

# Letter from New York

By JULIA CROWE



PHOTO: SCOTT HEANEY

**Rovshan Mamedkuliev.**



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**Edel Muñoz.**

RUSSIAN GUITARIST Rovshan Mamedkuliev and Cuban guitarist Edel Muñoz were the featured guitarists in the most recent D'Addario Music Foundation Pro-Arté International Competition Winners concert series held this year at Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall. This concert series is considered a 'rebirth' of the Debuts & Premieres Concert Series first launched in 1979 and is now named the D'Addario Pro-Arté Concert Series. The goal of this series, like the original, is to feature the newest generation of international classical guitarists. The D'Addario Family hopes this series will evolve into other music genres and expand to other cities over the coming years.

The first performer of the evening, Rovshan Mamedkuliev, was from Baku, Azerbaijan and he

started his classical guitar studies at age eleven in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. In 2004, he entered the Nizhny Novgorod Conservatoire and graduated with honours in 2009. He is presently a postgraduate student at the Nizhny Novgorod Conservatoire where he also teaches. He most recently won first prize at the 2011 International Guitar Competition 'Heitor Villa-Lobos' in Salamanca, Spain. In 2010, he was the first place solo recital winner at the 11th International Guitar Competition and Festival in Paris, France. He was also the first prizewinner at the 10th International Guitar Competition in Nizhny Novgorod, named after the esteemed Russian classical guitarist A.K. Frauchi, who studied with A.M. Ivanov-Kramskoy. This concert was Madmedkuliev's New York debut.



**Left to right: John D'Addario III, Executive VP of D'Addario, Rovshan Mamedkuliev, Suzanne D'Addario, Michael Newman, Edel Muñoz.**

Madmedkuliev's concert programme had been well-rounded, academically thoughtful and sublimely performed, opening with the contrasting set of Villa-Lobos' delicate *Prelude No. 3* and dramatically vibrant *Etude No. 12*. Within the concert programme notes, it is written that Andres Segovia met with Villa-Lobos in Paris in the 1920s and Segovia requested a new piece, possibly an etude, thus inducing Villa-Lobos to write his *12 Etudes*, *5 Preludes* and much later, the *Guitar Concerto*.

Madmedkuliev performed a stellar rendition Miguel Llobet's *Folia (Variaciones de un tema de Sor)*, op 15, with much sensitivity, utilising his left hand slurs during one movement with bee-like precision effortless over the length of the fretboard. The term *folia*, of Portuguese origin, is related to the Latin term for 'fool' or 'madness' and suggests the dance of a court jester. The programme notes mention that Sor wrote the guitar variations on the theme in 1810 and that Llobet, a protégé of Tárrega, performed these variations in 1914 during a tour in Germany.

Madmedkuliev closed his programme with Brouwer's *Sonata* in three movements, of which the 'Sarabanda de Scriabin' left the hall so quiet that the absence of a rustle and stray cough seemed as equally remarkable as his playing. Madmedkuliev is a bit of a facially expressive performer who physically projects his phrasing at times yet he conveys great musical sensitivity and clarity and thorough knowledge of his repertoire.

Edel Muñoz, a graduate of the National School of Music of Havana, Cuba, had been twenty years old when he won first place at the International Competition and Festival de Guitarra de La Habana, headed by Brouwer. He has most recently won the 2011 Boston Guitar Fest International Competition and resides in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Muñoz performed an indefatigable, powerhouse programme, opening with Scarlatti's elegant *Sonata K 208 in A Major*, a piece with a binary structure with repeats and a steady harmonic rhythm. Muñoz followed with J.S. Bach's *Prelude, Fugue & Allegro BWV 998* and Spanish guitarist and composer Dionisio Aguado's *Andante et Rondo No. 2*. This piece is the second of Aguado's *Tres Rondos Brillantes*, published as *Op.2* in Paris in 1825. Fingers sufficiently warmed, Muñoz conveyed a gorgeous tone and expression with Federico Moreno Torroba's *Sonatina* in three movements, conveying notably lyricism in the second Andante movement. For an encore, Muñoz performed a truly spectacular *Muerte del Angel* by Astor Piazzolla, tearing through the runs and wringing out every last note of smoky nightclub nuance until the final rousing end. This concert had also been Muñoz's New York debut.

**For further information:**

**Rovshan Mamedkuliev:**

**<http://youtu.be/3Xq53mfgSvg>**

**Edel Muñoz: <http://www.edelguitar.com>**