

Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival: Saturday afternoon recital by Muxin Li (June 6)

by Daniel Hathaway



Chinese-born guitarist Muxin Li took up the instrument at the age of three, made her concert debut at ten, and began studies with David Starobin and Jason Vieaux at Curtis at 16.

On Saturday June 6, in Mixon Hall, she demonstrated both a charming precocity and an impressive maturity in her Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival recital of works by Spanish, Italian, Paraguayan, and Swiss composers.

Like François Couperin's character pieces, the titles of movements of Vincente Asencio's *Collectici Intim* depict human affects. In "La Serenor," simple chords lead to lyrical music beautiful in its simplicity. "La Joia" is animated by sweeping scales, and "La Calma" is soothing, with a gentle, sweet melody. "La Gaubanca" delightfully strums its way forward, and "La Frisanca" shimmers with tremolo. Li played its impressionistic lines with sensitivity and direction.

She tossed off the scales of Miguel Llobet's Scherzo-Vals — a brief fun dance by the rare guitar composer who wasn't himself a guitarist — with clean articulation.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesca's *Sonata Omaggio a Boccherini* begins with a spirited Allegro in which Li brought out brilliant connecting phrases, followed by a sad, song-like Andantino and a vivacious minuet with an amusing trio. She brought this tribute piece with its many notes to a brisk, energetic conclusion with numerous color changes along the way.

After an intermission, Li closed out her program with a rather episodic account of

Joaquin Rodrigo's *Sonata giocosa*, a nicely-paced performance of Agustin Barrios-Mangoré's craggy *Mazurka Apasionata*, and a thrilling reading of Giulio Regondi's *Introduction et Caprice* studded with virtuosic scale passages, all of which she played with clean, focused tone.

Throughout her recital, Li showed a left-handed dexterity on the fingerboard (oxymoron intended) that might have made the right hand of a pianist like Chopin jealous.

Her nostalgic encore? *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* (Memories of the Alhambra).

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