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The Rare and the Hendrix at Mannes College's New York Guitar Seminar

By [ALLAN KOZINN](#)
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The parade of short summer festivals and teaching institutes at the Mannes College of Music began its annual flirtation with the classical guitar on Wednesday. This is a short series — it runs through Sunday only — but its 13-hour days are packed with master classes and lectures on technique, interpretation and historical issues, as well as concerts that offer a compellingly bifurcated overview of the instrument's developing repertory. Most offer a balance of new works, including pieces by many of the performers, and rarities by 19th-century guitarist-composers who are being rediscovered.

Comparatively little time is devoted to the standard repertory, as Andrés Segovia and his disciples defined it, and maybe that's a good thing: at Mannes, it is taken for granted that the audience has heard the favorites more than enough, and it is time to hear something fresh.

Mr. Verdery has always been an iconoclastic player, more likely to slip into a Jimi Hendrix song than a Rodrigo piece, and that was where he began, with his own arrangements of "Ezy Ryder," "Little Wing" and "Purple Haze." "Little Wing," with its achingly beautiful introduction, suited the classical guitar best, but Mr. Verdery found an inventive solution to the others as well. Mostly, he condensed them by dropping the verses and moving directly to the signature guitar lines and solos, transcribed fairly literally but also embellished with standard classical techniques (rolled chords and tremolo figures, for example).

A short, gentle work by Lou Harrison and a Mozart Adagio (K. 540) showed Mr. Verdery's more meditative side. And having played his Hendrix arrangements without amplification, he plugged in for his closing piece, his own "Be Kind All the Time," a remarkably tactile exploration of the thickening textures created with the help of a digital delay.