

Pavel Steidl

"Here was a guitarist who knew how to laugh with the music and share the joke with his audience. But behind the entertainer lies a serious artist, whose extended composition in memory of Jana Obrovská proved fully capable of stirring emotions at the other end of the scale. Never was a standing ovation more richly deserved. Pavel Steidl had won the hearts and minds of a capacity crowd". (Classical guitar magazine).

Pavel Steidl was born in Rakovník (Czech Republic). While studying at the Prague Conservatory and Academy of Music, he won first prize at the Radio France International Competition in Paris in 1982 becoming one of the most widely celebrated soloists of his generation. Between the members of jury were names of such artist like Alexander Tansman, Antonio Lauro and Maria Luisa Anido.

Before that, he studied with such guitarist as Milan Zelenka and Stephan Rak in Prague.

Due to the political situation in the former Czechoslovakia, he was forced to leave his native country and in the Netherlands he first obtained political asylum (1988), then also citizenship (1992). In 2004, following political changes in Europe, he decided to return to the Czech Republic, where he still resides.

Steidl spends his time traveling around the world, performing regularly in the most prestigious concert halls of major cities such as London, Tokyo, Vienna, Sydney, Toronto, Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, Bogota, Rome... He has played in over 40 Countries around the world including Canada, Cuba, Spain, Poland, Austria, Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala, Australia, Japan, England, Scotland and many more.

He also composes for himself and often performs them in his concerts. As evidence of his activities, there are many radio, television and CD recordings of him (such as those made in Japan, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Costa Rica, Germany, Italy and many other countries).

Pavel Steidl plays many instruments, but mainly Francisco Simplicio (1926) and Franz Butcher (2008), romantic guitar: copies of J. G. Stauffer guitar made by B. Kresse and original instrument from the beginning of the 19th-century Nikolaus G. Ries cca.1830.

His highly expressive performances of rare nineteenth-century guitar literature, using original instruments, add a wonderful dimension to his already exceptional performances. According to the Italian guitar magazine "Guitart", his name appears among the eight most important guitarists of 2003; two years later he received the 2005 Classical Guitart Award.

Irina Kulikova

Roland Kieft - chief editor Dutch classical radio

Biography of Irina Kulikova – It's about the touch

Widely acclaimed for the rare beauty of her tone and her enchanting presence on stage, Irina Kulikova has established herself as one of today's leading guitarists. She received over 30 awards for her artistry, including 1st prizes at the most prestigious international competitions. She tours far afield, with appearances at leading festivals in Europe, North America and Asia and in concert halls such as the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow, the Palau de la Musica in Valencia, the Musashino Hall in Tokyo and the Oriental Arts Center in Shanghai.

Childstar in Russia

Irina Kulikova was born in Chelyabinsk, the capital and industrial mainport of South Ural. The daughter of a cellist and distinguished pedagogue, she started her musical career at an exceptionally young age. At five, she started playing piano and guitar. At eight she gave her first guitar performances. By the time she was twelve, Irina Kulikova was a child star playing all across Russia and at festivals in Europe.

Discovered by the great players

She received a scholarship from 'New Names', the United Nations program for talents. And she was discovered by some of the world's leading guitarists, including the Grammy Award winning David Russell and Sergio Assad. 'If you close your eyes, it is like you hear an adult play', Spanish master José María Gallardo del Rey marvelled. 'A star is born', Colin Cooper reviewed in Classical Guitar Magazine. At fourteen, Irina Kulikova appeared in Maurice Summerfield's book 'The Classical Guitar, its evolution, players and personalities since 1800'.

Moscow and a broken arm

The early discovery of her musical talents didn't come with a ticket to fortune and fame. At seventeen, Irina Kulikova left home to study at the Gnessins Academy in Moscow. As the country struggled with the hardships of the post-communist era, a young artist tried to find her way in life and music.

At nineteen, Irina broke her arm. It was as if life wanted her to stand still and make a conscious choice for a career as a musician.

Passion for chamber music

Irina did make her choice. She decided to move to Europe. For some years, she travelled between Moscow and Austria for studies. She joined the 'Salzburger Solisten' and ensemble-chef Luz Leskowitz with his Stradivarius for numerous concerts in Austria and Germany. Performing with outstanding violinists, cellists and pianists, she developed her passion for chamber music.

She played for various members of the royal and aristocratic families of Germany and Denmark. In 2005, she recorded her first solo CD.

