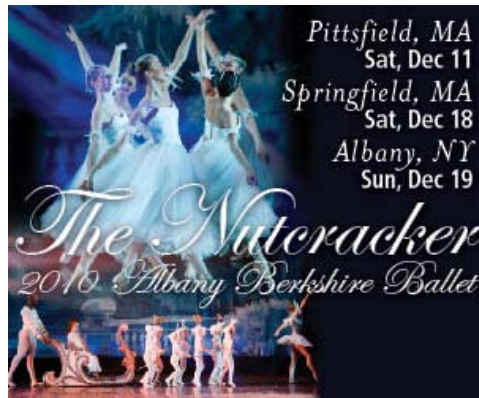


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Violinist St. John's recital a style-crossing spectacular

By Priscilla Mclean Special To The Times Union
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TROY -- Perhaps a violin recital sounds like a rather tame event. That is, unless [Lara St. John](#) is the violinist, and then it becomes a spectacular show, as happened at the Troy Chromatic Concerts on Sunday afternoon.

St. John appears comfortable with a variety of styles -- classical, jazz, gypsy and salon, and all these were heard as she and [Martin Kennedy](#), pianist, performed seven pieces and one encore.

St. John sailed onto the stage wearing a long black gown with wide white-and-black stripe down one side, the colors blending with the piano, and proceeded to live the music she was playing as she danced and turned on stage, head bouncing and sometimes almost crouching intensely.

Although it was obvious that a large sound was emerging, people sitting several rows in front of the stage heard the violin's low notes hardly at all, and range of volume was muted. After an arduous journey up three flights of steep stairs to sit in the (almost empty) second balcony on hard seats, the adventurous were treated to an overwhelming amount of sound, and a perfect balance between violin and piano -- something to consider when attending future concerts at the hall.

Although all of the music was played with great skill, the best forum for Lara St. John's performance came with the Ravel "Tzigane:

Rhapsodie de concert." A long solo Hungarian gypsy violin cadenza began the piece, thrillingly played by St. John. Later the violin and piano engaged in alternately lively, then delicate virtuosic duetting.

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Claude Debussy's last work, Sonata in G minor, began the concert, and along with Beethoven's Sonata No. 5, a very famous and popular piece, displayed great bursts of energy. Both violinist and pianist played with impressive accuracy and at times great delicacy. St. John's high notes often sounded like silken ribbons of melody floating in the air.

One problem seemed to be the speed at which some of the music was performed. The Beethoven was played at breathtaking speed, but was still comprehensible. The Jascha Heifetz arrangement of George Gerschwin's Three Preludes for piano was played so fast as to almost negate the jazz tunes and slides, spoiling the mood of sultry languor, especially in the second, slower prelude.

Martin Kennedy's "Trivial Pursuits" was a memorable "six slices" of music revolving around a major scale ground bass, with some influence of jazz and even Bartok in the harmonies, very nicely performed.

Priscilla McLean is a freelance writer and composer/performer.

Concert review

Lara St. John

When: 3 p.m. Sunday

Where: Troy Savings Bank Music Hall

Length: One hour, forty-five minutes with one intermission

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