

**Guitar Society presents
Stephanie Jones (Feb. 27)**

by Jarrett Hoffman



On Saturday, the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society unveiled the latest concert video in its International Series. Australian guitarist Stephanie Jones introduces herself to Cleveland from her home in Munich in an excellent recital that's still available on [YouTube](#) for at least a month.

One of the first impressions from the video is Jones' gift as a communicator, both in words and in music. Her spoken introductions are engaging and casual. She doesn't aim to provide a verbal program note — instead, she mixes bits of history and explanations of technique with personal insights, and always keeps it short.

It's amazing to watch her transition right from those segments into a state of total immersion in the music. You can see the transformation happen in her face, and you can hear in her playing that she has immediately transported herself, and us, to another place.

That holds true across the entire spectrum of emotions present in her program. She mesmerizes with her easygoing feel of bossa nova in Luis Bonfá's *Manhã de Carnaval*. And her sense of emotional tenderness shines out beautifully in the more melancholy pieces (like Leo Brouwer's stunning *Un Dia de Noviembre*) as well as the more peaceful ones (Richard Charlton's *The Black Cockatoo Flying Alone*).

But what Jones especially brings to the table is a rare sense of verve. That comes through first in the world premiere of Kevin Callahan's *The Whiskey Tales*, a piece that's notable for its unique and tasteful mix of blues, jazz, rock, and classical. Particularly in the third

movement — a portrait of the Corryvreckan whirlpool off the West coast of mainland Scotland — Jones grabs your attention with intense staccato strumming and an exhilarating rise and fall of dynamics.



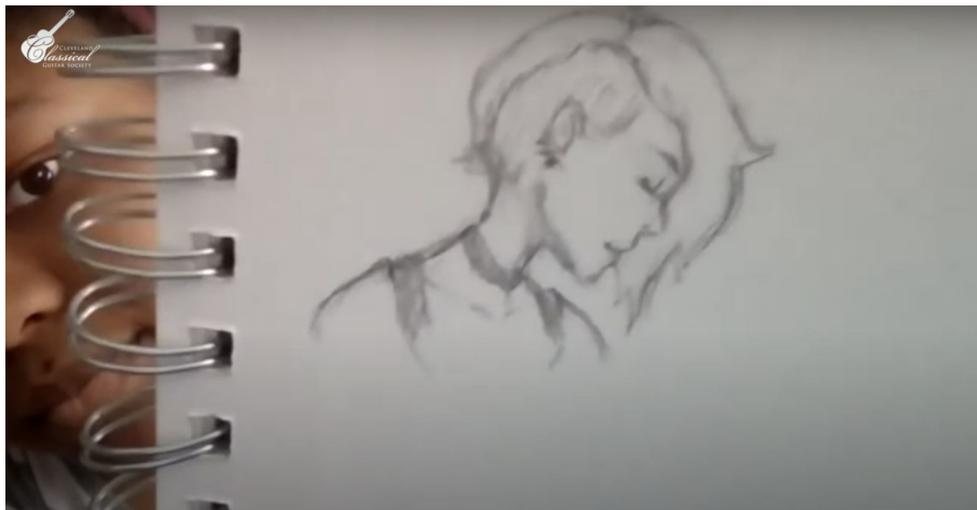
Two of the brightest highlights come from Argentina and Brazil: Quique Sinesi's *Cielo Abierto* and Antônio Carlos Jobim's *A Felicidade*. Jones revels in the grooving rhythms, the bits of fascinating harmony, and the percussive qualities of the Sinesi. And in the Jobim, we find her totally unleashed, relishing all of the kicks of spice in this adventurous arrangement by Roland Dyens. The performance gives off a beautiful feeling that's not at all common: when performer and music seem to merge into one.

The opening work, Francisco Tárrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*, is known for challenging performers with its constant tremolo. Jones handles it well with her agile digits, but here, and in brief moments of fingerwork during Astor Piazzolla's *Invierno Porteño*, there's a slight straining in the sound, which otherwise rings out beautifully.

The Guitar Society's pre-recorded concerts this season have not only been beautifully performed and produced, but they've all wrapped up in under an hour. At that perfect length, the audience is game to stick around a few more minutes to take in some nice behind-the-scenes, bonus material.

Here, Jones talks with the Society's student guitarists about creating videos (sound quality is the most important thing no matter how amazing the camerawork, she emphasizes) and how she lines up content for her popular social media channels (often through a single recording session, though she can add pop arrangements into the mix

fairly quickly). The final image of the video is a student showing off an impressive drawing of Jones — with a special focus, of course, on that head of hair.



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