



Marko Topchii

Winner 2017

Michele Pittaluga Guitar Competition, Alessandria

JOSÉ • CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO

MARTIN • KOSHKIN • DYENS



Marko Topchii: Guitar Recital

Antonio José • Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco • Frank Martin • Nikita Koshkin • Roland Dyens

This anthology of original compositions for solo guitar presents a varied selection of repertoire produced between 1933 and 2004 by composers of five different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. The pieces range from neo-Romanticism to serialism, offering a wide variety of approaches to the instrument. Roland Dyens and Nikita Koshkin, for example, are distinguished virtuosic performer/composers whereas the other composers may not even have played the guitar to any extent, if at all. But each composer offers a unique vision of the guitar's technical and expressive capabilities. The result is a fascinating compendium of sonorities, tonalities, and historical concepts inspired by a fervent ambition to create a substantial contribution to the finest recital material.

Antonio José (1902–1936) was praised by Maurice Ravel as a composer who would 'become *the* greatest Spanish musician of our century'. But his arrest and execution near his home city of Burgos in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War cast his music into a subsequent obscurity which has only recently been remedied. A monograph about his life and work has been published by the municipality of Burgos.

Considerable interest was aroused by the discovery in the late 1980s of the *Sonata*, which Antonio José finished on 23 August 1933. One movement was given its premiere in Burgos by Regino Sáinz de la Maza in November 1934. *Sonata* offers further perspectives on the expansion of the guitar repertoire during the early 20th-century Spanish musical renaissance. The work established Antonio José's reputation beside those of his distinguished contemporaries who respected the guitar as an expressive medium. José's *Sonata* is a composition requiring virtuosity as well as emotional depth and insight.

It can be observed with historical hindsight that José's *Sonata* is a remarkably original and inventive work, written in a period of very few precedents for guitar in this genre. By 1933 Moreno Torroba, Ponce and Turina had indeed presented various pieces in sonata form to Andrés Segovia but it is by no means certain that José was acquainted with these compositions.

The first movement contrasts the lively lyricism of the

opening statements with meditative slow chords and answering arpeggio patterns. This leads to a passage characterised by urgent pedal notes sustaining a short burst of three-part chords before the return of the opening section and a modified recapitulation. In these final pages, the previous musical substance is taken through various modulations before concluding with a resounding chord of E major.

The *Minueto* retains the 3/4 metre of its traditional 18th-century predecessors, but otherwise assumes an entirely 20th-century vocabulary. Though the essence of its opening theme is straightforward, its harmonic basis is complex, leading to a rainbow of modulations through diverse keys and labyrinthine sequences. Similarly *Pavana triste*, written in 3/2 time, brings a new language to an ancient dance form. At first dotted rhythms suggest a certain lightness of atmosphere but the predominant mood of the movement turns out to be melancholic rather than lyrical. Once again, intricate harmonic progressions lift this dance to new expressive heights reminiscent of Rodrigo's use of traditional musical structures to create fresh and meaningful vehicles for modern music.

Final begins with strummed chords characteristic of the Spanish guitar. Their function is not to provide Andalusian associations but to establish part of a compelling framework for statements of the first movement presented in modified *rondo* form. This structure supplies a powerful means of presenting familiar material from new perspectives while achieving a unifying effect between the first and last movements. After much harmonic divagation, the work ends decisively on the chord of E major, one of the most convenient and appropriate keys in keeping with the guitar's usual tuning.

In 1932, Segovia had travelled with Manuel de Falla to the International Festival of Music in Venice. At the Festival, Segovia was introduced to Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968) who became fascinated by the guitar and decided to explore its possibilities. Between 1932 and his death in 1968, he wrote over a hundred works for the instrument, including a sonata, sets of variations, concertos, and impressionistic pieces of various kinds.

