

# BLIND DATE

BOWS AT THE READY, THREE CLASSICAL MUSICIANS FIGHT IT OUT FOR THE LAST LAUGH

**T**he scene: *Stringers of Edinburgh*, York Place. The cast: Rebecca Carrington, a performer who brings comedy to classical music in her show, *Me and My Cello*. Paul Staicu, a concert pianist, and Laurent Cirade, a classically trained cellist, two virtuosos who do battle with their instruments in their show, *Duel*.

Rebecca Carrington: Laurent came up with a great idea for my show the other day. He thinks I should be up on a high chair like a baby so I have to double over to reach my cello. Funny, eh?

Paul Staicu: I'm not surprised he came up with that idea. Every day he wakes me up with a new idea, such as playing his cello with a chainsaw.

Laurent Cirade: It just came to me. Musicians are so particular about their instruments and people are always asking me: "What kind of bow do you use?", expecting something very delicate, so one day I answered: "A chainsaw" and that gave me the idea for the show.

PS: It's awful, we have to have a new cello for every show.

RC: I know that you've always said, Laurent, that you couldn't do a comedy music show on your own with just your cello, but I'm sure you could, you have so much energy.

PS: Don't give him ideas, he'll kick me out. The sad part of being a pianist is that you're often just the accompaniment; the happy part of it is that you can do any kind of music and you need no-one. But in our show, it's really 50 per cent each.

LC: Yes, we always count how many notes each of us play on stage to get it exactly right.

RC: And then you're paid accordingly?

PS: It's as good a way as any.

LC: We start our show like a traditional classical concert: we come on and don't speak to the audience but sit down at our instruments.

RC: I do that too, but only at the very beginning. I don't want to scare anyone off by making them think it's a solo cello concert.

LC: When you listen to classical music it's so beautiful, but when you look at it it's so boring. That's what we're trying to get away from.

RC: It's important to create a show that people can access from all walks of life, not just for musicians.

PS: You can't have private jokes.

LC: People come to our show with no idea what a cello is.

PS: People ask: "What's with the weird guitar?"

RC: The one I always get when I'm struggling down the road with my cello is: "I bet you wish you'd learnt the flute."

PS: If one person walks away from the show thinking that classical music is not that boring after all then it's worth doing it. When we play the music, we always play it correctly, regardless of the fact that people are laughing.

RC: The nice thing is that we can talk as well as play. When I was doing concerts suffered from years of mental constipation, now I have terrible verbal diarrhoea. It's like the famous story about how Victor Borge got started: he went on stage to play a serious concert and his piano stool collapsed and the



audience started laughing. It's amazing to have an immediate audience reaction rather than playing for 20 minutes for a restrained round of applause. Victor Borge really inspired me.

LC: When I was ten-years-old, I saw this movie called *Limelight*. There's a really funny scene near the end where the short-sighted pianist, played by Buster Keaton, has to accompany the rather

ABOVE: Rebecca Carrington with Paul Staicu and Laurent Cirade of *Duel*.

Picture: Neil Hanna

manic violinist, played by Charlie Chaplin. For me, it was a kind of revelation of the comic possibilities of music.

PS: It's a very long sketch, I'm not sure it works as well any more.

LC: You're right. It's like opera - who wants to take four hours out of their day?

RC: And they're always about one thing. Loving and then dying.

LC: I think that I was influenced by Hoffnung's illustrations as well.

RC: When I was a child, we had placemats with Hoffnung cartoons on our dining table. Maybe it influenced me, too. He draws people going fishing in the grand piano.

LC: Really?

PS: Oh no, everything becomes an idea with him. New ideas every single day.

LC: Out of 99 ideas, just one is good.

RC: I get into trouble with my director because I keep adding bits in when things occur to me during the show.

PS: There is very little improvisation in the show we do.

LC: It's because the timing is so important both for the music and the comedy. There's a pulse and a score in your mind. You can't stop and enjoy the laugh.

● *Me and My Cello* is at the Pleasance Courtyard. *Duel* is at the Assembly Rooms. Both shows run until 29 August.

THE SCOTSMAN