



Bella Hristova, *violinist*

LocalArtsLive

Time Travel with a Solo Violin: Curtis Graduate Bella Hristova Impresses Town Hall, New York

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For violinists, performing with a pianist provides not only musical but also moral support. Last night in New York's Town Hall, as part of the Free For All At Town Hall series, the young Bulgarian-American violinist and Curtis graduate Bella Hristova walked out onto the famous stage and into the spotlight with just her violin in hand. The program was a refreshing one, presenting the audience with a series of works all conceived for the solo violin. Also refreshing was the manner in which the program took the listeners on a reverse-chronological journey, from the beautiful strains of a twentieth-century score to the efforts of a master from the turn of the eighteenth century.



If there were any doubts about the feasibility of such a program, they were soon vanquished when the haunting sounds of Corigliano's *Red Violin Caprices* emanated from the 1655 Amati violin. Ms. Hristova's sound filled the hall comfortably in both forte and piano sections, so successfully that it seemed the hall might have been designed for the solo violin.

Next came *Arches*, a collection of virtuosic movements by the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts. The violinist, playing from the score for this demanding work, gave her all to the music, meeting the virtuosic and musical challenges, of which there were many. The three Piazzolla Tango-Etudes (nos. 3, 4, and 6) that followed were charmingly played and expertly mastered. The first half ended with a performance of the *Paganiniana Variations* composed by the great violinist Nathan Milstein. A rare feature in concert, these lively variations provide a thoughtful homage to the grandfather of violin virtuosity. With her formidable technique Ms. Hristova captured the spirit and vitality of the work and would surely have pleased both Mr. Milstein and Mr. Paganini.

The second half consisted of the entire Bach Partita in D minor, arguably the most familiar work on the program. Scarcely a month goes by without a performance of this monumental work; it is an integral part of every violinist's repertoire. The violinist Jascha Heifetz, who played the piece throughout his career, once played the Chaconne movement in Town Hall—on the viola. Ms. Hristova's rich instrument sounded at times as deep as a viola. Her performance of the Partita was thoughtful, imaginative, and engaging.

With nothing more than her beautiful old Italian violin, Ms. Hristova successfully transported the appreciative audience on a journey away from the bustle of cold late-November Manhattan. She received heartfelt and extended applause and a bunch of flowers from the series President and Artistic Director, Martin Riskin.

Would there be an encore? Nothing else could possibly follow the Chaconne, the polite and humble violinist explained to an audience eager for more. But, Ms. Hristova conceded, Bach could follow Bach, so she played the Sarabanda movement once more.