

**Cleveland Classical Guitar Society:
Lukasz Kuropaczewski makes his Cleveland Debut**

by Mike Telin



From the moment he first heard the sound of the guitar at the age of nine, Lukasz Kuropaczewski knew he wanted to be a classical guitarist. “Every Sunday we went to church and one day there was a girl in the church, singing with the accompaniment of the guitar and I thought, this is the instrument of my life,” Kuropaczewski said during a recent Skype conversation from his home in Poland. On Saturday, October 18, at 7:30 pm in Plymouth Church [Lukasz Kuropaczewski](#), will his Cleveland debut on the [The Cleveland Classical Guitar Society](#)

International Series. As part of his Cleveland visit, Kuropaczewski will present a masterclass from 6:30–8:30 pm on Friday, October 17 at The Music Settlement.

“I’m excited because this is my first time performing in Cleveland. I’ve been to the city but never played there,” the extremely friendly Kuropaczewski said, adding that he is equally excited about the evening’s program which will begin with Italian guitarist-composer Mauro Giuliani’s *Rossiniana No. 3*. “Giuliani wrote many wonderful pieces for the guitar but I particularly like his Roainianas. First of all they are really beautiful and very romantic. They’re really fantasies based on Rossini’s operas, in this case, *La donna del lago*, *Il turco in Italia*, *Zelmira*, and *Ricciardo e Zoraide*. Giuliani took themes from each and wrote variations on those themes. They’re very virtuosic and audiences love them, so I try to play them as often as I can.”

Does Kuropaczewski think it is important to study Rossini’s operas as part of learning the work? “Of course! The first thing I did was to look at the original arias to find out how they sounded and how people sang them.”

Kuropaczewski will continue his program with *Ten Preludes* by Mexican composer Manuel Ponce. “These preludes are probably my absolute favorite pieces for guitar, but

they don't get as much attention as they should. Ponce wrote 24 preludes just like Chopin did for piano. I think Ponce meant to pay homage to Chopin. Every time I perform them I feel like a pianist. For this program I looked at all 24 and I chose 10 that I thought were the most beautiful."

What does Kuropaczewski find fascinating about Spanish composer Antonio José's four-movement *Sonata para Guitarra*? "Again it's a wonderful piece, but what's interesting to me is that José was a composer, not a guitarist. We should all be grateful that a composer as talented as he was decided to write something for our instrument. José was a student of Ravel and you can hear that in his music. It's very Spanish, very impressionistic, and sometimes aggressive, but it's a powerful piece."

Although Kuropaczewski admits that many guitarists make fun of it, a piece he enjoys programming is Albeniz's *Asturias*. "I think it's a masterpiece and I love performing it in concerts."

For as much enthusiasm as he has for the guitar, there was a time when Lukasz Kuropaczewski became frustrated by the limitations of the instrument. He thought perhaps the piano would be a better choice. "I am really in love with the piano and its expansive repertoire. My discography is 95% piano music. The instrument is a huge inspiration to me. I think it's the perfect instrument—everything has its place and everything is so well organized in a way that the guitar is not. Often when I am practicing the guitar I always think of how a pianist would play it, how it would sound and then take it from there. So the piano is my huge love."

Gradually Kuropaczewski's frustrations began to wane as he discovered new music and new composers, as well getting the opportunity to study with renowned guitar teacher Maestro Manuel Barrueco at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, MD. "He showed me things I never knew existed, and that opened a huge door. Now I think the guitar is the most wonderful instrument—together with the piano."

Kuropaczewski describes Barrueco as a true genius and the most important person in his musical life. "I cannot say enough wonderful things about him. I think he is the most important guitarist in our history and studying with him was an honor. I would not be who I am today if it weren't for him."

Today Kuropaczewski is mentoring his own students. He currently teaches at the Academy of Music in Poznan, Poland, where he also serves as the Artistic Director of the Polish Guitar Academy Festival. "I love teaching at the Academy and I have a wonderful group of students. This summer a guitar quartet won the most important chamber music competition in Poland. They are on tour now playing Rodrigo's *Concierto Andaluz* with symphonies. I'm really proud of them and teaching is a very important part of my work."

Although he did not come from a “musical” family, there was always music in the house. “My parents are teachers in a primary school. My father teaches math and physics and my mother teaches Polish literature and Polish. They never played any instruments and the only music they listened to was rock music from their teenage years. But when I started to play the guitar, they began to listen to guitar music with me.

“Then they moved on to classical music. Now when I visit them I see that they’re listening to a lot of Nora Jones, Keith Jarrett and Chick Corea, so they’ve gone into jazz a little more. Also my wife is not a musician, which I am very happy about. She’s a graphic designer and printmaker. So we have a lot of things to talk to each other about, not just music. It all makes for a very healthy life.”

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