

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a cable-stayed bridge. The bridge's white pylon and numerous stay cables are visible against a clear, deep blue sky. The cables fan out from the pylon, creating a strong geometric pattern.

Darko  
**NIKČEVIĆ**  
(b. 1971)

Srdjan  
**BULATOVIĆ**  
(b. 1972)

**Peninsula**  
Works for Guitar

Darko Nikčević,  
Srdjan Bulatović,  
Guitars

## Darko Nikčević (b. 1971) • Srdjan Bulatović (b. 1972)

### Peninsula

Darko Nikčević and Srdjan Bulatović, the internationally renowned guitar duo from Montenegro, are acclaimed for their virtuosity and exciting performances providing a unique blend of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern mysticism. For more than a quarter of a century, they have performed for national and international audiences, presenting their own compositions which evoke the multiple qualities of classical and flamenco guitar. Their works are varied in terms of character, style, technique, rhythm and tempo, and share a common thread of Montenegrin traditional music, movie soundtracks, world music and popular contemporary movements.

The Duo's comments on their compositions provides a useful introduction to their music:

'The process of making our music is unusual, because our music often comes to us completely unexpectedly. The inspiration comes from the uniquely wonderful nature that surrounds us and through the characteristic rhythms and melodies familiar since childhood which continue to resonate among the emotions and experiences of our everyday life.'

Each composer has provided notes about his compositions, beginning with Darko Nikčević:

**Peninsula:** I started to compose this piece in 2017. I had all the main ideas then with the final touches provided in November 2018. I was entirely fascinated by the rhythms of the Balkans, which resonated with me from my earliest childhood and are common in our region. The culture inspires composing in irregular rhythmic structures, a very natural process for us. The whole album is a set of compositions typical of peninsula peoples. The three large Mediterranean peninsulas (the Balkans, Iberia and the Apennines) are inhabited by very similar people, descendants of the oldest cultures of the Western world and our music (from the northern Mediterranean) is full of

various influences. This composition is my attempt to cover most of them within one piece.

**Tarantella balcanica:** As its name implies, *Tarantella* is rhythmically based on music characteristic of southern Italy. But this one has a somewhat Balkan sound. I composed it after one of our concerts in Italy in the autumn of 2018.

**Emotions:** The piece was composed in the summer of 2018 during quiet, contemplative moments such as I often spend with my guitar. Reflections on the loss of loved ones inspired the music, which in the end are not necessarily too sad. A touch of optimism in the final minutes of the composition gives hopes for a better future, providing the opportunity for at least a more cheerful interpretation of this work.

**Mara:** This was inspired by traditional Montenegrin music, which is melodically simple, and since it is mostly performed a capella, it left me plenty of scope for exploring different harmonies, even changing from the major key to a minor tonality. I discovered that the same melody in the minor key may sound better than the original (which was in the major). The composition was created in the autumn of 2018.

**Bulerías:** This typical flamenco composition was written in 1993. I turned my admiration for the great Paco de Lucía into the kind of music which he made world famous. I respect all forms of flamenco *Bulerías* but also tried to add my own personal stamp. I boosted the rhythm of the *compás* by adding percussion (udu) and two more guitars at the end.

**Meditation:** I wrote *Meditation* at the end of spring 2019. It was late at night, very calm and quiet. I did not want to disturb the atmosphere and composed it quickly, almost in one breath, utilising an unusual tuning. Small

adjustments ensued in the following days though I was careful not to spoil the mood of that night when the piece first came to me.

**Dreams:** Montenegro has a beautiful coastline on the Adriatic Sea. Its vividness is not easy to describe in music. Still, sunny, warm and calm summer days without wind and waves cause drowsiness for everyone. Those dreams are romantic, relaxed and full of positivity. I composed *Dreams* on one such day in the summer of 2012.

**Tangos:** This work was created in the spring of 2003, after a visit to Spain, where I participated in an event alongside flamenco dancers and musicians. Flamenco has a characteristic and recognisable form, which is also present in my piece. Like *Bulerías*, *Tangos* is full of a variety of flamenco playing techniques such as *rasgueado*, *alzapua*, and *picado*, among others.

