

Cleveland Classical Guitar Society: a conversation with executive director Erik Mann

by Mike Telin



The Cleveland Classical Guitar Society will open its International Series with a “Showcase” concert at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights. On Saturday, September 19 at 7:30 pm, two duos will join Grammy-winner Jason Vieaux in a wide-ranging program of pieces for voice and guitar, two guitars, and solo guitar. The performers include Stephen Aron, guitar, and JoNell Aron, soprano, as well as Duo Amaral (Jorge Amaral and Mia Pomerantz-Amaral, guitars).

Where else can you find *Shine on, harvest moon* and a Bach lute suite on the same program? There’s no admission charge, but donations are welcome.

In addition to the great music, CCGS will honor Jason Vieaux during the concert as the first recipient of the Cleveland Classical Guitar Award. “We created the award because we felt that we should recognize the classical guitarists who are spreading the word about our art form throughout the community, and Jason is the perfect fit to receive the first award,” CCGS executive director Erik Mann said during a telephone conversation.



“Jason’s been in Cleveland for twenty-five years,” Mann continued. “He moved here as a freshman to study at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and about a year later he won the Guitar Foundation of America competition. Since then he has been going strong. I can’t think of anybody who has done more to elevate the status of the classical guitar in Cleveland than he has.”

I asked Erik Mann to say a few words about each of the International Series concert, which will continue on October 24 with a performance by Croatian guitarist Ana Vidović. “She is extremely popular in the classical guitar world. Ana was a child prodigy and is well known for her technically perfect performances, but her musicianship is astonishing as well. I last heard her play about a year ago, and it was an incredible concert. I’m excited because this will be her first performance in Cleveland in over a decade.”

The November 21 concert features flamenco guitarist Grisha Goryachev. “He’s a native of St. Petersburg, Russia and is another player who’s technically unbelievable — he plays the fastest scales I have ever heard from a guitarist. He also has a great flamenco groove and a wonderful musical ear. He first learned to play flamenco by transcribing recordings. He’s also the only great flamenco player I am aware of who is not a native of Spain.”

Legendary lutenist Paul O’Dette returns to Cleveland on January 30. “Paul is fantastic. He won his second Grammy this year, but this one was for his conducting. It’s amazing to me because he just seems to get better with age. I heard him play an all-Dowland concert about a year ago, and I was on the edge of my seat the entire time.”

Polish guitarist Łukasz Kuropaczewski stunned listeners with his Cleveland debut recital last year. On March 12 he returns to Cleveland, this time with Polish accordionist Maciej Frackiewicz. “At dinner after his concert last year, I asked him if he happened to play in a duo. He told me about his guitar and accordion duo, and I immediately started working on getting them here this year. Łukasz also gives the most animated master classes of any classical guitarist I know.”

The series will conclude on April 16 with a performance by Manuel Barrueco, who last appeared in Cleveland with Cuarteto Casals as part of the Cleveland Chamber Music Society series. “Manuel is a towering figure in the classical guitar world, and this will be his first solo concert in Cleveland in over ten years. In addition to being a great performer, he’s also a very well known teacher. In fact he taught Ana Vidović and Łukasz Kuropaczewski, as well as the amazing Beijing Duo, who we presented a few years ago.”

All of Cleveland Classical Guitar Society's International Series concerts will take place at Plymouth Church. Click [here](#) for more information.

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