

The instrumental pairing is an unusual one, to be sure, but for **Lawler & Fadoul**—Zara Lawler, flute, and Paul Fadoul, marimba—it's the most natural thing in the world. The pair first met as members of the music-plus-storytelling group Tales & Scales, and hit it off so well that a continuing partnership seemed inevitable. "Paul and I would probably be playing together whatever instruments we played," says Lawler.

"In chamber music," Fadoul explains, "you play with the instruments you have—and these are the instruments we have." Lawler calls the pairing a "classic treble solo/keyboard combination—with the added interest of the percussive nature of the marimba." The resulting performances are delicate and beguiling, even whimsical, but seriously musical.

The musicians' initial programming was a patchwork: arrangements of pieces for flute and guitar, piano and violin, flute and piano; "even a few pieces actually written for flute and marimba," Lawler says. But their search for repertoire became more focused with the launch of the "Gronica Project"—a large-scale endeavor aimed at creating a flute/marimba repertoire. (The name comes from Lawler's family when she was a kid: they'd call the biggest present under the Christmas tree the "gronica.") In its initial stage, the project has involved transcribing pre-

ludes and fugues by Bach and Shostakovich; as it develops, the plan is to branch out into different instruments—including vibraphone, alto flute and piccolo, and possibly adding singing—and also to commission new preludes and fugues from favorite composers.

Fadoul describes the transcription process as "an active music-history lesson": as a percussionist, he has had little previous hands-on involvement with Bach. "I get to study the works," he says, "and as a pair, we get to figure out how each line works. It's applied music history."

"It's taking something out of the abstract realm of listening and putting it in the concrete realm of performing," Lawler says.

By splitting the lines of solo keyboard works between two instruments, the duo's arrangements elucidate complex contrapuntal textures. But the trick is to play with the consistency of approach that a soloist will bring. Luckily, the two musicians have an enduring personal bond—Lawler was even "best woman" at Fadoul's wedding—that helps them sync up their music-making.

"We bring different things to the table, but we have similar sensibilities," says Lawler. "I bring a melodic and tone-color sensibility; Paul brings a really strong vertical harmonic and rhythmic sensibility. We complement each other—and we've learned to play as one person." ■

lawlerandfadoul.com



Watch Lawler & Fadoul perform their arrangement of Shostakovich's Prelude and Fugue in A Major at www.chamber-music.org/member/lawler-and-fadoul.

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