

IVCI laureate Yoojin Jang lives up to her title Laureate chamber recital also features pianist Thomas Hoppe.

By Tom Aldridge



Violinist Yoojin Jang



Pianist Thomas Hoppe

While admitting that there is no such thing as perfection, Monday's International Violin Competition of Indianapolis (IVCI) laureate chamber recital players came as close to the zenith in their playing as I've witnessed in many a concert/recital. Violinist and fifth-place laureate in the 2014 IVCI, [Yoojin Jang](#), joined with collaborative pianist [Thomas Hoppe](#) in five selections, from Beethoven to Saint-Saëns.

Beethoven's Violin Sonata in A Minor, Op. 12 No. 2, began the program in a light, somewhat jocular vein. Between the players, Hoppe caught my ear first with his seemingly effortless, dashing pianism. But then I couldn't ignore Jang's tonal characteristics: her matchless passage work, her well-controlled, variable vibrato.

If anything, the recitalist duo struck even more sparks in the ensuing Grieg Violin Sonata in G Minor, a piece deserving of more hearings than we get. In listening to the three movements, I recalled his magnificent A Minor Piano Concerto (a standard-repertoire work if ever there was one). Jang played a few passages which reminded me of the piano writing in the concerto. This is not to suggest that Hoppe didn't have his work cut out for him. His scale runs, his (own) passage work, his decorative high figurations and his chordal passages . . . I can't imagine anyone playing them any more musically--and without any audible slips.

Following the break, we heard Stravinsky's own transcription for violin and piano of a portion of his ballet music to *Le Baiser de la Fée* (The Fairy's Kiss). The orchestra's original presented the lyricism of Tchaikovsky blended perfectly (well, almost) with the rhythm of Stravinsky. Its duo transcription lacked the colors of Tchaikovsky's orchestra. But our recitalists gave us a matchless blend: Neither player outshone the other.

Next came Sibelius' Six Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 79 Nos. 1, 5 and 6. They are "Souvenir," "Tanz-Idylle" and "Berceuse." Our duo gave just a suggestion of the Nordic chill lightly suggested by the composer.

The program ended with Saint-Saëns' chestnut, Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Op. 28, intended as a work for violin and orchestra, turning out to be the composers' most famous work for those forces. Still Hoppe's piano work came close to rivaling an orchestra's. Yang's work remained every bit the equal of Hoppe's. I awarded her No. 1 in the 2014 competition's finalist rankings, with Tessa Lark running a close second.