Cleveland Classical Guitar Society

Annual Report

2022-2023
2022-2023 brought so many wonderful things. Our Education Program continues to serve youth from the City of Cleveland, and they have continued to inspire. Consider these numbers: CCGS students played opening performances for all six of our International Series concerts, and three of those students got critical reviews. Three more are now in a prestigious fellowship program. One played on stage with an acclaimed duo; 47 shared a stage in an unforgettable, standing-room only show; and one alumnus took the stage in a high-profile performance for 2,000 people.

Meanwhile, the International Series continues to host the greatest performers from around the world, and last season’s artists represented South Korea, Australia, the U.S., Cuba, Brazil, and Scotland. In addition to giving mesmerizing performances, these musicians also worked with our students, including a very special class by Grammy winner David Russell.

In these pages, you can read about the journeys of some of our recent graduates, and how we reconnect and even hire some of our alumni after they graduate. You can read about our new curriculum, new staff, summer camp and, most of all, inspiring stories of people who are all part of a positive change through music.

Thank you for reading, and we can’t wait to see you!

It has been a great year for powerful change through music.
Growing Our Staff

Our team recently had two exciting additions!

Shannon Filice
Director of Education

Shannon Filice has taught music in the public schools for over twenty years. Her expansive teaching experience includes fifteen years as an elementary music specialist, five years as a secondary choral director and one year as an orchestra conductor. She holds degrees in music education from Bowling Green State University and Boston University, and is a doctoral candidate at Kent State University. She has presented her research multiple times at the Ohio Music Educators Association State Conference. Shannon resides in Medina with her husband and three children.

Yolanda Manley
Office Coordinator

Yolanda Manley is joining the team after nine years as an Assistant Store Manager for Cuyahoga Community College Bookstores and has over twenty years of experience working in various Administrative/Office Management roles for non-profit social service and corporate organizations. She holds a bachelor’s degree in management with a minor in marketing from Baldwin Wallace University and an associate’s degree in Visual Communication and Design from Cuyahoga Community College. Throughout her career she has continued to stay steadfast in continuing her training and obtaining knowledge in all facets of the office environment. Yolanda is eager to bring her expertise to CCGS.

CCGS’s Education Program

An (Inter)Culturally Relevant Curriculum

In the 2022-2023 academic year, Educator & Curriculum Lead Rodrigo Lara Alonso spearheaded CCGS's first full curriculum, based on the needs of a population that are not met with any existing curriculum. This (Inter) Culturally Relevant Curriculum is based on principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and unites students from various backgrounds. The works are largely compositions and arrangements of relevance to Black and Latin American students, and based on the values, knowledge, and experiences students bring to class. Some examples are Stand By Me, which provides both an uplifting message and a connection for students to music of their parents’ generation; Guantanamera, which provides students of all backgrounds the opportunity to sing in Spanish and connect to Cuban heritage; and Lift Me Up from the 2022 movie Black Panther: Wakanda Forever, which is both popular and uplifting. There are currently over 100 works in the curriculum. Some of the pieces were commissioned by CCGS from BIPOC Composers in Residence.
Student Performances

December 10th

On December 10th, 2022, CCGS hosted its largest student event to date, at Julia De Burgos Latin American Cultural Center. A full hall of 180 people were treated to performances by 47 students, who came from CCGS’s programs at multiple Cleveland schools and Cleveland-area community centers. Through the rehearsal and performance, the youth were able to meet and connect with their peers from around Cleveland. This incredible night was capped off with a full reception that included homemade food from many of the parents.

The Guitar Star Ensemble

We are always excited when we can forge new relationships in Cleveland. On November 12, 2023, Boyd Meets Girl performed at Cuyahoga Community College’s John P. Murphy Foundation Theatre as part of Cleveland Classical Guitar Society’s International Series. This was the first CCGS concert to be held on the Tri-C campus. This event also featured our largest student opening group, The Guitar Star Ensemble. This 23 student group performed with CCGS staff and a few local professionals, including soprano Ashlee Foreman.

Summer Camp

In August 2022, CCGS held our 2nd Summer Camp at Cleveland Public Library’s South Branch on Scranton Road. Students participated in a five day camp that included lessons in songwriting, tie-dying, percussion, and of course, a ton of guitar playing! The week was capped off with an afternoon performance at Luis Muñoz Marín Dual Language Academy. CCGS alumni Alana Colvin, Kadirah McJunkins, and Damian Goggans helped our staff organize and instruct over a dozen kids.
Outreach

International Series artists provided our students with some unique and special learning moments. Bokyung Byun, Boyd Meets Girl, René Izquierdo, Brasil Guitar Duo, and David Russell all either visited our classrooms or worked with students at outside locations.

