

## Guitarist Jason Vieaux and the Escher Quartet

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### Guitarist Vieaux adds extra dimension to Escher String Quartet

Guest guitarist Jason Vieaux fit in well with the members of the Escher String Quartet at Edmond Town Hall in Newtown last Sunday. ESQ takes its name from M.C. Escher, whose well-known graphic work has elements interlocking, transforming and often creating optical illusions that seem totally realistic. Vieaux's guitar could blend in with the quartet or stand out on its own, as in an Escher etching of a reptile making a loop, coming out of a two-dimensional sketch pad, walking around the table top in 3D and re-entering the piece of paper. Newtown Friends of Music presented ESQ with guest guitarist Vieaux in a recital that merged a wide assortment of musical elements, creating an acoustical work of art.

ESQ opened with String Quartet Op. 64, No. 5 ("The Lark"), perhaps the most popular quartet by Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809). In the opening theme, violinist Adam Barnett-Hart sounded avian, soaring on his high E string, flying above the other members of ESQ, violinist Wu Jie, violist Pierre Lapointe and cellist Dane Johansen. The members have an unusual affinity for fitting together, picture perfect.

Vieaux played a transcription for guitar from Suite in G minor, BWV 995, by J.S. Bach (1685-1750), originally written for solo cello, and later adapted for lute, an early cousin of the guitar. With his phrasing and articulations, Vieaux added freshness to the baroque work. Delicate fingering commanded everyone's attention in the soulful "Sarabande."

For Concerto in D Major, RV 93, by Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), guitar joined violin, viola and cello in a piece with many internal intricacies. Vieaux's guitar developed the theme in the gorgeous largo, as the three strings provided graceful accompaniment. It made me take pause, listening to music written almost 300 years ago that remains timeless and has eternal appeal.

Following intermission, Vieaux played two excerpts from "Iberia," by Isaac Albeniz (1770-1827), with complete mastery of the acoustic guitar. Everyone was transported to sunny Spain in "Sevilla" and "Torre Bermeja." By now, Vieaux was all warmed up and ready for a little more heat as Barnett-Hart joined him for a fiery history lesson in tango by Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992). The guitar-violin duet made a heady mix, playing pulse-quickening rhythms, reaching back to "Bordel 1900" and "Cafe 1930." With knuckles knocking on the body of his guitar, Vieaux was hot.

They closed with Guitar and String Quartet in D Major, G. 448, by Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805), ending in the swirling "Fandango," building up and turning around on itself like one of Escher's Mobius strips.

The exhibit "M.C. Escher: Impossible Reality" is at the New Britain Museum of American Art until Nov. 14. Call 860-229-0257 or visit [nbmaa.org](http://nbmaa.org) for more information.

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