

Jason Vieaux

Rodrigo Guitar Concerto with the Charlotte Symphony

"spirited, nimble and bright"

Flash, spirit win day - and the crowd

Charlotte Observer 10/10/2009 <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/local/v-print/story/994299.html>

The audience must've wondered what was up. When the house lights went down Friday night for the second half of the Charlotte Symphony's concert, the orchestra had vanished. Its part of the stage was dark.

Instead, guitarist Jason Vieaux - who had closed the first half as the soloist in Joaquin Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez" - returned to front and center with guest conductor Chelsea Tipton. With chitchat and guitar music, they paved the way from Rodrigo's Spanish tone-painting to the jazzy Americana that would end the concert: an orchestral potpourri from George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess."

The interlude let Vieaux play three de facto encores. If three of them sounds pushy, the way he played them more than justified their presence. In the "Aranjuez," Vieaux had been spirited, nimble and bright. But it was in the solo pieces by Isaac Albeniz of Spain, Jorge Morel of Argentina and Duke Ellington that he really savored the guitar's colors and seductions. The whispers of "In a Sentimental Mood" had such magic that the way he handled the concerto's famous second movement paled a bit by comparison. The beloved Rodrigo tune was neatly turned but much less soulful.

But Vieaux captured the concerto's breezy charm. And the orchestra, led by Tipton - a Greensboro native who directs the Symphony of Southeast Texas - added its own sparkle. Vieaux used a little amplification to make sure he was heard. The orchestra may have made that unnecessary, though: Its airiness not only suited the music's civility but forestalled any competition with the guitar.

The orchestra occasionally brought that kind of delicacy to "Porgy and Bess" and the concert's opener, Leonard Bernstein's "Three Dance Episodes from 'On the Town.'" Early in "Porgy," an offstage solo by the orchestra's new principal trumpeter, Karin Bliznik, served notice that the trumpet can spin out dulcet tone when it's handled right.

Flashiness and spirit were more often the order of business, though. The orchestra played lustily. And the audience may have set a Charlotte record: In response to the concerto, then Vieaux's solos, then "Porgy," it let loose with three standing ovations.