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••• b> Polkastra, "Apolkalyse Now" (Ancalagon). Those silly Grammy Awards, knocking out the polka category. Here is the violinist Lara St. John playing polkas. If she'll roll out the barrel, who won't? St. John, born in London, Ont., has a reputation as a sexpot. She made waves when she posed next-to-nude on a Bach album (the rationale, as quoted on Wikipedia, was that unaccompanied Bach exposed the artist completely). So I love seeing her on the cover of "Apolkalyse Now" looking like a regular person you would see in a bar, another band member on her lap. Besides St. John, Polkastra boasts a folk fiddler, an Israeli accordionist and the Met's contrabassoonist, among others. They have a distance to go in the grit department before they can approach Those Idiots. But this is a nice start. St. John sounds as if she is having a whale of a time, her bow bouncing happily on the strings as she and the band whirl through numbers like the "Clarinet Polka" (I know it as the "Jessie Polka"), the "Budapest Polka" and other lusty, hilariously diverse tracks. Classical music fans get their "in joke" with the Ludwig van Polka, which weaves in a bunch of Beethoven themes I don't want to give away. (M. K. G.)

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