

Liona Boyd in Concert

Classical guitar enthusiasts and newcomers to the classical guitar alike were thrilled this month by stunning performances throughout Asia by Liona Boyd, Canada's First Lady of classical guitar.

Liona, a beautiful and articulate woman, is dedicated to bringing the art of the guitar to a larger and broader audience. This dedication and her search for songs from all over the world for future recordings, prompted her to make this tour to the Far East, which has taken her to Japan, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Ms Boyd's concert in Jakarta was her first in Indonesia and was given at the Hilton Hotel before an audience of 430 people including senior Indonesian officials, cultural personalities and members of the media who also attended an Embassy reception in her honour. She later gave a workshop for approximately 60 students and faculty members at the Jakarta Institute of Arts.



Canadian Classical guitarist, Liona Boyd.

PROCEEDS FOR CHARITY

The recital in Singapore was held at the Singapore Conference Hall before a capacity audience of 1,000, and reflected Liona's ability to combine the classical with the popular. Liona beautifully demonstrated what the New York Times referred to as her "flair for brilliance" with pieces as varied as those by 18th Century composer Bach through Chopin to a Latin guitar repertoire by Granados and Rodrigo.

Her performance was described by Robert Luse of the Straits Times as evoking "a succession of moods and images that often transcended time and place". She herself was described as "the most serene and accomplished of artistes".

Some 70 Singaporean guitarists were given a unique opportunity to learn from Ms Boyd at a workshop presented by the Ministry of Culture. The Canadian High Commissioner, Mr. George Seymour and his wife gave a dinner in Liona's honour. Among the guests were Attorney-General Tan Boon Teik and his wife.

A capacity audience of 400 braved monsoon rains to attend Ms Boyd's dinner concert at the Hilton International in Bangkok. The audience included Minister of Science, Technology and Energy, Mr. Damrong Lathapipat and Privy Councillor Usni Pramoj as well as various members of the diplomatic and Thai business community.

By special arrangement, a group of guitar students was ushered in after the

dinner to hear the performance. Reviewers were particularly impressed by Ms Boyd's rendition of Canadian composer Richard Fortin's "L'Oiseau Triste" written specifically for the performer. Liona dedicated one piece, Scherzino Mexicano by Manuel Ponce to the people of Thailand.

Large audiences attended concerts under the patronage of Dato Elyas bin Omar, Mayor of Kuala Lumpur, held at Kuala Lumpur's City Hall and the Petaling Jaya Hilton Hotel. Proceeds from the performances went to the non-governmental Sang Kancil Organization for Social Services to support its numerous social development activities among the urban poor.

A MOST ACCOMPLISHED ARTIST

Liona began her study of the guitar at the age of 14 with Eli Kassner in Toronto. In 1972 she graduated with honours from the University of Toronto Music Faculty. She has studied with the world's top guitarists, including Segovia, Lagoya, and Bream. It was as a result of hearing a Julian Bream concert that she decided to take up the guitar as a young girl. To this day Liona conducts autograph sessions after each performance in order that she too may encourage fledgling guitarists.

Ms Boyd not only performs in the major concert halls and with symphony orchestras around the world but has been a guest on such programs as Merv Griffin, Johnny Carson, Paul Anka, Mike Douglas,

Evening at Pops (Boston Pops) and Entertainment Tonight.

A SENSE OF MISSION

At a press conference in Singapore she said "Though my absorbing interest is classical guitar music, as a musician, I feel I should share the beauty and secrets of my instrument with others. And since the guitar is better known in a popular way the best way to introduce its sounds is through Pop music".

She has produced 11 albums, and one of them "A Guitar for Christmas" has passed the gold mark. Among the honours bestowed on Liona Boyd are the Vanier Award and the Order of Canada for her contribution to the cultural life of Canada and she is a three-time winner of the Canadian Instrumental Artist of the year.

Her tour has been sponsored by Cathay Pacific. In Singapore, the Bank of Montreal Asia Ltd, the Ministry of Culture and the Canadian High Commission sponsored her performance, while in Jakarta the Jakarta Hilton and eleven Canadian companies supported the project. Support by the Siam Kolkan Music Foundation in Bangkok and the Sang Kancil Organization for Social Services and the Petaling Jaya Hilton in Kuala Lumpur were much appreciated.

Liona's albums, produced by CBS Records are available in the area's record stores. Ms Boyd was thrilled by the response in the host countries and has promised to visit the area again soon.