# CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL

CLASSICAL GUITAR FESTIVAL® - 25TH ANNIVERSARY



Jason Vieaux (US) guitar

Antonis Hatzinikolaou (GR) guitar/luthier

Helen Zhibing Huang (CN) soprano

Jonathan Leathwood (EN) guitar/lecturer

Alan Mearns (IE) guitar

Kimberly Patterson (US) cello

James Piorkowsi (US) guitar/composer

Petra Poláčková (CZ) guitar

Laura Snowden (EN) guitar/voice

Patrick Sutton (US)

Hao Yang (CN) guitar

Stroud Youth Competition Semi-Finalists and Finalists

JUNE 5-8, 2025

# The Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival® strives to:

**Inspire** guitarists and non-guitarists of all ages, genders, national origins, and backgrounds;

**Encourage** deeper thought, discussion, and understanding about how we perceive, perform, and evaluate fine music;

Nurture new and old musical relationships;

**Promote** the creation and dissemination of fine musical art.

For we believe that it is in heightened moments of live musical magic—when art and chance coalesce, time stops, and egos dissolve— that often we become most mindful of our shared humanity.

[One of] two of the most important annual American classical guitar events.
(Classical Guitar Magazine)

Front Cover: Guitar by Antonis Hatzinikolaou (Greece) 2024

Courtesy Guitars International

# **Welcome and Acknowledgments**

**Welcome** to the twenty-fifth annual Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival<sup>®</sup>. This June we look forward once again to sharing world-class classical guitar concerts, premieres, master classes, lectures, private lessons, and a demonstration of concert guitars with old friends and new from around the USA and beyond in a celebration of the classical guitar and art music: solo and ensemble, old and new.

In presenting this international event it has been my pleasure over the years to work closely with Jason Vieaux, Grammy Award Winner and Cleveland Institute of Music Guitar Department Head; Tom Poore, an excellent devoted guitar teacher and superb writer; and James Stroud, Founder and Director of the James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition. Without these individuals' many generous and varied contributions this Festival would not be possible. As always, many thanks to you all.

Armin Kelly, Founder and Artistic Director Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival®

# We Wish to Thank the Following for their Support.

**Cleveland Institute of Music** Adminstration, Departments of Marketing, Concerts & Events, and Staff, and law firm **Thompson Hine LLP**, for their ongoing generosity and assistance.

**Business Partners:** Alphagraphics Cleveland, The Augustine Foundation, Cleveland Classical.com, Cleveland Foundation, First Baptist Church of Greater Cleveland, Guitars International, Rodgers Tuning Machines, The College Music Society, The Plain Dealer, and WCLV 90.3FM.

Festival Friends: Jeff and Teri Allen, Chip and Kate Andrews, Elizabeth Batts, Cornelia Bergmann, Rosario Cambria and Teresa Cambria Btrvis, Rick Chandler, Mark Cohen, Colin Davin, Martin and Kathy Davin, Joshia de Jonge and Patrick Hodges, Jim Doyle, Patrick Duncan, Jeffrey R. Elliott and Cyndy Burton, Patrick Frank, Drs. Jonathan and Melissa Fitzgerald, Chris Freitag, Robert and Melissa Gruca, Linda and Steve Hall, Ruud Harmsen, Christoph and Iris Harlan, David W. Hershberger, Tom Holland, Patrick Kilkenny, Doug and Carolyn Kohrs, Brian Kozak, Terese McLeod, Krystin O'Mara, Andy Poxon, Carolyn Ritchie, William W. Rowley, Matthew Ryan, Lisa and Michael Sharon, Andy Sutton, and Paul Valenti.

**Festival Artists and Participants:** Finally, many thanks to all our distinguished participating artists, the James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition Semi-Finalists and Competition Judges, and to all of you who have traveled here from near and far over the years, thirty-two states and Canada at last count. Your musical passion, support, and diversity contribute immeasurably to making this Festival the artistic jewel that it is widely acknowledged to be.

# **About Our Festival Founder & Director**



Armin Kelly (USA), Founder and Artistic Director of the Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival®, studied classical guitar with Miguel Rubio in Spain and Switzerland, and Phillip deFremery and Oscar Ghiglia at the Aspen Music Festival. Among his most formative musical influences were friends and colleagues classical guitarists Christoph Harlan and John Holmquist. Armin Kelly holds BA and MA degrees in English literature from Columbia University and an MA degree in teacher education with a concentration in English from Harvard University. While at Harvard he founded Guitars International,

a business devoted to representing, promoting, and retailing the work of the world's finest contemporary classical guitar makers.

# **About Our Competition Founder & Director**



James Stroud (USA), Founder and Director of the James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition, received his undergraduate degree in classical guitar and composition and his MA degree in classical guitar. He is a Board Member of the Guitar Foundation of America and long-standing supporter of a number of artistic and philanthropic organizations. He founded the James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition to help create opportunities for the next generation of classical guitarists, ages thirteen through eighteen, residing in the United States. Now in its sixth year, he hopes that this Competition

will aid deserving guitar students to further their artistic development through advanced musical study and the pursuit of professional musical careers.

# **About Our Resident Concert Notes' Author**



Tom Poore (USA) has taught at the North Carolina School of the Arts Community Music Center and the Cleveland Institute of Music Preparatory Department. His background in teaching children includes Suzuki training, outreach programs through the Broadway School of Music and Passport Program, and the Cleveland Public Schools' Arts in Summer Education Program. Former students have gone on to earn scholarships and degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University, The Juilliard School of Music, University of Southern California Thornton School of Music, and Aspen Music

Festival. Tom Poore earned his bachelor's degree at the North Carolina School of the Arts, under Aaron Shearer, and his master's degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music, under John Holmquist. He was the editor for Aaron Shearer's three volume *Learning the Classical Guitar*.

# **About Our Guest Lecturers**



Jonathan Leathwood (England) is Chair of Guitar at the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music. He is passionate about integrating different kinds of skills: apart from guitar performance, he teaches performance-informed music analysis, and he is an internationally certified teacher of the Alexander Technique. Professor Leathwood gained his PhD at the University of Surrey and his bachelor's degree at King's College London. He edits Soundboard Scholar, the Guitar Foundation of America's peerreviewed scholarly journal. As a recitalist, Jonathan has appeared

at Wigmore Hall (sponsored by the Julian Bream Trust), the Leo Brouwer Festival in Brazil, the Cheltenham Festival, and many other venues in Europe and both American continents. His recordings are available on the Cadenza and NMC labels.



Antonis Hatzinikolaou (Greece) is a world-renowned classical guitarist and winner of the Royal Academy of Music's prestigious Julian Bream Prize, adjudicated by the great maestro himself. In addition to his concert and conservatory teaching duties, he has spent many years researching and perfecting his luthiery skills by designing and constructing fine concert guitars. In this endeavor, he has been fortunate to learn his craft next to Greek master guitar makers Nicholas Ioannou (New York) and George Pandelias (Athens). Antonis' traditional fan braced concert guitars

have been inspired by the Hermann Hauser I and Robert Bouchet traditions and influenced by great luthiers of our time such as the French master Dominique Field, who now lives in Athens, and the American master Jeffrey R. Elliott.

# **About The Composer Of Our Competition Set Piece**



James Piorkowski (USA) has performed around the world and is a SUNY Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York at Fredonia, where he served as head of the guitar program for forty-one years. From 1982-2000, he was a member of the internationally acclaimed Buffalo Guitar Quartet. James Piorkowski studied composition with Anton Wolf and Donald Bohlen, and had classes with Aaron Copland, Jacob Druckman, Lucas Foss, Morton Feldman, and Milton Babbitt. Of his writing style, *Buffalo Magazine* wrote, "His music evokes comparisons to jazz icons..."

and *Classical Guitar Magazine* (UK) stated, "his compositional skills are illustrated in a very favorable light, with his work conjuring up musical imagery, extending through a whole assortment of emotions from jubilant and rhythmic, to the impressionistic."

# Schedule of Events

# **THURSDAY, JUNE 5**

## **James Stroud National Classical Guitar Youth Competition**

**Semi-Final Round** - See pp.42-46 for information and students' biographies.

10:00 am - 12:10 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

## **James Stroud National Classical Guitar Youth Competition**

Semi-Final Round cont.- See pp. 42-46 for information and students' biographies.

1:45 - 3:55 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# Lecture: Beyond Transcriptions, A Conversation with Alan Mearns Jonathan Leathwood (England), lecturer

See p.10 for topic synopsis

6:00 - 7:15 pm, CIM Room 217

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# GUEST CONCERT: Hao Yang (China), guitar with Helen Zhibing Huang (China),

Soprano. See pp.13-18 for artists' biographies, program, and concert notes

7:30 - 9:30 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Special 25th Anniversay Ticket Price: \$1.00

#### **James Stroud National Classical Guitar Youth Competition**,

**Finalists Announced** - See pp.42-46 for information and students' biographies.

9:30 p.m., CIM Mixon Hall

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

#### Post Concert Dinner: L'Albatros Brasserie

11401 Bellflower Road, Cleveland, Ohio - Tel: 216-791-7880

10:00 pm - Attendees must make their own reservations and pay their own tab.

# FRIDAY, JUNE 6

# Master Class: Patterson-Sutton Duo (USA), cello and guitar

Five student guitarists will perform and be coached.

9:30 am - 12:30 pm, CIM Room 201

Open to auditors - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# Master Class: Petra Poláčková (Czech Republic), guitar

Five student guitarists will perform and be coached.

9:30 am - 12:30 pm. CIM Room 229

Open to auditors - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# Schedule of Events FRIDAY, JUNE 6 cont.

## Master Class: Jonathan Leathwood (England), guitar

Five student guitarists will perform and be coached.

9:30 am - 12:30 pm, CIM Room 227

Open to auditors - Free (no tickets or passes required)

## Master Class: Alan Mearns (Ireland), guitar

Five student guitarists will perform and be coached.

2:00 am - 5:00 pm, CIM Room 201

Open to auditors - Free (no tickets or passes required)

### Master Class: Jason Vieaux (USA), guitar

Five student guitarists will perform and be coached.

