

Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival celebrates its 17th season June 9-11

by Mike Telin



Beginning on Friday, June 9 and continuing through Sunday, June 11, Guitars International will present the seventeenth annual [Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival](#) at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

“I cannot believe it’s the 17th season,” CICGF founder and artistic director Armin Kelly said during a recent telephone conversation. “Over the years I’ve learned a lot about what to do and what not to do, but it was a steep learning curve.”

Kelly noted that the Festival has grown beyond what he had ever imagined possible. “I was interested in figuring out how to fill a void in the presentation of the classical guitar in Cleveland,” Kelly said. “There were guitar programs at CIM, Oberlin, the University of Akron, and other schools in the area, but there really wasn’t an established concert presenter for the instrument.”

As he began to talk to people about how to go about filling that void, Kelly soon found a kindred spirit in Tom Poore, who at the time was a master’s student at CIM. “Some mutual friends put us together, and one thing led to another,” Kelly said. “We started by presenting one concert in the fall and the spring, but we quickly began to think about creating a once-a-year festival.”

As the Festival has grown, friendships have also been established. “Last year Tom mentioned how nice it was to stand back and watch people who had previously attended renew their friendships, and to watch the first-timers establish new connections,” Kelly recalled. “Not just about relationships with the music, but also with the artists, with

students from around the country, and with people who just love music. And that makes me feel really good.”

This year’s roster of performers includes Grammy Award-winners David Russell and Jason Vieaux, as well as Gramophone-winning lutenist Nigel North. In addition to his all-Bach recital, North will also present a lecture titled Bach for Guitarists. “We could all learn something by attending his lecture,” Kelly said. “Nigel has been here a number of times, and even if he’s not giving a concert, he’s been generous to come and give master classes and lectures.”

As always, the presentation of young and emerging artists is a Festival priority. “Hao Yang attended two years ago as a student. She impressed everyone with the way that she played in the master classes. She’s a student of Jason Vieaux’s at Curtis, and not only is she technically gifted, she’s very musical. She’s also won some important competitions, so we’re very excited to have her here.”

An artist who grew up with the Festival is Bay Village native Colin Davin, who now serves on the guitar faculty at CIM. “Colin has emerged in the most wonderful way,” Kelly said. “He’s a special talent. This year he’s arranged all of the master classes in addition to teaching his own, and giving a concert.”

This year 20 students of all ages from around the country will participate in Festival master classes.

In addition to Nigel North, other lecturers include Grammy-winning producer Alan Bise and Portland, Oregon-based luthier Jeffrey R. Elliot. “Alan will have interesting things to say about the recording process,” Kelly said. “He’s is a very busy guy and we’re lucky to have him this year. Jeffrey was here a few years ago, and this year his topic will be the restoration of a couple of rare classical guitars. He practically performed heart and lung surgery on them, so it should be fascinating.”

Below is an overview of the Festival’s schedule. Click [here](#) to view programs and read program notes.

Friday, June 9

10:00 am Master Class with TBD in Studio 113 (Free)

10:00 am Master Class with Colin Davin in Studio 217 (Free)

1:30 pm Lecture: “The Recording Process” with producer Alan Bise in Studio 113 (free)

3:00 pm Master Class with David Russell in Studio 113 (Free)

6:00 pm Lecture Demonstration: “Bach for Guitarists” with Nigel North in Studio 113 (Free)

7:30 pm Concert by Jason Vieaux in Mixon Hall (Ticketed)

Saturday, June 10

9:30 am Master Class with Colin Davin in Studio 113 (Free)

9:30 am Master Class with TBD in Studio 217 (Free)

1:30 pm Lecture: “Forensic Luthier: Behind the Scenes of Historical Guitar Restoration”
with Jeffrey R. Elliot in Studio 113 (Free)

3:00 pm Concert by Nigel North in Mixon Hall (Ticketed)

6:00 pm Demonstration on Exhibition Guitars: Artist TBD in Mixon Hall (Free)

8:00 pm Concert by David Russell in Mixon Hall (Ticketed)

Sunday, June 11

11:30 am Master Class with Jason Vieaux in Studio 113 (Free)

11:30 am Master Class with TBD in Studio 217 (Free)

1:45 pm Cleveland Bella Corda Ensemble in Pogue Lobby (Free)

2:30 pm Concert by Hao Yang in Mixon Hall (Free)

4:30 pm Master Class with David Russell in Studio 113 (Free)

7:30 pm Concert by Colin Davin and Emily Levin in Mixon Hall (Ticketed)

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