

# The New Zealand Herald

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## Finish with Latin flourish

**CLASSICAL MUSIC:** American guitarist Jason Vieaux leads the Auckland Philharmonia south of the border for its season finale, writes William Dart

Miguel Harth-Bedoya is back in town for the last two concerts in the Auckland Philharmonia's spring season and the flavour is definitely south-of-the-border, with music from Mexico and Argentina.

Guest soloist for Friday's *Fiesta Latina* is American Jason Vieaux, and it's the guitarist's second visit — he played some fine Rodrigo with the orchestra in 2001.

Intensely affable, he is quick to mention the role his mother played in his career. "She bought me a three-quarter-size classical guitar because I was constantly raiding my parents' record collection which was mainly modern jazz, Motown and Beatles."

By the age of 8, Vieaux was learning classical guitar from Jeremy Sparks, a founding member of the Buffalo Guitar Quartet, and the boy gave his first recital four years later.

In 1992, the 19-year-old was the youngest player to win the Guitar Foundation of American International Competitions, "a real confidence-booster", he says, "the first baby-step towards becoming a professional".

Now, at 30, he is a consummate professional, heading the Guitar Department at the Cleveland Institute of Music with a number of successful recordings to his name. When I admire the latest, a collection of his own Albeniz transcriptions on the Azica label, Vieaux is remarkably modest.

"Luckily, most of Albeniz's piano music sounds as if it was written for the guitar. I just listened to the Alicia de Larrocha performances, consulted the piano score, and tried to be faithful to the original but not so faithful that it sounded merely like an achievement."

Vieaux's recent achievements in the concert hall have been noteworthy, too, including taking the solo part in John Corigliano's *Troubadours* with

### » Performance

- What: *Fiesta Latina* with the Auckland Philharmonia
- Where & when: Auckland Town Hall, Friday 8pm

the Santa Fe Symphony this year.

On Friday night he'll be giving us another contemporary work that has taken his fancy, Roberto Sierra's *Folias* for Guitar and Orchestra, written for and premiered by the great Manuel Barrueco just last year.

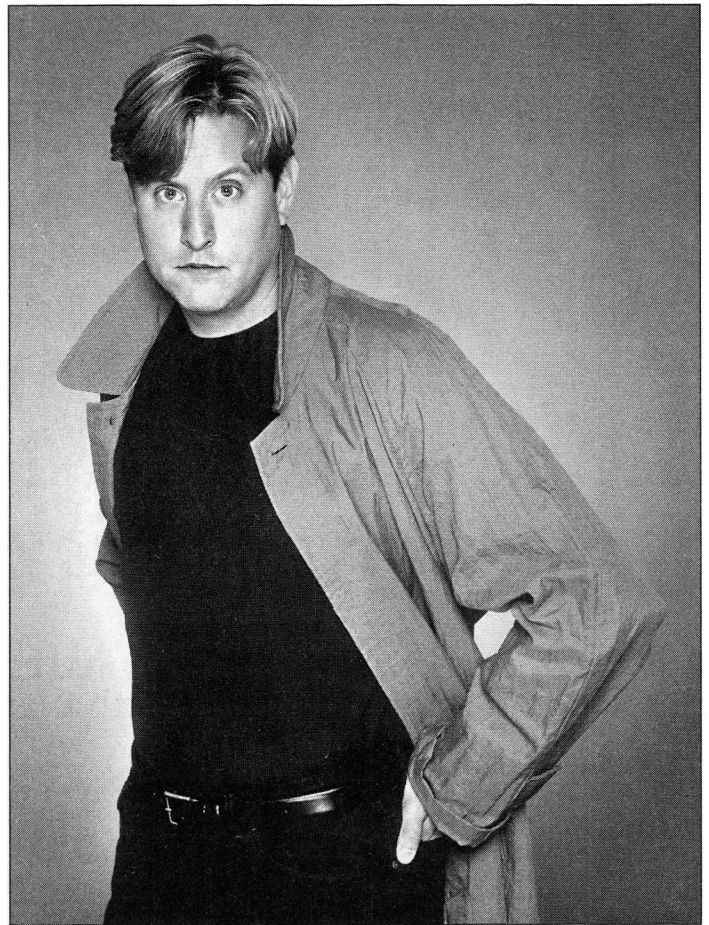
"It's basically variations on the chord progression from Corelli's *La Folia*, but I like the way the piece builds in intensity. It's quite virtuosic and very, very Spanish-sounding.

"When I heard Barrueco's performance, the audience really responded to it, so it's obviously a real crowd-pleaser."

We also talk about Manuel Ponce, one of whose concerto movements is included on Friday's programme. "Ponce is simply the most important Mexican composer of the 20th century and, although you can make a case for Revueltas and Chavez, Ponce is the father of serious Mexican music."

For all the expected Latin masters, it is an English guitarist who has had the most formative influence on the American.

"With Julian Bream I found myself listening to his records every day. There is something about his playing, the passion behind it and the conviction of his interpretation. He was just a real cool person who was patient and willing to work with great composers like Britten, Takemitsu and Hans Werner Henze, meaning that we ended up getting some of our best 20th-century repertoire out of them."



SECOND VISIT: American classical guitarist Jason Vieaux.