

Violin Virtuoso or Rock Star? David Garrett Brought the Best of Both at the Barbara B. Mann

David Garrett's performance last Wednesday night proved to be exciting for all ages.

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The Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall has been throwing some curve balls at us lately. Typically known for featuring Broadway shows and performances by more laid-back musicians, the Mann showcased two very unlikely artists this week: Alice Cooper and David Garrett.

While Alice Cooper is definitely the big shocker here, world-class violinist David Garrett certainly brought enough energy to keep the crowd up past their bed-time last night. In fact, I found that I was continuously asking myself one question the whole time: Am I at a rock concert?

There is no doubt that Garrett's sound has bridged the gap between classical and rock music. The German-born violin prodigy with the Juilliard education has found a comfortable niche playing such songs as Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters" while giving them his own classical twist.

No rock song is safe from Garrett's mind-blowing talent, and no classical piece is safe from his style, either. "Csardas – Gypsy Dance" by Monti, which Garrett performs on his self-titled album, is one example of how he places a little more edge on a typical classic tango piece.

Given this information, it might be possible that I was attending a rock concert last night. Then again, considering the average age of the audience and the fact that we were all sitting in our seats, it seemed unlikely that I was experiencing a rock performance.

Yet, it was hard to deny the rock star persona that was plastered all over David Garrett's angel-like face. This man, along with the four members of his band, definitely put on a memorable show.

While listening to the group perform such pieces as Michael Jackson's "Smooth Criminal" and Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir," it was easy to imagine that Garrett was holding a guitar instead of a violin.

And speaking of guitars, there was no doubt that the guitarist John Haywood was putting on a rock star performance when he busted out the solos during Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing." That dude could shred, and the audience knew it; they gave him quite an ovation before the song was even finished.

The wicked guitar solos were just some of the many surprises that were offered that evening. It was quite magical to recognize the transformation that took place at the Mann. Those many surprises were undoubtedly major players in this transformation.

At the beginning of the evening, I was not surprised to see that I was one of the youngest members of the crowd. I also wasn't surprised when Garrett began the show at the back of the theater and then walked up to the stage (I

watched the PBS special where he did the exact same thing). And I certainly wasn't surprised when Garrett and the band alternated between slow numbers and upbeat songs, much like the set-up on Garrett's latest self-titled album.

I was surprised when the drummer played a killer solo at the beginning of Garrett's "Rock Prelude." This was not included on the album and it certainly kick-started that transformation that I was talking about earlier. The crowd was certainly pleased from the very start of the performance, but something changed within them after this unexpected drum solo.

The band's performance of "Little Wing" was not lost on the audience either. Garrett played with the band at the beginning of this piece and then he very casually walked backstage as he let the rest of the guys have the limelight for a little while. That's when guitar solos came.

"Kashmir" was definitely the next big surprise. This song was not featured on the album and I wasn't even aware that David Garrett had ever played the Zeppelin classic. It was certainly a crowd pleaser.

It was during this transformation that Garrett's classics, such as Vivaldi's "Summer," started sounding even better. He "officially" ended the show with AC/DC's "Thunder," however the group came back out to perform "Flight of the Bumblebee" and "Somewhere."

After contemplating on this "transformation" for a while, I have recognized that this concert was the epitome of David Garrett's ingenious sound. This violin prodigy has managed to transform the classical pieces into contemporary rock songs and vice versa.

With that said, it is time to focus on the original question: Is David Garrett a violin player or a rock star?

Honestly, anyone who has the ability to convince a bunch of seniors to yell "Thunder" while he plays the classic AC/DC song is a rock star in my mind. It was an amazing show and none of us can wait for him to return to Ft. Myers!