

The Washington Post

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND THE FLYING KARAMAZOV BROTHERS

By Mark Carrington

Last night at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall, the Flying Karamazov Brothers charted the intersection of the twin worlds of music and juggling with a blend of artistry that was part genius, part insanity.

While it was billed as a National Symphony Orchestra pops concert, there can be little doubt as to who the stars were. The Brothers are irrepressibly good at what they do and infectiously funny to boot.

From their slow-motion entrance to Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King" to their riotous rendition of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" (the quartet belted out the tune with juggling pins on their heads while the NSO sang along), one never quite knew what to expect next.

Certainly choreographer George Balanchine could never have anticipated men in tutus and pink stockings hamming Rossini's "William Tell" quite this way. Japanese festival drumming, too, will never again be the same after one of the Brothers beat the living daylights out of his meticulously tuned cardboard box.

Behind the high jinks was some of the finest juggling imaginable. The Brothers' humor didn't overshadow their craft, it augmented it in breathtaking fashion -- as when two of the troupe succeeded in juggling marimba sticks while playing first "Chopsticks" and then, amazingly, a Bach two-part invention. Successful entertainment acts were ever thus: Draw the audience in, then blow them away.

In a realm where Mozart, Monty Python and jugglers coexist in a state of manic glee, the Flying Karamazov Brothers are peerless.

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

NEW YORK - Tuesday, the best moments at the Cincinnati Pops' Carnegie Hall show were all the silliness, the goofy gags and the dizzy juggling by the Flying Karamazov Brothers.

Kunzel capped his zany April Fool's Day program with the Karamazov Brothers. Like everyone right now, the New Yorkers needed a good laugh, and they howled through this program from beginning to end. The Karamazovs put on the same show they gave with the Pops in Cincinnati, complete with groaning puns and quick-witted sight gags

They came out in slow motion to Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King, " and proceeded to astound with an impressive counterpoint of juggling across Carnegie Hall's fabled stage. It was usually faster than the eye could follow, and you could also miss a good joke if you blinked. "Here's a bit of rhythm so natural it's condoned by the pope," they quipped as they juggled in 5/4 time.

They brought down the house several times, such as when they played Bach's D Minor Invention on the marimba with pins while juggling, or when they bashed themselves with clubs in their hockey helmets to transmit radio waves into a MIDI keyboard gizmo to play "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's Ninth. ("A feat so difficult as to be virtually senseless.")

The New Yorkers whistled when the performers came out in tutus for their "Pas de Six" (hysterical choreography by Doug Elkins). And what could be funnier than watching four grown men beat cardboard boxes to a pulp? (their homage to Japanese Taiko drumming.)

The Pops musicians laughed along with the audience as they played; the tension release following their important first concert with Paavo Jarvi there on Monday was almost palpable.

New York loves the Cincinnati Pops, and the audience cheered every number in the orchestral first half. Kunzel, kicking up his heels, knew how to sell it to them.

The New York theme was a hit tenor Morgan, an Indiana University grad, and soprano Wolfe, a junior at the University - of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, were a charming duo in "Once Upon a Time in New York City." Another highlight was a Tribute to New York City, featuring trombonist Cristian Ganicenco in the solo "Manhattan."

Kunzel's musical joke, Haydn's Farewell Symphony, had the-Audience in stitches as all 100 musicians walked off the stage, section by section, until Kunzel was left holding the baton alone.

San Jose Mercury News

Flying Karamazov Brothers a soaring success at Spangenberg

By John Orr
Daily News Arts and Entertainment Editor

It was an inspired and delightful joining: The zany, brilliant, hilarious and astounding Flying Karamazov Brothers, and the California Pops Orchestra, which has been known to hit some zany, brilliant and hilarious notes of its own.

A chance to see The Flying Karamazov Brothers should never be missed, as was proven Saturday at Spangenberg Theater in Palo Alto.

Brothers Dimitri (Paul Magid), Alexei (Mark Ettinger) and Zossima (Stephen Bent) entered from the wings in super slow motion, looks of panicked flight on their faces (time to start the show!), while the orchestra played Edvard Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King."

Meanwhile, a fourth brother, Pavel (Roderick Kimball) — who looks remarkably like Stan Laurel of Laurel and Hardy fame, except, perhaps, a bit goofier — entered blithely at normal speed, ignoring the great comedic drama of his brothers' entrances. Oops! Forgot something! Off stage he went! Then back again!

Before long the Brothers all hit full speed in a show that included ballet dancing that was funnier than it was graceful (Karen Gabay's place in the dance pantheon remains unchallenged), lots of fabulous club-juggling, fan juggling and, of course, "taiko" drumming. Except The Flying Karamazov Brothers don't bother with fancy drums from Japan, when cardboard boxes work just as well — and are a lot funnier. My 7-year-old nearly fell out of his seat laughing as the Brothers pounded viciously on the boxes till they were shredded, with one brother walking off stage with his head stuck in a box.

The zaniness level dropped just a little when Alexei took the baton from Pops conductor Kim Venaas to direct Zossima, on euphonium, and the orchestra on Mozart's Bassoon Concerto. It was lovely, except for the big "BLAT!" into Alexei's face at one point.