Winning top competitions

In 2007, Irina Kulikova made her home in The Netherlands. The year after, every touch was magic: she graduated with distinction at the Mozarteum University in Salzburg; she was awarded 1st prizes at all five competitions she participated in: the highly prestigious competitions of Michele Pittaluga in Italy, Guitarra Alhambra in Spain, Forum Gitarre Wien in Austria and Iserlohn in Germany and the Twentse Guitar Competition in The Netherlands; and still in the same year, she was awarded the Dutch Youth, Culture and Podia prize in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw.

A whole new world

In the years that followed, Irina was invited to thirty countries for concerts. She made her first visits to China and Japan, where her concert was broadcasted on national television.

In 2009 and 2011, she recorded new albums, both released by Naxos. 'Some of the most sheerly beautiful playing I have ever heard, with gorgeous sounds and exquisitely balanced sonorities', Soundboard Magazine (USA) reviewed.

It's about the touch

In July 2012, Irina Kulikova's beautiful baby girl was born. Eight months later, she brought her along to Moscow, for her performances in the Tchaikovsky Hall. Reunited with Mother Russia, Irina received a standing ovation, holding her daughter in her arms. To celebrate the inspiring beginning of a new phase of her career, Irina Kulikova recorded a new solo album for Naxos, sharing some personal and picturesque reminiscences of her motherland with her audience worldwide. The album included the world premiere of 'Swan Princess', dedicated to her by Konstantin Vassiliev.

To the future

Through the years, the beauty of Irina Kulikova's playing became iconic for guitarists around the world. She developed into a much appreciated mentor for conservatorium students and fellow professionals and gained popularity with her master classes brimming with imagery and humour. She founded a guitar program for the Russian School of Music in Irvine (USA) and made California her second home. In the USA, she was invited to most major guitar series and societies such as Cleveland, Austin, Dallas, New York, Baltimore, Boston, Seattle and Miami.

In March 2020, Irina Kulikova recorded her fifth album (to be released in autumn). Her fourth cooperation with genius producer Norbert Kraft. The program includes transcriptions of popular classical pieces and new world premieres, as well as compositions for guitar and cello. Title of the album will be Irina's personal motto in life and music: It's about the touch.

"Few can tell us something so special as she does"

Carlo Marchione

Leonardo Lospalluti

Obtained Guitar-Diploma in 1986 at Conservatory "N. Piccinni" in Bari, conducted by guitar teacher Linda Calsolaro, who was a pupil of Segovia, Leonardo Lospalluti graduated also in Musical Didactics (1994), Composition (2001), Orchestra's Conducting (2002), Mandolin (2005).

He attended guitar international masterclasses by Oscar Ghiglia, Alirio Diaz, Ruggero Chiesa, Betho Davezac, and for the Direction with Jorma Panula (orchestra) and Bruno Zagni (choir).

He won or was finalist in several competitions such as: Mondovì (1982), "M. Donia" in Messina (1986), finalist in "M. Giuliani" International Competition, 1st winner at the International Festival "Giovani Promesse" in Taranto, 3rd prize in the Duo-category at the "R. Curci" Competition, 1st in the First European International Competition by "Lions Club" in Istanbul in 1991.

He recorded CDs for various record labels: Turin FELMAY, Japanese RESPECT RECORDS, Italian from Puglia DIGRESSIONE MUSIC. The last work is dedicated to "Concerti Grossi" by Charles Avison based on Sonatas for keyboard by Domenico Scarlatti, published by Digressione Music.

He is instrumentalist and arranger, conductor as well.

Currently, he is guitar teacher at the Musical Lyceum "Cirillo" in Bari.

Lovro Peretić - Winner of EuroStrings 2020

Lovro Peretić (Zagreb, 1995) started studying guitar at the music school in Zagreb with prof. Xhevdet Sahatxhija and graduated at the Music academy in Zagreb in class of prof. Darko Petrinjak.

He is one of the promising guitarists of younger generation, which is confirmed by excellent results from national and international competitions.

He won National competition for soloists as well as chamber music, Antwerpen guitar festival (Belgium), Morski Festival Kitare (Slovenia), Bale-Valle guitar festival (Croatia), Enrico Mercatali in Gorizia (Italy), Split Guitar Festival (Croatia), Andres Segovia in Velbert (Germany), Anna Amalia in Weimar (Germany), Sarajevo International Guitar Festival (B&H), Porečki tirando (Croatia), International guitar competition in Grožnjan (Croatia), Zagreb Guitar Festival (Croatia), Boris Papandopulo in Zagreb (Croatia), Peja guitar festival (Kosovo), Antwerpen guitar festival (Belgium) and second prizes on Fernando Sor in Rome (Italy) and Volos guitar competition (Greece).

He represented Croatia in many significant festivals such as Vladimir Spivakov International Foundation's festival in Moscow (Russia) and EMCY's Young hearts for music (Austria and Germany).

