

Concert Review: Olga Kern and the National Gallery of Art Chamber Orchestra

by Jason DeCristofaro
Arts & Life Editor

On Friday night I had the privilege of being aurally treated to a concert of the highest caliber. The Scott Concert Hall at the Porter Center was graced with a phenomenal consort of musicians, most notably the featured soloist, Olga Kern. The pianist defies explanation when she plays the instrument, and it is easy to see why she has achieved something of a pop-star status in the classical music world.

When the giant of the piano world walked out onto the stage, her presence was mesmerizing. She had an intensity and classiness about her that is rarely seen in the world of concert music. The first notes on Shostakovich's "Piano Concert No. 1," were a veritable carnival of sound, captivating the audience's eyes and ears. Kern's command of the piano was, simply put, impressive. Her ability to execute lines involving contrary motion in both hands

with the accuracy of a computer was nothing short of astounding. Olga's whole body seemed to be an extension of the piano as she jumped from the lowest octaves to the upper register of the instrument.

Speed and precision are, however, only one aspect of a great musician. The ability to use these techniques to communicate emotions musically to the audience is what separates the students from the pros. In Olga's case, this proved to be true. It was easy to see why many consider her a world class performer and not just a pianist possessing great technical facility. On the second movement, traditionally a movement reserved for reflection and melancholy, expressive playing, Kern utilized the instrument to its fullest potential, bringing a plethora of tonal colors and shades from the keyboard with crystalline precision.

Olga's performance brought down the house in the first half, so it almost seemed anti-climactic for me to return to the show

for the second half when only the orchestra would be playing. However, the orchestra itself proved to be as exciting and powerful as Kern's performance in the first half. The two selections chosen were excellent pieces that simultaneously fulfilled the functions of demonstrating the ensemble's technical capabilities and pleasing the crowd.

The first piece performed following intermission was George Gershwin's, "Lullaby," a beautiful serenade from the early 20th century that showed the American composer's abilities as an arranger even during the early years of his life. The use of pizzicato, col legno (striking the strings with the bow), and artificial harmonics provided a cornucopia of timbres for the audience to indulge in. The tango ostinato in the bass and violas actually grooved, something even some of the most professional string ensembles lack the ability to execute.

The second piece, Tchaikovsky's "Serenade for Strings op. 48 in C Major," was one of the highlights

of the evening's performance. The full ensemble produced a lush and vibrant sound in the opening fanfare, despite the fact that there were only a total of 15 musicians on the stage (9 violins, 3 violas, 2 cellos and a bass). At the end of every chord, you could hear the overtones ringing, creating a beautiful effect in the Scott Concert Hall.

The Serenade was an excellent choice since it allowed each section of the string ensemble to show off its chops. The bassists ability to switch from complex ostinato figures using pizzicato to lush, romantic lines with the bow was a treat to watch and listen to. The first and last movements of the piece even allowed the principal violist to shine with a soaring melody that was exquisitely executed. Often, the viola is an instrument relegated to supporting the ensemble, so hearing its potential in the hands of a skilled performer was especially enjoyable.

The thing that amazed me the most about this show, however,

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Radical Reels to screen on Tuesday

by Elyse Veeneman
Staff Writer

On Tuesday September 30, Brevard College will be hosting the 1st Annual Banff Mountain Film Festival Radical Reels Film Tour! Radical Reels is a showing of all the action films that could not be included in the regular screening of Banff; which will happen later this year.

The Radical Reels are action-filled shorts that include adventure sports such as skiing, climbing, kayaking, BASE jumping, snowboarding, and mountain biking. This is something you

won't want to miss.

Ticket sales started Monday, September 1. You can purchase tickets through Brevard College by calling 828-884-8107. You may also purchase tickets at Nali Outdoor wear (located on Mainsreet). Radical Reels will be held in the Porter center at 7:00pm. Tickets are selling fast, so get yours today.

Ticket Prices: \$5 Brevard College student with valid student ID, \$8 BC faculty and staff and other student's k-12 and college with valid id, \$10 general admission. All tickets are \$12 day of show.

For More information visit www.brevard.edu and click campus life, or visit <http://www.banffcentre.com>



The Radical Reels World Tour, put on by Banff and National Geographic will be at the Porter Center next Tuesday at 7 p.m. Ticket prices are \$5 for students and \$8 for faculty and staff.

Photo from MyBC page of BC website