2019 Showcase Concert  
September 14, 2019

Prelude  
(from *Cello Suite No. 6, BWV 1012*)  
Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685-1750)

Brasiliana No. 13  
I. Samba-Bossa Nova  
II. Valsa  
III. Choro  
Radamés Gnattali  
(1906-1988)

Vals Venezolano No. 3 "Natalia"  
Antonio Lauro  
(1917-1986)

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Colin Davin, guitar

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The Shepherd’s Dream  
Rachenitsa  
Alan Thomas  
(b. 1968)

Chamber Music  
Ballake Sissoko  
(b. 1968)  
arr. Gripper, Gruca, White

Samba!  
(from *Dances in the Madhouse*)  
David Leisner  
(b. 1953)

Gruca White Ensemble  
*Linda White, flute*  
*Robert Gruca, guitar*

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Sonata, K. 208  
Domenico Scarlatti  
(1685-1757)  
arr. Leo Brouwer

Variations on a Theme by Handel, Op. 107  
Mauro Giuliani  
(1781-1829)

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Jason Vieaux, guitar
Program Notes

The six unaccompanied *Cello Suites* were groundbreaking works of a scale which had never before been approached for the instrument. They are now often arranged for other instruments and have become a core part of the guitar’s repertoire. Each begins with a Prelude, which became a vehicle for Bach to display exceptional creativity. Preludes were typically improvised at the time, and while most of those by Bach’s contemporaries were simply notated improvisations, Bach managed to add form and direction that elevated the genre to a new level. This Prelude is the most virtuosic of the set.

The Brazilian composer, pianist, and guitarist Radamés Gnattali had musician parents, and like his two siblings he was named after a character from a Verdi opera. Gnattali was a master of fusing Brazilian popular styles with classical forms, including in his series of works (for various instrumentations) entitled *Brasiliana*. The first movement of *Brasiliana No. 13* for solo guitar is loosely inspired by Bossa Nova music made popular in the 1950’s and 1960’s, as well as the earlier samba. The second movement is based on Brazil’s version of the European waltz (Valsa), while the exciting Choro that ends the work refers to street music dating back to nineteenth century Brazil.

Antonio Lauro began his career as a pianist, but after hearing the Paraguayan guitarist/composer Agustín Barrios he gave up the piano for the guitar. Lauro’s music typically falls within the tradition of popular music from his home country, lyrical and rhythmic, but with intense counterpoint that can only be realized with an advanced technique. Most popular are his waltzes, which alternate between 3/4 and 6/8.

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Alan Thomas arranged a collection of ten Balkan songs and dances for flute and guitar (and one for solo guitar), two of which are featured tonight. Of these the composer writes: “While perusing a folk song collection, I came across a little tune labelled as ‘Croatian Lovesong’. Though only eight bars long and extremely simple in its rhythmic and melodic construction, I became somewhat obsessed by the haunting beauty of this melody. I am often troubled by these ‘earworms’, and as I sang the melody over and over in my mind, an image began to form of a shepherd on a hillside in the still evening air, playing variations on the melody as he drifted off to sleep. The score is headed with an excerpt from a poem by W.B. Yeats: ‘And I dreamed my lost love came stealthily out of the wood/With her cloud-pale eyelids falling on dream-dimmed eyes...’ The rachenitsa is a Bulgarian wedding dance in 7/8 time, which is often played at virtuosic breakneck speeds. Though based on a newly composed melody within a more lyrical flavour and varied harmonic context than is the norm, my version nonetheless attempts to retain the drive and energy of the traditional dance.”
*Chamber Music* is the title track from the debut album of two exceptional and unique musicians: Ballaké Sissoko and Vincent Ségal. Ballaké Sissoko of Mali is one of the finest players of the kora, a traditional harp with 21 strings and a large lute-like body. Vincent Ségal is a French cellist with a background in various styles including reggae, pop, hip hop, and the fusion style known as trip hop. The improvisatory work heard tonight was first arranged for solo guitar by Derek Gripper, who specializes in arranging kora music for classical guitar, and then further arranged for flute and guitar by the Gruca White Ensemble.

Dances in the Madhouse is a 4-movement work based on four lithographs of inmates in an asylum. David Leisner wrote a dance for each picture. Samba! is the last of these, and according to the composer is “for the middle-aged couple dancing a wild, dizzy dance.”

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Domenico Scarlatti, rather than following in the footsteps of his father (the great opera composer Alessandro Scarlatti), worked as a music teacher for royalty. Today he is known almost entirely for his more than 500 sonatas for harpsichord. Heavily influenced by the native music of Spain and Portugal, many of Scarlatti’s sonatas imitate the guitar, and have become standards in the solo and duo guitar repertoire.

