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THE INDIANAPOLIS NEWS

- HARPSICHORDIST: Jory Vinikour will be guest artist in the Ronen Chamber Ensemble's first concert of the season Tuesday.

Baroque love converted pianist to harpsichordist

Ronen Chamber Ensemble

Program: J.S. Bach's *Tno Sonata* from *A Musical Offenng*; Royers *Suite in C minor*; Stephen Blumberg's *Gyre*; Carl Nielsen's *Woodwind Quintet, Op. 43*.

Guest artist: Harpsichordist Jory Vinikour.

Location: Circle Theatre Wood Room. When: 7:30 p.m., Tuesday

Admission: \$10 adults, \$5 students, at the door or by calling (317) 6374574.

By Charles Staff

How does a Chicago-born pianist who played Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in Colombia become a harpsichordist living in Paris? And why switch from one instrument to the other? Jory Vinikour, who will be guest artist in the Ronen Chamber Ensemble's first concert of the season Tuesday, has some answers.

In a phone interview from Chicago, where he was playing harpsichord for concert performances of Purcell's *Fairy Queen*, Vinikour, after mentioning the South American *Rhapsody*, said, "Why do I play harpsichord? I know there's a perception that we switch because there's too much competition among pianists. But I was always fascinated by baroque music and so I was listening to the harpsichord a lot, to recordings by (Wanda) Landowska and (Gustav) Leonhardt, among others."

Vinikour, who studied piano at Baltimore's Peabody Conservatory and harpsichord later at New York's Mannes College of Music and Rutgers University before moving to Paris, is so in

love with his instrument that he insists a fine player at a fine instrument can produce dynamic nuances, a claim no other harpsichordist I've talked with has made.

"I don't mean thundering fortissimos or whispering pianissimos, like the piano, but touch can make a difference.

Harpsichordists usually mention articulation and legato when the word "nuance" comes up. While the former is certainly possible, the latter is an illusion, as it is on the piano; created, in the latter's case, by creeping around the keyboard in spider fashion — not letting go of one note until the other is played— and by the use of the sustaining pedal, which the harpsichord doesn't have.

On the harpsichord, strings are plucked, not struck, and, as one harpsichordist put it after being told of Vinikour's statement, "A pluck's a pluck."

Nevertheless, Vinikour is a busy harpsichordist who performs in revivals of baroque operas in France and who can be heard on the sound track of *Jefferson in Paris*. The film failed to please movie-goers, including Vinikour, who calls the music a bad mixture of "the real thing," meaning 18th century music, and "typical Grade-B Hollywood film music."

After Chicago, Vinikour flew back to Paris to teach and to play J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Then he returned to Chicago for more performances of the Purcell before his Ronen appearance which includes the American premiere of *Gyre*, written for him in 1991 by American composer Stephen Blumberg, Royer's Suite in C minor, and the Trio Sonata from Bach's *A Musical Offering*.

Gyre called to mind Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*, which "did gyre and gimble in the wabe." "No. It's inspired by a poem by William Butler Yeats," he explained. (According to Geoffrey Lapin's Ronen program notes, the poem is *The Second Coming*.) "I met Stephen and his wife in Paris. He was a student there and he composed this astounding, superlative work for me, one of the 10 finest solo pieces written on the instrument in this century," he exclaimed.