Concert pairs Latin American music with poetry

Michelle Ruan, Correspondent | Posted: Monday, October 27, 2014 11:06 am

On Oct. 21, Cal Poly Pomona hosted a concert in the Music Recital Hall that celebrated music from Latin America. Titled “Art Songs of Latin America,” it featured soprano Ursula Kleinecke-Boyer and pianist Vernon Snyder.

The intimate concert featured songs by famous Latin American composers and poets. Kleinecke-Boyer and Sydner paired poems together with song compositions, developing an interesting combination of art and music.

The idea for this concert came from both Kleinecke-Boyer and Snyder, who were colleagues at Pomona College last year. Kleinecke-Boyer, who was born and raised in Mexico, has always had a passion for Latin American art songs. She worked with Snyder to make their idea of a concert devoted solely to Latin American songs a reality.

The hour-and-a-half concert took listeners through a musical journey of 25 different pairings of poems and piano music. From Mexican composers to Peruvian composers, the concert featured a mix of folk and modern music styles. Besides the poems, there were also five children’s songs that were sung at the end of the concert.

Before each set of songs, Kleinecke-Boyer would give a brief description about the composer and say something special about a certain song.

Before singing “Gato” by Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera, Kleinecke-Boyer said, “‘Gato’ means cat in Spanish, but for this song, it refers to a type of dance that is also called Gato.”

She then performed the dance, sharing the tradition with the audience as she fluently sung in Spanish. Snyder accompanied every song on the piano.

An interesting point of the concert was when Kleinecke-Boyer sang in Nahuatl, the ancient language of the Aztecs.

“Cuatro canciones en nahuatl,” known as “Four Songs in Nahuatl,” was a unique experience for many of the listeners. The language itself is rarely heard in public, much less in song.
There was also a call for the audience to join the musicians during the encore. The encore featured the duo playing the first song, “Deseo,” a composition by Cuban composer Eduardo Sanchez de Fuentes. She asked the audience to tap along to the beat, as well as sing from the program book with her.

The program book contained the words to all the songs sung in Spanish, along with English translations. Several enthusiastic singers joined in with Kleinecke-Boyer, stumbling over some of the words but nevertheless enjoying the unique opportunity.

Snyder, who is a lecturer at CPP as well as Pomona College, said that he learned a lot from the concert because as a classically trained pianist, he learned new rhythms from the Latin American songs he played at the concert.

“I loved this opportunity to learn a style of music that was previously unfamiliar to me, and I look forward to deepening my understanding of this beautiful repertoire,” said Snyder.

The two also noted that there would be a similar concert at nearby Scripps College on Friday. According to Teresa Kelly, the music department’s publicist, they will come back to CPP.

“I have heard these artists and they are both outstanding performers,” said Kelly. “There will be more events similar to this one and we hope to have these artists return again in the future.”