

Music

Garrett's goal: Pull rock fans into classical world

Violinist doesn't shy away from 'crossover' label

By Elysa Gardner
 USA TODAY

For many classical musicians and fans, the term "crossover" evokes images of slickly marketed acts plying pop audiences with pompous pabulum. But German-born violinist **David Garrett** embraces the c-word as heartily as others shun it.

"Crossover music is a wonderful way for classical artists to reach out to new audiences," Garrett says. "But your goal must be to bring those people back into your own world."

That's the plan behind *Rock Symphonies*, Garrett's follow-up to the self-titled U.S. debut that made the 28-year-old former child prodigy the genre's hottest new star.

Like 2009's *David Garrett* — which entered *Billboard's* classical crossover chart at No. 1 and sold 80,000 copies, making him the year's best-selling new classical artist — *Symphonies*, which will be out Tuesday, mixes pop and classical pieces, this time focusing on arena rock.

Photographed for the album cover in rock-star garb, his black jacket open to the waist and his long blond hair brushing a chunky silver necklace, Garrett looks like a cross between Axl Rose in the late '80s and a chiseled fashion model — which he was several years ago, taking gigs while studying at New York's prestigious Juilliard School.

Guns N' Roses' *November Rain* is one of the tunes featured on *Symphonies*, which also includes instrumental covers of Led Zepelin (*Kashmir*), Aerosmith (*Walk*

This Way, with Orianthi on guitar) and Nirvana (*Smells Like Teen Spirit*), as well as a mashup of U2 and Vivaldi (*Vivaldi vs. Vertigo*). He's accompanied by the City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra and his own backing band of pop musicians.

"Classical music is the foundation of everything I do," says Garrett, who began playing the violin at age 4 and was performing with major international orchestras

"I grew up playing for older generations, and I always wanted to perform for my generation — to play Mozart and Beethoven and Brahms for them, and AC/DC and Metallica and Michael Jackson as well."

before he reached his teens.

"But I'm a huge fan of '70s and '80s rock. I grew up playing for older generations, and I always wanted to perform for my generation — to play Mozart and Beethoven and Brahms for them, and AC/DC and Metallica and Michael Jackson as well."

The unapologetic bombast with which Garrett practices his gospel has not endeared him to all critics. "His technique is cer-

tainly impressive," says veteran music journalist J.D. Considine, a contributor to Canada's *The Globe and Mail*. "But what makes a great classical violinist isn't speed or agility — it's musicality."

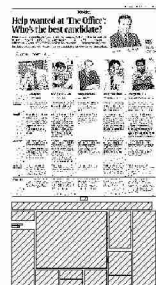
Considine allows that Garrett's commercial potential is impressive. "If Garrett can attain a mass audience in the USA, he should be applauded, because this type of music has been much more successful in Europe."

Indeed, Garrett has already enjoyed several gold and platinum albums abroad. But he's also becoming a more visible presence here, thanks to exposure such as the TV special *Live in Berlin*, broadcast on PBS last year. A new special, *Rock Symphonies: Live on a Summer Night*, also shot in Berlin, will start airing on public television stations in August.

Not that Garrett, who is based in New York, is entirely preoccupied with professional, or creative, advancement. "There are two different times in my life. I focus on my work for two or three months, then I take a week off and burn the candle at both ends. I don't take weekends when I'm touring or in the studio, so when I'm back home, I like to throw a party."

Garrett plans to tour again in 2011. When he next enters the studio, it will be for "a core classical record — a Brahms concerto, or something from that era."

And after that? "I'm up for anything. Maybe I'll go in more of a rhythm and blues direction. Making music is always more interesting when you don't know what's going to happen next."





By Philipp Müller

On the edge of stardom in USA: David Garrett, who is already a success abroad, is finding an American audience with a second public TV special, *Rock Symphonies: Live on a Summer Night*, airing next month.