

Jay Harvey Upstage

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Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra launches a new era with IVCI medalist and the formal debut of only its third music director



Matthew Kraemer



Tessa Lark

The air of celebration was bright at the Schrott Center Sunday afternoon, despite the shadow over the [Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra](#) concert due to the recent death of longtime hornist Kent Leslie, to whose memory the concert was dedicated.

The celebratory air was immediately established as new music director Matthew Kraemer mounted the podium to lead the 31-year-old orchestra in Maurice Ravel's arrangement of Claude Debussy's "Danse (Tarantelle Styrienne)." It established the dance theme of the ICO's first concert of the 2015-16 season. In the second half, which a previous engagement didn't allow me to hear, the theme was reinforced by performances of Dvorak's Czech Suite, op. 39, and Ligeti's "Concerto Romanesc" (Romanian Concerto).

The remainder of the first half — after the Debussy/Ravel had set the upbeat mood and showed off the ICO's nicely honed ensemble sound in the hall's fine acoustics — focused on the guest soloist, [Tessa Lark](#). Lark won the silver medal at last year's International Violin Competition of Indianapolis, standing out not only for her captivating performances but also for being the only finalist not of South Korean origin or heritage.

She had enchanted the near-capacity audience long before she shook off her concert slippers and played a barefoot encore — a brief, effervescent fiddle tune drawn upon her Kentucky roots — that had everybody smiling. When shod, she performed the Belgian composer Henri Vieuxtemps' Violin Concerto No. 5 in A minor, following it up with Beethoven's Romance No. 2 in F major.

The concerto features a demanding cadenza loaded with double stops that redeems the superficiality of much of the first-movement material. The slow movement is in the tender but not very deep-seated manner of the French tradition of lyricism. In the outer movements, the vigor and firm coordination of the orchestral tuttis buoyed up Lark's solo playing.

The Beethoven Romance displayed a soaring, more consistent, better founded lyricism of which Lark showed herself to be a master. The IVCI connection to Indianapolis continues to provide the area's orchestras with return appearances by excellent young concert artists. Lark's engagement to help launch the ICO season was an admirable continuation of that legacy. And Kraemer seems poised to extend the orchestra's own legacy of refined, emotionally involving performances.