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Classical guitarist Antigoni Goni.

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Guitar Heroine

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BY PEGGYMCEWAN

Pulling from her roots, classical guitarist Antigoni Goni will perform a program inspired by Greek culture and heritage on Saturday, Feb. 25 as part of the Chevy Chase-based John E. Marlow Guitar Series.

Described as “an eloquent player with a graceful touch and rich sound” by the New York Times, Goni has performed around the world since winning the International Guitar Competition in Havana when she was 19 years old.



Photo Credit: Simone Scozzari
Antigoni Goni

“Since my first international prize in 1988 at the Havana competition, I performed extensively internationally,” Goni wrote in an email. “The big official ‘boom’ was when I won the GFA [Guitar Foundation of America] competitions and recorded for Naxos in 1995. I toured from east to west, from Japan to Russia and back throughout the ‘90s and all the way up until 2005.”

When she had her first daughter in 2005, Goni said she cut back a bit on her tour schedule, but after her second daughter was born in 2009, she stopped touring. “I realized that my priorities shifted and being a present and not an absent mother was more important than a concert tour. Therefore, I took a leave off the performing stage until a couple of years ago,” she said.

Goni did continue teaching at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels where she is a full professor and head of the guitar department, and organized the Volterra Guitar summer workshop, which trains young performers in all aspects of professional development. “[It] has become one of the most alternative and innovative summer workshops in the scene,” she said.

Another of Goni’s innovations was to start a pre-college division at The Juilliard School in New York City. “After I graduated with my master’s at Juilliard, I realized that it is about time that the Juilliard School had guitar in its pre-college division,” Goni said. “I approached Sharon Isbin [head of the school’s guitar department] with the proposal and we realized the project. The idea was that these way talented teenagers can have the chance to [get] a proper and thorough pre-college music education that prepares them on time for their college musical studies in the manner that European kids prepare.”

Goni started playing guitar at age 10. “I [was] born into a family of graphic artists. My father is an architect and my mother, an interior designer as well as furniture and jewelry designer. They both love music and singing and the guitar was the instrument that accompanied their Saturday night get-togethers with friends at home,” she said.

“It was not until around 16 that the idea of making my hobby and talent full-time entered my head,” Goni said. “The ... proof that I could be competent internationally came with the prize in Cuba in 1988 and after a chat with Leo Brouwer [Cuban guitarist and composer] who helped me leave Greece...for the Royal Academy in order to make my dream—studying with Julian Brea—come true.”

About her upcoming performance, Goni noted that the piece she will perform, Dusan Bogdanovic’s “Hymn to the Muse,” “is one of my favorite

pieces in the program for the simple reason that through this music, I get a direct ticket to my civilization's past. I travel 2,000 years and I address with sounds all the knowledge acquired through literature and history.

"When at the very end of the 'Hymn to the Muse,' I play the 'Epitaph to Seikilos' intact on simple harmonics, I never fail to feel that time is a continuum: past and present and future is one in a harmonious co-existence, and it is through the highest human expressions—such as art and literature and poetry—that we can experience it as such."



Photo Credit: The Fog House
Photography by Pepa Niebla
Antigoni Goni

The concert coincides with the release of Goni's solo album "Hymn to the Muse," a recording of works inspired by Greece.

The John E. Marlow Guitar Series began in 1993, to honor Marlowe who died suddenly the year before. He was a composer, an arranger, the "go-to" player at the Kennedy Center, a teacher and a student, said Tim Healy, who founded the Marlow series with Regis Ferruzza. "He was much missed and his son was only 17, about to go to college, so we had a fundraiser concert," Healy said. "We rounded up about \$6,000."

The series does not make a profit, said Healy, but is able to bring renowned guitarists to the area for its six concerts each year. The first concert in 1993 featured local legend Charlie Byrd. In addition to the concerts, the organization hosts the John and Susie Beatty Music Scholarship Competition, encouraging young guitarists by offering scholarships so they can further their musical education.

Antigoni Goni will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 25 at Westmoreland Congregational Church, 1 Westmoreland Circle, Bethesda. Tickets are \$28 for adults; \$14 for students, ages 18 to 22; free for an individual younger than 18 accompanied by a paying adult. The performance will be preceded by a lecture by Mike Ward, director of guitar at South County

High School, Lorton, Va. Visit www.marlowguitar.org or call 301-799-4028. View this event on CultureSpotMC [here](#).

Tags: Antigoni Goni, Arts Ed, Arts Education, Bethesda, Charlie Byrd, Classical Guitar, Classical Music, Concert, Dusan Bogdanovic, Epitaph to Seikilos, Greece, Greek, Guitar, Guitar Foundation of America, Hymn to the Muse, John and Susie Beatty Music Scholarship Competition, John E. Marlow Guitar Series, Juilliard, Julian Brea, Leo Brouwer, Marlow Guitar, Mike Ward, music, Music Education, Musician, Naxos, New York Times, Regis Ferruzza, Royal Conservatory of Brussels, Sharon Isbin, Tim Healy, Volterra Guitar Summer Workshop



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