

violinist JOVAN KOLUNDŽIJA

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Movie Review

C.A. Bustard



Jovan & Nada Kolundzija (Randolph-Macon College)

Jovan Kolundzija, the Yugoslav violinist and protégé of Henryk Szeryng, who is engaged in his first widespread introduction to U.S. audiences, opened Randolph-Macon College's 1982-83 concert season last night in a vein of high romanticism.

Kolundzija's romantic temperament is well-matched to his instrument, made in 1754 by Petrus Guarneri I (of the Venetian branch of the family), imbued with a rich, dark amber tone, veritably a cello among violins. Temperament and instrument were applied to a program firmly rooted in the 19th century, positioned a bit closer to the parlor than the chamber.

The violinist, who turns 34 this weekend, was joined by his younger sister, pianist Nada Kolundzija, billed as his accompanist but turning in a performance that would do a soloist proud. Like her brother, Ms. Kolundzija lavishes attention on tone, dynamic contrast and sweeping phrasing — her Schumann must be something to hear.

The program opened with that doughty showpiece for fiddle, Tartini's "Devil's Trill" Sonata, nicknamed in honor of its purported ghostwriter but living up to the name in its technical challenge. Kolundzija assayed the work at a solid tempo and with some deliberation — the way Italian violinists like to play Vivaldi — concentrating more on production of tone than on high-speed pyrotechnics. Here and elsewhere, the violinist had to cope with a humid climate that hampered bowing and, especially in soft passages, tone.

The pyrotechnics came later, in the Slavonic dances and rhapsodies punctuating Josef Suk's "Four Pieces for Violin and Piano." Both Kolundzijas crisply negotiated the irregular dance rhythms, only to shift easily into more broadly phrased singing passages. His playing reached for the edge in the final *burlesca* movement of the Suk, and his sister was not far behind.

The balance of the program was given over to Franck's Sonata in A Major and Saint-Saëns' Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, both works of swooning Gallic, with more than a whiff of Germanic, style. The Franck, almost a concerto in microcosm and somewhat bigger than its contents warrant, gave Ms. Kolundzija ample opportunity to play in the foreground. The Saint-Saëns emerged as a sort of "Devil's Trill" revisited, a showcase more in this violinist's temperamental territory.

The Kolundzijas were rewarded by a warm reception from an audience of about 400, rewarded in turn by an encore, Fritz Kreisler's "Schöne Rosmarin."