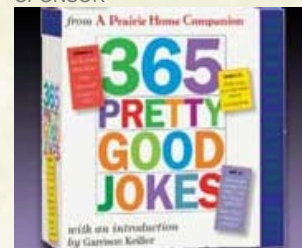


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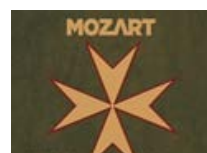
New Classical Tracks: Mozart with a Smile

by [Julie Amacher](#), Minnesota Public Radio
November 16, 2010
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St. Paul, Minn. — Just about every photo you'll find of Canadian violinist Lara St. John features her sporting a wide, bright smile. That's because she couldn't be happier with the way her career is going right now. She earns rave reviews every time she performs, she's a successful entrepreneur who founded her own record label in 1999, and her latest recording of Mozart concertos spent nine weeks on the classical billboard chart as a download before it was ever released as a physical CD. Lara St. John teams up with her brother Scott St. John on this recording which features each of them playing their favorite Mozart violin concerto, and they offer a rare performance of Mozart's last great string concerto, his monumental Sinfonia Concertante for viola and violin.

Lara St. John says she wants every recording she makes to have a truly live sound. "I think if a recording doesn't sound live, then there's something wrong with the recording. I'm not interested in hearing myself or anyone else play something that sounds edited or chopped together." To create that live ambience, Lara St. John insists a small audience be in the studio during the recording session. "You can feel your audience and you can feel if they're with you," she explains. "It's an intangible quality but there's something about that that sort of washes over you and it's just a totally different feeling to be playing for even 20 people rather than just your producer and sound engineer. It makes a big difference." That emotional satisfaction is quite apparent on this new recording, the centerpiece of which is Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for viola and violin. She and her brother have been playing this work since she was 10 years old and he was 12. So how do they keep it fresh? "I think Mozart took care of that for us," Lara St. John laughs. "I mean it's just such a great piece. In my opinion, and pianists would shoot me now if they could, I think it's his greatest concerto! It's a towering work of genius," she declares.



*Mozart: Sinfonia
Concertante for Violin
and Viola*

Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante is rarely recorded in its original form, which is more challenging for the violist, "The piece is in E-flat major, but he wrote the viola part in D major," Lara St. John explains, "so the viola part plays scordatura, meaning that it is tuned up a half step. So the violist is actually playing in D major and it's sounding like it's in E-Flat major. That's the way my brother did it. Mozart's point for this was to make the viola brighter, less tubby and more an equal partner with the violin." In the first movement the dialogue between the two soloists is vibrant and alive. Scott St. John is a violinist in the St. Lawrence String Quartet, but in this piece he



Youthful spirits and energy prevail on the new Mozart disc from violinist Lara St. John. It includes two solo concertos and the Sinfonia Concertante for violin and viola--a piece she maintains is the greatest Mozart concerto of all. (Paul Clancy)

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demonstrates his uncanny ability to bring out the robust, richness of the viola.

The slow andante of the Sinfonia Concertante is gorgeous. Lara St. John says she and her brother Scott have always encouraged one another and that collaborative nature comes through beautifully in this double concerto. Her 1779 Guarneri violin has a bold, dark tone which blends perfectly with the earthy quality of the viola.

Lara St. John and her brother are joined on this disc by the New York-based chamber orchestra, The Knights, who enhance the fresh energy of these performances. The disc also includes two of Mozart's solo violin concertos, with each sibling taking on one concerto apiece. Lara chose the Violin Concerto No. 3. "Well, I chose it for this album because it's my favorite," she laughs. "Especially that last movement, it's just so much laughter and just sort of Mozart at his sweetest and most charming... I mean, it's younger Mozart than the Sinfonia. It doesn't have the same depth and breadth. But it just makes you feel like cuddling a puppy... it's just beautiful, charming music."

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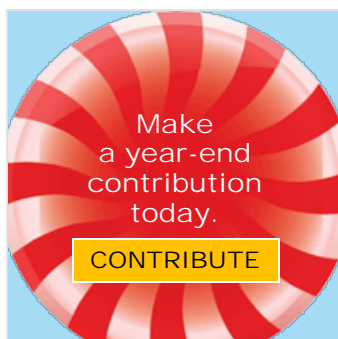
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