

# Boyd meets world

AUSTRALIAN GUITARIST  
MAKES HIS NEWPORT  
MUSIC FESTIVAL DEBUT

BY JENNIFER NICOLE SULLIVAN

Classical guitarists simply can't break a fingernail. Instead of a guitar pick, they need all five nails grown out to roughly 4mm on their dominant playing hand to rapidly pluck successions of crisp, precise sounds.

That's why Aussie classical guitarist Rupert Boyd said he's touching wood (instead of knocking on it) so he doesn't break a nail on his right hand before his July 24 debut at this year's Newport Music Festival.

"It's the bane of a guitarist's life. As long as I take care of them everyday, filing and polishing, they're fine," said Boyd, 27, in a telephone interview from his Brooklyn apartment. "In the classical world, you see them filing their fingernails — often large burly men with beards being careful not to break a nail."

Except for a shadow of scruff, Boyd is far from bearded or burly. On the back of his debut self-released solo CD, "Valses Poéticas," released in June 2008, Boyd's looks, with his infectious smile, warm



**He nails it.** From classic rock to classical guitar, Rupert Boyd has performed throughout the U.S., Spain, Italy, France and Australia. He released his first CD, 'Valses Poéticas,' last year. PHOTO BY MATTHEW FRIED

eyes, lean figure and mop of curly, Bob Dylan-esque hair (one of his guitar heroes), matches his calming, dreamy recordings of compositions by Bach, contemporary Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe and Enrique Granados, Spanish composer of the title track, one of Boyd's all-time favorite pieces.

"They are pieces that resonate within me," he said. "That first CD took so much time and mental effort."

Boyd recorded his debut at Yale University School of Music where he received his post-graduate Artist Diploma in 2008 at a memorable graduation ceremony where Sir Paul

McCartney also received an honorary doctorate in music. "The Beatles have been a big influence on me. It was great to be graduating in the same class as Paul McCartney," he said.

Before deciding to pursue classical guitar as a career at the end of high school, the Canberra-born musician found inspiration in classic rock. The first song Boyd played on guitar at age 8, using only one string and one finger, was the classic rock anthem, "Wild Thing." Before he headed off to New York City at 22 to study classical guitar at the Manhattan School of Music, he cites John Lennon as one of the reasons for his Big Apple fascina-

tion. And even today, he's still influenced by Jimi Hendrix's enthusiasm and artistry with the stringed instrument. "It's in the back of my mind, the palette of colors that you can create on the guitar," he said.

Boyd feeds this vivid image into the Australian, Spanish and chamber music he loves to play in solo performances and with guitarist Jacob Cordover in their group titled, Australian Guitar Duo. When he's not playing in venues in the United States, Australia and Europe, he teaches guitar at four schools in New York City, often teaching the youngsters to play "Wild Thing" as their first song. But Boyd makes sure to leave his classical guitar — the only guitar he owns, one he's never named — at home and uses a borrowed guitar to teach.

"Flailing arms on a \$10,000 guitar is not a good combination," said Boyd, laughing. "It's irreplaceable."

Before Boyd steps on stage for his debut performance at the festival, his nameless guitar gripped in his well-mani-

cured hand, he said he'd probably stave off any stage jitters with a nice cup of Earl Grey tea to help him relax and get a caffeine boost to play his two-hour program packed with Australian compositions picked in collaboration with Mark P. Malkovich III, the festival's artistic director.

"I do really love traveling and performing," Boyd said. "That's sort of why I love being a musician...the experiences and adventures. I feel like it's a privilege to bring this music from Australia to audiences in Newport."

**e** Rupert Boyd performs Fri., 7-24, 4 p.m., Ochre Court, 16 Ochre Point Ave., Newport, \$35. Boyd will play solos in two additional performances: "Huddle of Handel," Sat., 7-25, 11 a.m., The Elms, 367 Bellevue Ave., Newport, \$35; and "Span of Spaniards," Sun., 7-26, 11 a.m., The Elms, \$35. For more information, visit [www.newportmusic.org](http://www.newportmusic.org) or [www.rupertboyd.com](http://www.rupertboyd.com).