

## Cleveland Classical Guitar Society presents Cavatina Duo: a conversation with Denis Azabagić and Eugenia Moliner

by Mike Telin



When Bosnian guitarist Denis Azabagić and Spanish flutist Eugenia Moliner performed their first concert together in 1993, neither of them imagined that performing as a duo would become such an important part of their careers. But, as Azabagić and Moliner began appearing together more frequently, they realized that pursuing a career as a duo was something they should seriously consider.

On Saturday, November 15 at 7:30 pm in Plymouth Church, the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society will present Cavatina Duo in their Cleveland debut concert featuring music by J.S. Bach, Toru Takemitsu, Clarice Assad, Astor Piazzolla, and Fernando Sor. A pre-concert performance by students from the Society's education program at Buchtel Community Learning Center in Akron will begin at 6:45.

In 1993, at the age of 20, Denis Azabagić became the youngest winner of the prestigious Jacinto e Inocencio Guerrero Madrid, Spain. Between 1992 and 1999, he amassed twenty-four prizes in international competitions, eleven of which were first prizes.

Eugenia Moliner has appeared as a soloist with the Chicago Sinfonietta, the Camerata Serbica, Sarajevo Philharmonic, Monterrey Symphony and Traverse Symphony. She has collaborated with ensembles including the Rotterdam Baroque Ensemble, the National Philharmonic of the Netherlands and the Montebello Ensemble. As a Duo, Azabagić and Moliner regularly perform in venues around the world and have released five CD's.

"I'm looking forward to being back in Cleveland," Azabagić said during a telephone conversation while grabbing a quick lunch between outreach concerts he and Moliner were performing in St. Louis, Missouri. "But I'm very excited to be back with the Duo."

I asked Azabagić to say a few words about each of the works on Saturday's program.

J.S. Bach's *Sonata in C, BWV 1033*: It is a wonderful piece, but we always felt that it isn't quite the same as Bach's other flute sonatas. It turns out that it is different because he gave the task of adding a continuo part to his son, C.P.E. Bach.

Clarice Assad's *Three Balkan Pieces*: This is a piece we commissioned, and it will give listeners a musical glimpse into the area of the world that I am from.

Toru Takemitsu's *Towards the Sea* for alto flute and guitar: It's a subtle piece with a very distinct musical language.

Alan Thomas's *Out of Africa*: This is inspired by Karen Blixen's classic novel of the same name. And, through a series of five songs, the piece takes the listener on a journey through a single day.

Astor Piazzolla's *Adiós Nonino*: Piazzolla wrote it in 1959 in memory of his father Vincente. We love this piece.

Fernando Sor's *Variations on "O Cara armonia" from Mozart's The Magic Flute*: This is an arrangement that we commissioned by Alan Thomas. It's a fun series of fantasias.

Why does Azabagić think the combination of flute and guitar works so well? "It's the perfect combination," he answered quickly. "The flute is monophonic and the guitar is polyphonic. And because the guitar is a softer sounding instrument the flute is easily heard. The flute also has a singing quality to it so the guitar is the perfect accompanying instrument."

In addition to performing together as the Cavatina Duo, Denis Azabagić and Eugenia Moliner also happen to be married to one another. How do they manage their personal and professional relationships? "I'll pass the phone over to Eugenia, she's better at answering that question,"

Moliner says "hello" in a cheerful voice, "Can you repeat the question?" I do. "Ah my psychiatrist asked me the same thing," she says with a laugh. "No, I'm joking of course. But I think it works because we do have a strong respect for each other. We are both very different people, and we approach problem-solving from different angles, but we eventually come to the same conclusion."

She says that because they share both a professional and private life together they do have to "monitor each other" because they could easily find themselves talking about work all the time. "Luckily we have a nine-year old son who keeps us balanced. We take

him on tour with us as much as possible. If we're not able to, we stay connected by Skype. We love Skype — we even do homework together by Skype. Unfortunately we're not able to bring him to Cleveland, but we will be taking him to India with us later in the season.”

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