

ICO-IVCI launch season with Tessa Lark

By [Tom Aldridge](#)



Violinist Tessa Lark

While beginning the season with a two-sponsor concert is a money saver for both, it also provides a winsome mix of musical personalities audiences may be familiar with. For the IVCI, Saturday's late-afternoon program featured [Tessa Lark](#), its 2014 silver medalist--her first local appearance since winning that award. For the [ICO](#) we heard the inaugural concert of Matthew Kraemer as the chamber orchestra's brand new music director. The sponsors' five-work program tended toward the lighter side of music making.

Opening with *Danse (Tarantelle Styrienne)*, a Debussy piano work better known in its Ravel orchestration. Indeed it sounded like a mixture of the two French impressionists--Ravel here, Debussy there. Kraemer brought out all the colors Ravel inculcated the piece with.

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) was a French Romantic through and through, a concert violinist and a composer of five violin concertos, of which the Fifth is best known. Its three movements deliver a pastel set of colors, which, following a full orchestral introduction, Tessa Lark took over and dominated the remainder, including a lengthy first-movement cadenza. This product of Kentucky easily confirmed her silver medal status, gliding over her material while projecting a rich, even-centered tone. The only 2014 laureate who competed with her tonal excellence was 5th-place laureate Yoo Jin Jang, the best of five S. Korean laureates, with Lark the only state-side one.

Lark continued the program with Beethoven's *Romance No. 2 in F for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 50*, a very light-veined, pleasant enough piece, one which some say the Bonn master used to prepare himself for writing his Violin Concerto. Lark received a standing ovation prompted an encore from her Kentucky roots, the bluegrass tune, "Bow and Strings." By the way, Lark is playing on the 1683 ex-Gingold Stradivari, loaned to her for four years, more usually awarded to the gold medalist, in this case Jinjoo Cho. But Cho turned it down, having a top notch violin of her own, and didn't wish to set it aside till 2018.

Following the break Kraemer led the orchestra in Dvořák's five-movement *Czech Suite in D, Op. 39*. Except for some interesting wind writing in the opening Preludium, I could not get into the piece as Kraemer (and Dvořák as well) would have me do. A product of 1879, the suite came before the composer's only great period which evolved in his last two decades (1884-1904). Though well conducted, I could not find myself responding to the piece--unlike his contemporaneous *Slavonic Dances*.

It took Gyorgy Ligeti (1923-2006) to get me out of my Dvořák doldrums. This Romanian Modernist galvanized my attention with his *Concerto Romanesc*, in which he wove a neo-Romantic tapestry with upstart orchestration. A bass drum without any timpani (who ever heard of such a thing?) and a wood-slap pounded out the variable rhythmic elements in some of its four movements, the finale being a headlong rush to musical hedonism.

To better assess Kraemer as the ICO's new conductor, I need to hear his approach to more profound standard repertoire--and I expect to in the ensuing months. *Oct. 10; Howard L. Schrott Center for the Arts*