

New York. —

Jones, Maruri make return to Saugerties worth the wait

By KITTY MONTGOMERY

Reviewer

IS IT Two years since Michael Kevin Jones and Augustin Maruri played the Saugerties Pro Musica series?

The discography of this international cello-guitar duo is a spinning presence in a miniscule CD collection we keep at hand to clarify the universe, when necessary, so it seems they were never truly gone to those faraway places they've graced in the meantime. Among these few discs, we cherish a lush, reverentially joyous solo performance of J.S. Bach's six cello suites Jones recorded

at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the 1667 Antonio Stradivarius cello.

The Pro Musica concert was their last in a North American tour. British-born,

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London Royal College of Music-schooled Jones later studied with Johannes Goritsky of Germany and at the Hindemith Foundation in Switzerland in pursuit of the luminous voice he brings to this duo. Maruri is a Madrid native who has studied with Spain's guitar masters and possesses a brilliant encompassment of repertoire. Maruri's play combines immaculate tech-

nique and fluency with a Celtic passion and tenderness, Irish being the other half of an ethnic heritage this artist with a Spanish name claims.

It was a rare experience to share energy with the Saugerties audience, who absorbed the sonics of this duo with the hunger of aficionados at a jazz club.

Many of us, fans from previous appearances, anticipated transparent and evocative executions of classic works, some transcribed for their instrumentation by Maruri; some few, originally written for cello and guitar. As the world turns, however, and the duo's reputation has

expanded, composers have sought out Jones and Maruri as wing men for their musical visions. Drew Hemenger, whose "Songs from America" was premiered on the tour, is among them. Programmed contemporary works also expressly written for cello and guitar included Alain Miteran's "Petite Suite Française" — four French melodies textured and levitated with amazing enchantment and grace — Radames Gnattali's three movement "Sonata" and Hans Maria Anton Hauswirth's "Konzertino," in three movements. Both Gnattali and Hauswirth's works were a

"stretch", with instrumental patterns and harmonies juxtaposed in ear-opening, mind-expanding ways. Jones and Maruri lit their labyrinths of sound with a combination of agape curiosity and certainty.

Hemenger, whose instinctive sing as a composer was honed at the Manhattan School of Music, draws on seven traditional American songs for his suite. Variations on Negro spirituals "Were You There" and "Motherless Chile" carried the evolving passion of verse, with the duo discovering these and other tunes Hemenger set — "Two New England Dances," "Gallows

Song" and "Evil Hearted Man" among them — with the innocence and wisdom of men from other galaxies or, anyhow, countries.

To keep us on the hook, meet and transcend expectation of the classic traditional in their repertoire, Jones and Maruri left us with Manuel de Falla's Suite Espanola — six Spanish popular songs. Jones' cello lines traced melody on the heart, like the lingering finger of a lover. Maruri's splendid guitar play waxed intimate and orchestral.