

GUITAR MUSIC OF VENEZUELA

Carreño • Castellanos
Plaza • Ruiz • González
Nirse González



GUITAR MUSIC OF VENEZUELA
Inocente Carreño • Evencio Castellanos • Juan Bautista Plaza
Federico Ruíz • Pedro Mauricio González

Venezuelan Dances of the 19th Century		Evencio Castellanos (1915–1984)	
ed. Vicente Emilio Sojo (1887–1974)		11 Evocación (c. 1972)	2:15
(arr. Nirse González)		12 Homenaje a Antonio Lauro (1959)	2:31
Carlos Silva		Juan Bautista Plaza (1898–1965)	
1 El Guarenero	1:52	Obras para guitarra (1937–1954)	12:21
Blas María Tovar		13 I. Homenaje a los Vihuelistas (1937)	2:17
2 Danza venezolana	1:22	14 II. Sonata antigua	3:27
Anonymous		15 III. Cortejo de sombras (1954)	4:20
3 Sobre la arena	2:08	16 IV. Lejanías (1954)	2:08
Inocente Carreño (1919–2016)		Federico Ruíz (b. 1948)	
Suite No.2		17 Pieza Numero Uno (1970)	5:05
4 I. Vals	4:20	18 Piezas para niños menores de cien años	(1982–1994) – Valles del Tuy
5 II. Serenata	3:14	(arr. José Gregorio Guanchez)	
6 III. Merengue	2:02	Pedro Mauricio González (b. 1959)	2:21
7 IV. Danza	2:53	Tetralogía (2016) (dedicated to Nirse González)	11:05
Suite para guitarra (1966)		19 I. Tonada	3:03
8 I. Preludio	3:43	20 II. Sangueo	2:19
9 II. Madrigal	2:33	21 III. Llamada	3:15
10 III. Aire de Danza	2:24	22 IV. Golpe	2:20

The music of Venezuela has been described by John Williams as a ‘vibrant mixture of three cultures’, influenced over the course of history by the indigenous Indians, the Spanish who invaded the country, and the Africans brought to Venezuela as slaves. The significance of the guitar in the development of this music has been profound ever since the 16th century when the Spanish brought plucked chordophones such as the vihuela with them. But it was in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century that the Venezuelan guitar reached its finest manifestations, creating a magnificent repertoire which has enchanted the concert halls of the world with its brilliant colours and rhythms.

The first three pieces on this recording are taken from *Venezuelan Dances of the 19th Century*, compiled and harmonized by the Venezuelan musicologist and composer **Vicente Emilio Sojo** (1887–1974): *El Guarano* by Carlos Silva evokes the city of Guarenas, on the banks of the

Guarenas River in Miranda State, Venezuela. The name *Guarenas* (from the Caribbean language) means ‘prairie’ or ‘grassland’ as the original Indians, the Chagaragotos, called these lands. Its lyrical nature is also a characteristic of *Danza venezolana* by Blas María Tovar. This form of the waltz, though owing some allegiance to the European tradition, evolved in Venezuela to become a more rhythmically complex dance moving from 3/4 to 6/8 and back again. *Sobre la arena* (‘On the sand’) is a Venezuelan folk song arranged for guitar by Nirse González. The text to the song was written by Adolfo León Gómez (1857–1927), writer and politician:

*Sobre la arena grabó mi nombre
Y leve viento lo arrebató...
(On the sand I wrote your name
And the light wind caught it...)*

Inocente José Carreño (1919–2016) moved to Caracas

in 1932 from his home region of Margarita Island. From 1940 he studied composition with Vicente Emilio Sojo (1887–1974) and with the help of Antonio Lauro (1917–1986) wrote his first solo guitar piece, the *Preludio* (1956). This became the first movement of *Suite para guitarra*, published in Caracas in 1966. *Suite No. 2*, dedicated to Lauro, was written when the composer was an adviser in the Venezuelan Delegation for UNESCO in Paris. *Serenata*, the second movement of the suite, was originally written for guitar and voice.