Bokyung Byun

Boyd Meets Girl

Boyd Meets Girl led a very unique outreach experience. In November 2022, just hours before their International Series concert, the duo did a special performance for CCGS students at the Cleveland Public Library’s South Branch and invited the public to attend. The duo welcomed CCGS student Danelis Cedeño Cálderon to perform with them. Danelis would then join the duo on stage at Cuyahoga Community College’s John P. Murphy Theater for the International Series concert, performing “Blackbird” by the Beatles.

René Izquierdo

Brasil Guitar Duo

David Russell

Our Education Program strives to not only introduce students to music and the guitar, but to tenaciously nurture their passion and ambition should the instrument inspire them to further study. In spring 2023, it was an incredible thrill to provide four of our advanced students the opportunity to learn from a Grammy Award winner, as David Russell gave a special class specifically for CCGS students, in addition to the masterclass he gave for the greater community.

Composers in Residence

The Composers in Residence program provides a direct connection between our students and passionate, talented BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) composer-guitarists. The 2022-2023 Composer in Residence program was special because a CCGS alumnus was the selected composer. Cleveland Classical Guitar Society commissioned Alana Amore Colvin to create original music and arrangements highlighting culturally relevant repertoire from blues, soul, funk, R&B, and jazz genres. These pieces were incorporated into CCGS’s curriculum for group classes and individual lessons. Alana said about the experience, “When CCGS first reached out to me, there were a lot of conversations about expanding the repertoire to include more blues, jazz, and more compositions by women composers. I was super excited to hear that, because those are three aspects of my musical journey that really pushed me along and got me to where I am now. I wanted to present them [CCGS students] with pieces that were really representative of my journey so there’s a little piece of me with them but also something that I hoped they could take with them and find a little piece of themselves.”

Alana Amore Colvin traveled to Cleveland three times to work with CCGS students. In honor of Juneteenth and Father’s Day, CCGS students gave a special world-premiere performance of works by Alana as part of the second Cleveland Community Celebration. Afterward, the performers and guests were treated to live music from the Sam Hooper Group, games, catering, and a beautiful summer afternoon. This event was hosted in Midtown at Dunham Tavern Museum & Gardens and the Midtown Tech Hive.
Daziel Pérez Pagán

Daziel Pérez Pagán has always loved music. His journey took him from Florida to Puerto Rico, and, after Hurricane Maria, to Cleveland. Daziel’s grandfather, who plays in a salsa band in Puerto Rico, gave him a guitar when he was young. Daziel also received a few lessons in piano and percussion at age 6 or 7, but “when I got to Cleveland, that’s when I really started and advanced and really learned.” Upon arriving in Cleveland in 7th grade, Daziel entered a CGGS guitar class at Luis Muñoz Marin Dual Language Academy, studying an instrument that he loved and had always wanted to learn to play. One special experience he remembers is when CGGS brought the Brasil Guitar Duo to his school when he was in 8th grade. He said, “When I saw them play, I thought, wow they’re amazing, and it’s possible to get to that level.” This became a full-circle moment when Daziel gave the opening performance for the duo’s second appearance for the International Series four years later.

Daziel went on high school at the Cleveland School of the Arts, where he joined an advanced CGGS guitar quartet, continued guitar lessons with CGGS, joined a rock/metal band, studied violin and piano, and began composing everything from rock and electronic dance music to classical orchestral and chamber music. The 2022 Boyd Meets Girl concert for CGGS’s International Series inspired him to write a piece for cello and guitar. Daziel is now studying guitar and composition on a scholarship at Youngstown State University. He wants us to know how special his time with CGGS was: “If it wasn’t for CGGS, I wouldn’t be here, I would probably be doing something else. It definitely changed my life.”

