

## Philip Mann Conducts Symphony in C in Tchaikovsky, Corigliano

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### Symphony in C and guitar a fine match

DANIEL WEBSTER, FOR THE INQUIRER

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"Public intimacy" is social media's contribution to our oxymoronic life, but guitarists have grappled with the concept since the first one faced an audience. The instrument draws the heart into the fingertips, which bare the greatest intimacy in a whisper of sound. Place the guitar in front of an orchestra of 60, and logic - and intimacy - may vanish completely.

Amplification has balanced those forces, particularly in recordings, and the guitar has gathered a bundle of concertos that revel in the sonorities of plucked strings, exuberant brass, and richly carpeted strings. Symphony in C discussed all that Saturday when guest conductor Philip Mann led the first local performance of John Corigliano's *Troubadours* for guitar and orchestra at Rutgers-Camden.

The concert featured Jason Vieaux in the elaborated set of variations on 12th-century songs, which dealt theatrically with sound and delicacy. The composer was portraying a musical era and the troubadour himself as he exposed his heart in ballads of love and sometimes bravery. Offstage percussionists and winds offered conflict and precise noise against the singing guitar.

The work began with a whispered slow violin tone. The composer created hangings of tiny sound and difficult balances to introduce the guitar's search for expressiveness within the bounds of intimacy. As the piece evolved, Vieaux's virtuosity emerged in rapidly articulated passages and resonant quick chords. A cadenza, pairing quiet with fleet searches over the range of the instrument, echoed the antique musical source with chromatic theatricality. Mann led the ensemble in precise collaboration, shifting meters and dynamics to color and comment on the guitar's often dreamy message. Both Vieaux and the ensemble made thorny writing appear to be easily managed and maintained the feeling that the heart fit easily in the fingertips.

**Mann, now music director of the Arkansas Symphony, challenged a long tradition when he followed with Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 5*. Listeners were reminded that it is impossible to re-create performances like those common in the 1960s, the '80s, and even later. This young orchestra has a different metabolism and an impatience with sentimentality. Tchaikovsky's *Fifth* was often labeled "lugubrious" 50 years after its composition, but Mann found a new understanding of this piece. Its intricate inner workings**



**Artist Management**

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**Speed is not the mark of the new objectivism; instead, a clear-eyed perception of relationships and pairings gives direction and force to re-creating what many would call a warhorse. Mann demanded precision and opened the orchestral textures to make welcome soloists of the bassoon, flute, and horns and to show the composer's deft use of violas and cellos in coloring the music's outlook. The concert could count as an evening of new music.**

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