

**About the Music**  
**Boyd Meets Girl**  
**Presented by Cleveland Classical Guitar Society**  
**Cleveland, OH**  
**11/12/22**

Although paired less often than some instruments, the cello and classical guitar are natural complements. The latter's wide harmonic palette provides ideal support for the former's warm and expressive voice; and—as today's program amply demonstrates—together the instruments are capable of nearly any repertoire, from complex Baroque counterpoint to popular song.

The program opens with ***Vivissimo***, the third and final movement of Jaime M. Zenamon's *Reflexões No. 6* ("Reflections No. 6"). Zenamon (b. 1953) is a Bolivian composer and guitarist now based in Brazil, and the folk and popular traditions of South American music can be heard throughout his oeuvre. Unlike many of the compositions on today's program, this challenging work was composed expressly for cello and guitar. The exciting finale begins with an urgently repeated rhythm in the cello, which sets the stage for the virtuosic playing to come. Of particular note is the raucous *rasgueado* strumming in the guitar that marks the movement's exhilarating climax.

The next three compositions on the program are musically distinct, but each tells a story from a woman's perspective. The first, ***Gretchen am Spinnrade*** ("Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel"), is perhaps Franz Schubert's (1797–1828) most celebrated creation. Composed in 1814 for piano and voice, the song enacts a famous moment from Goethe's *Faust* in which the young Gretchen, seated at her spinning wheel, remembers a stolen kiss and swoons. The hypnotic circular patterns in the accompaniment symbolize both Gretchen's spinning wheel and her obsessive thoughts of love. The next piece, ***The Deserted Garden***, was composed for violin and piano in 1933 by the trailblazing Black composer Florence Price (1887–1953). Its title is borrowed from the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning's much earlier ode to childhood innocence, and Price perfectly captures the sadness and nostalgia of Browning's brief poem. Finally, Beyoncé's (b. 1981) song ***Pray You Catch Me*** tells of less innocent adventures and the pain inflicted by unfaithful husbands. The imaginative arrangement by Boyd Meets Girl heightens the intimacy of this downtempo R&B number—and even finds the performers vocalizing melodies in harmony with their instruments.

Growing up in Brazil, Radamés Gnattali (1906–1988) learned both guitar and the cavaquinho brasileiro (a small four-string instrument used in Brazilian samba and choro music). He would frequently return to these instruments—and to the spirit of Brazilian popular music—throughout his career as soloist, composer, and arranger. ***Allegretto comodo***, the first movement of his *Sonata for Cello and Guitar*, is an example of Gnattali composing in a classical vein, but even here the rhythms and harmonies of bossa nova can be heard in the guitar part in between statements of the infectious main theme. Claude Debussy's (1862–1918) ***Arabesque No. 1*** is a more abstract composition, an *arabesque* being a musical depiction of the flowing, interlinking lines common to Islamic nonrepresentational art. Originally composed for solo piano, this piece

contains early examples of Debussy's impressionistic technique and includes one of his most famous melodies. The wonderful arrangement for cello and guitar by Boyd Meets Girl is itself a kind of arabesque, each instrument intertwining with the other as they blur the line between lead and accompanist.

The first half of the program concludes with arrangements of two of the best-known songs by the Beatles: ***Eleanor Rigby***, from 1966's *Revolver*, and ***Blackbird***, from 1968's *White Album*. The band's catalog has been endlessly arranged and rearranged for countless ensembles, but these two songs lend themselves particularly well to guitar and cello: *Eleanor Rigby*, because it features a prominent cello line composed for the original recording by producer George Martin; and *Blackbird*, because its guitar part is instantly iconic and a staple of the repertoire. The loving arrangements by Boyd Meets Girl hew closely to the original recordings, with the cello mostly handling the melodies and the guitar the accompaniment.

The second half of the program commences with an arrangement of the folk song ***Shenandoah*** by American composer Caroline Shaw (b. 1982), who became the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 2013 for her work *Partita for 8 Voices*. The origins of this famous tune are murky—it may have first been sung by French-Canadian *voyageurs* traveling the Mississippi River in the nineteenth century, and “Shenandoah” refers to Chief Skenandoa of the Oneida, who aided the English in the Seven Years' War. Shaw composed the work for the pianist Kathryn Stott and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and today it appears in a new arrangement for cello and guitar by the performers themselves. Shaw offers a stark, almost minimalist interpretation of the haunting melody, anchored by a steady pulse in the chordal accompaniment.

J.S. Bach (1685–1750) composed the ***Inventions and Sinfonias*** as musical exercises for lovers of the “clavier” or keyboard. The *inventions* are brief, two-part contrapuntal works while the *sinfonias* are weightier three-part compositions. Although written with the keyboard in mind, these ingenious pieces have often been arranged for chamber ensembles of various configurations, since each of the contrapuntal parts can be played by a different instrument. This is the approach adopted by Boyd Meets Girl in their arrangements of inventions nos. 8, 10, 6, and 13. The challenge for them here is to make sure that the widely contrasting timbres of the two instruments illuminate rather than obscure Bach's contrapuntal logic.

***Mountain Songs***, by American composer Robert Beaser (b. 1954), is a cycle of eight songs originally composed for flute and guitar. Although each song is original, they draw inspiration (and melodies and harmony) from Anglo-American folk tunes, in particular those with roots in south Appalachia. “Barbara Allen” and “The House Carpenter” are based on English ballads dating from the seventeenth century and brought to these shores not long after. The origins of “He's Gone Away,” meanwhile, are perhaps Scottish, though it was often heard in America during the Civil War. Beaser's imaginative arrangements offer new and unexpected ways to hear these familiar tunes, from the sparse tranquility of “Barbara Allen” to the rolling, almost bluesy treatment of “The House Carpenter.” “He's Gone Away” is the longest of the three and covers the most musical terrain, fitting for a song that speaks of traveling “ten thousand miles” to find one's love!

The program concludes with a work composed specifically for Laura Metcalf and Rupert Boyd: Marián Budos's ***A New York Minute***. Budos (b. 1968) is a Slovak-Australian composer, pedagogue, and guitarist with a penchant for collaboration. When Boyd Meets Girl requested an uptempo work for guitar and cello, he returned a composition that (as the title suggests) packs a tremendous amount into a short period of time. The jaunty composition brims with an energy and optimism befitting a megalopolis, and Budos's deft touch as a composer and arranger ensures each instrument plays to its strengths: an expansive, memorable melody for the cello and sparking arpeggios and strummed chords for the guitar.

*Notes by Michael Bane*