

Artist Management

## Guitarist Jason Vieaux with Julien Labro and A Far Cry

*"...a hugely enjoyable performance of Piazzolla's "Four Seasons"*

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### Music for all seasons, in farewell to a concert space

By [Jeremy Eichler](#) Globe Staff / December 21, 2010

Constructing programs can be almost as difficult as playing concerts. A Far Cry, the city's young conductorless chamber orchestra, is doing both very well these days. At the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum on Sunday afternoon, the audience seemed to drift out of the performance slightly disoriented, as if blinking into nonexistent sunlight. They had just experienced one of the more transporting concerts of the year.

Most performances begin and end with some amount of silence, but Sunday's was uncommon in the breadth and quality of that liminal space. The program opened with Arvo Pärt's "Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten," a work that itself emerged after a period of creative silence during which this Estonian composer was abandoning avant-garde complexity and discovering a new mystical beauty in the simple connections between two notes. His "Cantus" from 1977 and other works of this period glow with a hard-won purity of thought and a haunting simplicity of language.

"Cantus" opens with the toll of a single bell, then violins drift in quietly from the stratosphere. The air gradually thickens with the sounds of descending A-minor scales that gather into an intensely sorrowing spiral of strings. The feeling is of music being pulled downward from all sides, as if grief itself were a kind of gravitational force.

On Sunday, the members of A Far Cry delivered a richly expressive, pristinely drawn account of this score. They also had the insight to answer this work, at the other end of the program, with the glittering unearthly chords of Aaron Jay Kernis's "Musica Celestis," adapted from his String Quartet No. 1, and here given a reading at once poised and ravishing.

**In between came the breezy parts: a brisk high-energy account of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, and then a hugely enjoyable performance of Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires." Too often when Piazzolla's tight chamber arrangements are opened up for string orchestra, the music turns soupy and inert, but this new arrangement by Julien Labro for guitar, bandoneon, and strings, gets things right. On Sunday the Far Cry strings sounded taut and lean, deftly supporting the two excellent soloists, Jason Vieaux on guitar and Labro on bandoneon. The music was by turns rapid and rhythmically driving, hazy and languorous, nostalgically grand-gestured, tart and cutting. Shifting moods were sharply etched throughout, and Jae Young Cosmos Lee handled the violin solos with real idiomatic flare.**

The program included Elgar's Serenade for Strings. It also happened to mark the end of an era: This was the final performance on the Gardner's Sunday series to take place in the museum's Tapestry Room.

*Jeremy Eichler can be reached at [jeichler@globe.com](mailto:jeichler@globe.com)*