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Siblings strike a chord



The Hindu

The concert was more than just an exhibition of the duo's talent. Photo: M. Srinath

Sisters Chelsea and Chloe De Souza took the audience on a musical trip with melodies from Bach to Barber

Chelsea and Chloe De Souza closed their concert with 'I Could've Danced All Night', that iconic song from *My Fair Lady*. It summoned the differing moods of the music that evening. It also showcased the flamboyance and lyricism of the pieces from Bach to Barber that the sisters negotiated with skill and subtlety.

Chelsea, 20, the pianist, pursues a Bachelor's degree in Music and International Politics at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and College of Arts and Sciences, Ohio. Chloe, a year younger, is also a student of music with a double major in voice and piano performance.

Winners of all-India and international piano competitions, the sisters have won scholarships, awards and performed for maestros such as Zubin Mehta. Chelsea, now in her senior year, is the co-director and arranger of Oberlin's oldest all-female a capella group 'Nothing But Treble', while Chloe is part of the 'Giving Voice to India' programme. The duo performed at the Pitti Theyagaraya Hall as part of a series of concerts organised by the Chennai Western Music Association.

Considering the not-so-grand stage, the onus was on Chelsea, who opened the concert, to hold the audience in thrall. Supremely talented, she did so with her technique, the heft of the music she can conjure from the piano and her alluring stage presence.

Beginning with 'Chaconne in D Minor Bach-Busoni', Chelsea's controlled playing coaxed sounds of delicate beauty from the Yamaha piano.

She accompanied Chloe for three songs by Mozart. 'Das Veilchen', a song about a careless girl who crushes a violet, supposedly a metaphor for a young man; 'Abendempfindung', a song that best represents Mozart's genius and the inherent sorrow that underlies even his happy music; and 'Deh Vieni', the well-known aria from the *Marriage of Figaro*.

Chloe's voice was admirably free from frills, skimming through emotions and delving into the beauty of the music only as much as was needed. And much of that beauty came from Chelsea's consistent accompaniment.

Chelsea's pianism portrayed the folk spirit of Frederic Chopin's 'Nocturne in C Minor' and the complex music of 'Etude in C Sharp Minor' with aplomb.

Chloe's vocally radiant 'En Priere' by Gabriel Faure, an intimate prayer song, was followed by Claude Debussy's 'Beau Soir' and 'Nuit D'etoiles', impressively mirroring the evening and the starry night with harmonic textures. Debussy's music from the *Images* followed, with notes by both singer and accompanist staying plush and nuanced.

Chloe rounded off the concert with two compelling pieces by Samuel Barber, 'Sure On This Shining Night' and 'Secrets of the Old', that had choral lines rising in parts from the dense piano clusters.

The concert was more than just an exhibition of the duo's talent. It was also a reminder, given the sisters' age, that they will continue to make extraordinary music for many years to come.