Evencio Castellanos (1915–1984) pianist and organist, graduated in 1944 as a composer with the first generation of Sojo’s students and collaborated with his teacher in harmonising popular Venezuelan music. He wrote two pieces for guitar, *Homenaje a Antonio Lauro* (1959) and *Evocación* (c. 1972), dedicated to Alirio Díaz. *Evocación* is a lyrical composition with elegant themes singing above an arpeggiated accompaniment. *Homenaje a Antonio Lauro* begins with expressive chords and rapid arpeggios before an *Allegro molto* middle episode introduces complex rhythms and staccato chords.

Juan Bautista Plaza (1898–1965), composer and musicologist, first studied law and medicine at the Central University of Venezuela while directing the choir at the Caracas French School. In 1920 he won a scholarship to study composition in Rome. On returning to Venezuela in 1923 he became choirmaster of Caracas Cathedral and in 1924 Professor of Harmony at the Escuela Nacional de Música. He was later appointed Director of Culture in the Ministry of Education. His compositions include a quantity of choral music, as well as orchestral and instrumental works. Plaza also arranged the official version of the Venezuelan national anthem.

Homenaje a los Vihuelistas (‘Homage to the Vihuela Players’) (1937), dedicated to the Spanish maestro Regino Sáinz de la Maza (1896–1981), expressed the composer’s admiration of the 16th-century vihuela tradition. *Sonata antigua* evokes the sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti. Two decades later, Plaza dedicated *Cortejo de sombras* (‘Procession of Shadows’) to Alirio Díaz on 23 January 1954. In the same month he composed *Lejanías* (‘Distances’).

Federico Ruíz (b. 1948) studied composition with Primo Casale, Vicente Emilio Sojo, and Evencio Castellanos at

the José Angel Lamas Conservatory, Caracas. His prolific musical output includes orchestral and electronic works as well as several concertos, choral and chamber music, songs, and two operas. The pianist Clara Rodríguez has described his music as ‘a sophisticated synthesis of Latin American styles that among many other traits, expresses the subtle interface between the classical and popular music of the continent’.

Pieza Numero Uno (‘Piece Number One’) (1970), in the style of the *joropo*, features jazz elements as well as a central section of characteristic Venezuelan rhythms evoking the vitality of the *arpa tuyera* (‘the harp of Tuy’). *Valles de Tuy* (‘Valleys of Tuy’) is arranged for guitar from the piano suite *Piezas para niños menores de cien años* (‘Pieces for children under 100 years of age’) (1982–1994). The Tuy is a river in Miranda State, northern Venezuela.

Pedro Maurico González (b. 1959) was awarded the titles of Maestro Composer and Professor of Double Bass at Lino Gallardo Music School, Caracas in 1990 and also studied the guitar for a while. The composer’s output includes orchestral works, chamber music, many instrumental and choral pieces, and incidental music for radio and television.

Tetralogía (‘Tetralogy’) comprises a group of four related movements featuring a range of guitar technical resources, a free atonal language and a variety of rhythmic and melodic elements of Venezuelan folklore. *Tonada* represents a work song. *Sangueo* deploys drum effects from the coast of Carabobo State, an aspect known as the Drums of San Millán. Circular melodies and rhythmic cells are interwoven with percussive effects played by tapping on the soundboard. *Llamada* (‘The Call’) represents a ceremonial ritual, originally a hymn presented in tribute to a saint. *Golpe* (literally ‘a blow’) is a compendium of rhythms of the *joropo* of Tuy, as traditionally performed by a singer accompanied by harp and maracas.

Graham Wade

Grateful acknowledgement in the writing of these notes is due to Alejandro Bruzual’s *The Guitar in Venezuela, A Concise History to the End of the 20th Century* (Quebec: Doberman-Yppan, 2005).