2:00 - 5:00 pm, CIM Room 229

Open to auditors - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# Lecture: The Guitar Makers's Art, Understanding the Instrument Antonis Hatzinikolaou (Greece), master guitar maker

See p. 10 for lecturer's biography and topic synopsis

6:00 - 7:15 pm, CIM Room 217

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

## GUEST CONCERT: Patterson-Sutton Duo (USA), cello and guitar

See pp.19-21 for artists' biographies, program, and concert notes

7:30 - 9:30 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Tickets: \$25.00

#### Post Concert Dinner: L'Albatros Brasserie

11401 Bellflower Road, Cleveland, Ohio - Tel: 216-791-7880

10:00 pm - Attendees must make their own reservations and pay their own tab.

# **SATURDAY, JUNE 7**

#### **Demonstration of Fine Classical Guitars**

Classical guitar virtuoso and guitar maker Antonis Hatzinikolaou (Greece) will perform on seven individually handcrafted concert guitars to demonstrate each instrument's unique musical qualities.

10:30 - Noon, CIM Mixon Hall

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

## Schedule of Events

# SATURDAY, JUNE 7 cont.

# Lecture: Working with Composers, A Practical Guide for Guitarists Jonathan Leathwood (England), lecturer

See p.11 for topic synopsis
1:30 -2:45 pm, CIM Room 217

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# GUEST CONCERT: Alan Mearns (Ireland), guitar

See pp. 27-30 for Artist's biography, program, and concert notes 3:00 - 5:00 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Tickets: \$25.00

# Lecture: Julian Bream as We Knew Him, A Conversation with Jonathan Leathwood and Laura Snowden

See p. 11 for topic synopsis 6:00 -7:15 pm, CIM Room 217 Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

### CIM FACULTY CONCERT: Jason Vieaux (USA), quitar

See pp. 31-33 for Artist's biography, program, and concert notes 7:30 - 9:30 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Tickets: \$30.00

#### Post Concert Dinner: L'Albatros Brasserie

11401 Bellflower Road, Cleveland, Ohio - Tel: 216-791-7880 10:00 pm - Attendees must make their own reservations and pay their own tab.

# **SUNDAY, JUNE 8**

# Lecture: Playing with Ease, An Introduction to the Alexander Technique Johnathan Leathwood (England), lecturer

See p.11 for topic synopsis

11:30 - 12:45 pm, CIM Room 217

Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# GUEST CONCERT: Laura Snowden (England), solo guitar & guitar with voice

See pp. 34-37 for Artist's biography, program, and concert notes

1:00 -3:00 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Tickets: \$25.00

## Schedule of Events

# SUNDAY, JUNE 8 cont.

# Lecture: The Guitarist's Touch, Right and Left - Hand Expression Johnathan Leathwood (England), lecturer

See p.12 for topic synopsis 3:10 pm - 3:50 pm, CIM Room 217 Open to the public - Free (no tickets or passes required)

# GUEST CONCERT: Petra Poláčková (Czech Republic), Viennese and modern guitars.

See pp. 38-40 for Artist's biography, program, and concert notes.

4:00 - 6:00 pm, CIM Mixon Hall

Tickets: \$25.00

# JAMES STROUD NATIONAL CLASSICAL GUITAR YOUTH COMPETITION Final Round and Awards Ceremony

See pp. 42-46 for information and students' biographies. 6:30 -9:30 pm, CIM Mixon Hall
Open to the public - Free (No tickets or passes required)

#### Post Festival Dinner: Valerios Ristorante

12405 Mayfield Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44106 - Tel: 216-421-8049 9:30 pm - Attendees must pay their own tab.

Schedule of Free Lectures and their Synopses

## **THURSDAY, JUNE 5**

Pre-Concert Lecture featuring Jonathan Leathwood and Alan Mearns: Beyond Transcription, A Conversation with Alan Mearns

Time and Location: 6:00 to 7:15 pm, CIM Room 217

**Description**: Alan Mearns's transcriptions of Bach and other composers have electrified audiences and critics far beyond the confines of the classical guitar world. His approach is a fundamentally imaginative one—perhaps not surprising from such a multi-faceted artist: Alan is not only a virtuoso guitarist but also a poet, composer, and singer-songwriter. His transcriptions seek to recreate the excitement of the original music in terms of the guitar, as if he himself were the composer. In this conversation, Jonathan Leathwood will interview Alan about his process, with particular attention to the works he will play in his recital **(Saturday at 3:00 pm)**: Bach's *Chaconne* and two *Preludes* by Chopin.

## FRIDAY, JUNE 6

Pre-Concert Lecture featuring Antonis Hatzinikolaou: The Guitar Maker's Art, Understanding the Instrument.

Time and Location: 6:00 to 7:15 pm, CIM Room 217

**Description:** Winner of the Royal Academy of Music's prestigious Julian Bream Performance Prize, adjudicated by the great maestro himself, Antonis Hatzinikolaou, has, in addition to his concert and conservatory teaching duties, spent many years researching and perfecting his guitar making skills by designing and constructing fine concert guitars. He has been fortunate to learn his craft next to Greek master guitar makers Nicholas Ioannou (New York) and George Pandelias (Athens). His work has been inspired by the Hermann Hauser I and Robert Bouchet traditions and influenced by a number of great luthiers of our time such as Dominique Field and Jeffrey R. Elliott. Areas of discussion in this lecture will include: How to choose the correct classical guitar for your needs, understanding guitar construction and its impact on sound (tonewoods and their influence on sound), construction techniques (traditional, lattice, double top, etc); string length, how to evaluate sound and playability, handmade vs factory made guitars, myths and misconceptions, and a practical approach to auditioning guitars.

Schedule of Free Lectures and their Synopses

# **SATURDAY, JUNE 7**

Pre-Concert Lecture featuring Jonathan Leathwood: Working with Composers: A Practical, Guide for Guitarists

Time and Location: 1:30 to 2:45 pm, CIM Room 217

**Description:** Much of the guitar's modern repertoire is written by non-guitarists—skilled professional composers working closely with a great performer: think of all the music written for Segovia, Bream, Starobin, and others. In this lecture, we'll explore what goes into a collaboration: what composers need to know, how to help make a piece more playable, and how to guide a composer in harnessing the guitar's unique resonance. I'll offer real examples from my own collaborations with composers in markedly different styles, including Roxanna Panufnik, Param Vir, and Harrison Birtwistle.

Pre-Concert Lecture featuring Jonathan Leathwood and Laura Snowden: *Julian Bream as We Knew Him, A Conversation with Jonathan Leathwood and Laura Snowden* 

Time and Location: 6:00 to 7:15 pm, CIM Room 217

**Description:** After his retirement, the legendary British guitarist Julian Bream devoted his energies to mentoring younger players and commissioning new music from fine composers for them to play. Jonathan Leathwood and Laura Snowden both worked with Bream extensively at different times and on a variety of projects and repertoire. In this session, Jonathan and Laura will discuss their impressions of Bream's one-of-a-kind personality and exchange recollections of how he approached musical interpretation, worked with composers, and evaluated guitars. They'll also share some of Bream's favorite anecdotes from his extraordinary career.

# **SUNDAY, JUNE 8**

Pre-Concert Lecture featuring Jonathan Leathwood: *Playing with Ease, An Introduction to the Alexander Technique for Guitarists* 

Time and Location: 11:30 to 12:45 pm, CIM Room 217

**Description:** The Alexander Technique is a method for identifying and undoing harmful patterns of movement. Using the principles of the technique, musicians can play with greater ease, deepen their connection to the music, and relate the activity of playing the guitar to the activities of everyday life. Join me in this informal workshop: you are welcome to bring your guitar or simply observe and ask questions.

Schedule of Free Lectures and their Synopses

# **SUNDAY, JUNE 8 cont.**

Pre-Concert Lecture featuring Jonathan Leathwood: The Guitarist's Touch, Right- and Left-Hand Expression

Time and Location: 3:00 to 3:50 pm, CIM Room 217

**Description:** This is a workshop about being a magician on the guitar. To make a beautiful sound on the guitar, basic movement and positioning are key. But some guitarists are able to produce uniquely expressive sounds and colors with an almost imperceptible movement of the right hand, often bringing in the left to give the sound more weight or using a certain kind of vibrato to make the tone 'float'. So what exactly are they doing? Let's explore and find out! We'll look at both ends of the tonal spectrum, from gentle and liquid to aggressive and bright, and we'll talk about how to develop your own unique voice on the instrument. It's a practical session: you are welcome to bring your guitar or simply observe.

# Hao Yang & Helen Zhibing Haung (China) Guitar & Soprano

Thursday, June 5, at 7:30 p.m. Cleveland Institute of Music, Mixon Hall

# **Program**

Two Romatic Pieces arr. Jonathan Leathwood
Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht, Op. 96, no.
Canzonetta, from String Quartet no. 1, Op. 12 Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Sonatina, Op. 52 no. 1

Lennox Berkeley (1903–1989)

Allegretto Lento

Allegro non trop

Capriccio diabolico: Omaggio a Paganini, Op. 85 Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

(1895-1968)

#### Intermission

I Will Give My Love an Apple Trad. English arr. Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

Plum Blossoms in the Snow 踏雪寻梅
Jiangnan 江南
Daixuan Ai (b. 1998)
Quiet Night Thought 静夜思
Live at the Source of the Yangtze River 我住长江头 Qing Zhu(1893–1959)
arr. Yang

She Threw Me a Quince (*The Book of Songs*)

The Old Lute (Songs from the Chinese, Op. 58)

Plucking the Rushes (*The Book of Songs*)

Dance Song (Songs from the Chinese, Op. 58)

Stephen Goss (b. 1964)

Benjamin Britten

Benjamin Britten

Ària (*Bachianas brasileiras* no. 5, W389) Heitor Villa Lobos (1887–1959) Reinas de la bajara (Cantares) Trad. Spanish, arr. Roberto Gerhard (1896–1970)

Farewell 送别 John P. Ordway (1824–1880)

#### About the Artists'



Chinese born classical guitarist **Hao Yang** has won top prizes in numerous competitions, including: the Koblenz Guitar Competition, the GFA International Youth Competition, CSU International Guitar Competition, Andrès Segovia 7th International Guitar Competition, the Astral Artists' National Audition, and was a recipient of the Clifton Foundation's Emerging Artists Award. She has appeared as soloist with the Chursächsischo Phiilharmonie in Germany and has been invited to perform solo recitals at the Cleveland, Panama, and Bejing International Guitar Festivals. Ms. Yang has performed concerts in

major venues such as Carnegie Hall, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Miller Theatre, Princeton Sound Kitchen, and Subculture NYC. Hao Yang holds a BM from the Curtis Institute of Music, an MM from Lamont School of Music at University of Denver, and is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma at the Yale School of Music.

