

Dr. Mariam Renno – Boccali
Practitioner of music and medicine



Mariam was born in Savigny-sur-Orge, France, eleven miles from the center of Paris. At the age of six she began her first guitar lessons with her father and at fifteen she began her study with Alberto Ponce at the National Conservatory and later attended the famous Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris. While still in her teens she traveled to Barcelona, Spain where she studied several months with the legendary guitarists Emilio Pujol and Maria-Luisa Anido.

During this period she also began her medical study and continued giving concerts and winning international guitar competitions in Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, and Geneva.

After graduation as a medical doctor of general medicine from the Paris Diderot University she completed her studies in Lausanne, Switzerland at Lausanne University and began her practice in Dietikon, Switzerland where she lives today with her husband and two children.

Mariam balances her medical career with her music, performing throughout Europe and the Middle East. She is also the founder of *Concert for Cancer*, which promotes music in hospitals.

“I am impressed by the degree of your art.”

Emilio Pujol

Your skill and musicianship on the guitar is quite impressive. When one considers that you are also a medical doctor it's hard to imagine such accomplishments, it seems overwhelming to consider the time, devotion and passion for both.

Thank you. I think it's a combination of factors like, timing, organization and personality. I had the chance in France to attend classes at the conservatory when I was very young. In my family an education in music was very important. My schedule was so well organized that I had many hours in the day to practice. It also helped that I was a shy child and enjoyed learning and reading.

I believe my passion for both music and medicine fed each other. It's about sharing, giving, love and healing. Music and medicine go well together.

Tell me how music came into your life and the history of your study.

My father played the guitar as an amateur and the guitar was always part of our home. I cannot remember my life before the guitar. For me the sound of the instrument was magical. Then later the music caught me. It was like hugging a dear friend each time I played it. My father gave me lessons for some years and then we met maestro Alberto Ponce after a concert. He invited me to study with him at the conservatory, which I did. He was a highly passionate teacher who opened a lot of doors for me into another world. He required more than I thought possible, bringing me to my limits of musical expression. “Give all” was his motto. I studied with him for five years. It was intense work with lessons even on Sundays and holidays. I was sometimes

torn to pieces but became a musician.

What led to the study on medicine?

This was a more quiet study! I wanted to be a doctor from the age of ten or eleven. I was eager to study and learn. Maybe it was the Alsatian family story and our administrator Dr. Albert Schweizer that inspired me. I started my study of medicine at the age of eighteen after I finished my music degree.

Tell me about your medical study and your practice today.

It was difficult to study arts medicine in France at that time which was my first interest so I specialized in rheumatology and sports medicine. My life eventually brought me to Switzerland where I had to meet new medical requirements. Meeting colleagues concerned with the study breast cancer led me to begin a gynecological practice. Many of my friends work hard to bring women in poor countries medical care so I started giving benefit concerts and set up an association to promote music in hospitals. I now share my split my week between medicine and the guitar.

You have great technique on the guitar. Please tell me what you practice and how

you approach practicing.

I had strict technical exercises each day, every day, early on. I must admit I have forgotten a little. Perhaps it was enough to overcome the technical difficulties of the repertoire. Now I find it more important to practice coordination, relaxation and lightness and visualizing helping train the memory. There are many ways to find 'your' perfection, but most of all, to find an interpretation, which matches your deep intuition, coming straight from the heart. For me this is the challenge.



You studied with Emilio Pujol who is a true legend in the classical guitar world. Please tell me about that experience.

I first went to Barcelona with my teacher Alberto Ponce when I was seventeen. I now realize what a wonder it was to have studied with Emilio Pujol as well as Maria-Luisa Anido.

The first piece I played for Emilio Pujol was his "Impromptu." His balance between musical sensibility and his opulence of color overwhelmed me and I couldn't believe his extreme technique, especially for the left hand. I took lessons at his home for several months, always welcomed by his wife, Maria-Adelaida, sometimes playing his Torres,

studying Bach, Tarraga and his own compositions. Like many people I was impressed by his intelligence, his precision, the legitimacy of his explanations, and incredible kindness. I remember he would always begin his comments with a nice word, "very good," "you did well." Then step-by-step he would bring me through a totally different concept! This stayed with me and now has carried into my own teaching. I try to follow his way of precise analyze of the composition, the knowledge and background of the composer and understanding what inspires his soul. When speaking of Pujol Alberto Ponce used to say, "he made us." I'm also amazed that I had this close link with Tarrega!

Do you have a period of music or composer you favor?

I don't have a favorite period of music or composer but I do love playing baroque music because it makes me feel that the world is right! I like the music composed for the vihuela, and also playing new pieces composed by friends.

Your guitar is a bit unusual in how the strings attach past the bridge. It also seems to have a larger than normal sound hole. Please tell me about this guitar and its builder.

I played a wonderful Friederich most of my life but became curious about Joel Laplane, from Marseille, France. He is a guitar builder and acoustician. He built this guitar model after a computer analysis in an acoustic lab. The strings are not attached in a traditional manner but attached to an inside extension of the neck. The sound-hole is not larger but is not perfectly round and is located higher to increase resonance. It's a "wow!" guitar,

powerful, easy to play and very warm with a spruce top and African Padouck for back and sides. I've played it now for nearly twenty years. I also have a new spruce top guitar built by Dominique Field, always looking for warmth and brilliance.

Tell me your thoughts on teaching.

I enjoy it. I have received so much and try to give a little back. I think it's important to support each student in his or her own personal ways - it's a responsibility.

Who are the musicians that inspire you?

I think that human beings in general inspire me more than musicians. As far as musicians, Pablo Casals and Yehudi Menuhin inspire me for their life, political courage, for spirit grandeur and their ethics. I am naturally always inspired by great musical interpretation but then I have to find my own.

<http://mariamrenno.com/>



La Badinage

Silvius Leopold Weiss

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