Photo: Ariane Becke

Nirse González

The talented Venezuelan guitarist Nirse González has been praised by audiences and critics alike for his rich musical sensitivity and excellent technique. He studied music with a focus on classical guitar in Venezuela, Spain and Germany. At the age of fifteen, he performed the *Concierto de Aranjuez* with the 'Vicente Emilio Sojo' Orchestra. He soon developed into an internationally sought-after artist performing at numerous festivals worldwide as solo artist and with chamber orchestras and ensembles. Nirse González has won numerous awards: in 1996, he won first prize at the Concurso Nacional de Guitarra Antonio Lauro where he also received a special prize from Yamaha. In the same year, he was awarded first prize at the Concurso Nacional de Guitarra Raúl Borges, and received a special prize for the best interpretation of music by Raúl Borges. Subsequently, he received an invitation to perform a solo recital at the IX Encuentro Internacional de Guitarra Raúl Borges 1997, alongside many other renowned guitarists. Third place at the Concurso Internacional de Guitarra Alirio Díaz 1998, second place at the Concurso Joven Solista and third place at the Concurso Internacional de Guitarra Julián Arcas in Almería in 2005 were to follow. In 2006, he won one of the most important guitar competitions: the XL Certamen Internacional de Guitarra Francisco Tárrega in Benicàssim, Spain. In August 2007, he released his first album featuring classical pieces for solo guitar on Naxos. The CD *Classica Venezolana* was released in September 2010 by Dabringhaus und Grimm. With this new recording González is looking to popularise the musical diversity of Venezuela for classical concerts.

www.nirse-gonzalez.de

Throughout the 20th century Venezuelan composers created a repertoire of guitar works that, with their vivid rhythms, folkloric elements and brilliant colours, captured the country's musical soul – a process that continues to this day. These elements can be found in the rich lyricism of the folk songs arranged by guitarist Nirse González, in the charm of Inocente Carreño's suites, or in the sophisticated synthesis of Latin American styles evoked by Federico Ruíz. Ceremonial ritual and use of the *zoropo* dance are expressive features of Pedro Mauricio González's *Tetralogía*.

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| Venezuelan Dances of the 19th Century ed. Vicente Emilio SOJO (1887–1974) (arr. Nirse González) | | Juan Bautista PLAZA (1898–1965) |
| | | Obras para guitarra (1937–1954) 12:21 |
| Carlos Silva | | Federico RUÍZ (b. 1948) |
| 1 | El Guarenero 1:52 | 17 Pieza Numero Uno (1970) 5:05 |
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| Anonymous | | 19–22 Tetralogía (2016) 11:05
(dedicated to Nirse González) |
| 3 | Sobre la arena 2:08 | Nirse González, Guitar |
| Inocente CARREÑO (1919–2016) | | Full track details will be found in the booklet |
| 4–7 | Suite No. 2 12:38 | |
| 8–10 | Suite para guitarra (1966) 8:48 | |
| Evencia CASTELLANOS (1915–1984) | | |
| 11 | Evocación (c. 1972) 2:15 | |
| 12 | Homenaje a Antonio Lauro (1959) 2:31 | |

Recorded: 15–18 September 2016 at St. John Chrysostom Church, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada
 Producers: Norbert Kraft and Bonnie Silver • Engineer: Norbert Kraft • Editor: Bonnie Silver
 Booklet notes: Graham Wade • Guitar: Otto Rauch • Publishers: transcriptions for guitar by Nirse González (1–3); Edition Fundation Vicente Emilio Sojo Volument XVIII, legal deposit: CP15820074 (4–7); Edizioni G. Zanibon, G 5487 Z (8–10); Edition Fundation Vicente Emilio Sojo (11–12); Edition Fundation Vicente Emilio Sojo Volument 1 (13–16); Edition Fundation Vicente Emilio Sojo Volument XI, ISBN 9806440-00-5 (17); Edizioni Musicali Bèrben, COD 5514 (18); Unpublished – recorded with permission of the composer (19–22)
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Playing Time
63:10



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