Artist's Website: haoyangguitar.com/



Chinese-born soprano **Helen Zhibing Huang** was recently described as "impressive" (The New York Times) after her portrayal of Pamina in *The Magic Flute* for the Glimmerglass Festival. Huang has earned recognition from competitions such as the Astral National Auditions (2021 winner) and the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. She has held young artist residencies at Portland Opera, Central City Opera, Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, and Songfest. Huang holds degrees from the New England Conservatory, Bard Vocal Arts Program, the Eastman School of Music, and the University of Rochester (B.A. Economics). She is a founder

of Wear Yellow Proudly, an initiative that aims to bring awareness to Asian culture and strengthen the ties within the global community through music, poetry, and culture.

Artist's Webpage: athloneartists.com/artists/helen-zhibing-huang/

#### **Notes**

What is a guitar for? What does it do best? In its origins (say, the end of the sixteenth century), the guitar was designed to accompany the voice. And in the home, on the street, in the popular imagination, things have never changed: the guitar was meant for the voice, and the voice was meant for the guitar. But there is a parallel history: from the late eighteenth century, players, luthiers, and composers have worked together to make the humble guitar into a solo concert instrument – or better, a miniature orchestra – capable of sustaining complex structures, profound emotions, and feats of virtuosity. This evening's program presents the world's most popular instrument in both guises. There's something especially fitting about the organization of the recital: the first half – guitar as solo vehicle – is tightly organized, with each set more dramatic and virtuosic than the previous one; the second half – guitar as companion and muse to the voice – is poetic, wayward, and personal

#### **Guitar Solo**

Ironically enough, the first half begins with a song: **Johannes Brahms's** "Death Is the Cool Night" is originally a setting for voice and piano of a poem by Heine; it is here compressed onto a single guitar. The first line states the whole idea of the song: "Death is the cool night; life, the sultry day." As the song progresses, the poet becomes tired and drowsy, but even as he gives way to sleep, he is haunted by the sound of a young nightingale who sings incessantly of love. From the beginning of the song to the very end, Brahms uses a throbbing heartbeat rhythm to carry all the emotions of the poem, from the tiredness of age to the passion of youth.

Brahms's meditation is paired with the *Canzonetta* from **Felix Mendelssohn's** First String Quartet, a wickedly playful piece that was arranged for other instruments several times in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including an inspired arrangement for guitar by the Spanish guitarist Francisco Tárrega. The transcription presented here (by the author of these notes) was made with Hao Yang's exceptional abilities in mind: although it reproduces many subtleties of the original string quartet version, it could hardly have been attempted without Tárrega's arrangement as a model.

**Lennox Berkeley** wrote his *Sonatina* for guitar in 1957 at the request of the great British guitarist Julian Bream. Although only twenty-three at the time, Bream was already becoming a celebrity in British cultural life: what he yearned for, however, was a new repertoire of his own, written by contemporary composers – especially British composers. Berkeley was the first to answer his call with a work that was a perfect fit for the young guitarist's exuberance. This *Sonatina*, then, is a landmark in the guitar's quest to become a serious concert instrument with a wide repertoire.

Berkeley was British, yes, but not a nationalistic composer drawing on traditional folk songs in the style of Vaughan Williams: of French ancestry, he studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, where he became friends with Ravel and Fauré. The opening of the *Sonatina* recalls that of Ravel's sonata for violin; the slow movement has tinges of jazz that again recall Paris and Ravel; the outer movements have touches of folk and popular music, and at the climaxes, a tip of the hat to Spain.

"My only instrument is the piano – perhaps I write better for other instruments than for the one I actually play." With these words **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco** explained his love for the guitar, in a 1958 radio interview. Certainly, he wrote more for the guitar than almost any non-guitarist composer, nearly all at the behest of the legendary Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia.

Segovia loved to give prompts to the composers who wrote for him, often suggesting some fertile link to music of the past. And since Castelnuovo-Tedesco was from Italy, Segovia often pointed him to that country's rich musical history. Here, from the same interview mentioned above, is how Castelnuovo-Tedesco described the genesis of *Capriccio diabolico*:

[In 1934, Segovia came to me and asked:] "You know, your old countryman Luigi Boccherini (an 18th-century composer) was very fond of the guitar. Why don't you now write a larger work for me, a sonata in four movements, as a homage to Boccherini?" And I did.... The following year, he came back and told me, "You know, Paganini was also very fond of the guitar. Why don't you write a homage to Paganini?" For him, I wrote a Capriccio diabolico, or "Devilish Caprice" – which is really devilishly difficult.

Composers have been writing works called caprice ever since the sixteenth century, generally emphasizing imagination and whimsy – and frequently virtuosity – over structure. But Castelnuovo-Tedesco channels his flights of fancy by restricting himself to five small motives, weaving them into melodies and witty debates, developing them, and at the end, combining them into a grand climax. In the final seconds, Paganini himself – the most celebrated composer of caprices – steps out from behind the curtain with a quotation from one of his best-known tunes, *La campanella*.

#### Voice and Guitar

Hao Yang describes this part of the program as:

a recital of Western classical works inspired by folk traditions and musical cultural identity. There are Chinese art songs and Chinese and Chinese poetry set to music, evoking landscapes, longing, and the past that is gone. Although all the songs are classical in structure, they blend with folk idioms from China, Spain, Brazil, Great Britain and beyond, exploring themes of love, nostalgia, and human connection across cultures. Throughout, Helen and I wanted to highlightthe intimate and expressive posibilities of voice and guitar.

The emphasis here is on connection: how readily emotions flow together, deepening and transforming one another in the process. With this in mind, the performers have ordered the works in the form of a conversation, organized not by composer or work but according to an intuitive sense of narrative that makes this program unique.

The performers will introduce many of the songs from the stage, and this booklet is accompanied by a separate document that presents all of the song texts in full. Where applicable, Hao and Helen have given us the original Chinese texts in their traditional hanzi characters, and these are displayed alongside the English translations. Although we recognize that only a few members of the audience will be schooled in Mandarin Chinese, we hope that everyone will enjoy the sense of context and calligraphic beauty they offer.

#### Voice and Guitar cont.

A word, then, about Chinese writing: as you look at the text, remember that each character represents just one syllable; following the traditions of Chinese calligraphy, it also occupies the same amount of space on the page, so that a block of text creates orderly columns as well as rows. Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that traditional Chinese poetry plays with sonic relationships within the resulting grid: poems such as Bai Yuji's "Old Lute", the anonymous "Jiangnan", or Li Bai's "Quiet Night Thought", are miniature miracles of craft, following complex traditional prosodic forms that require exactitude in the choice of sounds, tones, and rhymes.

Some of the poems sung in this program are extraordinarily ancient: two settings, "Dance Song" by Benjamin Britten and "She Threw Me a Quince" by Stephen Goss, are taken from *The Book of Songs* (or the *Classic of Poetry*; in Mandarin, the *Shijing*), a collection of poems dating from the 11th to 7th centuries BCE; so old is this collection that it is traditionally held to have been compiled by Confucius himself. Sayings from these two-thousand-year-old texts crop up in modern spoken Chinese the way that English speakers quote (unwittingly or not) from Shakespeare and King James's Bible.

Actually, Britten and Goss both chose to set an English translation of these texts, rather than the Chinese original; yet even here, the performers wanted us to have sight of the Chinese. As for the translations, both composers use the work of Arthur Waley (1889–1966), who was one of the most influential British sinologists of the early twentieth century and who made some of the first translations into English of ancient Chinese and Japanese literature – without, mind you, once traveling to the Far East. The notes that accompany his translations are so authoritative as to make you think he must have traveled to China, not just by boat but by time machine. As an example, here is his commentary on the image of the unicorn in "Dance Song":

That this was a dance song is shown by its extraordinary likeness to [another song in his collection of translations], which we know to be a dance song. There is a "unicorn-dance" in Annam. It takes place at the full moon of the eight month. Masked dances sometimes end by the chief mask being set up and shot at. That, I think, is what is happening here. The archers shoot away first its hoofs, then its brow, then its horn.

If you look at a translation of Waley's, such as his version of Bai Yuji's "Old Lute" (again set by Britten), you might notice that there are many more syllables in each line of English than Chinese characters to the left (remember that each Chinese character represents a single syllable). That is because Waley thought to echo the measured, syllabic progress of each Chinese line by putting roughly the same number of stressed syllables as Chinese syllables. Waley, in other words, thought like a poet, and his translations of Chinese and Japanese poetry – then entirely unknown in the West – had some impact on the development of modern poetry in English. In this way, the songs by Britten and Goss performed in this recital echo and re-echo across times and cultures.

The duo has also chosen examples of Chinese composers interpreting Chinese texts. Some modern art-song composers living and working in China, such as Zhao Jiping and Qing Zhu, seem to paint the texts in watercolors, using an accessible harmonic language and focusing on sonority to create delicate textures and imitations of nature. You might take a second look at the poem "Quiet Night Thought", by the Tang poet Li Bai (set by Zhao Jiping): this is one of the first poems given to every Chinese schoolchild to memorize. Gerald Garcia is a guitarist based in Britain but born in Hong Kong, famous for his arranger's ear: as you listen to Liu Xue'an's poem, depicting a group of students riding on donkeys to pick flowers, remember that in China, plum blossoms symbolize a noble spirit. Contrast these sound worlds with the more experimental sonorities of a composer educated both in China and the United States: Daixuan Ai, born in Hunan and now resident in Indiana.

Not every song in this program has a connection to the East. Additional texture and depth are given by the inclusion of folk materials from other parts of the globe. Benjamin Britten's mysterious, offbeat accompaniment to "I Will Give My Love an Apple" echoes the riddles of the song's text. The song by Villa-Lobos is taken from one of his Bachianas brasileiras, pieces inspired by both the popular music of Brazil and the music of Bach, whose music Villa-Lobos considered to be a kind of "universal folk music". The Catalan composer Roberto Gerhard wrote his setting of "The Queens in the Pack" from England, where the Spanish Civil War had sent him into permanent exile.

