

A MUSICIAN AWARD & HIGHLIGHT ARTICLE



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This article is an introduction to two artists and provides background information that goes beyond the scope of what the individual reviews of their albums could have covered. Those reviews at present are:

[Original Music for Cello & Guitar](#) | [Original Romantic Music for Cello & Guitar](#) | [J.S. Bach 6 Cello Suites](#) | [The Andrés Segovia Album](#)

The Jones & Maruri cello/guitar duo

The first time I came under the spell of the Jones & Maruri Duo was in 1993. Their first CD *Original Music for Cello and Guitar* [EMEC E-001] is still one of the most frequently spun on my players to date not just for musical enjoyment but also sonic indulgence. A number of surprise elements that struck me then have never ceased to amaze - the creative energy as unveiled through the rare repertoire, the expressive and emotional appeal, the textural richness and contrasts demonstrated through the partnership... We've known quite a number of original music for violin and guitar mainly popularized by Paganini who excelled at both instruments as virtuoso and composer, and to a somewhat lesser extent by Mauro Giuliani who was a prodigious guitarist and accomplished violinist and flautist. But cello and guitar?

The Jones & Maruri Duo is one of the rarest chamber music teams and believed to be the only established duo of its kind that records on a regular basis and actively performs around the world including not only Europe, North America, Asia and Australia but also the Middle East, Cuba, Venezuela and South America. They toured China last December after the Beijing Olympic, visiting Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and other major cities giving ten concerts. Right now they are touring North America as their regular annual event.

Formed in Madrid in 1990, Michael Kevin Jones and Agustin Maruri have instigated research into original historic repertoire that led to discoveries of many significant works by unknown 19th century composers like Leonhard von Call, Thomas Matiegka and Friedrich Dotzauer - and world premier recordings of them. As the result, Maruri has received scholarship and awards towards his ongoing work as a musicologist. At the same time, their success has inspired new compositions from composers such as Pedro Saenz, Francesco Telli, Erik Marchelie, Nicholas Marshall, Jose Maria Sanchez Verdu, Drew Hemenger, Paul Coles and Satoshi Tanaka. All of a sudden, titles for cello and guitar seem to outnumber those for violin and guitar!

In 1999 Jones & Maruri recorded *The Charm of Spain* for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, a collection of Spanish romantic melodies from the 19th century performed on instruments from the museum's collection. This has now become an ongoing series with these two musicians who have privileged access to the rare historical instruments in the MMA collection for their use in solo or duo recordings.

Michael Kevin Jones

British-born cellist Michael Kevin Jones started to play at the age of 13, his first teachers being Pauline Ballard and Dulce Haigh Marshall. He studied at the Dartington College with Michael Evans before going on to the Royal College of Music where he was a pupil of Joan Dickson. During his time in London he won prizes for solo and chamber music playing, was chosen to perform for the British Royal Family and was awarded a scholarship from the German government to study in Düsseldorf under the great Johannes Goritski who himself was a student of Pablo Casals.

While a student in Germany, he became solo cellist for the German Chamber Academy, concertizing around the world and at major music festivals such as Salzburg, Lockenhaus and Kuhmo. He continued to study chamber music with the Amadeus, Vermeer and La Salle Quartets as well as record with the WDR, BBC and collaborate with well-known artists and groups such as the Moscow Virtuosi, Lindsay Kemp and Carlos Cano.

Michael currently spends his free time in the Andalucian town of Jimena de la Frontera where he has started a cello education center which serves the Costa del Sol area of southern Spain and Gibraltar.

Agustin Maruri

Spanish guitarist Agustín Maruri was born in Madrid. He represented Spain in the 1989 Athens concert celebrating the EU Greek Presidency. In 1990 he received the medal of the Spanish College in Paris for his research into historical guitar repertoire. His specialty in this field has led him to further surveys in The Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, The Munich Library and The British Museum. Maruri has premiered many guitar works including Torroba's *Interludios* and Francesco Telli's *Serenata*. His work for the rediscovery of Adam Falckenhagen's music has received acclaim by the Yuste European Academy who awarded him in 1996. His discography claims more than 25 titles solo as well as with other chamber musicians, with acclaim from critics and audiences alike.

As guitarist, Agustin has a special quality which is undoubtedly a combination of his enthusiasm for the historical works he discovered and his passion for the contemporary works specially written for him and the duo. A fusion of romanticism and modernism and artistic freedom to migrate from one to the other is always evident in his playing and of course Jones'. That makes his sound unique. His teacher was the celebrated Argentine-born classical guitarist Ernesto Bitetti

who encourages his students to find their own sound and personality. According to Adam Schwartz's [Interview](#) of Bitetti, the way to do so is first to have a sound in mind and then shape your fingernails to the precise length necessary to achieve that sound.

The special sonority and rare tonal beauty of the cello and guitar partnership alone would not have made the Jones & Maruri Duo so unique, however. It's also their wide range and musical diversity in their stage and recorded programs that shape their inimitable character. Their recordings are mostly produced by EMEC and the full catalog can be found [here](#).

After listening through more than a dozen of their recordings, I'm compelled to say that for their untiring devotion to this unusual presentation of chamber music and the enjoyment it has brought, they deserve special recognition. Knowing that our music review efforts are still in their infancy and far from broadly credible to hand out a Musicians Of The Year award, a Blue Moon Award for outstanding musicians will be appropriate for the time being instead. To conclude this feature article, I would like to share some interesting information about the duo.

Prior to their China Tour last year, I had the honor of interviewing them via email for a Chinese publication. Since the interview was never been published in English, I trust it's worth doing now while they are touring North America. (MJ is Michael Jones, AM is Agustin Maruri.)

