

Víkingur and Karen

an exciting evening of classics

Steingrímur Steinolfson

ST. PAUL, MN — A viking from Iceland came to Minneapolis on 10 April 2007.

This 23-year-old viking, Víkingur Ólafsson, teamed up with 22-year-old Toronto-born Armenian-Canadian cellist Karen Ouzounian for the kickoff concert on their two-week tour of North America. Both Víkingur and Karen are in Masters Programs at Juilliard School of Music in New York.

The talented and handsome Víkingur was 2004 winner of the Icelandic Music Awards “Iceland’s Brightest Prospect in Classical Music”; 2006 winner of the Carl Roeder prize in piano from Juilliard; and 2007 Icelandic music awards

“Performer of the Year.”

Víkingur made his debut with the Icelandic Symphony orchestra when he was 16. He has given solo recitals in Iceland, Spain, France and the USA. After graduating from the Reykjavik College of Music he moved to Juilliard in 2002.

Karen, whose Bachelor of Music is from Juilliard, has also studied in Britain, Holland, Italy, and in Banff and Oxford in Canada. She has performed across North America and Europe and will join the East Coast Chamber Orchestra for its 2007 season.

Performing in the beautiful surroundings of the one-hundred-year-old St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in the most historic area of St. Paul, Víkingur and Karen treated every-

one to a repertoire of powerful, moving and exciting classical music.

Víkingur’s solo had everyone mesmerized; the scintillating fastest passages had the page-turner turning pages like a fan.

The evening was capped off with an elegant reception sponsored by the Icelandic American Association of Minnesota. Everyone dined on platters of food replete with Icelandic *hangikjöt* on brown bread, *vínarterta*, *pönnukökur*, *kleinur* and more. A little *skyr* would have put us over the edge. (Even when I was growing up in Mountain, ND we didn’t get this good stuff in April.)

After a round of hugs, everyone wished Víkingur and Karen well on their tour across North America.



PHOTO: STEINGRÍMUR STEINOLFSON

Víkingur Ólafsson and Karen Ouzounian at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church in St. Paul, MN