**Love:** I composed *Love* in one day after meeting my future wife in 2013. If I had not had my guitar with me, I believe that the music inspired by that love would have evaporated and only the emotions of love would have remained. Fortunately, my guitar is usually close to hand, so this composition survived.

The following are comments by Srdjan Bulatović:

**Cloud:** A mid-tempo work written in mid-2018, this piece came about by chance and was written in a couple of days. Disappointed with an unsuccessful composition that I had wrestled with for over a year, I played the initial couple of chords which at that time sounded strange and intriguing. I kept developing them, and the beginning of a new one began, followed a few days later by the completion of the entire composition. Written in 6/8, the work contains elements of jazz from the mid-20th century. At the time of its writing, the weather was cloudy (with some unusually shaped cloud formations) hence the naming of the piece.

**Bridge:** This is a composition of fast tempo, with frequent changes of rhythm, metre, and accents. Irregular rhythms such as 9/8 and 7/8 alternate. With its rhythmic and musical authenticity, this piece represents a typical composition from the Balkan Peninsula. I composed it over the course of two years. The first part was created in 2017 and the rest of the composition a year later in 2018. I acquired the idea of the name of the composition by accident. I walked past one bridge, watched it, and began to associate it with the piece I had just written. Music is the universal language of the world, and *Bridge* is about connecting with and understanding our culture in comparison with other countries and their cultures. Music makes 'bridges' even where it may seem impossible.

**Mountain:** This composition, of a fast tempo, was written over several months in the second half of 2018. It contains several sections that introduce chromatic melodies, Mediterranean themes (combined with Middle Eastern *melos*), and elements of flamenco music. In 4/4 time, the piece is inspired by the northern part of Montenegro, home of the high mountains.

**Alka:** This mid-tempo work, written in 2018, is based on the traditional Montenegrin song *Pomračina*, *Stara Varoš spava*. The idea for the piece came from both the song and the Sahat kula, the famous historical clock tower in the city of Podgorica in Montenegro. In the introduction, where only one guitar plays, the bass imitates the chimes of the bell and the clock in the Sahat kula. The second guitar then provides an accompaniment, playing the same tune in different octaves with a plectrum to imitate the tambourine, an instrument also played in the market place in Podgorica, and used widely in traditional music in cities across Montenegro.

**River:** Written in the first half of 2018, in 12/8 time, the structure includes a short introduction and several sections characterised by a dominant melody moving through various parts of the composition. Like the river, it flows through valleys, mountains, and canyons. In the melody itself, a calm romantic theme is expressed in the



first part, which develops more intensity before returning to the original mood. So the flow of the river, which inspired the composition, has elements that are both rapid and peaceful.

**South:** Composed towards the end of 2017, *South* was influenced by the Mediterranean and the music of Latin America. In 4/4 time with various virtuosic aspects, the first guitar part features several demanding passages while the second guitar performs an unusual rhythmic figure.

**Sokak:** Composed early in 2018, *Sokak* is based on the traditional song from northern Montenegro, *Ja prošetah Šefteli sokakom*. In 4/4 time, the piece includes Middle Eastern and Mediterranean influences as well as elements of classical and flamenco.

**Childhood:** The work was composed in 2018. Sitting at home, my thoughts returned to when I started playing guitar, remembering the many compositions I used to perform. I recalled some of the beautiful miniatures I enjoyed playing in my childhood such as pieces by Tárrega, Sor, Giuliani, and Carcassi. I was glad to go back to performing them as an adult. Suddenly a new and unknown tune came to me. I picked up the guitar and started composing the theme. In the next few hours, I wrote the main tune. The next day I created the second part of the composition and some time later gave it an introduction. The composition is of medium tempo and has a romantic theme, and with its form and duration is adapted to the present time and the requirements of the contemporary listener.

