

Classical Guitar Weekend at the Cleveland Institute of Music

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By Daniel Hathaway



Recital by Jason Vieaux and Jung Eun Oh

As is customary, Classical Guitar Weekend ended with a recital by Cleveland's (and CIM's) own Jason Vieaux. Pride of place, but it can be a tough assignment to play at the end of a long weekend of guitar music. Vieaux dispelled the possibility of any musical fatigue with his decision to feature music by John Dowland and Benjamin Britten linked by Britten's *Nocturnal*, and to invite soprano Jung Eun Oh along for a set of Dowland lute songs as well as two groups of Britten songs.

Vieaux opened with a well-voiced, healthy-sounding performance of Dowland's seventh fantasia, then joined Oh in amiable readings of *Can she excuse my wrongs*; *Flow, my tears*; *Come again, sweet love*; and *Come, heavy sleep*.

The last Dowland song is the basis for Britten's *Nocturnal*, but the composer deconstructs it in eight variations before the whole song appears at the end. It's rather chilling music — musings about death from an insomniac — and Jason Vieaux played it with stunning expressiveness and a fine sense of pace.

After intermission, Vieaux and Oh teamed up again for Britten's *Songs from the Chinese* and six folk song arrangements, separated by two virile and colorful dances from a non-doleful Dowland, *Queen Elizabeth's Galliard* and *My Lady Hunsdon's Alman*.

Both Britten groups were delightful settings of bits of poetry, sometimes humorous, often epigrammatic, and redolent of the composer's skill at marrying diatonic tunes with quirky accompaniments. Some inspired chuckles and sometimes outright laughs from the audience. Ms. Oh sang them beautifully with an unerringly clear tone, though crisper diction would have helped the words to come across without having to consult the program insert.

Keep your eyes out for a recording of this repertory — we understand that Jason Vieaux is thinking Britten for his next CD project.