

Guitarist Jason Vieaux in Baltimore

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LIGHT FOR ALL
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Weekend review roundup: guitarist Jason Vieaux, Juilliard String Quartet

In addition to catching the Mayor's Christmas Parade in Hampden -- I just had to see to see if a) the mayor turned up and b) what sort of reaction she would get -- I heard two excellent concerts.

On Saturday night at the Baltimore Museum of Art, I heard a recital by Jason Vieaux, a substantially gifted guitarist whose playing revealed equal portions of stylistic elegance and technical polish. Presented by the Baltimore Classical Guitar Society and drawing a sizable crowd, the program would have been memorable if it had contained no more than the few minutes needed for Vieaux to perform the Sarabande from Bach's Lute Suite No. 3. What the guitarist did in that short span of time was magical, creating a deeply lyrical poem from the subtly articulated phrases.

Gentle nuances accounted for several other highlights in the concert, including "Julia Florida: Barcarola" by Augustin Barrios (the closing measures of that piece were treated with the most exquisite tonal and rhythmic shading) and the "Evocacion" movements of Jose Luis Merlin's "Suite del Recuerdo." Vieaux's arrangements of Albeniz' "Sevilla" and Pat Metheny's "The Bat" also proved highly effective. The guitarist brought a great deal of virtuosity and atmosphere to Leo Brouwer's "El Decameron Negro."

For an encore, there was a disarming, smooth-jazz (in the best sense of the term) treatment of "Christmas Time is Here"; it seemed doubly satisfying on the night of the season's first snowfall.

To give you a taste of Vieaux's refined musicianship, I've attached a clip of a 2007 performance of that gorgeous work by Barrios that he played so tenderly at the BMA:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Skz8CS9QIT8>

--Tim Smith

http://weblogs.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/classicalmusic/2009/12/weekend_review_roundup_guitari.html