

that the instruments are very delicate, but they are actually quite strong and sturdy.

"The older the person, the more attached they are to their piano, perhaps because it's been in the family for years. People become emotionally attached to them. They'll say that their childhood piano had the best tone ever, but it's a good rule that the prettier the piano, the worse its sound."

Markson admits that people ask him whether his connection to Markson Pianos hinders giving unbiased advice. "Where there is a possibility of there being a link with Markson Pianos, I tell people and make sure that they know where I am coming from. When talking to people, I talk about the piano, not the business side. Rather like a doctor talks about a patient, I talk about the piano – give a straight-line opinion."

But in an era of super technology, does the piano have a place in the modern household? Markson says yes, pianos are still important. "People have a very short attention span, and computers mean that everyone is an expert in two hours. So it's difficult to explain to somebody that if they practise for five to 10 years they could become a moderately reasonable player.



"However, there is the boredom factor. We saw this with keyboards – everyone worried they would signal the death of pianos, but in essence it's a three-battery cycle. The first set of batteries runs out quickly, because the keyboard is new and exciting. The second set lasts a month, and the third set, if it gets replaced, it's more by luck than judgment."

Markson thinks that there is a place for the digital piano. "There is more to a piano than just playing it. One can derive a lot of pleasure from listening to somebody play as if they were sitting there, when it's

actually a digital piano with the keys moving automatically. There is definitely a place for that in the entertainment industry."

The piano market is improving and is a lot better than it was a couple of years ago, when it was really "in the doldrums", says Markson. So perhaps the old-fashioned and technologically unsexy piano will make a comeback. And if you need some advice, you know who will be happy to help.

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Classical Music Magazine*

Exciting contrasts of a memorable evening at Wigmore Hall

Assistant Jan Lowy writes The mid-summer Musicians' Company concert at Wigmore Hall was given by mezzo-soprano Julianne Young with Mark Nixon, and the violin and piano duo Fiona McNaught and Daniel Tong.

Our concerts are financed by the Maisie Lewis Young Artists' Fund, set up in 1970 by Sir Edward Lewis to provide young performers with an opportunity to appear on a London platform, and on this occasion the artists took full advantage of the opportunity – all performing in both halves, with programmes that contrasted well.

The duo began with an exciting

performance of *Subito* by Lutoslawski, followed by Schumann's Sonata in A minor, Op 105, a melodic work in three movements, beautifully played. Then Julianne Young thrilled the audience with her beautiful singing – and her lovely appearance.

Julianne spent her younger years in South Africa, and started her programme with three songs by the composer Hendrik Hofmeyr, born in Cape Town in 1957, to texts by the South African protest poet S V Petersen, and the music brought their message to life – applicable to the ostracised and oppressed everywhere.

Five songs by Sigurd von Koch made a

gentle contrast, telling of love's journey in music, followed by an exciting performance of Bizet's *Seguidilla* from *Carmen*, which showed what an asset Julianne is to the operatic stage.

Fiona McNaught and Daniel Tong opened the second half with a stirring rendition of Beethoven's Sonata in G, Op 96, illustrating the fine rapport between them and with contrasting movements beautifully played.

Five songs by Brahms and three by Benjamin Britten again showed off the versatility of Julianne Young, and she topped these with a beautifully characterised performance of Rossini's aria *Cruda Sorte*, from *L'Italiana in Algeri*.

An encore in which Julianne joined Fiona and Daniel in Tchaikovsky's *None but the weary heart* rounded off a most successful evening.

● Auditions were recently held to select artists to perform in 2002. The first date for your diary: 11 March, again at Wigmore Hall, when Richard Harwood and Dominic Harlan (cello and piano) will play Martinu and Fauré and Sally Pryce (harp) will perform a variety of works including Paul Patterson's *Spiders*. We hope to see you there.



Wigmore stars: Julianne Young (left) and Fiona McNaught and Daniel Tong