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The Art of Love, Into the Labyrinth

Friday, March 28th, 2014

by [Marina P. Kennedy](#) on [Playing Around](#)

The Art of Love, Into the Labyrinth was presented by Voice Afire on Saturday, March 22nd at the Tenri Cultural Institute in New York City. The evening began with a tasting of fine Italian Wine from Roca della Masie, Stella & Mosca, St Michael Eppan, and Zenato and Prosecco from Enrico, Toffoli, and Zardetto. The welcoming atmosphere set the stage for a fascinating performance. The Tenri Cultural Institute was an ideal performance space with an intimate setting.

Voice Afire productions are small ensemble concerts using a combination of actors, dancers, singers, and musicians. They are also music-theater, but with staging adaptable to the venue. Their shows feature professionals from the world of theatre, dance, and opera in ensembles of three to eight performers. Saturday's performance featured two extraordinarily talented pianists, Jennifer Chu and Beth Nam. They are both graduates of the Juilliard School of Music and Chu is currently on the faculty of the school. Chu is a prize winner at the 2009 Wideman Piano Competition. Nam is a member of the acclaimed Allant Piano Trio.

The show also starred veteran actor, Harry Burney. Burney's credits include performances of *Porgy and Bess* at the Houston Grand Opera, and his one-man show, *Signature* at the Kennedy Center. He is a well-known acting coach and has served as the Artistic Director of the Zora Neale Hurston Festival.



The show opened with Chu and Nam playing *Scaramouche* suite for piano duo, with music by Darius Milhaud. The suite was an alternatively energetic, moving and exciting piece, flawlessly performed. It was followed by a thrilling concert of *The Art of Love, Into the Labyrinth*. Ray Luedeke's original, virtuosic score for two pianos was played with a text adapted from *Ovid's The Art of Love*; an ancient manual which was banned for two thousand years.

The dramatic reading focused on the legend of Queen of Crete Pasiphae and her son, the Minotaur. It was performed by Burney while Chu and Nam played the piano score. The pianists also contributed vocalizations that highlighted and interfaced Burney's compelling oration. The presentation in nine parts

included the Labyrinths of Lust, Love, Sorrow, and Revenge. This adapted reading touched on a range of emotions from amusing to grim and Burney was in full command of his dramatic interpretation. The performance concept merged musical and dramatic arts perfectly.

The abundant talents of the night's performers gave full life to an evening of artistry, one which presented the best possible qualities of musicianship and theatrical performance.

Dan Swern directed the production and looks forward to more performances in the future. Swern is the co-founder and producing director for CoLAB Arts in New Brunswick, New Jersey, providing performance and developmental programs for emerging artists and arts education for the local community.

Voice Afire Pocket Opera and Cabaret, "Chamber Music as Theater" began in Canada in 2007 by composer Ray Luedeke and it moved to New York City in 2010. Voice Afire productions include *Butterfly's Trouble*; a reinvention for seven performers of Puccini's opera, and *My Life with Pablo Neruda*; a cabaret-opera based on the life of the Chilean poet.

For more information on Voice Afire, [please visit their web site](#).

Tags: [2009 Wideman Piano Competition](#), [Allant Piano Trio](#), [Beth Nam](#), [Butterfly's Trouble](#), [CoLAB Arts](#), [Dan Swern](#), [Darius Milhaud](#), [Harry Burney](#), [Houston Grand Opera](#), [Jennifer Chu](#), [Juilliard School of Music](#), [Kennedy Center](#), [Marina P. Kennedy](#), [My Life with Pablo Neruda](#), [New Brunswick](#), [New Jersey](#), [Ovid's The Art of Love](#), [Porgy and Bess](#), [Puccini](#), [Ray Luedek](#), [Signature](#), [The Art of Love Into the Labyrinth](#), [The Tenri Cultural Institute](#), [Voice Afire](#), [Voice Afire Pocket Opera and Cabaret](#), [Zora Neale Hurston Festival](#)

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