

The Star-Ledger

November 15, 2005

Classical CD

In searching for something new under the sun, classical artists often re-arrange existing works for different instruments and settings. This new disc is an example of the transcriber's art at its most alluring.

“Images of Metheny” Jason Vieaux, guitar

(Azica) ****

Virtuoso jazz guitarist Pat Metheny has always had a flair for melody to rival Schubert and the Beatles. One wouldn't think that his long-breathed tunes (and their contextual harmonies) could be sustained by classical guitar, but Buffalo, N.Y., native Jason Vieaux has arranged some of Metheny's most striking compositions for his solo instrument -- and plays them with clarion beauty. The resulting album is an inspired masterpiece, with appeal far beyond classical and jazz listeners to virtually anyone who loves music.

Those who don't know Metheny's recordings will be beguiled simply by the way these pieces combine surface loveliness with emotional depth. Many tunes are colored like rainbows; but, as with Mozart, most silver linings have their wistful cloud. Those who do know Metheny's originals -- usually played on electric guitar with a full band -- will find Vieaux's arrangements staggering in the way they incorporate so many strands of these rich, often improvised creations into a singular whole.

Recorded with the ideal sort of sumptuous clarity, such highlights as "Tell Her You Saw Me," "Message to a Friend" and "The Bat" are poetry in motion. The composer's imagination and the player's execution dazzle hand in hand.

— *Bradley Bambarger*