

## Jason Vieaux The Buffalo Philharmonic Two Guitar Concertos

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Focus on Baroque makes for a chamber concert, instead of a symphony concert

### Vieaux and Gajewski work flawless magic

By **Mary Kunz Goldman**

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The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, joined by guitarist Jason Vieaux, is presenting a concert at Kleinhans Music Hall this weekend that focuses on Baroque music.

This is a different kind of concert from what we are used to. The texture is different — it could be called a chamber concert, as opposed to a symphony concert. There is even a guest conductor, Piotr Gajewski. Born in Poland, he leads the National Philharmonic in Washington, D. C. **Even considering all these novelties, I think most of the big crowd that turned out Saturday was there to see Vieaux.**

Vieaux is from our area. He grew up, he once told The Buffalo News, right by the Depew exit on the 90. Now, he is worlds from there. He heads the guitar department at the Cleveland Institute, and was recently invited to start up a guitar department at the Curtis Institute. Considering those accolades, he seems remarkably ego-free. So does his playing.

**Thanks to the JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition, we have the pleasure of hearing a lot of classical guitarists here in Buffalo. I have never heard anyone with Vieaux's subtlety. Vieaux's articulation is faultless and more importantly, it is**

**endlessly varied. Sitting there stolid and placid, he radiates concentration. He plays melodies and accompaniments simultaneously, immediately distinguishable from each other. His playing is clear without being dry. And he has a tremendous dynamic range. Just to hear him play something simple, like a scale, is a delight.**

**In his hands, Vivaldi's Concerto in D, RV 93, held the audience's attention from start to finish. The beloved Largo movement was entrancing. What a melody this is — Vivaldi lays out a simple theme, with gently dotted rhythms, and then plays with it, twisting it, inverting it, approaching it from different angles. Vieaux, the least grandstanding of players, played the music simply but passionately. He brought courtesy but also pizzazz to Rodrigo's "Fantasia para un Gentilhombre," or "Fantasy for a Gentleman," by Joaquin Rodrigo. This music brims with grace: Rodrigo is taking a lively look back to the Renaissance, the way Ottorino Respighi does in his lovely "Ancient Airs and Dances."**

**The orchestra was fine, declarative and strong. Vieaux, strumming along with tutti passages, added percussive energy. The woodwinds' gentle dissonances and the many layers of Vieaux's playing made the music seem as if you were seeing it through an old mirror. Conductor Piotr Gajewski and Vieaux worked well together to bring out the syncopations. It ended with dash and high style, and won a standing ovation.**

After intermission came the Suite No. 2 from Handel's "Water Music," followed by Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 3. I worried initially that

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these pieces were too much alike in texture and sound. But you could not resist this music, rich with strings, bright with trumpets, accented by timpani. It was music designed to make you feel royal. Gajewski, wearing tails and conducting without a score or a baton, was part of the show. His courtly, conservative movements matched the music's mood. A flick of his finger, and a fanfare sounded. He held up his palm, and the musicians quieted. It was like watching a race car in the hands of a good driver.

This is sensuous music, and it had interludes of tremendous beauty. In the well-known, ethereal "Air" from the Bach — this is the caressing theme Michael Caine uses to seduce Barbara Hershey in Woody Allen's "Hannah and Her Sisters" — time seemed to stop. The strings played it so lovingly, the pulse was so hypnotic. At the end, you could hear everyone exhale. Programs suddenly rustled, people coughed and came back to earth. Incredible music.

The Gavotte, the Bouree and, finally, the tumbling triplets of the exuberant Gigue brought the evening to an upbeat close. That looked like Claudia Hoca playing the harpsichord. She did yeoman's work. As did everyone.

This unusual concert repeats today at 2:30 p. m.

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