Kendyra White

Kendyra White graduated from the Cleveland School of the Arts in spring 2023 and plans to give back in a big way. Kendyra will enter Cleveland State University in January as a music therapy major with the double bass as her main instrument. Kendyra, who faces hearing loss, began her musical journey in a CGGS guitar class in eighth grade. She pushed herself in a field that she knew would be challenging: “I wanted to quit guitar; I thought I couldn’t do it because I couldn’t hear. It helped me to push myself to not quit. That was a really big part of my life, starting in music.” Kendyra continued guitar lessons through high school with various CGGS teachers (including CGGS alumnus and Assistant Teacher Damian Goggans) where she majored in orchestra and applied her guitar skills to the double bass. Hearing challenges led her to switch out of this major for a year, but she says, “I love music, so I came back to it. I accepted my hearing loss for what it was and learned more about myself. In my last year of high school, I got hearing aids and it almost broke my heart because I heard music for what it was. It was an amazing journey.” Kendyra was then given the opportunity to practice teaching others, including kids with autism, which brought her full circle to her own journey. “I loved working with them and how they could make music. To see them doing that, it made me more confident to do even more. I could relate to them because of my struggle with hearing loss. I found that I can help them with anything that they are struggling with through what I love.” As a music therapy major, Kendyra will learn to use music as a vehicle for helping others, and hopes that her career will include helping others with hearing impairments and autism.

Damian Goggans

Damian Goggans is no stranger to the concert hall. His journey with the guitar has led him to perform with the duo Les Freres Meduses, on tour with the U.S. Guitar Orchestra to Merkin Hall in New York and many venues in Spain, and throughout Cleveland. July 2023 brought the most prestigious performance of his young career so far; he was the first person to give a solo performance for the Cleveland Foundation’s annual musician showcase, a poorly attended event attended by a wide swath of Cleveland’s artistic, philanthropic, and social sector communities. This year, the free event reached its maximum capacity of 2,000 guests filling the large hall at Severance Music Center, where The Cleveland Orchestra regularly performs. Damian describes his feelings as he waited backstage to give the event’s opening performance, “As soon as I heard the announcer introduce me, I got more scared. I was playing through everything in my head. I thought, 'I can't mess up!' As soon as I walked onstage though, the musician part of me—belief in my musicianship—kicked in, oh my gosh, I'm so happy to get to share my music.”

Following his performance, several audience members from large organizations asked Damian to perform for other events, including the MetroHealth Women’s Expo, a Cleveland Public Library event, and the opening performance for a Wade Oval Wednesday concert. At the event, he also reconnected with incoming Cleveland Foundation CEO Lillian Kuri and outgoing CEO Ronn Richard, who chose him for this performance. Ronn stated, “I knew that Damian would be the perfect person to give the opening performance at our Annual Meeting. Damian’s story is an inspiration to so many and a powerful example of why it’s important for young people in Cleveland to have access to high-quality arts programs. If not for Cleveland Classical Guitar Society, Damian never would have been exposed to what has become his passion—and we would never have experienced the joy of hearing him play.”
From breathtaking technique to lilting tones to unique and inventive repertoire, last year’s International Series performers were truly inspiring.

2022 Showcase Concert
9/10/22

Bokyung Byun
10/8/22

Boyd Meets Girl
11/12/22

René Izquierdo
1/28/23

Brasil Guitar Duo
3/11/23

David Russell
4/22/23

The coming year will see a couple of exciting changes to the CCGS concert calendar. First, we are excited to be hosting the entirety of our International Series at Maltz Performing Arts Center. Also, in collaboration with BlueWater Chamber Orchestra we are presenting “Jason Vieaux Plays Vivaldi” in May 2024.

2023 Showcase Concert - 11/11/23

Hermelindo Ruiz and Samuel Diz - 2/24/24

Celso Machado - 4/13/24

2023-2024 International Series
Maltz Performing Arts Center

Stephanie Jones - 9/17/23
Tal Hurwitz - 10/5/23

2023 Showcase Concert - 11/11/23
Hermelindo Ruiz and Samuel Diz - 2/24/24
Celso Machado - 4/13/24

Jason Vieaux Plays Vivaldi
Special Collaboration with BlueWater Chamber Orchestra
Church of the Covenant
5/4/24
Guitar Community

We love to connect with the incredible guitar community here in Cleveland. Every year we host programs and events designed to teach and inspire local musicians and music enthusiasts.

Masterclasses
Two of our award-winning International Series artists, David Russell and Bokyung Byun, gave masterclasses. These classes are always free and open to the public.

Guitar Orchestras and Open Recitals
After all the teaching and learning it’s time to get on stage! CCGS provides local guitarists with multiple opportunities to perform throughout the year through our Guitar Orchestras and Open Recitals.

You can help us Teach, Inspire, and Connect by donating here: cleguitar.org/donate or by scanning the code.

Thank you!
Thank You!

To the foundations who generously supported CCGS in 2022-2023

Cleveland Classical Guitar Society is in residence at John Carroll University.

Special thanks to Dr. Cynthia Caporella.