As soloist *and* chamber music ensemble members-not just the duo but also with other groups-you obviously enjoy both roles. Would you say that you have more freedom on your own or that more expansive partnerships open up more interpretation possibilities and therefore more freedom that you might realize as a duo?

• *AM: They are very different and the music has a different sense. A composer doesn't write the same way when it is for a soloist or duo. Also there are different manners of concentration and expressivity. In chamber music you must always think what your partner is doing and go with him so in a way you have less freedom but what counts is the final result.*

There are very few cello/guitar duos but the two instruments compliment each other beautifully. Do you think the rarity is due to a shortage of music specially written for this combination? Or are music lovers simply yet to discover the beauty of these two instruments together?

• *MJ: It is an enchanting instrumental combination and quite unknown to many music lovers still.*

• *AM: Yes, it is a new language and in the chamber music field, the guitar receives a great benefit from this combination. It never loses its character or personality while creating a major contrast to the cello. We shouldn't forget the experiment of the arpeggione, the hybrid instrument which resulted from combining the cello and guitar into one instrument. Obviously many people have thought over this marriage of both instruments.*

As a musicologist, how do you discover lost or forgotten works? Do you have to sift through archives and manuscripts page by page like hunting treasure on a deserted beach and more often than not coming up empty-handed?

• *AM: It is hard but fascinating work. You must follow your instincts and be lucky. There are ways of exploring musical periods where you believe that there may have been someone who could have written a duo piece and then try to guess who it could have been. So yes, you must spend many hours looking through old catalogues, composers and libraries. I spent two years doing this work but was very happy with the results. In fact one of our duo projects is to present a new album containing only XIX century original works from European composers, all newly rediscovered music for this ensemble.*

What condition are such discovered works usually in?

• *AM: It depends. Normally if the music has been preserved in a library, it is in a fairly good condition. On other occasions, parts are missing or the reading is very difficult.*

When you have a piece of music in front of you that has never been performed, how do you start interpreting it? Is everything there in the music? Do you hear it in your heart once you start reading it? Is there any development between the initial reading to the final performance?

• *MJ: Yes it is a process of study and realization after the initial reading. The greater the music, the less of yourself you have to put into it.*

• *AM: In the first place there is a like or dislike for the music just like when you are introduced to a new person. Either there is chemistry or there isn't. Then you start to get to know the music more and more and finally, it becomes a part of*

yourself.

In extreme cases when the composer is not known to most people, how do you recognize his style? Is that also in the music? Do you feel the composer is talking to you?

• *MJ: An instrumentalist has to allow the voice of the composer to come through in the performance. Of course the composer himself may be the 'medium' for another voice and can be the link to this universal spirit if his music is any good!*

• *AM: There is always the historical and style period which influences a particular piece of music. Then there is your personal taste and of course the desire to express what the music provokes in you. An artist wants to transmit the emotions he feels through the music to others.*

In musical history, it happened quite a few times that performers disagreed with composers. How is the working relationship between you and the composers? What do you think is more important - a thorough understanding of instrumental techniques or the musical idea?

• *MJ: We have always had very good working relationships with the composers who have written for us and so far worked with each one on details and techniques.*

• *AM: It's always a great experience to inspire young composers to write for us. Then come the composer's independence and freedom to show how he understands the duo language. We try to maintain the respect for the originality of the creative mind but also like to show the composer what has already been written for the combination through recordings of other cello/guitar pieces and then hope for the best results. At the moment we are working on a very interesting project. We have asked several composers to write a concerto for cello, guitar and orchestra, and already have some very attractive results.*

How important is an instrument to you? When you work with an instrument that is new to you like from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, do you have to get accustomed to its characteristics?

• *MJ: Yes, it is important to get used to the different measurements of instruments basically to be able to play in tune and be comfortable enough with the instrument to concentrate on the music. "A cello is just a wooden box with strings," as a teacher of mine said when I started to get too obsessed with my need for a better instrument. Of course when an instrumentalist has truly realized his potential, then a great instrument can make a big difference in taking the 'musical voice' to another level.*

• *AM: Is not always easy. Instruments have their own personalities and voices. You need to become their servant and treat them with love.*

Can you tell us about your own instruments?

• *MJ: My cello is an unknown instrument from about 1850. The Strad of 1667 which I used for the Bach recording was a far superior instrument to my own but also worth \$3.5 million.*

• *AM: I play with a guitar built by Ignacio Rozas, from the Madrid traditional construction school. I was very privileged to be able to choose the wood for several instruments he built especially for me following my suggestions and I am very happy with the results. I use nylon strings as they are best for the classical guitar.*

What programs have you planned for the upcoming China tour? Do you have 16th to 20th century works and modern compositions? And perhaps even some Chinese pieces?

AM: We are going to present two different programmes to include Spanish composers such as Falla and Ni, as well as central Europe composers from the romantic tradition such as Schubert and some Chinese traditional songs we love.

Where can we buy the 1996 Taiwanese Maysun recording of the Chinese traditional melodies?

• *AM: I would like to know the answer to that question myself! We did the recording for that company but were never informed if the CD was released or not. I think this company no longer exists although I have a copy of the work. Obviously it doesn't belong to us but to the owner of Maysun and the release or not of the material depends on his decision.*

How does the duo divide their time for solo and duo schedules? Do you live in the same city?

• MJ: The duo's home base is Madrid.

• AM: Yes, we met in the summer of 1990 and since then have been working together and Madrid and Spain are our home even though we both have independent careers.

Is the EMEC label owned and operated by you and Mr. Jones?

• AM: No, EMEC DISCOS is the filial company of EMEC editorial and belongs to an independent Spanish editorial group called Seemsa. EMEC stands for Editorial de Musica Española Contemporánea. We love them.



David Kan