

Evening of guitar is divinely diverse Schaupp all nuance in Mesquite program

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BY OLIN CHISM / THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

MESQUITE - Almost everyone would agree that the classical guitar is a pleasant instrument, but the uninitiated might argue that its ability to achieve variety in sound is limited. A subtle young artist from Australia demonstrated on Tuesday night that the second proposition is untrue. Karin Schaupp presented a program that ranged far in moods and sounds, consistently avoiding anything trite.

Ms. Schaupp played in the Mesquite Arts Center for the Dallas Classic Guitar Society, which is active in some of the suburbs as well as the city itself.

She eased into her program rather conventionally, with two contrasting sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti and one by Giuliani.

Scarlatti is a composer, like Haydn and Dvorak, who had a gift for bringing joy to the world. The opening sonata (Longo 423) was stately, but its companion (Longo 483) was quick and joyous and they made an effective pair. Ms. Schaupp's quiet mastery came quickly into play. The second sonata's two musical voices were always clear and distinct, as if two guitars were involved.

Sonata Eroica, or Heroic Sonata, sounds like a contradiction in terms when it's for the guitar. But once you adjust to the scale, it's heroic enough. Again Ms. Schaupp achieved clarity in a piece that might have been for a group of instruments.

After her opening salute to the classics, she moved into unfamiliar territory. Threnody for Chernobyl by the Australian composer Richard Charlton was a wonderful discovery. It opens with a 12-note theme that soon appears in retrograde form, but it's not an atonal work. It's a probing, emotional composition that ends with spooky, fading sounds. It calls for a wide variety of tone color, which Ms. Schaupp brought off so beautifully that the piece might have been written with her technique in mind. Maybe it was.

Two other works by an Australian composer, Phillip Houghton, were not as appealing, though it would be hard to fault Ms. Schaupp's performance of them. God of the Northern Forest and Kinkachoo, I Love You were vaguely minimalist in the persistence of some of their musical ideas, though they weren't in the least like the music of Philip Glass.

Ms. Schaupp moved back to older times, though not familiar territory, with Fantasie Hongroise by the 19th-century Austrian composer Mertz. Hungarian gypsy music was all the rage in his time, and this is one more sign of it. As a piano piece, it would have been a little vulgar, but the classical guitar tends to tame more flamboyant sounds.

The remainder of Ms. Schaupp's program, sensitively played throughout, included music of Angel Barrios and Manuel Ponce and arrangements of French popular songs by Roland Dyens. It was not the kind of program you'd be likely to encounter again soon.