



Bach-analia: Musical comedy duo makes U.S. debut

By Joshua Walovitch

Thursday, March 24, 2011

josh.walovitch@bostonherald.com

http://bostonherald.com/entertainment/arts_culture/view.bg?articleid=1325664&srvc=edge&position=4

Laughing at a classical music performance is usually frowned upon. But not when violinist Aleksey Igudesman and pianist Richard Hyung-ki Joo perform. The pair have turned concert halls into comedy clubs, which they'll do Saturday when they make their U.S. debut at Berklee Performance Center.

Carrying on the tradition of classical music humorists P.D.Q. Bach and Victor Borge, Igudesman and Joo are determined to spread the joy of classical music. They've been doing a good job of it: Their zany humor and genre-crossing medleys have garnered more than 20 million YouTube hits.

"We pay a nice Chinese guy to click our videos," joked Joo, the UK-born son of Korean parents.

Actually kids, 20-somethings and grannies, most with little or no previous interest in classical music, are howling at the duo's combination of satire and sound.

Joo and the Russian-born Igudesman met at a music conservatory in England and went on to pursue classical-music careers. But both had reservations about the uptight attitude that too often surrounds classical music.

"The music is serious, but that doesn't mean it has to be presented or performed or talked

about in a serious way,” said Igudesman.

Their comedy makes fun with music, not fun of it. Their routine plays out like a Monty Python skit scored by Mozart and has charmed such admirers as John Malkovich and Roger Moore, both of who have joined them onstage.

But don't be fooled by the hijinks. The duo's talent is no joke. What they lack is any trace of pretension.

“We are not untouchable geniuses,” Joo said. “We are very touchable. After the performances we go out and sing and talk and take pictures with our fans. We also constantly update our Facebook account, for our supporters.”

And their biggest supporters? The classical music community.

“We were very surprised and taken aback by how positive we were received,” Igudesman said, “especially from all these brilliant classical musicians. A lot of them have become fans of ours.”

And they like having fans. Joo points out that Franz Liszt, the greatest piano virtuoso of the 19th century, was then the equivalent of Justin Bieber.

“Women went crazy over him, throwing their panties at him,” Joo said. “He was like the first rock star ever.”

“We have some devout fans, but we haven't had any underwear thrown at us yet,” Igudesman said.

“At least,” Joo said, “not during the concert.”