

William Jenks Biography

William Jenks is a rare and unique talent among classical guitarists and he has celebrated a diverse and successful career as a concert artist, musical educator, and concert presenter since 1999. Not only is he a world class recording artist, sought out for performances and master classes around the globe—he is also the Founder and President of one of the leading classical guitar organizations in the nation called U.S. Classic Guitar which presents concerts, master classes, and community outreaches featuring world-renowned artists in Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles, California, and Hawaii.

Jenks began his musical career as a gifted singer, performing choral music at age six. As a youth he participated in a memorable Carnegie Hall performance of the Magnificat, under the celebrated composer and maestro John Rutter. After switching to guitar as a young man, Jenks would go on to record four widely-praised CDs, each supported by extensive touring. He gave a series of favorably received solo concerts in France, Germany, and Italy, and then became the first performer to play at the renovated Elgin Opera House, where, the Elgin Times noted, “he put on a tremendous show.”

More recently in July of 2022, Jenks performed solo concerts and taught master classes on a 40-day tour of Italy, Germany, and England. Some of the highlights of this tour included being invited to perform a solo concert, teach master classes, and serve on the jury of the 30th Anniversary of the prestigious International Guitar Festival of Mottola, Italy and he was invited back for a third time to perform, teach and serve on the competition jury of the Fiuggi, Italy International Guitar Festival. In April and May of 2019, Jenks performed solo concerts, taught master classes, and served on the jury for several international guitar festivals in Europe including the 17th International Guitar Festival in Peniscola, Spain, the 17th International Guitar Festival in Hondarribia, Spain, the Rust, Austria International Guitar Festival, and the Skopje, Macedonia International Guitar Festival. In July of 2018, he performed, taught, and served on the jury for the International Guitar Festival in Mottola, Italy and he returned to perform a concert, teach master classes, and serve on the Jury at the Fiuggi, Italy International Guitar Festival where he received an award on his previous trip for his promotion of guitar music in 2014.

Jenks has also focused much of his performance itinerary on the culturally rich region of Latin America. In 2012, he was invited to perform at the Festival Internacional de Guitarra, in the Dominican Republic and in 2014, he was invited back by the Conservatorio Nacional De Musica in the Dominican Republic to perform Vivaldi’s Concerto in D Major, and to serve on the jury for a major classical guitar competition. He also performed numerous times in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and several places in Chile—including an appearance at the 15th and 18th annual Festival Entrecuerdas, an international guitar festival that lasts through the month of October.

While in Chile, Jenks traveled the countryside performing various concerts and teaching master classes.

Jenks now presents many concerts annually—often in tandem with master classes—and has earned a loyal following among professional musicians and casual music lovers alike. Most of these concerts sell out, and no wonder; past performers have included many legends of the guitar, some of who were visiting Portland for the first time. John Williams, David Russell, Eliot Fisk, Sharon Isbin, Manuel Barrueco, The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, Ana Vidovic, The Assads, Roland Dyens, Carlo Barbosa-Lima and the Romeros—the latter drawing a record-breaking audience of 2300—have all performed for the U.S. International Guitar Series. But Jenks is equally supportive of the next generation of legends, presenting the U.S. debuts of such artists as Dimirtris Kotronakis (from Greece), Gerard Abiton (from France), and Ruben Gonzales (from Cuba), as well as some of the best local up-and-coming guitar talent. Jenks has also presented the First Prize Winners of the Guitar Foundation of America and EuroStrings competitions and has presented over 200 concerts of world-class musicians.

In addition to performing, and stewarding the classical guitar series, Jenks was the brains behind the U.S. Classic Guitar teaching studio, which since 2001 has provided invaluable instruction for hundreds of students of all ages and skill levels, many of whom have gone on to their own music careers. Indeed, Jenks is a much sought-after guitar instructor in Portland, Los Angeles, Hawaii and online both at the university level and privately. His approach has been informed by some of the best teachers in the world, including Portland guitarists David Franzen, Bryan Johanson, and Dr. Ken Johnson (with whom Jenks studied at Colorado Christian University, where he graduated magna cum laude). As a teacher, Jenks generously shares wisdom gained from attending and performing in over 100 master classes of celebrated classical guitarists such as Christopher Parkening, Scott Tennant, Ricardo Iznaola, David Russell, Eliot Fisk, the Romeros, John Williams, and many more.

Jenks's contributions to music were honored by a gorgeous classical guitar, built by renowned luthier Jeffrey Elliott and gifted by an anonymous benefactor. In July 2015, Jenks also received an award from the Fiuggi International Guitar Festival, for his promotion of guitar music. Other recipients of this award have included the legendary composer Leo Brouwer, guitarist Eduardo Isaac, and others. Jenks was on the music faculty at Marylhurst University as guitar instructor between 2015 and 2018 where he trained classical guitar students working toward their degrees in music and he directed the Marylhurst University Guitar Ensemble before accepting his current position as President of U.S. Classic Guitar.