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THE 2020 FENTON BROWN EMERGING ARTISTS CONCERT

LINÜ

Gulli Bjornsson and Jiji, *guitarists*

Baroque Set —

Prelude and Corrente, RV64 Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

“Air on a G string” Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
from *Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major, BWV 1068*

Les Cyclopes. Rondeau Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)
from *Suite in D major, RCT 38*

Cadenza from *Guitar Concerto, W50* Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)
Quasi allegro – Andante – Quasi allegro – Poco moderato

Mad Rush Philip Glass (b. 1937)

Libertango Astor Piazzolla (1921-92)

INTERMISSION

Bergmál Gulli Bjornsson (b. 1991)

Asturias Isaac Albeniz (1860-1909)

Late 19th/Early 20th Century set —

“Ruines d’un chateau” Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
from *Souvenir de Hapsal* (for piano), Op. 2, No. 1

Prélude en Ré Lili Boulanger (1893-1918)

“Passepiéd” *from* *Suite Bergamasque* (Gieseking) C. Debussy (1862-1918)

Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence Ryuichi Sakamoto (b. 1952)

Spanish Dance No.1, “La Vida da Breve” Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

Program Notes

by Gulli Bjornsson

A. Vivaldi - *Prelude and Corrente, RV64*

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) was born on March 4, 1678, in Venice, Italy, Antonio Vivaldi was a prolific composer who created works in the hundreds. He became renowned for his concertos in Baroque style, becoming a highly influential innovator in form and pattern. Vivaldi sought religious training on top of musical instruction; at the age of 15 he began studying to become a priest and was ordained in 1703. Due to his red hair, Vivaldi was known locally as “il Prete Rosso,” or “the Red Priest.” Vivaldi’s career in the clergy was short-lived. Health problems prevented him from delivering mass and drove him to abandon the priesthood shortly after his ordination. The prelude and Corrente is from a set of sonatas for two violins and basson continuo written in 1705.

J. S. Bach - *Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major “Air on a G string”*

J.S. Bach’s (1685-1750) infamous Air on a G string originates from Bach’s Orchestral Suite No. 3 in D major. Orchestral suites, or Overtures, as they were often called, were immensely popular in Germany during the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The Air (for strings alone, as it was originally composed) features a “walking bass line” that keeps the momentum from being slowed by the subtle interweaving of inner lines. This is one of the most famous movements in all of Bach’s compositions. It achieved bon-bon status thanks to the violinist August Wilhelmj, who, in 1871, published it in an arrangement for solo violin under the title “Air on the G String” (since his transcription was meant to be rendered entirely on the violin’s lowest string).

Jean-Philippe Rameau - *Suite in D major, RCT 3 8. Les Cyclopes. Rondeau*

Jean-Philippe Rameau (baptized September 25, 1683, Dijon, France—died September 12, 1764, Paris) was a leading French composer of his time that made tremendous contribution to the field of musical theory and particularly, Baroque compositions. Rameau spent the initial part of his life as a professional organist in Clermont Cathedral. In the early 1720’s, he moved to Paris where he composed and published many of his famous harpsichord pieces that went on to become legendary. He wrote three books of *Pièces de clavecin* for the harpsichord. The first, *Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin*, was published in 1706; the second, *Pièces de Clavessin*, in 1724; and the third, *Nouvelles Suites de Pièces de Clavecin*, in 1726 or 1727. *Les Cyclopes. Rondeau* is from the 2nd *Pièces de Clavessin*, written in 1724.

H. Villa-Lobos - *Cadenza: Quasi allegro – Andante – Quasi allegro – Poco moderato (from Guitar Concerto, W501)*

Heitor Villa-Lobos (born March 5, 1887, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil—died November 17, 1959, Rio de Janeiro) was a Brazilian composer and one of the foremost Latin American composers of the 20th century, whose music combines indigenous melodic and

rhythmic elements with Western classical music. Besides being a composer he was a skilled conductor, cellist, pianist, and guitarist and has been described as “the single most significant creative figure in 20th-century Brazilian art music”. The Guitar Concerto, W501 Cadenza is in four unmeasured sections with different tempo markings (Quasi allegro – Andante – Quasi allegro – Poco moderato) and is so substantial in length that it functions as a separate movement and even as a solo guitar piece.

