



## Guitarist, Sinfonietta pair for a riveting evening

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FALMOUTH — When you have a soloist who combines a gift for composition, an ecumenical embrace of many kinds of music and a natural and seemingly effortless connection with his chosen instrument, you have the makings of an exceptional and riveting evening of music.

Guitarist Benjamin Verdery is an ebullient performer, a musician of fluent and authoritative technique and high emotion. He was the soloist in two concertos Saturday at Falmouth Academy with the Simon Sinfonietta and conductor Stephen Simon — A Vivaldi Guitar Concerto and the Concerto of Aranguez by Joaquin Rodrigo, the first movement of which some years ago gained wider recognition through a reorchestrated collaboration between trumpeter Miles Davis and arranger Gil Evans.

Verdery, who spent summers on the Cape as a youth, has been chairman of the guitar department at Yale University since 1985. He has written his own arrangements of Jimi Hendrix songs, and his playing has an improvisatory quality — loose and flexible — giving the listener the sense that he is creating and bringing to life the notes right on the spot. In the Vivaldi slow movement, a melancholy lament, he kept the line spinning, bringing to mind the phrase from artist Paul Klee "a line is a dot that went for a walk."

The lightly amplified soloist and the orchestra, comprising 35 or so fine players from Boston and the southeast corridor, were not always in synch — a minor blemish that may be attributed more to the acoustics of the hall and the inability to "lock in" rather than any shortcomings on the part of conductor or players. That quibble aside, Falmouth Academy deserves full credit for creating a venue for the Sinfonietta's artistic excellence and adventurous programming.

The Rodrigo concerto featured telling exchanges between the soloist and deft interspersions from individual instruments. There were especially attractive contributions from lead cellist Bo Ericsson and a discrete, heartfelt solo from English horn player Donna-Marie Cobert.

The concert started with Mozart's Prague Symphony and ended with Symphony No. 2 by Carl Maria Von Weber. Weber's two symphonies are undeservingly underplayed. They may not be the pathbreaking monuments of other major composers from the era. But they are tuneful, cheerful and fun to hear. Weber loved wind instruments and he gave them plenty of work. The first movement heard distinguished statements of the simple themes from all the woodwinds. Weber also had an operatic sense of the effect of silence and those pauses presented welcome tension and intrigue.

Audiences for the next Sinfonietta concert will hear more Von Weber. That concert, scheduled for March 31, will have Mark Miller, principal clarinet, as soloist in the composer's Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra in addition to Zwilich's Concerto Grosso and symphonies by Boyce and Haydn.

### In Concert

What: Simon Sinfonietta

Who: Benjamin Verdery, classical guitar

When: Saturday only

Where: Falmouth Academy