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NAXOS

# CHANGES

Contemporary Guitar Music

by CAGE

CARTER

DASHOW

KAMPELA

REICH

Arturo Talini, Guitars

# CHANGES

- Steve Reich** (b. 1936)
- ❶ **Electric Counterpoint** (1987) **14:44**
- John Cage** (1912–1992)
- ❷ **A Room** (1943)  
(arr. Arturo Tallini for prepared guitar, 2021) **2:37**
- Elliott Carter** (1908–2012)
- ❸ **Changes** (1983) **7:31**
- James Dashow** (b. 1944)
- ❹ **iPiece** (2019) **16:56**
- Arthur Kampela** (b. 1960)
- ❺ **Percussion Study III** (1997) **10:01**
- John Cage**
- ❻ **Dream** (1948) (arr. Arturo Tallini for guitar, 2021) **7:41**

Publishers: Boosey & Hawkes ❶ ❸, Peters Edition ❷ ❹, Composer's manuscript ❹ ❺

Guitars: De Gregorio 2020 (classical), Ibanez AS73 TBC (electric)

## CAGE • CARTER • DASHOW • KAMPELA • REICH

### Changes

As the 21st century has progressed, the repertoire available to solo guitar continues to gain in depth and quality, with acoustic and electronic music enjoying an ever more comfortable coexistence. That is not to say the music itself is comfortable, but that composers are finding increasingly imaginative ways of exploring and integrating the elements available to them. This recital from Arturo Tallini examines contrasting approaches in writing for the instrument, from the dream-like sequences of Steve Reich and John Cage to the percussive and more angular approaches of Elliott Carter and Arthur Kampela.

Tallini begins with an acknowledged classic of the electric guitar repertoire. The 'minimalist' label applied so often to Steve Reich's music can be misleading, for while its origins lie in compact melodic loops and fragments, the sum of its parts is a full-bodied experience. So it is with *Electric Counterpoint*, a three-movement work commissioned by the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival for the guitarist Pat Metheny. It is part of a series of multitracked instrumental pieces, written for a soloist playing against as many as ten pre-recorded parts. Reich had already written for flute (*Vermont Counterpoint*) and clarinet (*New York Counterpoint*) before completing this work for eleven guitar and two bass parts in 1987. In live performance, the soloist plays the eleventh part with the tape. In his note on the piece Reich credited Metheny's counsel on shaping the guitar writing with the use of single melodic lines, enabling the harmonies, built up in layers, to take care of themselves. In this recording Arturo Tallini pays tribute to his late colleague, Domenico Ascione (who passed away in 2017), by playing over his self-recorded tape of the pre-recorded *Electric Counterpoint*. Ascione's original version was reworked by Stefano Tallini for this album.

Reich uses a conventional classical structure of three movements: fast–slow–fast. The first movement uses a theme 'derived from Central African horn music', introduced to the composer by ethnomusicologist Simha Arom. It builds in an eight-voice canon, with pulsing harmonies beneath. Meanwhile, the soloist highlights melodic patterns resulting from the counterpoint generated between the parts.

The second movement halves the tempo, changing key to introduce a new theme that builds on nine guitars in canon. Once more the soloist brings out distinctive melodic patterns, given harmonic support by the remaining parts. For the third movement Reich returns to the tempo and key of the first, introducing a new pattern in triple time and enjoying the rhythmic combinations that this offers. Here the melodies operate at different speeds, dancing in hazy syncopations.

The pioneering American composer and musical philosopher John Cage wrote very little music using the guitar. In his music for prepared piano, however, he often approaches the sonority of the acoustic instrument, and these qualities are recognised in two transcriptions of early works by Arturo Tallini on this album. Originally intended as part of *She is Asleep*, a duo for voice and prepared piano from 1943, *A Room* was extracted as a standalone piece for piano. Tallini's transcription assigns its low range ostinato to a reverberant sound similar to that of an oud, while the upper range harmonics offer an ethereal contrast. Cage's notes for the piece reveal a complex rhythmic scheme – 4, 7, 2, 5, 4, 7, 2, 3, 5 – that sounds natural in playback.

*Dream*, composed in 1948 and first performed at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, is a more substantial structure. As a slow, expansive piano piece it was used to shadow choreography by Merce Cunningham, yet as with much of Cage's music its versatility has yielded arrangements for other instrumental combinations. This transcription enjoys the sustained elements of the single melodic line, the tune often shifting by step as it floats on the reverberation. There is no sense of urgency, the music unfolding as a set of stray thoughts in its own sweet time.

The music of Elliott Carter offers a sharp contrast to Cage's reverie. *Changes*, one of two pieces for acoustic guitar written at the request of David Starobin, was first performed at a 75th birthday concert for Carter in New York in December 1983. Described by its composer as 'music of mercurial contrasts of character and mood, unified by its harmonic and rhythmic structure', it takes the form of a conversation, with phrases resembling spoken sentences. There are exclamations and appropriate pauses between the dialogue as Carter punctuates his musical thoughts. These exchanges take on a particularly searching intimacy towards the centre of the piece, contrasting with Carter's more animated writing. Towards the end of *Changes* a sustained style of writing confirms the influence of bell-ringing patterns, heard as if from afar.