The recital ends with a unique case (unique, at least, to this program) of a western melody traveling to China and acquiring a new text in Mandarin. John Ordway's "Dreaming of Home and Mother" was a popular sentimental song of Civil War America; Lu Shitong heard a Japanese version in Tokyo and wrote a Chinese text in 1915: this is the version that closed the 2022 Beijing Olympics – and this evening's program.

Notes by Jonathan Leathwood

# Patterson - Sutton Duo (USA) Cello and Guitar

Friday, June 6, at 7:30 p.m. Cleveland Institute of Music, Mixon Hall

# Program

Welsh Folk Songs

Stephen Goss

Dafydd y Garreg Wen (David of the White Rock)

(b. 1964)

Wrth fyn'd hefo Deio I Dywyn (As I went with Deio to Dywyn)

Suo-gân (Lullaby)

Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf (White Rose of Summer)

Lisa Lân (Fair Lisa)

Suite No. 1 for Cello & Guitar

Hela'r 'Sgyfarnog (Hunting the Hare)

Raffaele Bellafronte

Preludio

Histérico

Romantico

Tango

(b. 1961)

#### Intermission

Nightclub 1960 (from Histoire du Tango)

Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Preludes or Postludes (World Premiere)

Calm and Expressive

Static

Lively

Stephen Goss

Sonata for Guitar & Cello in Four Dreams

Mathias Duplessy

Rêve Exalté (Exciting Dream) Rêve Heureux (Happy Dream)

Rêve mélancolique (Melancholy Dream)

Rêve fou (Crazy Dream)

(b. 1972)

#### **About the Artists**



Praised by *The Strad* magazine for their "wit and imagination," the trailblazing **Patterson-Sutton Duo (USA)** are in high demand around the world. In 2014 the Duo held a guest- artist residency at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music in Kabul. More recently the Juilliard School sent the Duo to Bratislava, Budapest, Dublin, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and New York City to perform and teach. Their latest album, *Still Life: Collected Music for* 

Cello & Guitar by Stephen Goss, has received wide acclaim. Cellist Dr. Kimberly Patterson holds degrees from the Juilliard School, the Cleveland Institute of Music, and the University of Colorado at Boulder and is Associate Professor of Cello at the University of Memphis. Guitarist Dr. Patrick Sutton holds degrees from the University of Denver and the University of Colorado at Boulder and is Assistant Professor of Practice in Guitar at the University of Memphis.

Artists' Website: celloandguitar.com/

#### **Notes**

The Welsh Folk Songs by **Stephen Goss** (b. 1964) were originally composed for voice and guitar in 1991. They have since become a popular addition to the guitar chamber music repertoire and are performed on a number of different instrumental combinations. He tried to keep the settings uncluttered, so that the simple beauty and individual character of each folk song melody would not be lost. Goss describes the songs below:

The 18th Century harpist and composer David Owen was known locally as Dafydd y Garreg Wen (David of the White Rock) after the farm near Morfa Bychan that was his home. According to folklore, Owen called for his harp as he lay on his death bed and composed this haunting melody. Lisa Lân (Fair Lisa) is a lover's lament. The heartsick lover asks Lisa to guide him to where she is, so that they may be reunited in death. In contrast Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn yr Haf is a joyous love song dedicated to the white rose of summer. Suo Gân simply means lullaby, although this seemingly comforting melody is tinged with melancholy. Hela'r 'Sgyfarnog (Hunting the Hare) is a lively hunting song and Wrth fynd hefo Deio i Dywyn is all about a shopping trip to Dywyn (with Deio).

Italian composer **Raffaele Bellafronte** (b. 1961) *wrote Suite No. 1 for Guitar and Cello* just two years after the 1992 death of the great Argentine tango composer Ástor Piazzolla. Bellafronte's *Suite No. 1 for Guitar and Cello* reads like an homage to Piazzolla's *Nuevo Tango* infused chamber music. Each of the four movements seeks to strike a balance between rhythmic excitement and sections of languid lyricism. Between fire and mystery. Evocative movement titles such as Histeríco (Hysterical) and Romantíco (Romantic), invite us to contemplate a state of mind rather than something more concrete. The Suite is one of the earliest large scale works written specifically for cello and guitar.

Nightclub 1960 by **Ástor Piazzolla** (1921-1992) is the very sort of piece that Bellafronte might have had in his ears when composing his *Suite No. 1 for cello and guitar*. *Night Club 1960* represents a snapshot in time when the tango begins to intertwine with elements of the Brazilian bossa nova. It is the third movement of *Histoire du Tango* (originally for flute and guitar), which traces the metamorphosis of the tango from traditional dance music into a modern chamber music form

**Steven Goss's** *Preludes or Postludes* are pieces designed to be played as a prelude or postlude to other works in a recital. They are based on the three Interludes from Steve's *Theorbo Concerto*, but reimagined for cello and guitar. They were commissioned by the Patterson-Sutton Duo, and we present them here as a set for the world premiere performance.

**Mathias Duplessy** (b.1972) is described by Radio-France International as "A guitarist of the highest virtuosity... one of those rare performers capable of shining in every genre: classical, jazz, (world) music, flamenco... As a composer he has assimilated all of these styles in order to compose and perform music that is uniquely his own, alive and personal, brilliant and coming from deep within, sensitive and yet contemporary." Duplessy's *Sonata in Four Dreams for Cello & Guitar* is no exception. It is a synthesis of diverse musical styles that makes for one of the most unique and electrifying new pieces in the ever expanding cello & guitar repertoire.

- Notes by Kimberly Patterson and Patrick Sutton

# alphagraphics<sup>®</sup>

At Alphagraphics Cleveland, we partner with our customers to improve the effectiveness of their marketing and communications.

Banners • Newsletters • Signs Mailings • Digital Printing

Call or email to see how we can assist you with your next project.

ph 216.623.1005 email us320@alphagraphics.com www.us320.alphagraphics.com Timeless
Classical
and
Jazz Music

# WE TAKE YOU THERE.



# Ways to listen:

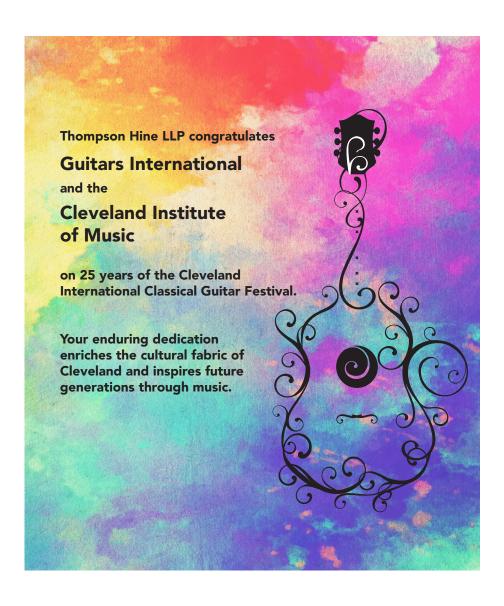
- WCLV: 90.3 FM
- ◆ JazzNEO: 90.3 HD-2
- Ideastream App
- ◆ Smart Speakers
- ◆ Additional HD Streams
- + ideastream.org/music



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF GREATER CLEVELAND 3630 FAIRMOUNT BLVD SHAKER HEIGHTS, OH 44118 (216) 932-7480

WWW.FIRSTBAPTISTCLEVELAND.ORG

Preserving one of Greater Cleveland's sacred concert and recording venues.





ThompsonHine.com Alwa

**Always Innovating** 

# Poláčková plays Mertz

"A true Poet of the Guitar, Petra Poláčková brings us Romantic guitar music of Mertz with more RPMs — revelations per minute— than any disc in recent memory.

Don't miss it."

John Schneider, KPFK, Los Angeles

"Some of the most sophisticated and expressive works of the Romantic repertoire.

Listen to the final piece, Ständchen, to appreciate not just Mertz's achievements,

but Poláčková's extraordinary artistry."

William Yeoman, Gramophone



www.BridgeRecords.com





Join us to explore three centuries of guitar making at our online museum:

# www.austinmarieguitars.com

Featured instruments include:

Seventeenth century guitars by Sellas, Voboam, & Tielke

The earliest extant six-string guitar

The earliest example of the work of Louis Panormo

Spanish six-course guitars by Pagés, Martínez, and Furnieles

The acclaimed 1834 presentation guitar by Pierre René Lacote

A rare C.F. Martin from his first year of guitar-making in America

Subscribe today for updates on new additions & interviews.

Guitars by Fabricatore, Guadagnini, Stauffer, Laprevotte, & more



# Alan Mearns (Ireland) Guitar

Saturday, June 7, at 3:00 p.m. Cleveland Institute of Music, Mixon Hall

# **Program**

Prelude & Passacaglia WL 33 Silvius Leopold Weiss (1687-1750)

arr. StanleyYates/Alan Mearns

Prelude Op. 28 No.6 Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) Prelude Op. 28 No.15

arr. Alan Mearns

La Vega Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

arr. Stanley Yates

Oración Alan Mearns Cantos (b.1977)

Perpetuo

#### Intermission

Serenata Manuel de Falla (1876 - 1946)

Serenata Andaluza arr. Alan Mearns Nana

Inishowan Alan Mearns

Chaconne BWV 1004 J.S. Bach/A. Mearns (1685-1750) (b.1977)

#### About the Artist



Alan Mearns (Ireland), is an accolaimed gutarist, composer, and arranger known for his deeply expressive performances and imaginative transcriptions. With a unique voice rooted in both classical tradition and modern innovation, Mearns brings a rare sensitivity and power to the concert stage. His work as a composer and arranger continues to expand the guitar repertoire, enriching the instrument's expressive possibilities.

