

NEW YORK

CONCERT REVIEW



Bracha Malkin, violin
Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall
May 4, 2004



A Weill Hall recital by Bracha Malkin, a brilliantly gifted 21-year-old Israeli-born violinist (but Russian parentage; she comes from the family of one of Jascha Heifetz's first teachers) on May 4th had me searching for superlatives. But this delighted and breathless writer was able to calm down and actually read Ms. Malkin's bio returning to earth after an astounding and (in truth) unexpected musical experience. He then

discovered that in fact word had already gotten around: The late, lamented fiddle afficionado, Henry Roth's book "Violin Virtuoso from Paganini to the 21st Century" listed her among "the gifted...who are among the vanguard leading the march of violin art into the 21st century". Moreover, this young lady (who studied with her parents, Aaron Rosand at Curtis, Miriam Fried in Indiana, Boris Belkin- she is again currently working with her father Isaac Malkin) actually made Weill Hall debut in 1996 with her violinist sister Anat Malkin in 1996; had been named third prize winner of 2001 Wienwaski International Violin Competition; has been to Marlboro for two summers; and has concertized in Russia, Holland, Israel, Germany, Brazil, Switzerland and Japan. I am happy to add my name to Bracha Malkin's admiring throng (even if my May 4 was a bit late for "snowballs"!).

Her Opening selection was the best known of Eugene Ysaye's Six Sonatas, the selfsame Sonata-Ballade No. 3 that David Oistrakh emblazoned in my memory at his American debut in November 1955. Ms. Malkin's taut, pristine, utterly confident account (albeit a mite learner and more reminiscent of say Heifetz and Kogan than Oistrakh's broader, more rotund interpretation on a still-treasured recording) proudly held its own.

And her vibrant, elegantly intense, Classical way with Richard Strauss's Sonata in E Flat Major, Op. 18 could have been a dead ringer for the wonderful recording Heifetz made of the Sonata circa 1954 with Brooks Smith. I once, quipped that the early Strauss work represented "Don Juan Before Puberty" (its vintage date preceded that early orchestral tone poem). But more accurately, the burgeoning piece in fact expresses the adolescent genius's boyhood crush on the Adagio from Beethoven's "Pathetique" Sonata (and I daresay, too, that there are allusions to "Happy Birthday to You" in its third movement). I have heard wonderful interpretations of the Strauss Sonata from the 19-year-old Ginette Neveu; and also from Gidon Kremer, both opting for a darker, more rhetorical approach. But once again, it was the universally known Heifetz interpretation that Ms. Malkin conjured for me. Cullan Bryant was assisting artist for the concert. I have taken Mr. Bryant to task for playing like perfunctory "accompanist" and I am therefore delighted to observe that the pianist was this time treated as a full partner, being encouraged to play with

the lid up (which he did discretely!), and being respected as a joint-recitalist, in boldface type on the printed program. Without doubt, the duo contributed a splendid performance.

Having not really read my printed program carefully (I was, once again startled by the excellence of the playing), I admit to having expected to hear Schubert; A Major Duo Sonata, D. 574 but I was mildly taken aback to hear Ms. Malkin instead launch into the opening cadenza of the same composer's early A Major Rondo, D. 438 which is often played with a small string orchestra. I am certain that she would have done the Sonata splendidly, but it was also a pleasure to hear the slight, airborne Rondo dashed off with real concertante brilliance. Bryant likewise made an admirable mark.

The program concluded with my old teacher Nicholas Flagello's *Credendum* (a substantial composition in conservative, late-Romantic to Modern idiom), Wieniawski Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 15, and a vibrant idiomatic encore account of Fritz-Kreisler's *Caprice Viennois*.

-Harris Goldsmith