P. Glass – *Mad Rush*

Philip Glass, (born January 31, 1937, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.), is an American composer of innovative instrumental, vocal, and operatic music. After studying composition at the Juilliard School of Music and in Paris, under Nadia Boulanger, he became acquainted with the Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar who decisively affected Glass’s compositional style. He began creating ensemble pieces in a monotonous and repetitive style; these works consisted of a series of syncopated rhythms ingeniously contracted or extended within a stable diatonic structure, now referred to as a kind of minimalist music. *Mad Rush* was written to honor the occasion of the Dalai Lama visiting North America in 1979. The opening three-voiced texture emphasizes two-note patterns playing against each other through a “two-against-three” poly-rhythm. It is contrasted by a four-bar idea of rapid 16th notes that add two extra beats during the fourth bar.

A. Piazzolla – *Libertango*

Another student of Nadia Boulanger, Astor Piazzolla (in full Astor Pantaleón Piazzolla) was born on March 11th, 1921 in Mar del Plata Argentina, and died on July 4th, 1992 in Buenos Aires. He was an Argentine musician and a virtuoso on the bandoneón (a square-built button accordion). Having won a composing contest with his symphonic piece *Buenos Aires* (1951), he went to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. She urged him to remain true to himself and to continue his experiments with the tango. Henceforth he combined his two musical passions, despite much criticism from tango traditionalists. *Libertango* is a composition from 1974 and marks a change in style for Piazzolla from classical tango to nuevo tango. He revolutionized tango music, by breaking the rules of traditional tango and fusing together elements of jazz and classical music into his tango compositions. He freed his country’s iconic music and dance form from the socially defined context of its origins and brought it to international concert halls. Perhaps it is best described by this short quote from the composer himself: “*Libertango stands for the freedom which I allow for my musicians. Their limits are defined solely by the extent of their own capabilities and not through any exterior pressure.*”

Gulli Bjornsson – *Bergmál*

“My composition *Bergmál*, Icelandic for echo (direct translation Rock-Language) is a piece that I have recomposed for many different instruments and it is the only composition of mine I have treated this way. As a composer I am interested in the idea of looping and *Bergmál* is a great example of that. The core of the piece is 18 bars of counterpoint. The counterpoint is based on four melodic (horizontal) ostinatos (a continually repeated

musical phrase) with fixed rhythm that loop continuously against each other. By looping these ostinatos, that are all of different lengths, and letting them clash against each other they create a surprisingly rich harmonic (vertical) matrix of chords that keep evolving, despite being fundamentally very repetitive. Bergmál is in two movements; the first movement is clear while the 2nd movement is blurry.“

Isaac Albéniz - Asturias

Isaac Albéniz, (born May 29, 1860, Camprodón, Spain—died May 18, 1909, Cambo-les-Bains, France) was a composer and virtuoso pianist and a leader of the Spanish nationalist school of musicians. Albéniz was a piano prodigy that studied with Felipe Pedrell, father of the nationalist movement in Spanish music, Vincent d'Indy and Paul Dukas. Albéniz's fame rests chiefly on his piano pieces, which utilize the melodic styles, rhythms, and harmonies of Spanish folk music. Among his most notable works are *Iberia* and the Suite *Española* which contains the infamous *Asturias*. The piece, which lasts around six minutes in performance, was originally written for the piano in G minor. The first guitar transcription of the piece was probably by Severino García Fortea, although Andrés Segovia transcription is the most famous and influential. Robbie Krieger of The Doors famously reworked the melody from this classical piece in *Spanish Caravan* that features on their 1968 album *Waiting For The Sun*.

Pyotr Tchaikovsky - “Ruines d’un chateau” from *Souvenir de Hapsal (for piano)*, Op. 2, 1.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (born April 25 [May 7, New Style], 1840, Votkinsk, Russia—died October 25 [November 6], 1893, St. Petersburg) is arguably the most popular Russian composer of all time. *Souvenir de Hapsal* was Tchaikovsky's first cycle of pieces for solo piano, written in the summer of 1867 while he was staying at the Estonian resort of Hapsal (now Haapsalu). The first movement titled “Ruines d’un chateau” (castle ruins) is in an ABA ternary form. The performance tonight is a world premiere of Gulli's brand new arrangement for two guitars.

