

PERFORMING ARTS

Kim Kashkashian And Lydia Artymiw

The internationalism of the program was as impressive as the playing in Sunday's recital by violist Kim Kashkashian and pianist Lydia Artymiw at Congregation Beth El in Bethesda. Kashkashian, of Armenian descent, and Artymiw, of Ukrainian parentage, started with a German work: Bach's Sonata No. 3 for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord. They gave it a warm, emotional reading, slightly marred by the full sound of a modern Steinway overwhelming

the viola in some passages.

The instrumental balance was better in the 20th-century works that made up the rest of the recital. Excerpts from Romanian-Hungarian composer György Kurtág's "Signs, Games and Messages," for solo viola, were interlaced with pieces from his "Játékok" for solo piano. The atonal miniatures featured very wide dynamics and expressiveness, ranging in mood from aggressive to quietly contemplative.

Next came a visit to Argentina: Three Songs for Viola and Piano by Carlos Guastavino. The piano begins all of these broadly romantic works and often takes a dominant role, but Kashkashian's viola stood forth warmly and beautifully, especially in the hauntingly lovely "Bonita Rama de Sauce."

Then it was on to Russia for Shostakovich's daunting Sonata for Viola and Piano. The first movement was a touch lacking in intensity, but the grotesqueries of the second were nicely highlighted. And the finale, permeated by bits of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, was dark and impassioned, eventually not so much ending as subsiding.

A quick trip to Armenia, for a folk-song encore, was a delightful way to lighten the mood and end the musical tour.

— Mark J. Estren

