

## Review

Cleveland Classical Guitar Society  
Showcase Concert (September 15)

by Mike Telin



Keeping an annual concert new and fresh is not an easy task, and that task becomes more problematic when the group of artists remain more or less the same each year. However, artistic minds usually find artistic solutions. On Saturday, September 15 at First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, a near capacity audience was treated to a brilliantly programmed evening of music when the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society presented its annual Showcase Concert. In keeping with tradition, the concert featured performances by classical guitar professors from the area's conservatories and schools of music.

Francois Fowler, (Dana School of Music at Youngstown State University) began the evening's musical kaleidoscope. *Meditation*, his own composition lasting roughly five minutes, chromatically weaves its way through many moods and colors and was a fitting prelude for the *Allemande and Bourée* from the *Partita in a minor*, BWV 1013 of Bach. Originally written for flute, the piece adapts nicely to the guitar, and Fowler, being the sensitive musician he is, performed each dance with grace and charm. He closed his set with Johann

Kasper Mertz's *Fantaisie Hongroise*. No performance by Francois Fowler would be complete without some humorous comment. "The work is dedicated to his wife – however scholars believe he died from being poisoned by her." Nonetheless, this is an engaging work that combines elements of classical music with Hungarian folk and Gypsy music, which he played with panache.

Jorge Amaral (Conservatory at Baldwin-Wallace University) along with his performing and life partner, Mia Amaral — aka Duo Amaral — were perfectly matched musical partners during their mesmerizing performance of *Saggio*, by Victor Manuel Amaral Ramirez, Jorge's father. Consisting of three movements, *Saggio* begins with a beautiful *Bagatela*, which Duo Amaral performed with perfectly matched voices, and leads into the slower ballad-like *Suplica*. The final movement, *Fantasia*, is a briskly paced rondo in which something inventive and aurally captivating occurs with each return of the theme. Duo Amaral are superb, thoughtful musicians, and a welcome addition to the classical music scene of greater Cleveland.

Stephen Aron (University of Akron and Oberlin Conservatory), a formidable soloist, showed he was equally at home in the role of chamber musician. Aron and his longtime collaborator and University of Akron colleague, flutist Jane Berkner, played a rousing set of Latin American music. *Carolina*, from Ricardo Iznaola, is a charming melodic dance tune inspired by the composers niece. Luiz Americano's *Tigre de Lapa*, which translates as *Tigre from the Jam Session*, a Brazilian choro full of arpeggios and passing of lines between players, made one want to dance. Two movements from Jose Lezcano's *Sonatina Tropical – Cancion de Madrugada, or Song of the Dog* and *Samba – Finale* were both played with the passion the music requires. Acknowledging the enthusiastic response from the audience, The AronBerkner Duo offered a last musical morsel: *A Casinha Pequena* or *The little House*, a Brazilian folksong arranged by Laurindo Almeida.

As is customary at this concert, the final performer of the evening was Jason Vieaux (The Cleveland Institute of Music and The Curtis Institute, Philadelphia). It's no secret that Vieaux is a versatile performer, and is at home in almost every genre of music, so it was a pleasure to hear his set which he devoted primarily to jazz and contemporary compositions. *Jongo* by Brazilian composer and guitarist Paulo Bellinati, kept the audience enraptured in Latin-America, which seemed to be right where the audience wanted to stay, given their response to the work's performance. Vieaux then put everyone *In a Sentimental Mood* with a heartfelt rendition of the Duke Ellington classic. His *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* by Francisco Tarrega with the piece's continuous employment of tremolo was simply sublime. *Felicidade* by Antonio Carlos Jobim was full of colors, crisp articulations and rhythmic precision. A fine conclusion to a most enjoyable evening. What could have easily been more of the same was anything but.

*Published on clevelandclassical.com September 25, 2012*