

Young violinist moves parish during recital

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PITTSFORD — One free-lance music critic couldn't keep quiet as he walked out of St. Louis Church following a performance by the Greece Symphony Orchestra.

Turning to the young woman in the green dress standing at the doorway, he said, "That performance was comparable in parts to a professional orchestra's."

Violinist Tara Noval accepted Justin Busch's praise with a smile and a "thank you" as other admirers gathered around her.

Later, Busch said Noval's playing that afternoon was "crisply articulated," and possessed "a real sense of energy ... (that) never flagged."

A classical composer himself, and an occasional writer for the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*, Busch knew a first-rate performance when he heard it at St. Louis Church in Pittsford Sunday, Nov. 5. Noval's talent was showcased in the second half of a program by the orchestra which supported her soloing in Max Bruch's G Minor Violin Concerto.

Noval, 20, graduated from St. Louis School and has played at the parish's Masses over the years while forging a path to potential stardom in the classical music world. Currently a senior at the Julliard School of Music in New York City, Noval's credits include appearances as a soloist with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, the Rochester Chamber Orchestra and festival orchestras in Aspen, Colo., Vermont and Sarasota, Fla.

She has also entertained audiences in Europe as concertmaster of the Rochester Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, which toured there twice when she was a member. But the largest audience she ever gar-

nered consisted of millions of listeners tuned in to a broadcast of her performance with the Rochester Chamber Orchestra over National Public Radio last year.

Noval credited her parents for introducing her to the world of classical music at a young age. Her mother, Barbara, a violinist, practiced with a quartet in the family's living room, much to the delight of Noval when she was a toddler. "I've heard stories that I used to sit and watch (the quartet) rehearse," she said.

When she was three, she began learning how to play violin, initially practicing about 15 minutes a day. By the time she entered elementary school, she was devoting a few hours each day to the instrument.

Even as a child, Noval showed considerable talent. At age seven, she was featured at the Southern Vermont Arts Festival in Manchester. Nonetheless, Noval doesn't refer to herself as a "prodigy."

"It's a funny term," she said. "Some people have called me that. I don't know. I started pretty young. I guess I've always been talented at the violin."

Despite her unusual interest, Noval led what she considers a normal childhood, free from friends taunting her for practicing while they were out playing. "They've been very supportive," she said. "My friends never thought it was weird. Maybe it was because I was doing something that no one else was doing."

After graduating from St. Louis, Noval attended Allendale Columbia School in Rochester, commuting by plane to Julliard's pre-college program on Saturdays. She has grown to love New York City, but is unsure where she'll settle after graduation.

"The music business is so hard," she commented. "Whatever opportunities you find, you take. I know a few conductors that I've talked to, (but) it's not cut and



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Violinist Tara Noval performed with the Greece Symphony Orchestra on Sunday, Nov. 5, at St. Louis Church in Pittsford.

dry." Ideally, the young violinist would like to perform with a major symphony orchestra, but said that she'll consider teaching or playing in pit orchestras for musicals. "I think it'll be a mix of things," she said about her career plans.

One place where she hopes always to return for performances is St. Louis. "Playing in church does sort of bring me closer to the spiritual world," she said, noting that some of her best performances have taken place before a congregation. "A lot of people have said that the music has moved them. I've moved (my grand-

mother) to tears playing in church, especially the Ave Maria."

Those listening in the pews last Sunday were likewise moved by Noval's playing. "I thought she produced an extraordinary performance," said Carol Lowne, who attended the concert with her family. Noting that her husband, Alan, was a violinist with the Greece orchestra, she praised Noval's technique.

"She has tremendous bow control," Lowne said. "(Bruch's concerto) has lots and lots of long trill sections. To sustain the pace at the trills, you have to control

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Noval, a graduate of St. Louis School, has been playing the violin since she was three years old. At present, she's a senior at the Julliard School of Music in New York City.