



Soloist Lidia Kaminska played bandoneón with conductor Rossen Milanov's strings.

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Showcase for strings spiced by adventure

A Vivaldi-glossed Latin piece soared with the bandoneón, a tawdry cousin of the accordion.

By Daniel Webster

For The Inquirer

The gifted chef grinds the spice and sprinkles the herb to lift and liven any holiday offering. It was that grasp of musical taste buds that made the Valentine's Day concert by Symphony in C more than a high-calorie string recital. It was a string recital, for conductor Rossen Milanov was showcasing his string section in Rutgers-Camden's theater with familiar music by Grieg and Tchaikovsky. The spice that made this holiday serving more than cookies and cream lay in Astor Piazzolla's *Four Seasons in Buenos Aires*, with Lidia Kaminska playing the bandoneón.

That's spice, indeed, for the soloist, the instrument and the music instantly turned this program into adventure and discovery. The bandoneón is a dance-hall resident, the tawdry cousin of the accordion that lurks in the shadowy streets of Buenos Aires and personifies the tango.

The Polish-born Kaminska, on the other hand, is the virtuosic classicist with the power and guile to lead her instrument into the upper levels of musical society. Because it looks impossible to play, the instrument is all the more engaging. Because she looks too ethereal to manage it, Kaminska's virtuosity, her ability to evoke atmospheres, and her swift changes in mood surround her playing with magnetic urgency.

The piece is a wry gloss on Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* - Piazzolla even has the second violins quote a moment of Vivaldi in his Autumn movement - but the work is a notable blending and contrasting of expanded string sounds and wind-produced tone. And all at high-tensioned rhythmical acrobatics. Kaminska's right hand drew anguished song and exuberant lyricism, while her left hand found magic in those buttons that brought sighs and darkness to the work. Her playing was solidly matched to the orchestral writing. The solo voice emerged from within the strings, soared with improvisatory freedom, then turned back into the ensemble.

The ensemble searched widely, too, through percussive effects, scratchy assaults on the instruments' bridges, and alternating sweetness and tangy bowings. Notable, too, were the blending of bandoneón and solo cello, but all the instruments had a turn at joining the soloist's sonorities. The work ended with a whoosh, a rough upward sweep a world away from the sweetness of Tchaikovsky and Grieg.