a lively pulsating *Hungarian Dance No.1* by Brahms as an encore. It had been a privilege to be in the company of two delightful musicians and to enjoy violin/piano playing of the highest professional level.