

Jason Vieaux, Guitar

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Well-attended concert brings Vivaldi Festival to a glorious close

By Mary Kunz Goldman

NEWS CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

The concluding concert of this year's Viva Vivaldi Festival, massively well-attended, was held Sunday at First Presbyterian Church on Symphony Circle. What a sight it was to see people crammed into every nook and cranny — and this huge, unusual church has plenty of them. After the concert, the traffic jam looked as if there had been a concert at Kleinhans Music Hall. Quite an event, this.

The Ars Nova Musicians and their conductor, Marylouise Nanna, pulled out all the stops for this concert. The concert featured the huge Buffalo Choral Arts Society, performing the "Festival Te Deum" of Ralph Vaughan Williams, followed by Vivaldi's mighty Gloria, RV 589.

Another guest artist was star guitarist Jason Vieaux, who grew up near Wehrle and Transit and now is the youngest person ever to head the guitar department at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Cellist Amelie Fradette, on loan from the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra like many of the musicians of the Ars Nova, also stepped into the soloist's spotlight. She performed a cello concerto in D minor by Vivaldi....

Vieaux's performance was a rare treat — one of the defining moments, really, of this colorful and long-running festival. The guitar concerto he performed, Vivaldi's Guitar Concerto in C, contains some great music, and Vieaux made the most of every note, playing with the utmost poetry and sensitivity. Every listener, I think, was holding his breath.

He followed the concerto with an encore, the popular Vivaldi lute concerto slow movement that everyone knows. Again, what a moment. You could see people draped over the balcony rails, sitting forward in their seats, loving every note.

This piece, deservedly popular, is one of Vivaldi's true bids for immortality. It's such beautiful writing. In the hands of Vieaux and the Ars Nova the piece became engrossing and hypnotic. Here is where you noticed Nanna's skills — she was with Vieaux every moment, watching him, following him, coaxing him. The wonder of it all culminated in the last chord, impeccably delineated by Vieaux and lovingly backed by the orchestra.

It was sweet to see Vieaux settle into a side seat to enjoy the second half of the program, the intense and gratifying choral half..... mkunz@buffnews.com