

Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival welcomes David Russell for his festival debut

by Mike Telin



When David Russell last performed in Cleveland in March of 2014, James Flood wrote in *ClevelandClassical.com* that the celebrated guitarist produced “just the right tone color for a given phrase or, in some cases, a single note, all done with such naturalness it’s as if his fingers instinctively know just where to go.”

On Saturday, June 10 at 8:00 pm in Mixon Hall, Russell will return to Cleveland for his debut performance on the Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival. He will also present free public masterclasses on Friday, June 9 at 3:00 and Sunday, June 11 at 4:30 in CIM’s Studio 113.

Speaking by telephone from Germany, where he was performing at the Koblenz International Guitar Festival, Russell said that although he and festival director Armin Kelly had spoken many times about his coming to CICGF, “the timing never coincided with my schedule, so this is going to be special for me.”

Russell will open his program with 18th-century Spanish composer José Brocá’s *La Amistad* (Fantasia in E), whose title means friendship. He’ll follow that with two small Partitas by Johann Kuhnau, who the guitarist described as a “not so well-known but very imaginative Baroque composer.” Kuhnau preceded Bach as Kapellmeister in Leipzig.

In honor of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Enrique Granados, Russell will present his own transcription of the Spanish composer’s *Valses Poéticos*. “It’s a very beautiful set of waltzes that always connects with an audience. I love them very much.”

The program’s second half will begin with Russell’s transcriptions of Domenico

Scarlatti's Sonatas K. 308 and 309. "I'll follow those with a piece that is very special to me and my wife María, Stephen Goss's *Cantigas de Santiago*. It's a big work, and all of the movements are based on 500-year-old songs and poems from the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. One is about a girl who plays her harp to the waves of the sea while waiting for her fisherman boyfriend to come home. There's another where a monk asks to view a little bit of heaven to see if it is worth so much suffering on Earth."

Russell said that he has known Goss since the composer was a student. "Steve had written a work for me based on poems by Federico García Lorca. He said he wanted to write a piece and dedicate it to me and my wife. We spoke about the city of Santiago, which is a special city for me and María because that is where we met, and it's not very far from where we live. He delved into the music that comes from there and made this terrific piece." The program will conclude with Francisco Tárrega's *Gran Vals*.

The Grammy-winning guitarist said that Cleveland is a memorable place for him — for many years he recorded with Telarc International, where he had the wonderful experience of working with the late recording engineer Tom Knab. "We were so sad when Tom died. He was very special for me as a friend, and also for María," Russell said. "He engineered maybe sixteen of my CDs and played a large part in my recording career. He was great — apart from always getting a fantastic sound. When you're in a recording situation, the person on the other end with the headphones is your audience. You need somebody who is encouraging, yet at the same time critical enough to help you, and he was absolutely perfect."

Click [here](#) to purchase tickets and for more information about David Russell.

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