Capriccio diabolico, Op. 85, 'Omaggio a Paganini' was written in 1935 following a suggestion by Segovia that Castelnuovo-Tedesco should compose a homage to Paganini who admired and played the guitar. Thus, the opening bars of the piece present the theme of *La campanella* from Paganini's *Second Violin Concerto*. The composition is an extended work, exploring the virtuosic potential of the guitar through the cumulative effect of diverse textures and moods. As well as lyrical moments, chordal passages, and rapid scale runs, a middle section breaks into a tremolo, the technique by which a guitarist can weave the illusion of a continuous line of melody. A vivid coda brings back *La campanella* in a final dramatic flourish.

The Swiss composer, pianist and harpsichordist, Frank Martin (1890–1974), born in Geneva, studied in Zurich, Rome and Paris. In 1926 he returned to Geneva and became director of the Technicum moderne de musique (1927–38). In 1946 he moved to the Netherlands and while living there also taught composition at the Cologne Hochschule für Musik (1950–57). Though his compositions were at first influenced by César Franck and French impressionists, he was later influenced by Schoenberg's dodecaphonic techniques. His works include operas, vocal scores and chamber works.

Quatre Pièces brèves (1933), originally written for Andrés Segovia, who disliked any kind of atonal composition, was published in 1959 by Universal Edition, edited by Karl Scheit. The suite was mainly neglected until Julian Bream began to perform the work in his concerts during the 1950s. Shortly after its composition Frank Martin re-arranged the four movements for solo piano (entitled *Guitare: Suite pour le Piano, portrait d'Andrés Segovia*) and, at the request of Ernest Ansermet, a version for orchestra.

Prélude begins with an expressive introductory passage, leading to a lyrical section marked *plus vite*. This progresses to a quick arpeggio episode leading to vigorous chords before pausing in a slow interlude. A final flourish ends the movement.

Air, marked *Lent et bien rythmé*, in 3/4 time, recalls the Baroque *sarabande* in its intricate ornamentation and gentle rhythmic impulse. The third movement, *Plainte*, places a melody over repeated arpeggiated chords. The second half includes a *Quasi-allegro* section with a

repeated bass leading on to a rapid flourish of double *pianissimo* sextuplets. *Comme une gigue*, in 6/8 time, marked *Con moto*, provides a final movement well rooted in the 20th-century harmonic vocabulary, once more pausing for a meditative moment before the reprise of the opening and a declamatory final statement.

Nikita Koshkin, guitarist, composer and teacher, began to study music at the age of 14 when his grandfather presented him with a guitar and a recording of Andrés Segovia. Soon afterwards he decided this would be his future career. Koshkin studied guitar under George Emanov at the Moscow Conservatory and with Alexander Frauchi at the Russian Academy of Music, and was a composition student of Victor Egorov. He achieved international fame as a guitar composer with *The Prince's Toys* (1980) and *Usher Waltz* (1984) and is now acclaimed as one of the major creative artists of the contemporary guitar.

Introduction et Vivace was commissioned by the publisher Doberman-Yppan as the set piece for the International Composition of the Guitar Foundation of America held in Montreal, Canada, in October 2004. Some would-be competitors decided not to attend the competition as this set piece was considered too difficult. Thus the work started to act as a kind of selection tool even before the event. The intention was to allow competitors to show their technical abilities over the six-minute duration of the composition.

Introduction is, in the composer's words, 'like an improvisation, like trying the instrument before playing'. The rapid arpeggios and scale passages are performed across the strings to achieve the *campanella* effect, where fretted notes chime pleasantly against open strings in a richly blended mixture of sonorities. The *Vivace* section, an extended movement in *toccata* style, takes the player through a range of challenging textures made more formidable by the sheer momentum of the work, developing towards a vigorous, chordal finale.

It was a great shock to the guitar world when Roland Dyens died in October 2016 a few days before his 61st birthday. Dyens, born in Tunisia of French nationality in 1955, was a deeply loved personality, a leading guitarist/composer and a distinguished teacher at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique in Paris. His concerts throughout the world had offered improvisatory

pieces as well as an extensive repertoire of original works. His profound knowledge of contemporary harmony co-existed with a vivid mastery of jazz and rock aspects which appear in various manifestations throughout his prolific compositions.