There were troubles with wireless microphones. Occasionally a loud, rude noise would be heard from the speakers, which the Brothers gestured away by waving their hands behind their tushes with an "Excuse me."

The worst part was when it was over and we all had to leave.

Great show, a wonderful ending to the Pop's season, and here's hoping the Brothers come back to perform with the Pops again soon.

Delightful.

Austin American-Statesman

Austin Symphony Orchestra

Duck! Those Karamazovs flew this way.

BY ROBERT FAIRES

It's been a year of formidable musical challenges for the Austin Symphony Orchestra: Beethoven's *Ninth*, Brahms' *Fourth*, Christopher Theofanidis' *Field of Infinite Forms*, playing with Yo-Yo Ma. But ASO may have saved the biggest for the last two nights: playing with the Flying Karamazov Brothers. I mean, how can one be expected to play serious music with these zanies constantly throwing gags (and occasionally mallets) at one?

The Ks, a primo juggling and vaudeville team for 35 years, have lately turned to abusing orchestras with a concert that includes J.S. Bach's *Two-Part Invention #4* performed on marimba by two Karamazovs juggling three mallets each (as Johann originally intended it, they claim); an homage to Japanese *taiko* drumming played on meticulously tuned cardboard boxes; Mozart's *First Bassoon Concerto* played on the euphonium; and Rossini's *William Tell* transformed into a hip-hop comic ballet. If you've yet to witness a corps of classical musicians crack up or just want to close out the year in convulsions of laughter, this concert is highly recommended.

Quand la musique jongle avec l'humour Deux mondes que, a priori, tout séparé: la jonglerie et la musique classique. L'Orchestre du Centre National des Arts et The Flying Karamazov Brothers

"C'est vrai que cela peut sembler inconciliable, mais la jonglerie, que'est-ce que c'est, sinon une affaire de rythme? demande Mark Ettinger, musicien (il a notamment étudié pour devenir chef d'orchestre) et jongleur de profession. Tout ce qu'on fait trouve écho dans la musique, que ce soit la nôtre ou celle qu'un orchestre interprète pour nous accompagner. On a simplement développé des applications pour mélanger l'art de jongler et celui de faire de la musique."

Singulière, la démarche des Flying Karamazov Brothers? Pour le moins. Mais pour eux, le fait de mélanger une bonne dose d'humour et de jongler sur des airs de musique dite "sérieuse" représente justement la mission dont les quatre artistes se sont investis depuis la création du groupe, il y a 30 ans, soit celle de démocratiser le milieu de la musique classique. Pour ce faire, ils se sont, plus souvent qu'autrement, produits seuls sur scène. Mais ils sont également montés sur les planches en compagnie de Frank Sinatra, The Who, The Grateful Dead et Dolly Parton, entre autres, comme ils ont déjà été accompagnés par les plus grands orchestres symphoniques américains, tels celui de Detroit, St-Louis, Atlanta et, plus récemment, Cincinnati. Ils ont aussi fait partie de la distribution du Joyau du Nil (VF de The Jewel Of The Nile), long métrage mettant en vedette Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner et Danny De Vito.

"Ce qu'on fait, c'est vraiment une façon pour nous de rendre le monde de la musique classique plus accessible à un plus grand nombre de gens, soutient l'artiste new-yorkais, au cours d'une entrevue qu'il se disait par ailleurs fort heureux de réaliser en français. Nous avons conçu un spectacle qui fait le pont entre ce qui est sérieux et la haute société qui y est associée d'habitude et les gens qui ne vont pas aux concerts normalement. Sans être des radicaux du milieu artistique, disons que nous ne sommes pas des conservateurs non plus. Nous ne sommes vraiment pas dans le mainstream. C'est peut être parce que le groupe est né en Californie dans les années 1970, à bien y penser!" lance, en éclatant de rire, celui qui s'est joint à la fin des années 1990 à la formation trentenaire.

Ainsi, les baguettes des quatre "frères" (Howard Jay Patterson, Roderick Kimball et Paul Magid sont les trois autres représentants de la "famille" Karamazov) risquent-elles de valser dans les airs en cours de prestation, prévient Mark Ettinger. Tambours et autres percussions, danse, marimba et casques de hockey (!) seront donc à l'honneur, sans oublier l'OCNA, qui n'échappera pas à l'esprit de la fece.

"Au départ, nous avons été étonnés de la réaction non seulement du public, mais aussi des musiciens des orchestres avec lesquels nous avons joué, puisque notre spectacle était complètement nouveau pour tout le monde, souligne Mark Ettinger. Il faut croire qu'eux aussi ont du plaisir quand ils jouent avec nous! De toute façon, on n'a qu'une vie, alors aussi bien expérimenter dans la joie et partager notre plaisir, notre énergie, notre passion pour l'art et un certain sens de la vie avec le plus de personnes possible!"

Quant au nom du groupe, il découle de la lecture du roman de Dostoïevski, Les Frères Karamazov, un classique de la littérature russe qu'Howard Jay Patterson lisait, à l'époque de la mise sur pied du groupe.

"Il trouvait l'idée d'emprunter les prénoms des personnages originale. C'est pourquoi, chaque nouveau membre, quand il se joint à l'équipe, hérite d'un prénom de scène tiré du roman", raconte celui qui se fait appeler Alexei depuis cinq ans, maintenant.