

The lutes are coming! — LuteFest-2018 at CWRU

by Delaney Meyers



The Lute Society of America's annual LuteFest draws people from all over the world, and is the largest early plucked instrument festival of its kind. From Sunday, June 24 through Friday, June 29 on the campus of Case Western Reserve University, LuteFest-2018! will present concerts by world-class faculty, and festival participants will take part in all kinds of workshops — they'll learn about lute technique as well as the instrument's history and repertoire.

“One of the great things about this festival is that every participant gets private lessons with the faculty members,” Assistant Director Chris Wilke said during a recent telephone conversation. “It's like going to a cello conference and getting a private lesson with Yo-Yo Ma.” Lessons are open to anyone who registers, regardless of their level or background with the instrument.

Another feature of LuteFest is the concert series, held in CWRU's Harkness Chapel. “All of the performers are free to pick out their own rep,” Wilke said. “They're the best of the best in the fields of lute playing and early music.”

Ohio native and acclaimed lutenist Paul O'Dette will open the series on Sunday, June 24 at 7:30 pm with a program of English music, titled [“Lord Herbert of Cherbury's Lute Book.”](#) Wilke described it as “unusual music between the Renaissance and the Baroque period.”

Medieval music from Italy will be featured on Crawford Young's 12:30 pm program on Monday, June 25, "[La mia tetra e il mio liuto.](#)" Wilke emphasized that this music is "very rarely heard in the United States," and festivalgoers will surely be in for a treat.

Ronn McFarlane's flute, bass, and drum ensemble Ayreheart will take the stage on Monday, June 25 in a 7:30 pm program titled "[Centuries Collide.](#)" "They will play historical music and also some of [McFarlane's] original music, as well as things like Celtic and Scottish tunes," Wilke said. "It should be a lot of fun."

On Tuesday, June 26 at 7:30 pm, theorbist Xavier Díaz-Latorre will present "[Dances by the Royal Masters.](#)" Next, McFarlane and O'Dette will team up for a concert of lute duos at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, May 27 ("[For Two Lutes : Virtuoso Duets from Italy and England](#)"). This program will also feature Italian Renaissance music, which is much more commonly heard than the country's Medieval music. Not to fret, however, hearing these duos is still a rare opportunity. In our conversation, Wilke explained why.

"One of the things that makes lute ensemble music sometimes difficult to program is that composers would often write it for different-sized lutes — so they're at different pitches, and you have to find people with the right lutes." He said that today, most people own standard-sized lutes, meaning that "even approaching this repertoire is kind of hard unless you've got a cabinet full of lutes — it's great to be able to hear it here."

Robert Barto, one of the leading experts in Baroque lute, will perform on Wednesday, June 27, also at 7:30 pm ("[Music by Luis Milan \(El Maestro 1536\) and SL Weiss](#)"). In addition to Baroque lute, Barto will perform half of his program on the *vihuela*, a Spanish instrument that Wilke described as a combination of lute and guitar.

On Thursday, June 28 at 7:30 pm, Elizabeth Kenny will present a creative program titled "[Music for 11-course lute from France, Germany, Scotland, and England.](#)" Nigel North will round out the faculty concerts with a 12:30 pm all-Bach program on Friday, June 29, titled "[Lute Works - BWV 997-1000.](#)"

LuteFest's final event will be a participant concert featuring both students and faculty on Friday the 29th at 7:00 pm. Wilke closed our conversation by talking a little bit about the Lute Society of America. "Our mission is to spread awareness of the lute as an instrument and its music, and this festival is one way that we do that."

Published on ClevelandClassical.com June 20, 2018.

Click here for a printable copy of this article

[Return to the Front Page.](#)