

Flamenco from Russia: fifteen minutes with guitarist Grisha Goryachev

by Mike Telin



“Why did I choose Flamenco? It’s just like love — you can’t explain it, you just feel it in your heart,” Russian-born guitarist Grisha Goryachev told us by phone. “When I listen to Flamenco I feel that it is my music. I don’t know why I feel this way because I am in no way a Gypsy, and I’m not Spanish. But it boils my blood and I feel love for this music.”

On Saturday, November 21 at 7:30 pm at Plymouth Church, [Grisha Goryachev](#) will present a concert of Flamenco music as part of the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society’s International Series. A demonstration of Flamenco dancing by the Fairmount Spanish

Dancers, led by Sandra Bohl with live guitar accompaniment, will begin at 7:05.

“I really look forward to Saturday. I’m going to play some of my all-time favorite pieces. During the first part I’ll play some of the older, more traditional Flamenco numbers, and during the second part I’ll include some modern pieces. The concert will be about an hour.”

Goryachev started playing classical guitar at age six, and from the very beginning he was attracted to the sound of Spanish music. “My father, who was my teacher, had a few recordings of Flamenco. I always loved the music. It absolutely hypnotized me. Then in 1986, Paco de Lucía visited Russia for the first time. He gave concerts in Moscow and in my home city of St. Petersburg. I attended one of them and I was so amazed, so shocked by the music that I begged my father to teach me that style.”

Although his father was not sure where to begin teaching Flamenco, he did have a friend who collected everything guitar-related, including Flamenco recordings as well as a

Flamenco method book by Juan Martin. “It was maybe the tenth photocopy of a photocopy,” Goryachev said, “but with the help of my father we started to sort out the puzzle. We learned all of the techniques by looking at the pictures and listening to the recordings, and I learned every solo in that method book within one year.”

Having exhausted the repertoire in that book, Goryachev and his father began to transcribe pieces from recordings. “I think the first piece took us about six months. It was a long process but as I did it more and more, it became easier. Transcribing music is like learning it from the inside out. It feels almost like I’ve composed it.”

Surprisingly, Goryachev has never had a Flamenco lesson. “I have never had a Flamenco teacher, not even for one hour. I’m not just talking about the masters — anybody. I’ve been to Spain multiple times and have listened to many guitarists, but I never studied Flamenco academically. I do teach Flamenco as well as classical. Today it’s so easy to come by methods with the Internet being so available. Twenty or thirty years ago this was not the case. It was like a closed culture. You had to know someone and have a teacher who would share little things here and there. You couldn’t go to the Internet and watch an instructional video.”

Goryachev pointed out that Flamenco is a mixture of many different musical styles that were collected by the Gypsies as they travelled to Spain. “Flamenco mainly exists as dance and song. The guitar is a more recent development. Usually in Flamenco concerts you will hear a singer and see a dancer performing a lot of palmas or hand claps. But mostly what people hear at performances is not really Flamenco at all, it’s people playing solos to a rumba rhythm. You even hear a lot of trumpets, and the guitars are often played with a pick instead of fingers. Flamenco singing can be very difficult for some people to take because you might say the *Cante* sounds unrefined, but there is always a lot of passion. I love it myself. I think it is the heart of Flamenco.”

Published on ClevelandClassical.com November 17, 2015.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)