Libra Sonatine (1982) written in three movements, published in 1986, is one of the most virtuosic of late 20th-century guitar works. It was written after the composer had

endured heart surgery. Dyens commented: 'Its three movements are an explicit portrayal of that very particular period of my life: first the chaotic *India* (before the operation), then the *Largo* (during it) and finally the *Fuoco*, in which the unrestrained rhythms depict a veritable incarnation of my return to life.'

Graham Wade

Marko Topchii

The Ukrainian-born guitarist, Marko Topchii, has been the winner of more than 40 international guitar competitions, among them the 56th Tokyo Guitar Competition (2013), the 6th JoAnn Falletta Concert Guitar Competition (2014), and the 50th Michele Pittaluga International Guitar Competition in Alessandria (2017). Born in 1991 in Kiev to a musical family, he started to play the guitar with Volodymyr Homenyuk when he was four and graduated at the the Kharkiv Conservatory under Volodymyr Dotsenko, an Honoured Artist of Ukraine, at the age of 21, continuing with a three-year postgraduate programme at the Kiev Tchaikovsky Music Academy with Yuri Aleksik, Honoured Artist of Ukraine. In 2018 he joined the professional studies programme at the San Francisco Conservatory in the class of Judicaël Perroy. Marko Topchii has performed at Carnegie Hall, the Salle Cortot (Paris), Yamaha Ginza Hall (Tokyo), and at the Tchaikovsky Hall (Moscow). He often performs with orchestras, having performed more than ten concertos for guitar and orchestra. He is sponsored by the D'Addario Strings company and records with a guitar made by Jim Redgate (Australia).

www.topchii.com

Marko Topchii, winner of the 2017 Michele Pittaluga Guitar Competition, has selected a rich and varied repertoire ranging from neo-Romanticism to serialism, each work offering a unique vision of the instrument's technical and expressive capabilities. Antonio José's *Sonata* is remarkably inventive, bringing a new language to ancient dance forms, while Frank Martin's *Quatre Pièces brèves*, written in the same year, offers the flourish and vigour of contemporary harmonic vocabulary. Roland Dyens' *Libra Sonatine* is one of the most virtuosic and brilliant of late 20th-century guitar works.

MARKO TOPCHII

Guitar Recital

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--|--------------|
| Antonio JOSÉ (1902–1936) | | Nikita KOSHKIN (b. 1956) | |
| Sonata (1933) | 19:29 | Introduction et Vivace (2004) | 6:45 |
| 1 I. Allegro moderato | 6:55 | 10 Introduction: Lento e rubato | |
| 2 II. Minueto | 2:50 | molto | 2:09 |
| 3 III. Pavana triste | 5:29 | 11 Vivace | 4:36 |
| 4 IV. Final | 4:04 | Roland DYENS (1955–2016) | |
| Mario CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO | | Libra Sonatine (1982) | 14:22 |
| (1895–1968) | | 12 I. India | 6:24 |
| 5 Capriccio diabolico, Op. 85, | | 13 II. Largo | 4:33 |
| 'Omaggio a Paganini' (1935) | 9:01 | 14 III. Fuoco | 3:20 |
| Frank MARTIN (1890–1974) | | | |
| Quatre Pièces brèves (1933) | | | |
| 6 I. Prélude | 2:09 | | |
| 7 II. Air | 2:05 | | |
| 8 III. Plainte | 2:30 | | |
| 9 IV. Comme une gigue | 1:51 | | |

Recorded: 26–28 February 2018 at Fellowship Church, Englewood, Florida, USA
 Producer, engineer and editor: Norbert Kraft • Booklet notes: Graham Wade
 Guitar: J. Redgate, Australia • Publishers: Bèrben Edizioni Musicali (1–4), G. Ricordi, Milano (5),
 Universal Edition (6–9), Les Éditions Doberman-Yppan (10–11), Éditions Henri Lemoine (12–14)
 Photo of Marko Topchii: Matheus Coura



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Playing Time
58:39



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 Booklet notes in English