

Sonatas and the Art of Listening

Sonata: literally meaning “a piece of music.” The word has its origins in the Latin word *sonare*, or “to sound.” The word now refers to a specific form of music, which—as famed conductor and composer, Leonard Bernstein, put it—comes from the first movement of the piece. The first movement is characterized by a “perfect three-part balance,” and “the excitement of its contrasting elements. Balance and contrast—in these two words we have the main secrets of the sonata form.” A sonata written for a full orchestra is called a symphony; when written for four instruments, a quartet; for three instruments, a trio; and for just two instruments, a sonata.¹

It is in the latter duo format that Chi Yong Yun, assistant professor of piano and piano area coordinator, and Carla Trynchuk, professor of music and string area coordinator have been performing together over the last several years. Yun, a graduate of Indiana University and doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Trynchuk, a graduate of Juilliard School, began collaborating shortly after Yun’s arrival at Andrews University in 2008.

“The first step in our collaboration is finding a piece that we want to perform,” Yun says. Some of the venues in which they perform already have an established repertoire. “In other concerts,

we have the liberty to put the program together,” says Yun. The pair usually performs duo repertoire, selecting sonatas from a variety of eras or to fit a specific theme. This last Valentine’s Day, they performed a number of light-hearted pieces including Beethoven’s “Spring Sonata for Violin & Piano,” Sibelius’ “Berceuse” and “Country Dance” in “An Evening of Violin and Piano Pieces” at the Howard Performing Arts Center. Previous concerts have included works by Leclair, Saint-Saëns, Franck, Martinu, Brahms, Faure and Vaughn Williams.

Carla Trynchuk & Chi Yong Yun





Trynchuk, Stephen Framil & Yun



Over the course of their seven-year collaboration, they also have incorporated other instrumentalists, such as cellist Stephen Framil or the American Piano Quartet. In 2015, Yun, Trynchuk and Framil performed Schubert's "Piano Trio in B-flat major" and Dvorak's "Trio in F minor" at Andrews University and several locations in Pennsylvania.

As experienced musicians and collaborators, preparation comes easily for Trynchuk and Yun. After working on the pieces individually, they meet to rehearse several times before the performance. "We read through the music together and make some comments," says Trynchuk, "but it falls together very quickly."

Trynchuk and Yun attribute the ease with which they collaborate to each other's musicianship. "It's the musical energy that we get from each other that fuels our collaboration and drives us to keep collaborating. Collaboration requires personal and musical chemistry. Working with a refined musician, like Carla, makes everything so much easier and more pleasurable," asserts Yun. Of Yun, Trynchuk says, "Her artistry is truly exceptional. She performs with a remarkable grace

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and beauty with a natural ability to bring out the entire spectrum of colors, characters, emotions and depth of any composer."

Every part of the collaboration has its joys, but both musicians agree that their favorite aspect is the performance itself. Many of their performances together have taken place on the Andrews University campus as part of the Howard Series performances, Faculty Recitals or Second Sunday Concert Series, but they are in no way limited to the Andrews campus.

For the past several summers, both musicians have participated in the Oregon Music Festival, held in Portland, Oregon. In 2015, both musicians were "artists-in-residence" at the festival. Trynchuk directed the Oregon Music Festival String Program and performed chamber and solo works, while

Yun performed with the Orpheus Academy Orchestra and Oregon Festival Orchestra.

Beyond the personal and professional benefits of their collaboration, Yun and Trynchuk find working together to be helpful in their music studios as well. "Teaching a work you have performed brings a different perspective," Trynchuk notes. "And," Yun adds, "students appreciate coming to a performance and observing how what they are learning is put into practice." "It's an inspiration for the students to have musical role models," Trynchuk agrees.

Seeing these professors perform also provides students with an example of how artists can work together. Yun has been active in promoting a spirit of collaboration among her students. "I developed a piano-ensemble class with the main purpose of educating pianists on collaborative performances, not just as an accompanist, but as a 50/50 collaborative artist," she says. "The goal is for them to learn the balance and technique required to work professionally and musically with other musicians."

"I think the art of listening is something that students need to learn. We assume that musicians are constantly listening, but that's not always the case," Trynchuk muses. If performed correctly, the music itself allows all the featured instruments to be heard. In the pieces they play, Yun notes, "the main elements of the piece expose both instruments. The music gives us equality."

In 2015, the duo traveled abroad to perform in Paris, France and Zagreb, Croatia. "We hope to do more trips together," Yun says. During their tours, both Yun and Trynchuk give master-classes in their separate areas, which enables them to mentor up-and-coming musicians and spread the word about the Andrews University Department of Music.

The pair has already thought about some of the future pieces they hope to perform. "One is the Beethoven-Kreutzer Sonata. If we have one piece that we know we want to work on, we create the program to complement that piece," says Yun. When asked if they had a favorite piece that they performed, Trynchuk responded, "The piece I am working on becomes my favorite. I like it that way."

1 Leonard Bernstein, "Young People's Concert: What is Sonata Form?" Script available at leonardbernstein.com