Artist's website: alanmearns.com

#### **Notes**

The preeminent lutenist-composer of the High Baroque, Silvius Leopold Weiss (1687–1750) shares an almost parallel lifespan to three other Baroque luminaries: J.S. Bach, G.F. Handel, and D.Scarlatti. The son of a court lutenist, Weiss in his later years would befriend W.F. Bach, J.S. Bach's eldest son. Wilhelm Friedrich eventually introduced Weiss to his famous father and it is said that they competed in improvisation. His music, rich in counterpoint and highly expressive, pours out idiomatically on the baroque lute (tuned to a D minor chord) but is challenging to realize on the modern guitar. Both of these movements have been arranged in the key of C to maximize the guitar's open-string sonority, particularly where the expressive half-steps are located. Additionally, a scordatura on the fifth string is utilized to emancipate the dominant arrival of the Passacaglia's stepwise descent. The Prelude is unmeasured and improvisatory. The famous Passacaglia cycles with a stately and tender pathos, similar in affectation to Handel's aria from Rinaldo, "Lascia ch'io pianga." Notably, each variation is seven measures long. This asymmetry lends a sense of arrival to the beginning measure of each new variation whose descending momentum has already begun, creating a sort of turbine-like forward momentum. Also, the Passacaglia's repeated bass line is occasionally placed in suspension to the figuration above, an unusual effect that propels a sense of guiet longing throughout the piece.

**Frédéric Chopin** (1810-1849) reluctantly joined George Sand and her two children on a three month trip to Mallorca in the winter of 1838. It was here that he finished his 24 preludes. The change of weather and scenery proved pleasant at first, but soon took a turn for the worse. A spell of wet weather preyed upon Chopin's fragile constitution and he was soon diagnosed with tuberculosis. They were turned out of their rooms and forced to find sanctuary in a Carthusian monastery. The famous story of the "Raindrop Prelude," with its drip-drip single note motif, belongs entirely to George Sand and was vehemently rejected by Chopin, a musical absolutist who shunned programmatic descriptions. Though one cannot help but imagine these circumstantial hardships and ill health contributing to the somber and sometimes foreboding nature of both preludes.

**Isaac Albéniz's** "La Vega" represents an aesthetic pivot away from shorter, salon pieces, towards a larger, orchestral virtuosity which would culminate in his great masterpiece *Iberia*. "La Vega" (singular form of Las Vegas!) means "the plain," presumably the fertile plain of Granada. This rich, evocative work pulls out all the stops of Albéniz's Andalusian fantasy. Full of counterpoint, chromaticism, and extended impressionistic harmonies, it marks a significant departure towards his mature style. This paraphrased arrangement by virtuoso-scholar Stanley Yates is best perhaps presented in his own words:

La Vega is a virtuosic piano work that would defy any attempt to reproduce in literal form on a solo guitar. My realization is a paraphrase, a reduction and re-composition of Albeniz's original work, that makes no attempt to preserve its broad, formal structure. I abandoned Albéniz's expansive sonata-form plan, and imposed on his musical ideas an expanded version of the da capo form (with coda) typical of his earlier 'guitar' music. This approach, at the same time, perhaps cavalier yet respectful of the composer's inspiration, may be taken as valid or not. Caveat emptor

Oración (meaning "prayer") is Alan Mearns' original composition in two movements. Cantos evokes ancient, chant-like melodies that seem to echo across time. Perpetuo explores a more urgent and rhythmically-driven sound, embodying a sense of spiritual searching. The composer notes, "While working on Baroque ornaments, I happened upon a rather strange and novel arpeggio technique. I knew it would manifest as a composition eventually and tucked it away in the back of my mind. A few months later, I was repeatedly listening to Gilels' incredible performance of the Bach/Siloti B minor Prelude. This must have generally influenced the tone and key of the piece. I can't say more about it because music arrives unexpectedly and for its own reasons. The piece is written with a lute tuning, the perfect symmetry and resonance of which the composer finds very appealing. It is dedicated to the great Cuban virtuoso Rene Izquierdo.

These two Serenatas capture the essence of **Manuel de Falla's** early Spanish tradition. The influence of Albeniz, Granados and Chopin are still evident, as is Falla's burgeoning native, Andalusian flair. Manuel de Falla was a quiet, sincere Catholic. These serenades, however, both express a latent eroticism mixed with a mystical if not Mephistical quality. (metaphistical?) The confluences and contradictions of magic and religion in Andalusia are innumerable and this archetypal thread can be noted throughout Falla's oeuvre, perhaps most explicitly in his Ballet *El Amor Brujo* (Love, the magician, or Love the Sorcerer). *Nana*, a traditional lullaby from *Siete canciones populares españolas*, is imbued with delicate melancholy and is often performed on the violin and cello.

Ireland is the only nation whose symbol is a musical instrument. That instrument, of course, is the harp. Named after a peninsula in County Donegal, Ireland, *Inishowan* is a musical tribute to the rugged beauty of the Irish coast. Drawing on Celtic modes and ornamentation, the piece evokes a windswept landscape, blending traditional folk elements with Mearns' original harmonic language. Here Mearns posits the guitar as a sort of "technological harp" with dark timbre and maximum over-ringing of the strings, thus connecting the guitar with the haunting landscape of his native Northern Coast.

The only Chaconne that compares
With the Bach Chaconne
Is the Chaconne of the moon

A cornerstone of the solo violin repertoire, **J.S. Bach's** *Chaconne* is a monumental exploration of variation form and emotional range. In this transcription for guitar, Mearns brings a new resonance and color to the work, highlighting the instrument's capacity for contrapuntal richness and lyrical depth. The *Chaconne* stands as a timeless testament to the power of solo music to convey the full spectrum of human experience. Personal notes and two short poems from Mearns are included below:

I can't help but psychologically frame Bach's Chaconne and second violin sonata as inextricably linked together and to the tragic, unexpected death of his first wife. The magnitude of the Chaconne in the context (and out of context!) of the partita itself is so glaring that, even on paper, it looks like an outburst, an anomaly, a breach, a tombeau. This is a purely conjectural idea, but there is a structural element I discovered about the Chaconne that altered my arrangement and performance of it. I feel that Bach had initially finished his piece at the conclusion of the first minor section. When examined in this way we can see a perfectly executed chaconne with a virtuosic conclusion and a recapitulation of the "overture" theme. We know that the schematic descending chromatic line is linked to lamentation and sometimes referred to as "The Way of the Cross"—this fits into many theories that assert the whole group of pieces as representational of the life of Christ. With the Chaconne as the central passion the piece would end there, at 33 variations; that is, the life of Christ. It is interesting to note in the same parallel context that his wife, Maria, died at 33 years of age. The number three is also theologically significant in other ways, but I feel this "ending" sheds further light on the ensuing variations. When playing through the 33rd variation I felt a compulsion to end the last "unison" chord on a rolling suspension- ornament, perhaps subconsciously as the entire variation is a series of suspended appoggiaturas. The resolution afterwards then gives the satisfying resolution of a standard picardy third" major-mode cadence, one we would expect from such an extended piece. The ensuing parallel-major section, then, no longer begins abruptly and strangely but the ending becomes the beginning, so to speak, and the reluctant flame of hope in the "afterlife" is gently blown and caressed until it reaches the heights of trumpets and cherubic choirs. Bach is then "thrown back to earth" after this beatific vision for the last quarter to deal with the existential reality of his temporal loss.

How then should we enter
The Bach Chaconne?
Like Orpheus entering Hades?
Like Theseus entering the Labyrinth?

Or Like Picasso's 'Old Guitarist'
- By way of the cross?vii
Yes, yes and yes.

- Notes by Alan Mearns

# Jason Vieaux (USA) Guitar

Saturday, June 7, at 7:30 p.m. Cleveland Institute of Music, Mixon Hall

# **Program**

Sonata Mexicana Manuel Maria Ponce Bailecito del Revozo (Allegro moderato) (1882–1948)

Lo Que Sueña El Ahuehuete (Andantino affettuoso)

Intermedio Tapatío (Allegreto, quasi serenata)

Cantos Y Bailes Aztecas (Allegretto un poco vivace)

Tidal Pools Jason Vieaux

(b. 1973)

Suite No. 1 Cello BWV 1007 J.S. Bach Prelude (1685-1750)

Allemande Courante

Sarabande

Menuet I and Menuet II

Gigue

#### Intermission

Prelude, Fugue, and Allegro, BWV 998 J.S. Bach

Home Jason Vieaux

Mallorca Isaac Albéniz Cuba (1860-1909)

#### About the Artist



Grammy-winner **Jason Vieaux (USA)** is "among the elite of today's classical guitarists" (Gramophone). Multiple appearances for San Francisco Performances, Caramoor, 92nd St. Y, and Lincoln Center have cemented his reputation. Vieaux has premiered works written for him by Jeff Beal, Avner Dorman, Vivian Fung, Pierre Jalbert, and Pat Metheny. His various collaborators include Escher String Quartet, Anne Akiko Meyers, Julien Labro, and Grammy-winners Sasha Cooke, Zuill Bailey, and Timothy McAllister. Vieaux has

taught at the CIM for 28 years.

Artist's website: jasonvieaux.com/

#### **Notes**

Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia was on a mission. Determined to raise the guitar's profile as a concert instrument, he set out to "endow it with a repertory of high quality, made up of works possessing intrinsic musical value, from the pens of composers accustomed to writing for orchestra, piano, violin, etc." In his eyes, no composer fulfilled this mission better than Mexican composer **Manuel Ponce** (1882-1948). They first met in 1923, when Ponce reviewed a Segovia recital. They hit it off, and Segovia encouraged Ponce to compose something for guitar. Ponce responded with a lyrical "Allegretto, quasi serenata." Delighted, Segovia urged the composer to turn it into a four movement sonata. Ponce promptly complied with *Sonata Mexicana*. Segovia had a heavy hand in its final version, changing passages to better suit his taste, and giving names to the four movements with an eye toward box office appeal. Ponce took it in stride, perhaps sensing Segovia's instinct for public relations. For his part, Segovia knew a good thing when he found it. Over time he drew many more works from Ponce, creating a body of work that often shows up in modern recital programs. Of Ponce, guitarist Jesús Silva wrote: "His musical imagination is really special. It's nothing violent. It's strong because it's subtle. It goes deep into the performer and the audience."

