

REVIEWS

Crowd hears, sees double

Three sets of twins appear in Duo-Piano Festival

ARTHUR KAPTAINIS
Gazette Music Critic

The Quebec International Duo-Piano Festival ended last night much as it began, pleasing a small crowd of true believers at Salle Claude Champagne. Four hands, unfortunately, remain considerably less than half as popular as two, despite good intrinsic repertoire and no end of transcription possibilities.

This program fielded 14 pianists, including six twins; only artistic director Dominique Morel and Douglas Nemish were unrelated by blood or marriage. Most of the music was better known in other formats, starting with Gershwin's tone poem *An American in Paris* as played by Anne and Edward Turgeon, the Canadian husband-and-wife winners of the most recent Murray Dranoff Competition in Miami.

Two pianos render jazzy syncopations rather well, so the loss of orchestral detail in this performance was not dire, even in that lazy-afternoon tune normally shouted out by a trumpet. It was a vivid reading, though surpassed in charisma and colour by *Rhapsody in Blue* as played by the sister-and-brother team of Josée and Martin Caron, with much languorous rubato.

Richard and John Contiguglia, twin

veterans from New York, seemed almost Siamese during Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 14* in a crowded version for one piano, four hands. They brought it off with panache, and the mandatory uproarious finale. Irina and Maxim Jeleznov, a married couple from Uzbekistan, played Ravel's *Rhapsodie Espagnole* with the necessary sensuality in one of the keyboard versions that preceded the famous orchestration.

The only pieces unambiguously for four hands were Beethoven's *Variations on Ich Denke Dein* (WoO 74), decently enough played by Andrew and Gilbert Wong (twins) and three excerpts from Fauré's *Dolly* suite as performed by Susan and Sarah Wang, twins from New Jersey. Apart from playing the delicate music with admirable silkiness – on one of the rather clattery Université de Montréal Steinways – these sisters presented a picture of identity at the keyboard worthy of Doublemint.

The grand finale was *Strike Up The Band*, the lively Gershwin tune, as transcribed by Martin Caron and played at two pianos by the Carons with Morel and Nemish. It was pure fun, a fitting tribute to the composer in his centenary year.