

Florida International Festival



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Paul Staicu on piano, and cellist Laurent Cirade "Duel" it out in their American premiere at Mainland High School Performing Arts Center in Daytona Beach on Monday.

'Duel' a close encounter of a very clever kind

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REVIEW

DAYTONA BEACH — Aliens took the stage Monday night at the Mainland High School Performing Arts Center — musical aliens, that is.

How fitting that pianist Paul Staicu and cellist Laurent Cirade played those famous five notes from the UFO contact scene in the film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." The two musicians from France, who bill their act as "Duel," performed a music comedy show that was weird, surprising and out of this world — a close encounter of the hilarious and clever kind. The performance also marked the American premiere of "Duel."

Moving from skit to skit to skit, Staicu and Cirade em-

ployed lots of slapstick and more subtle physical comedy, sight gags, witty musical parodies and more.

Who knew a cello could produce that eerie, high-pitched, feminine wail from the theme of the "Star Trek" TV series, until Cirade did so during the duo's "tribute" to extraterrestrial soundtracks?

Who knew a cellist could strum his instrument like a guitar and flail a fairly mean version of "Smoke on the Water," that King Kong-sized hard rock ditty by Deep Purple?

Cirade must be the only musician in this quadrant of the universe who duets, with himself, on cello and didgeridoo,

that Australian Aborigine wind instrument that sounds like a cosmic bullfrog.

Yes, the duo did get down to dueling, and one thing many people have long suspected about the cello was confirmed: That lengthy spike that projects from the bottom can be used as a weapon.

Other skits made clever use of the music of Stravinsky, Chopin and Barry White, plus the Beatles' "Come Together" and "Julia," and Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side" — the latter rapped (vocally) and tapped (quite physically) on Cirade's cello by Staicu.

Staicu and Cirade made one wish such musical comedy was not so alien in performance halls in the United States.

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