

Granada Theatre Premier Patron Society

Violinist Niv Ashkenazi – Upstairs at the G

THE LIGHTING WAS LOW AND ROMANTIC. Electronic tea candles twinkled on tables grouped around a small performance stage. A baby grand waited patiently to be brought to life. Appetizers and fine wines in abundance, members of the Granada Theatre's Premier Patron Society, contributors of \$10,000 or more each year to the Santa Barbara Center for the Performing Arts to help sustain its varied programming, were warming up for a special meet-the-artist performance last Saturday in the intimacy of the Granada's McCune Founders Room, also known as

DANIEL KEPL
MUSIC REVIEW

Upstairs at the G. Suddenly, a low-riding flash of energy traversed the length of the front of the stage and executed a couple of wheelies – or so it seemed – while tearing up the ramp of the elevated performance space. Violinist Liv Ashkenazi, Juilliard trained virtuoso and advocate for Persons with Disability, had arrived to give a recital of music by Handel, Elgar, Russell Steinberg, Arvo Pärt, Saint-Saens, and Wieniawski, with Valeria Morgovskaya collaborating at the keyboard. Sponsored by Eric and Nina Phillips, Patrick and Ursula Nesbitt, the Stephen and Carla Hahn Foundation, and Rich and Luci Janssen, Ashkenazi's performance established beyond

doubt that time, love, and music heals all wounds. Handel's *Violin Sonata in D Major, Op. 1, No. 4* opened the program in leisurely fashion, Ashkenazi's lush sound overcoming the heavily carpeted room's tendency to absorb sound. The artist's large hands and long, sinewy fingers were particularly fascinating to observe as he assayed the work's four-movement toy chest of frolicsome dance tunes with matter-of-fact expertise. Sir Edward Elgar's *Salut d'Amour, Op. 12*, gave Ashkenazi opportunity to express Edwardian romanticism, while Los Angeles-based composer Russell Steinberg's recent solo violin piece, *Latigo Tides*, allowed the audience to savor the violinist's mellow tone quality. Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's *Fratres (Brothers)*, utilizing the composer's minimalistic Tintinnabuli (bells) style of composition elicited the most passionate playing of the evening from Ashkenazi.

After intermission, Camille Saint-Saens' *Violin Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 75 (1885)* found Ashkenazi and Morgovskaya in excellent collaborative fettle, particularly in the last

two sections, *Allegro Moderato/Allegro Molto*. For encore, Polish composer Henryk Wieniawski's *Polonaise Brillante in D Major, Op. 4*, produced some of the most engaged and charming sprezzatura playing of the evening.

Daniel Kepl has been writing music, theatre, and dance reviews for Santa Barbara publications since he was a teenager. His professional expertise is as an orchestra conductor.



An intimate concert with celebrated classical violinist **Niv Ashkenazi** was presented Upstairs at the G by sponsors **Pat and Ursula Nesbitt; Craig Springer**, Chrisman Executive Director; **Nina and Eric Phillips, Luci and Rich Janssen** and not pictured Carla Hahn (The Stephen and Carla Hahn Foundation)



Niv Ashkenazi



10 year old **Aiden Woodrull**, student of cello and piano; **Jennifer Soh**, 14, violin student; **Mary Beth Woodruff**, Artistic Director of Santa Barbara Strings; and seven year old **Henry Woodruff**, student of violin and piano

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