Besides as a soloist, he regularly performs in various chamber music groups among which the most significant are duo with violinist Katarina Kutnar and guitar trio Evocación. He performed with symphony orchestra of Croatian radio television, Dubrovnik symphony orchestra, Zagreb soloists etc.

Lovro is awarded with Dean's and Rector's prizes of University in Zagreb.

He spend one year in a student exchange program at L'École Supérieure Musique et Danse Hauts-de-France - Lille where he studied with prof. Judicaël Perroy.

Álvaro Miranda

The classical guitarist Álvaro Miranda was born in San José, Costa Rica in 1993. He received his first guitar lessons with Jorge Aguilar and Sergio Carrera. In 2014, he studied with Juan Carlos Laguna in Mexico for three years.

In recent years, he has received virtual classes with Denis Azabagić and Carlo Marchione. Currently, he is studying virtually with Paolo Pegoraro through the Segovia Guitar Academy.

Alvaro Miranda won First Prize at: Florida Guitar Foundation Guitar Competition, National Guitar Competition in Costa Rica, Competition of the Latin-American Guitar Festival in Chicago and the International Music Competition 'Salzburg and Amsterdam' Grand Prize Virtuoso, among other awards.

Álvaro Miranda has participated in a movement to rescue the music and traditions of his native Costa Rica, attending different festivals of music and traditional dance around the world. In 2012, he was chosen to represent Costa Rica at the World Folkloriada in Anseong, South Korea, an event of the International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts (CIOFF) where he performed traditional music of his country adapted to solo guitar.

He has also performed in the United States, England, Mexico, Czechia and Switzerland.

In 2020, he was selected by the Tampere Guitar Festival as an EuroStrings Artist to participate in the EuroStrings European Guitar Festival Collaborative project.

Eleonora Perretta

The classical guitarist Eleonora Perretta was born in Naples, in 1995, and began studying the guitar at the age of six. She has won prizes in a number of national and international guitar competitions.

At the age of 14, Eleonora Perretta won First Prize at the International Guitar Competition 'Luigi Denza' 2010. She won the First Prize at 'Eduguitar' International Guitar Festival in 2016. In 2018, she graduated summa cum laude from the Conservatory of Music 'San Pietro a Majella', Naples, studying with Vincenzo Amabile and studied with Aniello Desiderio at 'Stefano Strata' Academy in Pisa.

In 2020, she won the 'Special Edition Prize' at Koblenz International Guitar Competition, Third Prize at Altamira Gorizia International Guitar Competition and First Prize at Mottola Festival International Competition. She is currently studying with Aniello Desiderio for a Masters at the Conservatorio di Musica 'Domenico Cimarosa' in Avellino, and with Paolo Pegoraro at Segovia Guitar Academy in Pordenone, Italy.

Eleonora Perretta has several recording projects for DotGuitar records: as soloist, she is recording a collection of guitar sonatas, as well as an album dedicated to J.S. Bach; in duo, with Lucio Matarazzo, a première album of music by Ida Presti for two guitars. They are also working on Perretta-Matarazzo Collection of original music and transcriptions for two guitars for the publisher Ut Orpheus; the first volume is of Scarlatti's Sonatas.

Steve Cowan

The Canadian guitarist Steve Cowan has performed as a soloist and in ensemble throughout Canada, the United States and Europe.

His debut album of Canadian music, *Pour guitare* (McGill Records, 2016), helped to establish him as 'one of Canada's top contemporary classical guitarists' (Classical Guitar Magazine).

In 2018–2019, Steve Cowan made his concerto debut with Ensemble del Arte in Germany, his New York solo recital debut, and released his second solo recording *Arctic Sonata* (EMEC discos).

As a chamber musician, Steve Cowan performs regularly with Forestare, a Montréal-based string ensemble; in 2022, he will tour New Zealand with flutist Hannah Darroch, as well as the Canadian Prairies with guitarist Adam Cicchillitti. The Cowan–Cicchillitti duo has premiered 15 new works and released an album of Canadian music titled *FOCUS* (Analekta, 2019); their next recording, *Impressions intimes* (Analekta, 2021), features original arrangements of Debussy, Ravel, Mompou and Tailleferre.

Steve Cowan has won awards at ten national and international competitions, including First Prize at the Tallinn Guitar Competition in Estonia. Originally from St. John's, Newfoundland, Steve Cowan holds degrees from Memorial University, the Manhattan School of Music and McGill University.

His teachers include Sylvie Proulx, David Leisner and Jérôme Ducharme. Since 2019, Steve Cowan has been a guitar instructor at Schulich School of Music of McGill University in Montréal.