The cello suites of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) are justly renowned. Ever since cellist Pablo Casals in 1889 found an old copy in a Barcelona thrift shop, they've been the cornerstone of the cello repertoire. (Bach himself must have valued them, as he refitted the 5th cello suite into the third lute suite.) Considering their venerable stature, it's a surprise to realize that no manuscript in Bach's own hand exists. This opens the door to rampant speculation, some of it off the wall. In 2006, an Australian musicologist claimed that Bach's second wife, Anna Magdalena, actually wrote all the cello suites. Few take this seriously—cellist Steven Isserlis retorted acidly: "Anna Magdalena Bach did not write the Bach suites, any more than Anne Hathaway wrote Shakespeare's plays, George Henry Lewes wrote George Eliot's novels, or Freddie Starr ate his friend's hamster." Where the cello suites are a product of Bach in his mid 30s, his Prelude, Fugue, and Allegro BWV 998 is a late work. It's also an odd duck. Bach seldom wrote three movement works for a solo instrument. Further, BWV 998 has one of the only three da capo fugues Bach wrote. Then again, it's hard to say what Bach "typically" wrote. Scholar Christoph Wolff estimates that Bach composed 11,000 works, of which 90% are lost. Typical or not, BWV998 is a luminous work, easily among Bach's best.

Until early 2020, guitarist Jason Vieaux (b. 1973) lived at a whirlwind pace. Still riding high from his 2015 Grammy win, he was always on the move from city to city. (An interviewer at this time asked how he spent his free time. Quipped Vieaux: "What is this 'free time' you speak of?") Then the COVID-19 pandemic wrenched everything to a halt. The worldwide shutdown put touring artists out of work. Recalls Vieaux: "It took a couple months to really figure out how to be a musician, because I'm very much a performance oriented animal. I have all these collaborations, and there was never any wanting for gigs. When the gigs weren't there, it was very hard for me to feel like me." Instead, Vieaux reconnected with his young son and daughter. "I had never really been with my kids for more than maybe a week and a half at a time. So my son Gabriel, as a five- year-old, was already used to that, but Evangelene was three at the start. It was great being together." Adapting to the forced timeout from his performing career, Vieaux settled into new and unexpected routines, including video games. "I got a gold cups on every level of Mario Kart. I was doing golf and tennis and baseball with Gabriel. If you would have told me a few years before that I'd be playing video games, I'd have said there's no way!" He also turned to composing. "That was great, because I wrote over sixty minutes of solo guitar pieces. Composing is something that always came naturally to me. I just never had time to do it." Of these pieces, one of them—a tremolo study entitled Home—has special meaning for Vieaux. "I called it 'Home' because I was thinking very much about being at home."

The life of Spaniard **Isaac Albéniz** (1860-1909) reads like a movie script. (Indeed, after his death he was the subject of a 1947 Argentine film, earning that country's equivalent of an Oscar.) A good part of this stems from the composer's knack for self-promotion. He often spun tall tales about himself that leave today's scholars scratching their heads to sift fact from fiction. But his real exploits were impressive enough. He was a tireless globetrotter, one of the first musicians to record, and a pioneer in imbuing classical music with a distinctly Spanish flair. *Rumores de la Caleta* (Murmurs from the Small Cove) is an early work, composed just as Albéniz was starting to make a name for himself. It's from *Recuerdos de Viaje* (Travel Souvenirs), a loose collection of seven pieces composed during a concert tour. *Mallorca* is a later work, penned in 1890 during an extended stay in London. Albéniz, ever the financial opportunist, dedicated it to the daughter of a wealthy patron. Though often taken for a Venetian gondola song, *Mallorca* is actually a grief stricken lament for the loss of a fiancé.

- Notes by Tom Poore

# RODGERS TUNING MACHINES

The World's Finest

Available from Guitars International

216.752.7502

www.quitarsint.com

# Laura Snowden (England)

## Solo Guitar & Guitar with Voice

Sunday, June 8, at 1:00 p.m. Cleveland Institute of Music, Mixon Hall

# Program

Black is the Colour Trad. arr. Laura Snowden

(b. 1989)

Les Barricades Mystérieuses François Couperin

(1668-1733)

(1685- 1750)

Adagio and Fugue from Violin Sonata Johann Sebastian Bach

No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001

This changing sky

Laura Snowden

Song for Maria Laura Snowden

Preludes no. 1, 3, and 2 Heitor Villa-Lobos

(1887-1959)

#### Intermission

As she sleeps Laura Snowden

Nocturne Op. 9 no. 2 Frédéric Chopin arr. Francisco Tárrega

(1810-1849) (1852-1909)

The Trap Laura Snowden

Carrickfergus

The Parting Glass Trad. arr. Laura Snowden

Tarantelle Johann Kaspar Mertz

(1806-1856)

#### **About the Artist**



Laura Snowden (England) has been described by Acoustic Guitar Magazine as possessing "multi-dimensional gifts, imagination and fearless artistic sensibility." Laura's eclectic musical output has ranged from playing on Lorne Balfe's soundtrack for Marvel film Black Widow to recording Lisa Streich's guitar concerto Augenlider with the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester. Laura studied with Julian Bream, during which time she gave two concerts at Wigmore Hall featuring premieres of his recent commissions. This led to international recognition and

festival debuts across Europe and the US, as well as concerto debuts with Norrköping Symphony Orchestra and Münchener Kammerorchester.

Artist's website: laurasnowden.co.uk/

#### Notes

#### Black is the Colour

Trad arr. Laura Snowden (b. 1989)

My earliest musical memories are of growing up in Cornwall with my dad playing Celtic folk music on the Irish tenor banjo and singing folk songs in harmonies with his two friends. Much later, when I moved to London for studies, I created a folk group called Tir Eolas, with whom I wrote and performed for many years. I am now drawing on these experiences to include some folk material into my solo recitals, including *Black is the Colour*. I particularly love Christy Moore's version of this song!

# Les Barricades Mystérieuses

François Couperin (1668-1733)

I first heard this piece played by French guitarist Raphaël Feuillâtre, and I absolutely fell in love with it. He played it with the most tremendous sense of warmth, comfort and healing, and I thought it would be a wonderful piece to have coming out of the melancholy *Black is the Colour*. I particularly love the fact that the piece sounds so simple, and has such a transparent texture, but the harmonies are so expressive and full of emotion.

The piece is one of two hundred and forty harpsichord pieces written by the French composer; nobody is completely sure what he meant by the name. Some have suggested it might refer to the suspensions in the harmony or the syncopated rhythms, whilst others have suggested it may refer to masks worn by performers of *Les Fêtes de l'Inconnu* (an event staged by one of Couperin's patrons), or even to women's eyelashes!

# Adagio and Fugue from Violin Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001

J.S.Bach (1685-1750)

Bach's G-minor violin *Sonata* is often played on the guitar, and today I will be playing the first two movements of this work. I have a device attached to the fretboard for this piece which is called a capo, and which allows me to shift the entire pitch range of the guitar. This means I can play the piece using E minor fingerings, which I feel work well on the guitar, but shift the pitch up to G minor, the original key; I really like the resonance that the use of the capo brings.

# This changing sky

Laura Snowden

I wrote this piece in Spring 2015 for a first performance at St John's Smith Square in London. I first played at St John's for a concert of music by John Tavener. There was something spiritual about the hall—a meditative space which encouraged listening to the sound itself and to the silence between notes. With this in mind, I wrote a meditative piece of music in which the sounds themselves—and the space between them—were important.

# Song for Maria

Laura Snowden

The melody and tender harmonies of this piece are intended to convey the love I feel for my sister, Maria, who is six years younger than me.

Nocturne Op. 9 no. 2

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849) arr. Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909)

Chopin's Nocturnes were some of his most popular pieces during his lifetime, and they remain some of the most well-loved core piano repertoire today. The first time I heard this particular *Nocturne* played on guitar was in a recording made by the wonderful Austrian guitarist Luise Walker (1910-1998). In her playing, I felt that every note was poetry. The arrangement she played, which I will also be playing tonight, was made by the Spanish guitarist Francisco Tárrega. He was a brilliant composer in his own right, having written some of the classical guitar's most famous pieces, but was also a prolific transcriber, with around one hundred and twenty transcriptions to his name.

The Trap Laura Snowden

This piece is intended to convey the feeling of being very gradually sucked into something and realizing only too late. I tune the bottom string down from an E to a low B for the piece, which adds extra depth and resonance.

# Carrickfergus The Parting Glass

Trad arr. Laura Snowden

I really enjoy arranging folk melodies for classical guitar and trying to come up with arrangements which allow the guitar to resonate as much as possible, so that the melody can really sing. I first heard *The Parting Glass* being sung at a session at the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, London; although it is often associated with Ireland, I gather the tune is likely to have originated in Scotland.

#### **Tarantelle**

Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806-1856)

Born in Hungary, Mertz moved to Vienna in the 1840s, where he toured Europe as a guitarist and benefitted from royal patronage. This *Tarantelle* is taken from one of Mertz' masterpieces, the fifteen volume *Bardenklänge*. For this work, Mertz was posthumously awarded First Prize at a competition in Brussels, organized by Russian guitarist Nikolai Makaroff. Makaroff remarked that "I have found in his works everything I had not come across before: a varied message, a profound knowledge of the laws of composition, an interesting alternation of harmonies, bold, never trivial, effects, and finally, an acquaintance with every secret and effect of the guitar."

- Notes by Laura Snowden

## Petra Poláčková (Czech Republic)

Viennese and Modern Guitars

Sunday, June 8, at 4:00 pm Cleveland Institute of Music, Mixon Hall

#### **Program**

From 6 Schubert'sche Lieder

Lob der Thränen Liebesbothschaft

Aufenthalt

From Bardenklänge, Op. 13

Gondoliera

Liebeslied

Gondoliera

From 3 Morceaux pour la Guitarre, Op. 65

Fantaisie Originale Fantaisie Hongroise Joseph Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856)

(1797-1828) (1806-1856)

Franz Schubert/Joseph Kaspar Mertz

Joseph Kaspar Mertz

#### Intermission

Grande Sonate No. 2

Moderato

Andante con Expressione

Variations sur l'air allemande par Heydn

Václav Tomáš Matějka

(1773-1830)

Sonata Romantica

Allegro moderato Andante espressivo

Allegretto vivo

Allegro non troppo e serioso

Manuel María Ponce (1882-1948)

<sup>\* 9-</sup>string Viennese style guitar by Jan Tuláček (2014)

<sup>\*\* 6</sup> string guitar by Domingo Esteso (1926)

#### **About the Artist**



Classical guitarist **Petra Poláčková (Czech Republic)** has received "sustained international acclaim" (The American Federation of Musicians) travelling the world to perform and teach. Her perfomances on her landmark debut CD Weiss have garnered wide praise for their elegant phrasing, tonal beauty, and emotional intensity. In April 2025, she released a recording on Bridge Records devoted to romantic guitarist and composer Joseph Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856). Petra Poláčková has been co-organizer of Guitar Festival Mikulov, Czech Republic,

since 2010 and in November 2024 was appointed Professor at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt in Weimar, Germany.

