

Dmitri Berlinsky leads the International Chamber Soloists in Barrie

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THE BARRIE EXAMINER

Music review By MICHAEL ADAMSON, SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER Published Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2012

Gifted violinist captures audience

Concert-goers who attended the Barrie Concerts presentation at Hi-Way Pentecostal Church on Saturday evening were ripe with anticipation to hear the violinist who was the youngest ever to win the famed Paganini Violin Competition in Genoa, Italy.

Dmitri Berlinsky went on to found the International Chamber Soloists, a chamber string orchestra he leads as he plays. Barrie was extremely fortunate to host this group and was also treated to an excellent evening of music.

The program began with Mendelssohn's "other" violin concerto, an earlier work in D minor in which the soloist is accompanied by strings only.

The playing was brisk and marked by crisp dynamics, yet the overall sound was smooth and sweet. Mr. Berlinsky displayed an effortless control of his instrument, and produced a wide variety of tone colours, along with dazzling speed in his passage work and an up-bow staccato that made one smile with admiration.

The concerto had distinct hints of a Baroque influence, but also showed Mendelssohn's developing tastes as a composer. Fragments of frenetic gypsy music supplied thematic content for the work's playful last movement.

The next item on the program was an offering of two of the *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, Spring and Summer, by Argentinean composer Astor Piazzolla. These are a set of pieces with South American flavours and rhythms uniquely forged into the composer's own nuevo tango style. The

group used an arrangement that had many exciting special effects, and even introduced traces of the well-known Seasons by Vivaldi.

The final component of the concert was a performance of Tchaikovsky's string sextet *Souvenir de Florence*, arranged for string orchestra. This work is in the usual classical four movement form and is so named as the composer worked out some of the material while visiting Florence.

Obviously, the audience enjoyed the entire evening and would not let the performers go without receiving another morsel. Listeners were appeased with a very lively rendition of the first movement of Vivaldi's *Winter Concerto*.

Dmitri Berlinsky is a violinist with an exciting stage presence, yet he plays with control, a sweet and varied sound, and well thought out musical ideas. He grew up in Moscow and won the Paganini competition at the age of 16.

As a result, he was afforded the rare opportunity to play Paganini's renowned 'Cannon' violin made in 1742 by Guarneri del Gesù. Not only did Berlinsky succeed in Italy, but he also triumphed in the Montreal, the International Tchaikovsky, and the Queen Elizabeth (in Brussels) violin competitions.

He has made appearances with major orchestras in Europe, the Far East, North and South America. He is now on the faculty at Michigan State University. Hearing him perform in Barrie will become an experience long to be remembered.