

Claire Aebersold and Ralph Neiweem

Piano Duo

Described as “consummate practitioners of pianism” (The Washington Post), Claire Aebersold and Ralph Neiweem enjoy an international career as exponents of music for both piano duet and two keyboards. Their innovative programming reflects the full gamut of this delightful repertoire, from four-hand works of Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms, to favorite lighter masterpieces by Poulenc and Milhaud, and contemporary works championed or commissioned by Aebersold and Neiweem.

Celebrating 25 years before the public in 2006-07, Aebersold and Neiweem have been heard on RAI-TV Italy, PBS television, and on WFMT Radio in Chicago, where they performed an unprecedented series twenty-five live broadcast concerts covering virtually the complete four-hand repertoire of the 19th and 20th centuries. The duo has appeared with orchestras internationally, including the Chicago Philharmonic and the Vienna Tonkünstler. They have been heard in recital in many cities throughout the USA and Europe, including Chicago, New York, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Santa Fe, Vienna, Rome, and Florence. In Italy alone they have given over 200 recitals throughout Tuscany and Umbria. They have taken their two pianos to many community concert organizations throughout Midwestern USA and Canada. Recent concerts in New York include a pair of all-Schubert recitals at the Goethe Institute, and a 25th anniversary celebration concert at Merkin Hall in May 2006. In November 2005 they judged the 1st International Two-piano Competition “Twenty fingers” in Rome, Italy.

Aebersold and Neiweem are co-founders of the Pitten-Classics International Music Festival in Austria. The Duo's Schubert performances in Arezzo, Italy won them the Premio "Il Borro" of the duke of Aosta, and they received an "Edpress" award for their articles in Clavier magazine. They have given master classes and workshops throughout the United States at such institutions as Northwestern University, Dartmouth College, University of Vermont, University of Wisconsin, Northern Illinois University, and they have guested at numerous MTNA State conventions. They are founders and directors of the NEA award-winning Chicago Duo-Piano Festival, now in its eighteenth season at the Music Institute of Chicago. They have commissioned significant new works for the piano duo, including Joseph Turrin's "Symmetries" for Two Pianos and "Great Movements" Sonata for Piano, Four-hands by Patrick Byers.

Aebersold and Neiweem's CDs on the Summit label include the newly released "Four-Hand Reflections," the world premiere recording of the Brahms Piano Concerto No. 1 in the composer's own arrangement for piano, four-hands, and volumes 1 and 2 of a complete traversal of Schubert's four-hand music, praised by Gramophone Magazine as "utterly charming...warmly recommended." Their editions of four-hand arrangements by Brahms and Mendelssohn have been published by Dover, International.

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1100 N. Main St., Ste. 207, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 • 734/665-4029 • info@greatlakespaa.org

Claire Aebersold and Ralph Neiweem met in Italy in 1970 as young solo performers at a music festival in Umbria. They were married in 1973 and have devoted themselves to the exclusive study of the duo repertoire since 1981. Claire Aebersold is a native of Oak Ridge, Tennessee and is a graduate of the New England Conservatory. Ralph Neiweem hails from Evanston, Illinois and is a graduate of the Juilliard School. Both completed graduate studies at Northwestern University and received artist diplomas from Villa Schifanoia in Florence, Italy. Their common teachers include Irwin Freundlich, Theodore Lettvin, John Browning, and Orazio Frugoni, at whose urging they became a duo. They currently reside in Chicago, and are Artists-in-Residence at the Music Institute of Chicago.

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