

December 16, 2013

## Take a bow



The Hindu  
Lena Neudauer. Photo: K. Pichumani

### **Lena Neudauer's solo violin concert was an exuberant display of skill and music**

The concert hall at the Goethe Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan was packed to capacity and beyond. Perhaps the audience had already heard of German violinist Lena Neudauer's enduring love affair with her 300-year-old violin. But what they perhaps never expected was how beautifully the love story played out on the spot-lit stage that night.

Lena started playing the violin when she was three and gave her first concert with an orchestra seven years later. Then, she veered off to learn how to play the drums and even tried her hand at the keyboard as part of a rock band. But she returned to her first love and has since enjoyed a wildly successful career as a classical violinist. One of Germany's youngest university professors (University of Music, Saarbrücken), Lena's debut album, a recording of Robert Schumann's works for violin and orchestra, was awarded the International Classical Music Award.

For the concert, Lena chose two pieces: Johann Sebastian Bach's *Partita No. 3 in E Major BWV1006* and Eugene Ysaie's *Sonata for Solo Violin Op.27 No.2*. The second Lena bowed her violin, made by master craftsmen Lorenzo Guadagnini in 1743; it was a procession of grandiose music.

Bach's piece is a set of baroque dances with a prelude, made popular by celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim in the late 19th Century. Lena's interpretation of Bach's complex musical structure resulted in an outpouring of stunning sound and glory for the next 20 minutes.

Playing from memory, eyes closed and swaying to the advanced bowing technique, Lena's rendition of the light and airy 'Prelude' reflected the rich timbre of the music that the composer is known for. Next came the meditative 'Loure', a precise piece with perfect intonation and graceful lyricism.

Lena's version of the 'Gavotte en Rondeau' was rousing and light-spirited with torrential strains and sweetly spun harmonies. This was followed by the 'Menuets' (I and II) where the single violin gave off the sounds of many, and which Lena played with heart-on-sleeve passion. The 'Bourree' and 'Giga', two fast-paced pieces rounded off the *Partita*. Winsome notes fluttered and sang the genius of Bach.

The second piece beginning with 'Obsession; Prelude' mirrored Bach's 'Prelude'. Lena's performance was a measure of the musicianship of Ysaye, the composer who was considered the Tsar of the violin in his time. She played the 'Malinconia', one of the most beautiful pieces written by Ysaye for the French violinist Jacques Thibaud. 'Danse des Ombres; Sarabande' followed with dexterously interwoven gestures and flourishes. The 'Les Furies' came with dazzling speed and plucking movements and ended in a breathless finale.

But the evening was not over for the audience yet. After a couple of curtain calls and sustained applause, Lena returned to play 'Recitativo and Scherzo' by Fritz Kreisler, one of the greatest violinists of all time.

In her arrangements Lena showed a remarkable understanding of the composer's style even while drawing her own interpretations. You ended up hearing shades of the music you had never before reflected on. Her violin sang passages from the heart. And Lena carried the weight of that music on the strength of her shoulders and the prowess of her play.