Artist's Website: petrapolackova.com

#### **Notes**

When it comes to composers, the guitar is an orphan. Those who don't play it are often at a loss in how to write for it. In contrast, most composers are comfortable writing for orchestral instruments. And writing for piano is almost fool proof—most composers can dabble on it, and the keyboard layout even looks like music, making it more intuitive to write for. But for non-guitarists, the guitar embodies Winston Churchill's "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

Before the 20th century, commissioning composers to write for guitar wasn't a thing. Further, there was no schism between playing and composing. So during the 19th century, guitar virtuosos wrote their own music. The upside is that players know what does and doesn't work on the guitar. The downside is that great players are often mediocre composers. (Not everyone is a Chopin or Liszt.) One guitarist who proved adept at both was **Johann Kaspar Mertz** (1809-1856). One reason his composing stood apart from most of his contemporaries might be due to his wife, Josephine. She was an excellent pianist. So her husband was well acquainted with the piano repertoire of the day.

Many of Mertz's guitar pieces seem to mimic piano textures. Indeed, with his enthusiastic use of arpeggios and two note tremolando, his guitar sheet music could easily be taken for piano music, with only the absence of the bass clef proving otherwise.

By far the majority of Mertz's output was paraphrases of popular operas. His *Op. 8 Opern Revue* alone is a 368 page tome that could double as an effective doorstop. This isn't surprising. Music lovers of the time were wild about opera. It was to them what movies were to the late 20th century.

In a time before recordings, opera paraphrases were a way to recall a pleasant night at the local opera house. (Provided a sufficiently skilled musician was at hand to perform these often difficult pieces.) Nowadays, Mertz's opera based solos are routinely overlooked. Their current neglect might be summed up by the old aphorism: "you had to be there."

Mertz's present day reputation stands on a relative sliver of his total output. Two oft played virtuoso samples are his *Elegy* and *Fantaisie Hongroise*. Also popular are his six Schubert songs, which closely mimic Liszt's own Schubert arrangements. (In the mid 19th century, copyright also wasn't a thing.) Rounding out the playlist is his Op. 13 *Bardenklänge*, a set of 25 character pieces. Here, Mertz rides the coattails of the piano miniature, so beloved among parlor musicians of the day.

Where Mertz stands out among his contemporaries, **Václav Tomáš Matějka** (1773-1830) is a shadowy figure. Confusingly, his name is often anglicized to "Wenzel Thomas Matiegka." Unlike his contemporaries Fernando Sor or Mauro Giuliani, he wasn't a fêted performer. There's no evidence of any public performances by Matějka. He seemed content with teaching guitar and piano, and publishing his own compositions. Indeed, for some time during the 20th century, his main claim to fame was that one of his chamber works was wrongly attributed to Franz Schubert. Nonetheless, he was a prolific composer. His solo guitar output can today amply fill seven compact disks. This includes no less than 12 multi-movement sonatas for solo guitar. (Unusual for a guitarist of his day.) His *Grande Sonata No. 2* is an ambitious work, its final movement a theme and variations based on an unassuming song by Franz Joseph Haydn. One assumes this choice banked on the marquee value of Haydn's fame. But it's questionable that Haydn's song, a genre for which he's almost unknown, would be familiar to audiences—then or now.

When non-guitarist composers do write for guitar, they rely heavily on collaboration with a virtuoso player. Perhaps the best known collaboration was that of Mexican composer **Manuel María Ponce** (1882-1948) and Andrés Segovia. Indeed, they seemed a perfect match. Ponce's fondness for music of the past aligned neatly with Segovia's conservative taste. It also dovetailed with Segovia's mission to elevate the guitar's repertoire. He did this in part with transcriptions of mainstream composers. Some music critics were outraged, as evidenced by a friend's report to Segovia: "Their Eminences were crossing themselves at the thought of a sacrilegious spree in the hall, while the young ones snickered at the word 'music,' when I mentioned that your repertoire includes Haydn, Mozart, Schubert. They actually believed I was talking about some hilarious musical parody!" Barbs like this may have goaded Segovia to propose a sonata in the style of Schubert. Ponce's response, his 1929 *Sonata romántica*, exceeded Segovia's expectations.

"I am enthusiastic about the *Sonata*. I work night and day. It is the only thing I work on." In no other work did Ponce delve so deeply into the soul of another composer. Wrote one musicologist: "Ponce subordinates his own personal style to write a work that could possibly have passed for a Schubert sonata."

#### - Notes by Tom Poore

#### Partial List Of Festival Artists Presented: 2000 - 2025

Tony Arnold, soprano, USA (Cleveland Debut)

Manuel Barrueco, guitar, USA

Beijing Guitar Duo, guitars, China (Cleveland Debut)

**Duo Damiana**, flute and guitar, USA (Cleveland Debut)

Rohan de Saram, cello, England (Cleveland Debut)

**Zoran Dukic**, guitar, Croatia (Cleveland Debut)

Eduardo Fernandez, guitar, Uruguay

Paul Galbraith, guitar, Scotland (Cleveland Debut)

Ricardo Gallén, guitar, Spain (Cleveland Debut)

Antigoni Goni, guitar, Greece (Cleveland Debut)

Robert Gruca, guitar, USA

Ellen Hargis, soprano, USA

Antonis Hatzinikolaou, guitar, Greece (USA Debut)

**Drew Henderson**, guitar, Canada (Cleveland Debut)

John Holmquist, guitar, USA

Helen Zhibing Huang, soprano, China (Cleveland Debut)

**Hubert Kappel**, guitar, Germany (Cleveland Debut)

Dale Kavanagh, guitar, Canada (Cleveland Debut)

Elizabeth Kenny, lute, England

Yolanda Kondonassis, harp, USA

Irina Kulikova, guitar, Russia (Cleveland Debut)

Julien Labro, accordion and bandoneon, France

Jonathan Leathwood, guitar, England

Emily Levin, harp, USA (Cleveland Debut)

Daniel Lippel, guitar, USA

Lynn McGrath, guitar with spoken word, USA (Cleveland Debut)

Alan Mearns, guitar, Ireland (Cleveland Debut)

**Duo Melis**, guitars, Spain and Greece (Cleveland Debut)

Nigel North, lute, England

Paul O'Dette, lute, USA

Patterson-Sutton Duo, cello and guitar, USA (Cleveland Debut)

Petra Poláčková, guitar, Czech Republic (USA Debut)

Stephen Robinson, guitar, USA

Liliana Rodriguez, soprano, Argentina (Cleveland Debut)

Rucco James Duo, guitars, Italy and USA (Cleveland Debut)

David Russell, guitar, Scotland (Cleveland Debut)

Mari Sato, violin, USA

Carrie Henneman Shaw, soprano, USA

Raphaella Smits, guitar, Belgium (Cleveland Debut)

Laura Snowden, guitar and voice, England (Cleveland Debut)

Gaelle Solal, guitar, France (Cleveland Debut)

SoloDuo, guitars, Italy (Cleveland Debut)

Nicolò Spera, guitar, Italy (Cleveland Debut)

Pavel Steidl, guitar, Czech Republic (Cleveland Debut)

Nathasja van Rosse, guitar, Netherlands (Cleveland Debut)

Ana Vidovic, guitar, Croatia (Cleveland Debut)

Jason Vieaux, guitar, USA

Hao Yang, guitar, China (Cleveland Debut)

Xuefei Yang, guitar, China (Cleveland Debut)

## **James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition 2025**



Welcome to the sixth annual James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition. This year's sixteen Semi-Finalists are from ten states - California, Connecticut, Florida, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia - and range in age from thirteen to eighteen. Their level of musical accomplishment is exceptional. Please take time to read their profiles in the following pages. While only one student can gain First Prize, this Competition is about much more than winning: It is about learning, becoming a better and more complete person, and forging lifelong friendships. To this end it is my hope that

all our competitors will make the most of this unique Festival's wonderful and varied musical offerings - concerts, master classes, lecturers - have many inspiring experiences while visiting Cleveland, and leave here having gained insights that will enhance their playing and lives forever.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Armin Kelly Founder and Artistic Director of the Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival® of which this competition is proudly a part, the Cleveland Institute of Music administration and staff for providing their lovely facilities and support, James Piorkowski for writing our Semi-Final Round set piece, photographer Pat Kilkenny, and this year's esteemed judges for so generously sharing their time, experience, and artistic insights with us.

Sincerely, James Stroud, Founder and Director James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition

#### COMPETITION JUDGES

### **Preliminary Round**

Dragos Ilie (Romania), guitar James Stroud (USA), guitar Mengya Tian (China), guitar Thomas Vilateau (France), guitar Hao Yang (China), guitar

#### Semi-Final Round

Christoph Harlan (USA), guitar Lynn McGrath (USA), guitar James Piorkowski (USA), guitar Patrick Sutton (USA), guitar Antonis Hatzinikolaou (Greece), guitar Laura Snowden (England), guitar John Marcel Williams (USA), guitar

#### **Final Round**

Stephen Aron (USA), guitar Antonis Hatzinikolaou (Greece), guitar Johnathan Leathwood (England), guitar Alan Mearns (Ireland), guitar Petra Poláčková (Czech Republic), guitar Laura Snowden (England), guitar Jason Vieaux (USA), guitar

## James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition 2025 Semi-Finalists' Biographies



**Beckett Cerón,** 15, is a sophomore at Seven Hills School in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has played guitar since age five and currently studies with Adam Holzman. Beckett has earned accolades in national and international competitions. In 2023, he was named to the GFA's Mentor Program, where Colombian guitarist-composer Carlos Bedoya wrote a Colombian Cumbia for him. Beckett is a passionate performer who has opened for Bokyung Byun and the Beijing Duo. He was recently named an NPR *From the Top* Fellow, and featured on Episode 440. When not playing guitar, Beckett can be found on the soccer field, playing chess, or studying mathematics.



