

NY Chamber Music Fest: Violinist Gary Levinson, by Diana Barth, The Epoch Times

NEW YORK—Part of the 4th New York Chamber Music Festival was the delightful and elegant concert by violinist Gary Levinson and pianist Daredjan Baya Kakouberi, on Sept. 9. After the two musicians took their places onstage at Symphony Space's Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, on the Upper West Side, Mr. Levinson began with Ernest Chausson's "Poeme," playing with both delicacy and ardor. His tone was lush, as is to be expected since he performs on a 1726 Antonio Stradivari violin (loaned to him by the Dallas Symphony Association).

The choice of pieces on the program indicated great versatility on the part of Mr. Levinson, as we were later to be treated to works by such varied composers as Prokofiev, Beethoven, and Ravel. Mr. Levinson performed the Prokofiev "Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 Op. 80 in F Minor" with passion and verve, the Andante assai flowing effortlessly to the Allegro brusco, then to the andante, and finally the Allegressimo. The performer does not resort to flamboyancy, as do some other artists. His approach stresses the music, in a pure sense. One can arguably hear it better that way. After a brief intermission, Prokofiev was again the order of the day, featuring "Five Melodies Op. 35bis." The two performers gave a lovely, sensitive rendition of this not so-well-known piece by the noted Russian composer.

Ludwig van Beethoven's "Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 9," commonly known as the "Kreutzer Sonata," is a major work, and Mr. Levinson and accompanist Miss Kakouberi accorded it their full technical and emotional skills. The piece is exceptionally long, approximately 40 minutes, and has a particularly demanding violin part, with movements featuring a placid approach, followed by greater liveliness, then a

darker level, then a slower and more dramatic quality, and ultimately a burst of passion and speed in the final Presto movement.

The performers acquitted themselves so favorably that when they had finished shouts of “Bravo!” came from the audience. To cap the performance was Maurice Ravel’s “Tzigane.” The French composer, noted for his melodies and texture of tone, here portrayed Gypsy musical themes. It was a delightful close to the afternoon, and beautifully played by the two musicians.

Mr. Levinson was chosen by conductor Zubin Mehta to join the New York Philharmonic at an early age. He went on to earn top prizes at major international competitions. He has recorded CDs of the complete Beethoven sonatas with Miss Kakouberi, and he also performs internationally with Eugenia Zuckerman and Adam Neiman as Trio Virtuosi.

Miss Kakouberi has been awarded prizes at numerous competitions and has been soloist with various orchestras abroad. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2002 and will perform at Carnegie’s Weill Hall this fall.

The New York Chamber Music Festival offers excellent programs and outstanding artists. Its president and artistic director, Elmira Darvarova, former concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra (the first woman concertmaster in the Met’s history), will perform at this season’s penultimate concert on Sept. 15.