

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

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## Unvarnished music-making from pianist Shevtsov

By David Patrick Stearns, Inquirer Music Critic

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Miranda Cuckson, who played with pianist Yegor Shevtsov. (BEOWULF SHEEHAN)

PRINCETON - Known among classical piano insiders as a place to learn pain-free, injury-free keyboard technique, the Golandsky Institute is, for most of us, a welcome piano-recital festival during the slow summertime concert period, featuring its own pool of talent not often heard in these parts.

Yet the Taubman Approach - the method championed by the institute's Edna Golandsky to promote ease of execution - seems not to encourage any sort of pianistic uniformity among its disciples. The best known among them, pianist and Golandsky faculty member Ilya Itin, is known for a lean sheen that was nowhere to be heard Tuesday from Yegor Shevtsov at the McCarter Theatre Center.

Ukrainian-born Shevtsov preferred music-making as unvarnished as possible in his program of sonatas by Debussy and Beethoven, plus more-unorthodox works by George Antheil and Steven Mackey. Better to reveal his deeply examined view of any given piece. Scarlatti's normally humble *Sonata in E K. 162* almost felt like a saga, given how much he varied the piece's frequent melodic repetition.

Most of the program was in collaboration with violinist Miranda Cuckson - one of those violinists like Jennifer Koh with an exceptionally adventurous intellect. Together, they turned Debussy's normally cogent *Violin Sonata* into a series of highly colored episodes that didn't hang together as a whole, but was fascinating for an originality borne out of making the absolute most of any given moment. Beethoven's *Violin Sonata No. 7 Op. 30 No. 2* had similar pluses

and minuses - plus interior anguish that performers often miss.

The true wild card was Mackey's *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, a 1996 vernacular-tinged, strike-out-in-all-directions piece that many composers would revise or suppress, especially in view of this composer's more integrated recent works such as *Tonic* (written for the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia).

In a preperformance talk, the Princeton-based Mackey said he was influenced by Thelonious Monk's ability to find the wrong note that feels exactly right - an idea he took to piquant extremes. At times, violin and piano seem to be on different, though similarly bluesy, planets (possibly influenced by Ravel's *Violin Sonata*).

Intentional strokes of perversity included several culs-de-sac - passages leading nowhere in a rebellion against typical notions of continuity. It's gleefully confrontational without being obscure. In other words, it should be heard much more widely.

The 2013 Golandsky Institute International Piano Festival continues through Saturday, including a solo concert Friday by Ilya Itin at the McCarter Theatre Center in Princeton. Information: 609-258-2787 or [www.golandskyinstitute.org](http://www.golandskyinstitute.org)

Contact David Patrick Stearns at [dstearns@phillynews.com](mailto:dstearns@phillynews.com).