

Boyer graduates reunite for classical music concerts

Timeless Resonance Music played its sixth show Oct. 10 at the Ethical Society with performances of the piano, flute and vibraphone.



Pianist Anthony Passante-Contaldi and vibraphonist Emilyrose Ristine play an original piece together on Oct. 10. | LILLIAN PRIETO / THE TEMPLE NEWS

Anthony Passante-Contaldi, Gabriel Preston, and Emilyrose Ristine worked in synchronicity with each other while playing in the All-City Orchestra. They each hailed from three different performing arts high schools and, while they were acquaintances, hardly knew each other.

However, their two-mile migration north to Boyer College of Music and Dance for college solidified the friendships that now make up “Timeless Resonance Music.”

“I found myself wishing that there were more places to perform classical repertoire in Philadelphia,” said Passante-Contaldi, a 2024 music alumnus. “So I reached out to my colleagues who had also recently graduated and shared the same vision.”

Passante-Contaldi formed TRM in 2024 and has since performed six concerts at the Philadelphia Ethical Society. Their latest concert took center stage on Oct. 10.

Passante-Contaldi opened on the piano with “Un Sosprio” by Franz Liszt and Preston followed with four flute compositions. Passante-Contaldi and Ristine closed the show on the piano and vibraphone, respectively, playing an original Passante-Contaldi composition, “Concerto for Vibraphone No. 1.”

Passante-Contaldi created TRM as an opportunity for classical composers and musicians from the Philadelphia area to perform. He is constantly looking for more members to showcase.

“I know there are many qualified players and composers who are maintaining high skill levels on their instrument yet find themselves with few outlets for performing classical music after graduation,” Passante-Contaldi said. “We are trying to give them an outlet for success.”

Passante-Contaldi was first classically trained as a percussionist. During his sophomore year at Girard Academic Music Program, he toured with the All-City Philadelphia Orchestra at Zappanale – an international Frank Zappa festival in Germany – as a drummer.

But at Zappanale, Passante-Contaldi had an epiphany: the best musicians mastered at least two instruments. He tried his hand at the guitar, a common second instrument for percussionists, but the neck felt awkward in his hands. Then, a single arrangement made it obvious.

“When I heard “Un Sosprio” for the first time, I knew the colors and textural atmosphere that the piano provides was a much better fit for me,” Passante-Contaldi said.

The year after Zappanale, Passante-Contaldi was selected again to go overseas with All-City in a historic five-city Italy tour. Preston and Ristine were among the 115-person ensemble travelling to Italy.

At the time, Preston was one of four clarinetists selected to play on the tour, grateful to not only travel with the group but receive teaching from maestro and fellow alum Don Liuzzi.

“It was his last year conducting the All City orchestra, so he wanted to go all out,” said Preston, 2019 bachelor of music and 2021 master’s in jazz alumnus. “He budgeted for us to go on a nine-day tour and explore all these different cities while performing each day. It was amazing.”

The tour was a chance to reconnect when the two arrived at Boyer in 2015. Rehearsals for the Wind Symphony turned into late-night jam sessions and before long, the two became close friends.

Around this time, Passante-Contaldi honed his piano skills to a level suitable for a performance and began composing his own pieces.

“That was when our chemistry, not matter what we were playing, really, truly clicked,” Preston said. “Tony became a best friend of mine and we agreed to just collaborate on as many different projects as we could.”

Ristine also reconnected with Passante-Contaldi through Wind Symphony, and the Preston and Passante-Contaldi pair became a trio. The three ate lunch together, hung out after rehearsals and bonded through their shared passions.

After Ristine graduated from Boyer, she began teaching percussion in the Philly public schools during the day and freelancing as a performer at night.

“In school, I wanted to go down the performance route but as I got closer to graduation, I had an epiphany, like, ‘I need to go back,’” said Ristine, a 2019 bachelor of music theory and 2022 percussion performance master’s alumna.

Last year, Passante-Contaldi gave Ristine the chance to showcase the talent she shares in the classroom and asked her to join TRM. When Passante-Contaldi told her it would be a series of pop-ups at the Ethical Society with their college buddy Preston, Ristine was all in.

The groups’ Boyer beginnings are still identifiable in breadcrumbs, and the group currently practices using the Boyer space. Audience members from their Oct. 10 performance may have noticed the music stands spraypainted with “BOYER” in large, white lettering.

“At Temple, I got exposed to so much music, I had to do so much rehearsing and learning of music,” Ristine said. “Temple put me

through fire by making me do all those things at once, so when I left, I could still do all those things at once.”

Madelynne Ferro