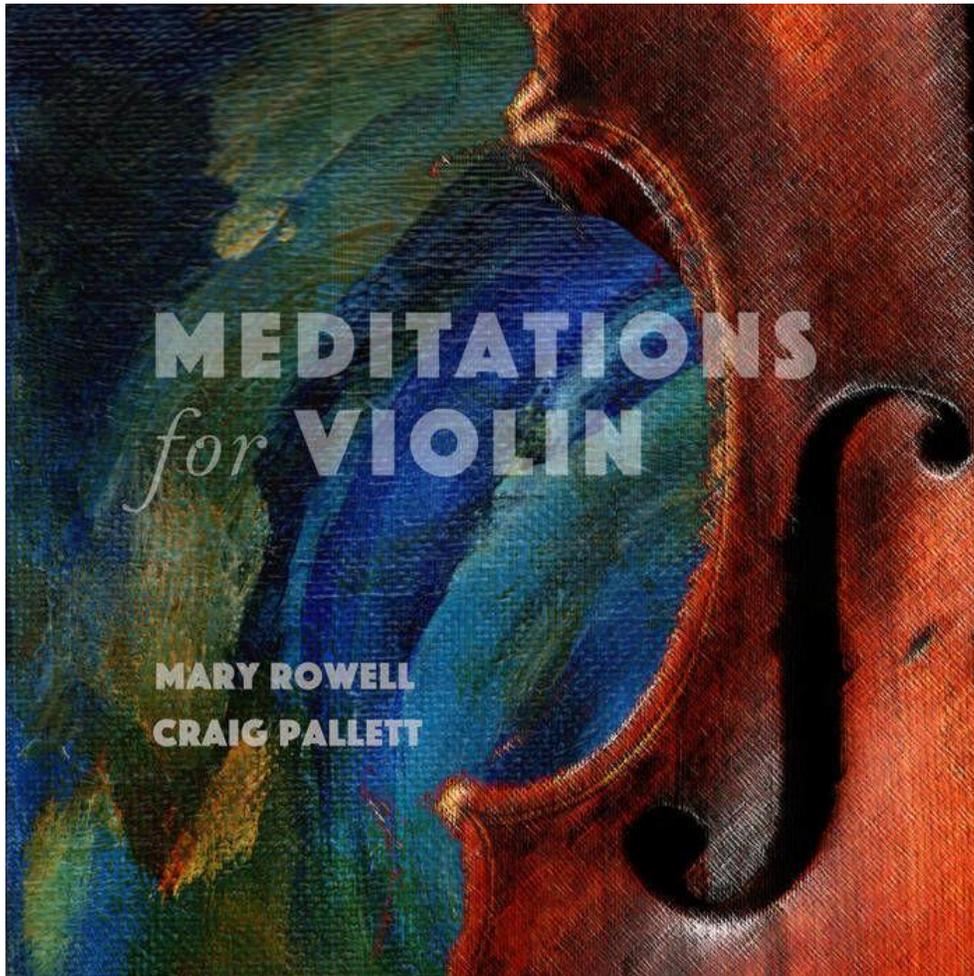


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Music Review: Have violin and dog, will travel

By Jim Lowe Staff Writer
May 17, 2020



Music videos live! At least they did at Friday's TURNon Livestream concert presented by TURNmusic, the Waterbury contemporary music ensemble, on Facebook. Violinist Mary Rowell and composer-keyboardist Craig Pallett showcased their just released album "Meditations for Violin" – an entrancing piece of Vermontiana.

The two "songs" performed, of the four on the album, mixed video of Vermont and nature with solo violin and synthesizer in a style that defied genre, but will likely prove irresistible to both classical and traditional music lovers.

“Two Vermonters struggle to express the clear reality of the world we now appear to be living in,” Pallett explains in his notes. “Sounds like a plot that can only thicken but I am not going to try. One of the world’s great violinists stopped by the studio in October 2019 one day, and she recorded these four compositions I created for her. Just her violin and my Mac.”

“Vermont Tornado” celebrates a bit of what the title describes. Video mixes Vermont pastoral with “weather event” scenes, while the violin sings and soars and the synthesizer rocks and rolls like Vermont’s unique weather. The violin ranges from lyrical to virtuoso with bit of traditional fiddling twang. It’s storytelling of sorts and sometimes downright exciting.

The performance and compositional craftsmanship are first rate. While the music doesn’t challenge the audience with difficult harmonic language, its depth should be rewarding to aficionados while giving pleasure to traditional and pop music lovers. Rowell, who grew up on a farm in Craftsbury, is well known in Vermont – and internationally – as an excellent genre-bending violinist. Pallett, a veteran of the Los Angeles studio system now living in Vermont, knows his way around a synthesizer with compelling results.

“Blueberries,” no surprise, is much more pastoral, but with a few wild moments. Rowell did the filming for this with her iPhone motoring on the roads around her home, including naked blueberry fields, with her dog in the passenger seat. The traditional twang continues, but her violin virtuosity becomes almost pastoral. (A nice touch is that occasionally the violin score appears at the bottom of the screen in both pieces.)

In “Blueberries,” the interplay becomes more interesting with the synthesizer occasionally taking on the melody while the violin becomes filigree in an obbligato style. This beautiful piece seems almost too short.

A segment of “Circle of Light,” another of the four pieces on the album, with more Craftsbury landscape was a prelude the program. Rowell, Pallett and Anne Decker, TURNmusic, introduced the program from their respective homes.

This 21st century soundtrack with a country accent made for a fine concert, another in the imaginative series in the times of COVID-19 by TURNmusic.

“Meditations for Violin” with Mary Rowell and Craig Pallett is available from Amazon Music, iTunes and BandCamp.

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TURNon Livestream

TURNon Livestream presents solo performances by TURNmusic ensemble members live-streamed free online at 7 p.m. Fridays and Tuesdays:

- May 19: Nicola Cannizaro, percussion
- May 22: Dan Liptak, clarinet

Admission is free (donations are appreciated); go online to www.facebook.com/TURNmusic