Lili Boulanger – Prélude en Ré

Lili Boulanger (Marie-Juliette Olga Boulanger) was born into a musical family and a sister to Nadia Boulanger. Lili, as she was called, suffered from chronic illness; beginning with a case of bronchial pneumonia at age two that weakened her immune system, leading to the “intestinal tuberculosis” that tragically ended her life at the age of 24. She was the first female winner of the Prix de Rome composition prize. The Prelude in D Flat is originally for solo piano and was composed in 1911, one of Lili Boulanger's earliest compositions. The arrangement by Jiji for two guitars is a world premiere.

C. Debussy - Suite Bergamasque: IV. Passepied (Gieseking)

Claude Debussy (born August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France—died March 25, 1918, Paris) was a French composer whose works were a seminal force in the music of the 20th century. He developed a highly original system of harmony and musical

structure that expressed in many respects the ideals to which the Impressionist and Symbolist painters and writers of his time aspired. The Passepiéd is the last movement of the solo piano suite: Suite Bergamasque. Although Gulli's arrangement stems from the original solo piano composition he was inspired to arrange it after listening to the brilliant arrangement of Passapiéd by the American Modern-classical bluegrass band Punch Brothers.

Ryuichi Sakamoto - *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*

Ryuichi Sakamoto is a Japanese composer, singer, songwriter, record producer, activist, and actor who has pursued a diverse range of styles as a solo artist and pioneered a number of electronic music genres. *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* is a 1983 British-Japanese war film directed by Nagisa Oshima starring David Bowie. The film marked Sakamoto's debut as an actor and a film-score composer; its main theme (which we are performing in an arrangement by Jiji) became an international hit. The film is based on Sir Laurens van der Post's experiences as a Japanese prisoner of war during World War II as depicted in his books *The Seed and the Sower* (1963) and *The Night of the New Moon* (1970). Sakamoto's score won a BAFTA Award for Best Film Music in 1983.

Manuel de Falla - *Spanish dance no.1 "La Vida da Breve"*

Manuel de Falla (born November 23, 1876, Cádiz, Spain—died November 14, 1946, Alta Gracia, Argentina) is perhaps the most distinguished Spanish composer of the early 20th century. Falla took piano lessons from his mother and in 1905 he moved to Paris, where he met Claude Debussy, Paul Dukas, and Maurice Ravel. Subsequently Falla won two prizes, one for piano playing and the other for a national opera, *La vida breve* (first performed in Nice, France, 1913). The critics raved! Among the opera's most popular numbers is "Spanish Dance No. 1," a lively jota, which has since been arranged for a plethora of instrumental combinations, including two guitars. In the opera, the dance is performed as part of the betrothal celebration for Paco and Carmela, the girl of his own class that he must marry instead of his beloved Salud, a Gypsy maiden.

LINÜ

Gulli Bjornsson and **Jiji** are two aspiring young artists searching for new ways to promote classical music. Both virtuosic and versatile, Gulli and Jiji have received multiple accolades for their guitar playing and have backgrounds in composition, film, electronic music, visual arts and theater. Their diverse backgrounds, classical training and contemporary influences all come to fruition as they present unique programs of classical music, improvisations, arrangements and new compositions on classical and electric guitars.

In recital, they have performed in a wide array of venues, including: Le Poisson Rouge, National Sawdust, Dominican Guest Concert Series, Morse Recital Hall, Mengi, Hannesarholt, Yale British Art Gallery, East Meadow Public Library and Yale Cabaret.

Gulli and Jiji met at the Yale School of Music in 2015 and have been performing together and creating music ever since. Their primary teacher was Benjamin Verdery.



