

ALAN MEARNS — Bio

Alan Mearns was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He began his musical studies with the classical violin at age five, switching to the guitar at age ten. Moving to the United States in his late teens, he studied classical guitar performance at Appalachian State University (where he held the prestigious Fletcher Scholarship) and as a graduate assistant at Austin Peay State University (where he received the Outstanding Graduate Student Award, 2003).

As a classical guitarist and composer, he has performed and presented masterclasses and lectures at significant venues in the US and the UK; recent appearances include Yale University, Royal Irish Academy of Music Dublin, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, University of North Texas, New York Classical Guitar Society, Dallas Classical Guitar Society, Allegro Concert Series Fort Worth, Columbus Guitar Society, Rochester Classical Guitar Society NY, Aguado Series Washington DC, Appalachian Guitar Festival, Tosco Music Festival NC, Western Piedmont Symphony Community Concerts, among others.

His recent Bach recording received wide praise and entered the Billboard Classical Music Chart at No. 8. His forthcoming release, *Lorca*, deals with his innovative arrangements of Spanish music.

He also has extensive experience as performer-composer in a wide range of non-classical music genres, including contemporary-traditional Irish music and popular Americana-alternative-folk music (under the pseudonym Yes The Raven), along with extensive experience as studio musician, arranger, and producer. Among his 12 CD recordings, he has recorded four solo CDs as songwriter Yes The Raven, two CDs as band-leader with Airspace, a recording of Irish music with The Belfast Boys (with his long-time collaborator, the well-known Irish poet Adrian Rice), and others.

His musical activities as song-writer-performer, composer, and classical guitarist have resulted in numerous magazine and radio coverage (including recent interview-performances for NPR Classical, BBC Sounds UK, Radio Ulster, Guitar Salon International Los Angeles), video interviews and podcasts, and a recent video feature by YouTube influencer Rick Beato (which has received almost 500K views).

He also enjoys significant activity as a poet; recently readings of his upcoming collection *Into The Fields* include the Seamus Heaney Center at Queens University Belfast, among other venues.



Reviews and Endorsements

J. S. Bach for Guitar: Sei Solo

In the beginning there was Bach...these transcriptions take [the guitar-Bach] endeavor to a new level. It is not hyperbolic to suggest that he has broken important new ground in the transcription of Bach's music for the guitar. His renditions exhibit stunning virtuosity with emotional rapport and conviction...

Soundboard Magazine (Journal of the Guitar Foundation of America)

Completely transcendent, stunningly haunting!

Benjamin Verdery, Guitar Chair Yale University

Bach-Godowsky, Bach-Busoni, Bach-Leonhardt. And now, Bach-Mearns, for no transcription of Bach deserves a hyphen more than the guitar transcription presented here. This a fearless examination of the potential of Bach on the guitar, the originality of which is not to be underestimated. Mearns encrusts the music with new lines, fully stylistically appropriate within the registral space available on the guitar. He creates a dialog between arranger and composer made possible only with the advancement of modern playing technique liberated from twentieth-century tradition.

Mark Delpriora, Guitar Chair Manhattan School of Music
Instructor The Juilliard School

"With this collection of Bach arrangements, Alan Mearns reveals himself a singular artist of extraordinary imagination. Listening to Mearns' Bach is like hearing these long-familiar works for the first time. His arrangements and performances are truly a next-generation phenomenon. This recording is a revelation."

Stephen Aron, Professor of Guitar Oberlin Conservatory of Music

Reading through Alan Mearns's volume of Bach transcriptions and listening to his virtuosic recording is a thrilling adventure for the hands and ears. His approach defies categorization, but it takes the music on an imaginary journey into an orchestral setting and from there back to the guitar, reminding us of how exciting the guitar can be as a solo instrument when it suggests something

greater than itself. I hope that others will enjoy this deeply inquiring and knowledgeable response to Bach as much as I did.

Dr. Jonathan Leathwood, Professor of Music **University of Denver**,
Editor Soundboard Scholar

Alan Mearns has taken these works where no one else dared before. If you think you have heard Bach on the guitar, think again!

Dr. René Izquierdo, Professor of Guitar **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**