



*NAFA Alumni Cupid Series*



# A Pair of Pianists



Donald Law & Carissa Wijaya  
Diploma in Music, 2013  
Bachelor Of Music With Honours, 2017

1. Thanks for accepting this interview, tell us where has your creativity taken you since graduating from NAFA?

C: I stayed back in Singapore to give private piano lessons.

D: I pursued my Masters of Music at the Royal College of Music, UK for two years before returning home as a piano teacher and performer. Recently, I was honoured to be inducted into the KNS Classical Artists group, and I have just released my debut solo CD album titled 'Evolution', under the Spanish label - KNS Classical.

## 2. How has being a couple work out for you as pianists?

Both: Being a couple in the same profession allows us to better understand the demands in our trade. This means that we tend to be more understanding towards each other's work schedule. For instance, we would postpone our dates when we need to practice for upcoming concerts or projects. We would also work around the timings of our teaching schedule, so that we could spend more valuable time with each other. Yes, we do try to keep our dates even after being married!

## 3. What is the best and worst part about playing the same instrument?

Both: The best part is that we could always get each other's critic and advice whenever we are preparing for upcoming concerts since our schooldays. As we appreciate and watch Classical Music concerts together, we could also discuss what we liked about the concert and the programme with each other.

At times, we give masterclasses to each others' students, especially before they go for piano exams, performances or competitions.

The worst part may probably be that only one of us can practise at any one time since we only have one piano at home!



Donald performing at the Lee Foundation Theatre, NAFA



#### 4. Donald, how was your study experience like at the Royal College of Music, UK?

I always consider myself very fortunate to be able to study music, especially so in the UK - where so many great composers such as Benjamin Britten, Frank Bridge, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gustav Holst, and Andrew Lloyd Webber to name a few, used to walk the rooms, corridors and halls as students at the very same Royal College of Music that I have been so privileged to spend two years studying at.

I was very fortunate to be under the tutelage of many great teachers at the college. Being situated in a well-connected Europe, I would travel out often to Paris and Prague to have lessons and masterclasses with professors there. I also had the opportunity to perform in various cities in Germany as well.

Apart from the performance opportunities, there were so many top quality concerts to attend. At times, I would be spoilt for choice as concerts happen every single day in London, sometimes many good ones in a day. It was also a good deal being a student there, as we get to enjoy affordable student concession tickets , what a treat!

Being in Europe, where it is rich in heritage, culture and the arts, the exposure I had was truly immense. What better place to study music than in Europe, the true source of Classical music!



## 5. Donald, share with us your experience putting together your CD 'Evolution', are there any plans to create a duet CD together?

It was my very first time recording a professional CD album. It was a very refreshing experience, I did not know what to expect during the first session of the recording. I was very lucky to have a very experienced sound engineer - Mr. Zhou Xiaodong, who is also the supervisor of the recording studio at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music at NUS to guide me through the sessions, helping me feel at ease during the recording.

At times, it gets very intense as we want to get that perfect rendition, and had to retake numerous times on a certain part of the music to find a satisfactory patch. But as a whole, the experience was a fulfilling one. I spent about 4 days to record the entire album, because it consisted of pieces that I am familiar with, having to work on them for some several years.

About creating a duet CD together, we haven't actually thought about it, but yes maybe one day we might do a duo piano album together. After all, we were partners in the Chamber Music module during our BMus course!

## 6. What are your current aspirations for your careers?

C: I enjoy teaching the young beginners and aspire to establish a strong foundation through my lessons.

D: My ultimate aspiration is to contribute back into the arts scene, especially in Singapore through performance and teaching. I wish that through my performances, I can inspire the young to fearlessly chase after their goals and dreams. No matter how unconventional the path may be, as long as one puts in 101% of hard work and effort, with passion, sheer determination and believe in yourself, one could eventually stand proud and "perform" on their respective stage, achieving the impossible!

Through teaching, I hope to not only teach the technicalities within music as a subject, but also to nurture and educate my students that to achieve anything in life, one has to dedicate their minds and hearts into honing the craft. As Thomas Edison said, "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety nine percent perspiration".



## 7. Which lecturers inspired you the most during your schooldays in NAFA?

C: I would like to take this opportunity to give thanks to all teachers who taught me, special mention goes to Mrs Rena Phua who was my Piano teacher from Diploma through to the BMus course.

D: I was very lucky to meet great teachers and lecturers during my many years at NAFA, from our Diploma in Music to completing the BMus course. With gratitude, I would like to take this opportunity to mention these lecturers:

- Ms Lena Ching, for widening my horizon of music making, inspiring me and giving me courage to step out of my comfort zone, to achieve musical excellence and soar greater heights.
- Mr Joost Flach, for inspiring me with his great musicianship and musicality. It is always a great pleasure to play with him and his ensemble.
- Mr Boris Kraljevic, for laying a solid foundation to my piano playing especially during my years as a Diploma student. Thank you for instilling discipline in me and always pushing my limits for greater success.

- Live Interview & Giveaway -  
Catch Donald performing 'LIVE' on the NAFA Facebook Page,  
1 October 2020, 8pm for our FB Live interview.  
3 viewers stand a chance to win a copy of Donald's piano  
sonata album - "Evolution"!

