



LESLIE LYONS

Violinist and composer Daniel Bernard Roumain moves among different genres with aplomb and enthusiasm.

## He takes a stand between classic and pop

By Matthew Guerrieri  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

It's a cliché for visiting bands to mention local musical heroes as part of between-song banter. At his entertaining Celebrity Series concert at the Berklee Performance Center on Saturday, violinist-composer Daniel Bernard Roumain (also known as DBR) gave a shout-out to James Levine and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It was an appropriate gesture for Roumain, who's made a name straddling classical and popular genres.

Backed by his band, the Mission, DBR played portions of his "24 Bits: Hip-Hop Etudes and Studies," as well as a few extras. The band — a string quartet with keyboards, drums, bass, and turntables — came with rock am-

### Daniel Bernard Roumain & the Mission

Presented by Bank of America  
Celebrity Series  
At: Berklee Performance Center,  
Saturday

plification, light show, and audience interaction. The studies, originally written as teaching pieces for the Harlem School for the Arts, draw equally on Bach, Philip Glass (a mentor), and the popular music hinted at in the title.

With short looped phrases layered against each other, Glass's minimalist influence was apparent, although the repetitions hardly approached that composer's hypnotic lengths. Motives that were sufficiently evocative of their vernacular inspiration produced

concise and intriguing dialogue between genres, but other, less immediately compelling ideas were cut short just as they were getting interesting.

The best revealed unexpected affinities. A bass line borrowed from Rachmaninoff's famous C-sharp minor Prelude established a menacing mood that soon flowered into a sunny Steely Dan jazz-rock epiphany. A couple of heavy-metal-flavored movements thrashed well, with violent bowing that recalled Bartók and Shostakovich.

And an homage to Duke Ellington combined horn-like strings with funky drums and superb old-school turntable scratching from DJ Scientific, wonderfully connecting the Harlem Renaissance to Stevie Wonder's "Sir Duke" tribute down

to the present.

The amplification was problematic: While some manipulation was inspired (like Jon Weber's wah-wah pedaled viola), the overall string sound was distractingly strident. During an introduce-the-band jam session, violinist Earl Maneein's wiring briefly failed, and for a moment, the hall was graced with a soulful, immediate timbre that drew you in, instead of an adulterated one that pushed you back.

Roumain's enthusiasm is infectious, though. He had a special connection with two young contingents from the Roxbury Center for the Arts and the Conservatory Lab Charter School in Brighton, beneficiaries of visits earlier in the week. Swept up in his energy and virtuosity, one couldn't help being a little jealous.