

BIOGRAPHY

Olivier Chassain was born in Paris in 1957. An active concert artist, he divides up his time between performing, teaching and composing.

He started studying the guitar as a young boy, while living in the Limoges area with his family. His first guitar teacher and mentor Roger Généraux encouraged him to take up composing as well.

Olivier subsequently studied composition with Louis Tillet at the Limoges conservatory where he also earned degrees in harmony and counterpoint.

After graduating from Roger Généraux's the newly-created guitar class at the Orléans Conservatory, Olivier attended Carel Harms' advanced study course in Paris and Alexandre Lagoya's intensive summer course at the International Nice Academy in 1975.

In 1977, he became a student of Lagoya at the Paris Conservatory – currently known as CNSMDP – and graduated with the Premier Prix de guitare (First Prize) in 1982. There, he also garnered Prizes in harmony and counterpoint after courses of study with Roger Boutry and Bernard de Crépy.

Olivier's performing career took an international turn after he won First Prize in the Guitar Foundation of America's competition. He was the first non-American competitor to win the coveted award. The following year, he embarked on a GFA-sponsored tour of North-America. He has since then been regularly invited back to give concerts and masterclasses, and has toured the rest of the world.

His teaching career began in 1978 when he took over at the age of 21 the position left by his first teacher. In 1992, he was named guitar professor at the Conservatoire Jacques Thibaud in Bordeaux. Two years later, Olivier was called on to take over the prestigious position held until then by Alexandre Lagoya. He was named guitar professor at the CNSMDP, a position he has held since then. Several students in his class have since won numerous international competitions top awards and have embarked on a particularly promising career, notably Thibaut Cauvin, Gabriel Bianco, Thibaut Garcia, Xavier Jara-Bishop, Bogdan Mihailescu, Randall Avers, Benoît Albert, Antoine Morinière, Giani Caserotto, Antoine Guerrero... *La Chitarra d'oro 2018 - Premio per la didattica* – was awarded to Olivier Chassain in September 2018 at the *23° convegno internazionale di chitarra* in Alessandria, Italy, on the occasion of the famous *Michele Pittaluga* 51st International competition.

Besides teaching at the Paris Conservatoire, Olivier has taught a number of advanced summer guitar courses in various parts of France throughout the years, such as Sées in the Normandy region, in the 1990's, or Périgueux (Dordogne) at the Britten School, from 1995 to 2010 and at the famous International Summer Nice academy from 2013 to 2015. Olivier currently teaches intensive courses in the Limoges area several times a year.

Olivier Chassain's eclectic repertoire spans the Renaissance to the present. His love of Renaissance and Baroque music led him to study lute and vihuela extensively for many years and impart some of the spirit of these instruments in order to participate in furthering their legacy.

Olivier Chassain has always been a strong advocate of new music for guitar. A number of composers have made him the dedicatee of solo guitar works: Georges Delerue, Stephen Dodgson, Antonio Ruiz-Pipó A.-M. Riou, Thierry Pécou, Sean Heim - or of guitar concertos: Roland Creuze's "Escales", Édith Lejet's "Des fleurs en forme de diamants".

Olivier's playing appears on several CD labels. Two of his albums released by Metronome Recordings garnered awards from the press: "Almost a Song" was awarded "Choc du Monde de la Musique" and "Eventail" won "Classica" Magazine highest Award".

His duo album of Ida Presti's complete work – which he recorded with Norwegian guitarist Stein-Erik Olsen for Simax - was hailed by the musical press. It ranked among the "Top Five" of the best ten classical music CD's of 2009. The album is the very first recording featuring Ida Presti's complete compositional output.

An all Chassain CD, featuring Olivier's compositions was released in April 2015, being the outcome of Olivier's fruitful collaboration with his friend John McClellan. The recording sessions took place during one of Olivier's recent stays in St Louis, Missouri. Olivier is soon to embark onto new projects, as an all Bach solo CD, and a second CD of his own compositions.

Olivier Chassain started composing at the age of 15 and composition has always been an essential part of his musical life. His output is impressive; it includes two Suites for guitar ("Étoiles" and "Arion"), solo guitar pieces such as "Le Fil d'Or" In memoriam Ida Presti et A. Lagoya, a sonata for two guitars ("De loin en loin", 1995), "Doigts de fées" for recorder and guitar (2010), a solo guitar sonata (2011), "Les variations interrompues" for two guitars (2012) in celebration of Claude Debussy's 150th anniversary of birth a sonata for violin and guitar ("La chevelure des anges", 2014) and several collections of teaching pieces: "Patchwork", "Ad hoc", and "Brèves de pupitre" (first published in 2012, actually six volumes).

Olivier's works have been published by Max Eschig, Billaudot, Fuzeau, Mel Bay and Clearnote publications (USA) and more recently by L'empreinte mélodique and Berbèn.

In 2014, Berbèn also published Oliviers' revision of the complete original Ida Presti pieces for two guitars, from the Presti-Lagoya collection owned by Berbèn publishing. His revision of her complete solo guitar works was published by the same editor in 2019.