Gulli Bjornsson (b. 1991) is a guitarist and composer from Iceland. Bjornsson's music typically blends electronics, acoustic instruments and visuals in a variety of contexts. Most recently Gulli released his debut album *Bergmál* with his own compositions for guitar, strings and laptop. You can find it on all major online platforms. He is a candidate for the Ph.D. degree in composition at Princeton University.

Bjornsson's compositions have recently been featured by Carnegie Hall, 92nd Street Y, Le Poisson Rouge, Centre Culturel Canadien Paris, Ung Nordisk Musik, Purdue Convocations, Krannert Center, Rockefeller tri-University Recital series, Müzewest Concerts, KPU music, Nantucket Musical Arts Society, Yale Cabaret Series, Yale Laptop Ensemble, Harpa, Mengi and RÁS2.

Gulli has been the recipient of multiple awards for his guitar playing, including first prize in 2010 at Nótan, a national music competition in Iceland, and winner of Lilian Fuch's Chamber Music Competition in 2013. In 2014 he received the Andrés Segovia Award from Manhattan School of Music for excellence in guitar studies. He's also been a finalist in international competitions such as the ASTA National Solo Competition, European Guitar Award and the International Young Talents Competition. He has also received grants from distinguished institutions such as Fulbright, the American Scandinavian Foundation, Valitor, Landsbankinn and the International Advisory Board. Most recently Gulli was the recipient of the Eliot Fisk Prize for his studies at the Yale School of Music.

He's performed at some of the most prestigious concert venues in America including 92nd Street Y, Le Poisson Rouge, National Sawdust, WQXR, Merkin Hall, Symphony

Space, Yale British Art Gallery and Woolsey Hall. Gulli has also performed as a soloist with the MSM Symphony and Yale Philharmonia.

He received his Bachelor of Music degree from Manhattan School of Music and Master of Music and Master of Musical Arts degrees from Yale School of Music. His primary teachers were David Leisner and Ben Verdery.



Applauded by the *Calgary Herald* as “...talented, sensitive...brilliant,” **Jiji** is an adventurous artist on both acoustic and electric guitar, playing a wide range of music from traditional and contemporary classical to free improvisation. Her impeccable musicianship combined with compelling stage presence and fascinating repertoire earned the Korean guitarist First Prize at the 2016 Concert Artists Guild International Competition.

The *Kansas City Star* described Jiji as “A graceful and nuanced player,” adding that “... she presented an intimate, captivating performance” in reviewing her recent concerto debut appearance with Kansas City Symphony. A major highlight of Jiji’s 2018-19 season was her Carnegie Hall/Stern Auditorium debut as soloist with the award-winning New York Youth Symphony, performing the world premiere of a new concerto written for her by American composer Natalie Dietterich.

Featured NYC recitals included Jiji’s April 2019 Lincoln Center debut on the Great Performers series, preceded by 2018 summer appearances at the Mostly Mozart Festival and the New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes. Other recitals include Grand Canyon Guitar Society and Arizona State University in Tempe, where Jiji joins the ASU Music school faculty as Assistant Professor of Guitar starting in fall 2018.

Currently sponsored by D’Addario Strings, Jiji’s performances have been featured on PBS (*On Stage at Curtis* series), NPR’s *From the Top*, WHYI-TV, FOX 4-TV, *Munchies* (the Vice Channel), *The Not So Late Show* (Channel 6, Kansas), and Hong Kong broadcast station RTHK’s *The Works*. Her new EP recording, “Underglow”, was released in May 2018, featuring acoustic guitar music by Bach, Albeniz, Ginastera and Dyens, in addition to her own composition for electric guitar and electronics.

A passionate advocate of new music, Jiji has premiered a duo piece “Talking Guitars” by renowned composer, Paul Lansky, and as a recipient of the 2017 BMI commissioning award resulting from the CAG Competition, Jiji commissioned Nina C. Young to write a new guitar piece premiered during 2018-19. In addition, the American Composers Orchestra is commissioning a new guitar concerto by Hilary Purrington, to be premiered by Jiji in an upcoming season. She has premiered works by numerous emerging composers, including Gabriella Smith, Riho Maimets, Kristis Auznieks, Gulli Björnsson, Andrew McIntosh, and Farnood HaghaniPour.