**Graham Wade, Darko Nikčević and Srdjan Bulatović**

*Notes edited by Graham Wade*

## Darko Nikčević



Darko Nikčević (born 1971 in Nikšić, Montenegro) is a guitarist, composer and audio engineer. He has played guitar since the age of six, and since then has felt a constant need to create his own music. He began composing the repertoire that he currently records and performs in the early 1990s. In addition to classical music, which he has played since his childhood, his discovery of flamenco music, with all its advanced guitar techniques, opened up new aspects and ways of musical expression to him. An intense study of jazz music and harmony, as well as various other genres, has contributed to his musical knowledge, helping him to find his own, authentic expression and original way of composing. His passion for music has led to the creation of more than 40 compositions. Thanks to his expert knowledge of audio technology, which he enriched with his university education (electrical engineering studies and an MSc in audio technology), he is able to record and produce the albums that he releases together with his colleague Srdan Bulatović, resulting in an optimum recording process for the duo.

[www.duogitara.com](http://www.duogitara.com)

## Srdjan Bulatović



Photo: Jovan Mandić

Srdjan Bulatović (born 1972 in Podgorica, Montenegro) is a guitarist and composer. He completed his doctoral studies on the subject *The Influence of Flamenco on the Development of Classical Guitar Playing Techniques* at the Faculty of Music Arts in Belgrade. To date, he has given numerous international concerts, including at Carnegie Hall in New York in 2016 and 2017. He is the author of the book *The Collection of Compositions and Etudes* for classical guitar (2003) and co-author, with Darko Nikčević, of the textbook *Guitar for Beginners* (published in 2006, 2011, 2013 and 2016). As a soloist, he has released *Guitar* (1998), which was the first classical music album to be recorded and published in Montenegro, *Live in Belgrade* (2010) and *Fuoco* (2012). He also recorded the album *Caffe* (2012) with flautist Boris Nikčević. With Darko Nikčević, he has recorded the albums *Duo* (2001), *Nostalgia* (2005), *Touch of Montenegro* (2011), *Synergy* (2012), *Ritmico* (2015), *The Best of Montenegro* (2016), *Balkan, Mediterranean, Orient* (2017) and *The Sea*, which was released on Naxos (8.573943, 2018). Bulatović is the founder and director of the classical guitar festival Guitar Days in Podgorica.

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Darko Nikčević and Srdjan Bulatović have gained international acclaim for virtuosic guitar duo performances providing a unique blend of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern mysticism. Their works are varied in terms of character, style, technique, rhythm and tempo, and share a common thread of Montenegrin traditional music, movie soundtracks, world music and popular contemporary movements. Their acclaimed album *The Sea* can be found on Naxos 8.573943.

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<b>1 Peninsula</b> (2017–18)	<b>3:11</b>	<b>2 Cloud</b> (2018)	<b>3:36</b>
<b>3 Tarantella balcanica</b> (2018)	<b>2:41</b>	<b>4 Bridge</b> (2017–18)	<b>3:15</b>
<b>5 Emotions</b> (2018)	<b>3:42</b>	<b>6 Mountain</b> (2018)	<b>4:02</b>
<b>7 Mara</b> (2018)	<b>3:09</b>	<b>8 Alka</b> (2018)	<b>3:55</b>
<b>9 Bulerías</b> (1993)	<b>3:54</b>	<b>10 River</b> (2018)	<b>3:48</b>
<b>11 Meditation</b> (2019)	<b>4:00</b>	<b>12 South</b> (2017)	<b>2:57</b>
<b>13 Dreams</b> (2012)	<b>3:34</b>	<b>14 Sokak</b> (2018)	<b>4:21</b>
<b>15 Tangos</b> (2003)	<b>4:08</b>	<b>16 Childhood</b> (2018)	<b>3:24</b>
<b>17 Love</b> (2013)	<b>3:14</b>		

### WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

**Darko Nikčević, Guitar I** **1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17,**  
**Guitar II** **2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16, Udu** **9**

**Srdjan Bulatović, Guitar I** **2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16,**  
**Guitar II** **1 3 7 9 13 15**

Recorded: 20 **5**, 24 **7** and 27 December **1** 2018, 16 **13 15 17** and 29 January **9** 2019, 18 **3**  
and 23 **2 8 10 14** April 2019, 14 May 2019 **6 12 16**, 5 **11** and 19 June **4** 2019 at Studio 6,  
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