Variations on a Theme of Handel, Op. 107 by the Italian guitarist Mauro Giuliani is based on the theme from the last movement (itself a set of variations) of George Frideric Handel’s Harpsichord Suite No. 5. The theme has become very popular, and is nicknamed “The Harmonious Blacksmith” after a rumor that Handel first heard the tune whistled or sung by a blacksmith, accompanied by the rhythmic clanging of his hammer upon the anvil. However, this story, and the nickname of the theme, were likely fabricated after Handel’s death. Giuliani’s work begins with the catchy theme, followed by six variations, each of which follow the outline of the theme with a different character (the slow fifth variation is the only one in a minor key and is more loose in its adherence to the theme). The work ends with a brief, exciting coda.

(Program Notes by Erik Mann)

**About the Artists**

Hailed as “the real thing, a player with a virtuoso’s technique, a deeply expressive musicianship, and a probing imagination” (*American Record Guide*) who “has the distinct ability to wring the depths of expressiveness from all that he plays” (*Classical Guitar Magazine*), and for his “precision, musical intelligence and passion” (*Cleveland Classical*), guitarist **Colin Davin** has emerged as one of today’s most dynamic young artists. Recent and upcoming highlights include concertos with the Wisconsin Chamber
Orchestra, Aiken Symphony Orchestra, New Mexico Philharmonic, Lake Placid Sinfonietta, Lakeside Symphony Orchestra, Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra, and Richmond Symphony; collaborations with Sharon Isbin at the 92nd Street Y and the Chautauqua Institution; and performances at the Aspen Music Festival and the Maui Classical Music Festival. Davin’s debut solo recording, *The Infinite Fabric of Dreams*, has been praised as “some of the finest interpretations I’ve heard...achingly beautiful...a thoughtful, perceptive interpretation, filled with details often missed” (*American Record Guide*) and "a first-rate disc...Davin knows the pieces deeply and delivers virtuosic and exciting performances...state of the art" (*Soundboard Magazine*).

Colin Davin is co-head of the guitar department at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and previously served on the faculty of Baldwin Wallace University. He holds numerous prizes in international competitions, and was a two-time finalist in the Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition. He holds a Master of Music from The Juilliard School, where he studied with Sharon Isbin; a Bachelor of Music from the University of Southern California with William Kanengiser; and preparatory studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music with Jason Vieaux.

Colin Davin performs on a 2007 Andrea Tacchi “Coclea Thucea” guitar, and endorses Augustine Strings.

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Since 2013, the **Gruca White Ensemble** has been entertaining audiences with their creative programs featuring music from multiple cultures and genres. Comfortable with both written and improvised musical forms, classical guitarist Robert Gruca and flutist Linda White stretch the boundaries of the standard classical concert by including original arrangements of rock, funk, Latin tunes, and free improvisation. Impressing audiences and critics alike, “The highlight of the evening was the set performed by flutist Linda White and guitarist Robert Gruca. Their performance of Chick Corea’s landmark composition *Spain* absolutely sparkled.” (*Clevelandclassical.com*, 2016).

The Gruca White Ensemble presents multiple performances throughout the Cleveland area, and has been featured on WCLV’s "First Fridays" live radio broadcasts. Robert and Linda are both graduates of the Cleveland Institute of Music, holding Masters of Music degrees, and currently teach at The Music Settlement in Cleveland, Ohio.

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Grammy-winner Jason Vieaux, “among the elite of today’s classical guitarists” (*Gramophone*), is the guitarist that goes beyond the classical. Among his extensive discography is the 2015 Grammy Award winning album for Best Classical Instrumental Solo, *Play*.
Vieaux has soloed with over 100 orchestras and has fostered premieres by Jonathan Leshnoff, Avner Dorman, Jeff Beal, Dan Visconti, David Ludwig, Vivian Fung, and Jos. Luis Merlin. Performance highlights include the Caramoor Festival as Artist-in-Residence, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Buenos Aires’ Teatro Colon, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, New York’s 92Y, and Ravinia Festival. Frequent chamber music collaborators include Escher Quartet, harpist Yolanda Kondonassis, accordion/bandoneon virtuoso Julien Labro, and violinist Anne Akiko Meyers. Vieaux’s latest CD release is a performance of Jonathan Leshnoff’s Guitar Concerto with the Nashville Symphony Orchestra (Naxos) and he has two upcoming albums on Azica. Recent recordings include a performance of Jeff Beal’s “Six Sixteen” Guitar Concerto (BIS); Infusion (Azica) with Labro; Ginastera’s Guitar Sonata, on Ginastera: One Hundred (Oberlin Music); and Together (Azica) with Kondonassis.

In 2012, the Jason Vieaux School of Classical Guitar was launched with ArtistWorks Inc., an interface that provides one-on-one online study with Vieaux for guitar students around the world. Vieaux has taught at the Cleveland Institute of Music since 1997, heading the guitar department since 2001. In 2011, he co-founded the guitar department at the Curtis Institute of Music. He has received a Naumburg Foundation top prize, a Cleveland Institute of Music Distinguished Alumni Award, GFA International Guitar Competition First Prize, and a Salon di Virtuosi Career Grant. Vieaux was the first classical musician to be featured on NPR’s “Tiny Desk” series. Jason Vieaux plays a 2013 Gernot Wagner guitar with Augustine strings.

For more information, visit www.jasonvieaux.com.