

## Jason Vieaux to perform on John Knox series

by Mike Telin



Life is good for classical guitarist [Jason Vieaux](#). His recent performances include appearances at the Caramoor Festival, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Buenos Aires' Teatro Colon, and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

This season he will collaborate with the Escher Quartet, mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, violinists Anne Akiko Meyers, Kristin Lee, and Tessa Lark, harpist Yolanda Kondonassis, and accordionist Julien Labro. "I don't know how all of this happened. I call up these fantastic musicians and they all want to work together," Vieaux said by telephone while he was on a layover in Washington D.C.

Although Vieaux said that airports are his home away from home, he will actually *be* at home in Cleveland this week. On Friday, February 2 at 7:00 pm at John Knox Presbyterian Church in North Olmsted, he will present a solo recital for the Church's performance series. The evening will feature classical and contemporary music from Italy, Spain, Germany, Argentina, Brazil, and the U.S. — including selections from Vieaux's 2015 Grammy Award-winning album, *Play*. Admission is free.

The program will open with Mauro Giuliani's *Grand Overture*. "Giuliani was the Paganini of the guitar. They were contemporaries and like Paganini, Giuliani was a bit of a rock star," Vieaux said. "He was very well-known in Vienna — he even had a fan magazine that chronicled his latest activities. He knew Beethoven, and was a cellist in the orchestra at the premiere of his Seventh Symphony."

Vieaux looks forward to bringing back a piece he has not performed in several years — Bach’s *Prelude, Fugue, and Allegro*, BWV 998. “As with everything by Bach, as you get older more things are revealed. Hopefully I can communicate the new things I’ve discovered during the performance.”

The guitarist will begin a set of works by Isaac Albéniz with *Rumores de la Caleta* (“Malagueña”). “I’ll continue the set with *Capricho Catalán*, which is a slower, very beautiful melody, and finish with the serenata, *Torre Bermeja*.” The European portion of Vieaux’s playlist will also include Hans Werner Henze’s “Drei Tentos” from *Kammermusik*.

Moving to the Americas, Vieaux said that Paulo Bellinati (pronounced *bellinache* in Portuguese) was a “brilliant” Brazilian guitarist and composer, and that his song *Jongo* is a dance from West Africa.

“Pat Metheny’s music lends itself so well to a solo classical guitar concert,” Vieaux said. “I’m playing my arrangement of *Always and Forever* in a medley with Antônio Carlos Jobim’s *A Felicidade*. The two were close and fans of each other. Pat lived in Brazil for a long time and was immersed in the culture where American jazz was meeting Brazilian street musicians. Pat brought all of this back to the States, so I thought that Pat’s tune would make a nice introduction to *A Felicidade*. I know that Roland Dyens, who arranged the Jobim, would appreciate it too.”

A piece that Vieaux said was a “signature piece” early in his career is Argentine guitarist and composer José Luis Merlin’s *Suite del Recuerdo*. “I’ve played this in Cleveland a few times and it’s a piece that is very close to me. I love playing it and must have performed it fifteen hundred times, but I never get tired of it.”

The guitarist will complete the program with his arrangement of Duke Ellington’s *In a Sentimental Mood*. You can watch him perform the work [here](#).

Vieaux said that a lot of his active performing career has stemmed from his association with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, which he has been a part of since 2007. “The artistic directors, David Finckel and Wu Han, invited me to Music@Menlo that summer — which is where I met the Escher Quartet — and we’ve all been tight friends ever since. I also met Sasha Cooke through them, and she and I are playing a Cleveland Chamber Music Society concert later this year. They’re all great people and there’s a lot of cool stuff happening. But now I’m having to learn to say no, which is difficult to learn but a great problem to have.”



A recent honor for Vieaux was being invited to play in a concert at the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires as part of Mario Davidovsky's 80th birthday celebration. "I love his music and he was such an important figure in the '60s avant-garde. Listening to his music is just wonderful, and to be able to work on it with him sitting there is a heady experience. But he was very happy.

"It was interesting because he'd say — 'the thing about this passage is' — and I was expecting to hear an intellectual comment, but then he'd say — 'when I wrote that I was thinking about when I was a child and I ran through a sprinkler.' I don't know if that was exactly it, but it was stuff like that. I think that's why people can relate to his music. He's a very smart, intellectual guy but his music isn't only coming from there. Somehow he's able to fuse his very 'severe' music with personal experiences. And if you listen long enough you begin to hear a lot of humor, love, and emotion. I'm very grateful to Mario for choosing me for that concert. It was a tremendous honor."

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