Paloma Chaprnka, 15, is a sophomore at Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. She has won first prizes in numerous international and national classical guitar competitions and has performed in multiple master classes. She is the founder and teacher of the Buckley Classical Guitar Project, which provides free classical guitar lessons to young students located in rural, northwest Michigan. Paloma has performed for Guitar Sarasota and the Florida Guitar Foundation. She has recorded at Guitar Salon International, Siccas Guitars, and at Pepe Romero Jr. Guitars. When not practicing guitar, Paloma enjoys gourmet cooking, going for long walks, and listening to music.



Hilbert Chen, 16, is a junior at Valley Christian High School. He has played classical guitar since he was three. He currently studies with Robert Miller at the California Conservatory of Music. He has won prizes in the: Kithara Project Guitar Competition, United States International Music Competition, Denver Guitar Festival Youth Competition, James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition, and GFA International Youth Competition. Hilbert has performed in master classes of: Manuel Barrueco, Andrew York, Steven Aron, Ben Verdery, Jonathan Leathwood, Raphaella Smits, Montenegrin Duo, Meng Su, Marco Tamayo, and Jason Vieaux. In addition to guitar, Hilbert enjoys playing baseball.



Oliver Chen, 16, is a junior at Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, where he studies classical guitar with Dr. Matthew Cochran. Originally from Manhattan, NY, Oliver has participated in master classes with distinguished guitarists including Colin Davin, Thomas Flippin, Joao Luiz, Matthew McAllister, and Gohar Vardanyan. He has performed at notable venues such as Laidlaw Music Centre and Merkin Hall. As a member of the Interlochen Guitar Ensemble, he has contributed to the premiere of new music. In addition to his musical pursuits, Oliver is active in slam poetry club, quiz bowl, and is an avid chess player.

## James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition 2025 Semi-Finalists' Biographies cont.



Preston Hong, 16, studies guitar with Christopher Mallett in California. He has been featured on NPR's *From the Top* and won prizes in guitar competitions including: the GFA IYC and James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition. He has been honored to have lessons and master classes with Manuel Barrueco, Bokyung Byun, Evan Hirschelman, Christopher Parkening, Raphaella Smits, Duo Sonidos, Meng Su, Marco Tamayo, Benjamin Verdery, and TY Zhang. To give back, he provides free guitar lessons to other youths. Preston is a Boy Scout, plays in school/club volleyball teams and plays clarinet in his school's marching band, County Honor Band, and California All-State High School Wind Symphony.



Ruqi Jiang, 17, is a pre-college student at the Curtis Institute of Music where she studies with David Starobin and Jason Vieaux. She began studying classical guitar at ten with Li Le in China, and later with Professor He Qing at the Tianjin Conservatory's affiliated school. Since 2017, Ruqi has participated in numerous domestic and international guitar competitions. In August 2019, she won the solo championship in Group A at the 5th GTA (Qinling) International Guitar Art Festival. She later won first prize in the Junior Division of the International Network Guitar Competition in The Hague, Netherlands and the youth category at the 10th Changsha Classical Guitar International Network Art Festival. Besides music Ruqi enjoys dancing and painting.



Brandon Kim,17, will be a senior in high school in Austin, Texas. Brandon has been playing guitar since he was seven years old, and for the past three years, Brandon has studied classical guitar under Adam Holzman. Brandon placed first in multiple divisions of the Dallas Guitar Festival, while also placing in the youth divisions of San Antonio Summer Fest, SGF, and CSU. Brandon is part of the Orpheus Honors Quartet, which has played at the Southern Guitar Festival and the Brownsville Guitar Festival, and other venues. Besides guitar, Brandon's hobbies include watching movies, cooking on weekends, and hiking in the woods.



Tae Kim, 14, attends Stuyvesant High School in New York City. Tae studies guitar with Gohar Vardanyan and previously studied with Robert Miller at the California Conservatory of Music. He has performed in master classes conducted by Eduardo Fernández, Eliot Fisk, Sharon Isbin, David Russell, and Jason Vieaux. Tae has participated in festivals and competitions hosted by Guitar Lab, Philadelphia Classical Guitar Society, Eliot Fisk Guitar Academy, and the Guitar Foundation of America. He has recorded *Caprichos de Goya No.18* by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco with Partita Studio in South Korea. Besides guitar, Tae loves Gong Cha. He is also qualified for the USA Junior Mathematical Olympiad.

## James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition 2025 Semi-Finalists' Biographies cont.



**Kiran Lee**, 17, attends high school in Palo Alto, California, and is a student of Scott Cmiel in the Pre-College Division of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is the first-prize winner of the 2025 Texas Guitar Competition and the 2022 Sierra Nevada Guitar Competition. She is also the second-prize winner of the 2024 Philadelphia Classical Guitar Competition and the 2023 Chicago Guitar Competition. Kiran opened for Stephanie Jones and Gaëlle Solal at the South Bay Guitar Society and recently performed with her guitar quartet for the Omni Foundation's concert series in San Francisco. Kiran volunteers at her local Pets in Need animal shelter



Allen Liu, 18, is a senior at Westwood High School in Austin, Texas. He began playing classical guitar at the age of 6, and currently studies with Stephen Krishnan at the Orpheus Academy of Music and Adam Holzman at the University of Texas, Austin. Allen has won prizes in the 2021 Southern Guitar Festival in North Carolina, the 2023 Texas Guitar Festival in Dallas, and the 2024 Southwest Guitar Symposium in San Antonio, Texas. He is also a member of the Orpheus Honors Guitar Quartet. In addition to playing classical guitar, Allen participates in his school's choir, robotics club, and Chinese yo-yo club.



Micah Montgomery, 15, is a freshman at Leland High School in San Jose, California. He began studying guitar at the age of five with Robert Miller at the California Conservatory of Music. Micah placed second in the James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition in 2024. He performed in the GFA's 50th Anniversary Orchestra with Sergio Assad and Ben Verdery, and has opened concerts for Paul Galbraith and Kevin Loh. Micah has performed in master classes given by Jason Vieaux, Sharon Isbin, Meng Su, Marco Tamayo, and Bin Hu. He has also received instruction from Rene Izquierdo and Thomas Flippin. Besides guitar, Micah enjoys playing basketball and volleyball.



Andrei Orasanu, age 16, is a junior at Norwalk High School in Connecticut. He began playing guitar when he was five. He studies with Dr. Tudor Niculescu-Mizi and Hao Yang. Andrei has participated in and won over thirty prizes in national and international competitions including the Southern Guitar Festival, Sinaia International Guitar Festival, Guitar Extravaganza, CSU Guitar Symposium, and the Guitar Foundation of America. He has had the opportunity to work with prominent musicians Renee Izquerdo, Judicael Perroy, Matteo Mela, and Joao Luiz. As part of Music for Youth, he performs solo and duo in various venues in Fairfield County. Andrei's hobbies include saxophone, tennis, and boxing.

## James Stroud Classical Guitar Competition 2025 Semi-Finalists' Biographies cont.



Noah Richer, 16, is a freshman at Greens Farms Academy in Westport, Connecticut. He began playing guitar at age 5 and is taught by multi Grammy Award-Nominated David Veslocki. He has won competitions at the Columbus State Guitar Symposium, Mid-Maryland Guitar Festival, Boston GuitarFest, Connecticut Suzuki Guitar Festival, and Kithara Project Festival. Noah has performed in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall, SubCulture NYC, and on top of the World Trade Center. He enjoys producing music, playing electric guitar, composing music for classical guitar, and playing the piano. Outside of guitar, he is an avid tennis player and enjoys traveling.



Mia Embree Stone, 17, is a student at Stratford High School in South Carolina. She began studying guitar at the age of 10 with Christopher Teves, who has mentored and inspired her throughout her musical journey. Mia has had the opportunity to learn from other artists through programs such as the Peabody Preparatory Summer Guitar Intensive and the Eastern Music Festival. Her passion for music extends beyond classical guitar, as she sings and leads in her school's treble and chorale choirs. Mia enjoys performing on stage in plays and musicals, sketching, and taking photos of her cat and dog.



Alicia Suen, 15, is a sophomore at American Heritage School in Florida. She began playing guitar at 8, and has studied with Young Jun Lim, Erdong Li, and Raphael Padron. She currently studies with Dr. Andrew Zohn and Christopher Mallet. Alicia has won prizes at the Marlow Guitar Festival, Southern Guitar Festival, CSU Guitar Symposium Columbus, Florida Guitar Festival, and UF Guitar Extravaganza. She is the VP of her school's guitar club and a regular soloist at her school concerts. Alicia's passion for music extends beyond guitar as she enjoys creating original songs. She likes to challenge herself with difficult courses and has a love for biology and other sciences.



Sonya Wert, 16, is a sophomore at Mars Hill Academy in Cincinnati, Ohio. She studies guitar with Stefan Schmidt and is mentored monthly by Stephanie Jones. She is a prize winner in the following competitions: Boston GuitarFest, Indiana University, Southern Guitar, App State, CSU Guitar Symposium, and Progressive Musicians. She debuted at Carnegie Hall's Weill recital hall in 2023, and has opened for the Beijing Guitar Duo and Thu Le. She has enjoyed master classes with Martha Masters, Mak Grgic, and Thomas Viloteau. Sonya loves running, studying biology, puzzles, watching movies with her family, and hanging out with her two cats. Baloo and Bagheera.

# **GUITARS INTERNATIONAL**

Featuring Fine Guitars and Guitarists from Around the World



## Help Support The

# CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL CLASSICAL GUITAR FESTIVAL®

a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Your tax-deductible donation helps us sustain artistic excellence, affordable ticket prices, and offer events which inspire and educate students and adults of all ages and backgrounds.

Ticket sales cover less than one third the cost of bringing the finest classical guitarists, lutenists, and supporting artists to Northeast Ohio to perform and teach.

Donations to the

Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival

can be made online at:

guitarsint.com/donate

or be mailed to:

Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival 22625 Westchester Road Shaker Heights, Ohio 44122

For further information contact us at: 216-752-7502 or classical guitars@guitarsint.com

[One of] two of the most important annual American classical guitar events (Classical Guitar Magazine)