James Dashow unites electronic and acoustic elements in a compelling fusion, combining live performance with computer music and using audio perspective as part of the compositional process. Born in America in 1944, Dashow first utilised computers with music as an undergraduate at Princeton University. His pioneering work led to further assignments at the University of Padua, while awards given to the composer include grants from the Koussevitzky, Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations, as well as from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Since visiting Italy in 1969 for a Fulbright Fellowship, Dashow has maintained very strong ties with the country, studying with Goffredo Petrassi and taking up residence soon after. In his work he tends towards small instrumental forces but has also completed an opera, *Archimedes*, designed for performance in a planetarium. His list of works reveals a progression from stereophonic sound through quadrophonic and hexaphonic to his chosen octophonic method of recent years.

*iPiece*, written for Arturo Tallini in 2019, is described as ‘a musical satire for guitar, octophonic electronic sounds, video and some electronic gadgets’, with this current version for guitar and electronic octophonic sounds. Taking the thoughts of the acoustic guitar as its starting point, the composer places them in a number of wider perspectives, with watery textures suggesting the guitar is being fed through a series of increasingly outlandish processes in a factory. Soon it is less a solo instrument and more part of Dashow’s highly intriguing sound world, with special effects suggesting a futuristic script or machine-based environment. The reverberant electronic sounds bounce off the walls of these premises and are suddenly placed in perspective by energetic outbursts, whirls of tremolo or unexpectedly plaintive comments from the guitar. Gradually the soloist regains control, with incisive and energetic writing that ripples outwards with the help of the electronics, before retreating to the shadows. Here the extremities of the guitar are found against nocturnal shading.

The guitar holds special significance for composer and virtuoso Arthur Kampela, born in Rio de Janeiro in 1960. Kampela won the International Guitar Composition Competition in Caracas in 1995, then the Lamarque-Pons Guitar Composition Competition in Montevideo three years later. His series of *Percussion Studies* for guitar, begun in 1989, have proved pivotal in exploring new techniques and sounds for the instrument. They are percussive in nature but are more than a mere sequence of effects, possessing strong melodic qualities along with complex rhythmic structures. The third in the series, completed in 1997, begins as a struggle between acoustic parameters, varying from wiry snaps to more fulsome notes at the lower end of the guitar, applying what the composer describes as a ‘squeeze’ to the foreground textures. As the study progresses Kampela implores the player to share their own reactions, which occur through a series of snatched cries or sharp intakes of breath. He also introduces a credit card and a bottle neck to extract unusual sounds from the guitar, securing with the latter what the composer accurately calls a ‘wavery, underwater sound’.

**Ben Hogwood**



Session photos by Andrea Pace



## James Dashow



Photo: A.S. Bombi

James Dashow (b. 1944, Chicago) studied with J.K. Randall, Arthur Berger and Seymour Shifrin, and completed his studies with Goffredo Petrassi in Italy on a Fulbright Fellowship. Dashow worked at the University of Padua, where he created the first computer music compositions in Italy. He was the first vice president of the International Computer Music Association, and has taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Princeton University. In 2003 he was composer-in-residence at the 12th Annual Florida Electroacoustic Music Festival, and for several years coproduced a weekly contemporary music programme for Rai. He is the author of the MUSIC30 language for digital sound synthesis, and also invented the Dyad System. Following his extensive use of audio spatialisation as an integral part of the compositional process, he composed the first opera designed to be performed in a planetarium (*Archimedes*). His most important recognitions include the Prix Magistere at the Bourges International Festival of Experimental Music; Guggenheim Memorial and Koussevitzky Music Foundation grants; and the Fondazione CEMAT distinguished career award Il CEMAT per la Musica. [www.jamesdashow.net](http://www.jamesdashow.net)

## Arturo Tallini



Arturo Tallini (b. 1958) is considered an exemplar of contemporary guitar music and is also much in demand as a teacher. He has given concerts across Europe, the United States, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia, and has recorded and performed some of the most complex music in the guitar repertoire, including works by Berio, Ginastera, Maderna, Scelsi, Bussotti, Carter, Maurizio Pisati, Brian Ferneyhough, Helmut Lachenmann, Arthur Kampela and Andre Bartzki. Many composers have written for him, including Matteo D'Amico, Bortolotti, Mauro Cardi, Simone Cardini, Fabrizio Casti, Fabio Cifariello Ciardi, Enrico Cocco, Gianvincenzo Cresta, Gacevich, James Dashow, Orlando Jacinto García, Tomás Marco, Marco Morgantini, Nicolau, Michele Dall'Ongaro, Fausto Razzi, Agostino Di Scipio, Stefano Tallini and Francesco Telli. He has taught at the Conservatory of Music Santa Cecilia in Rome since 2007, and the Fondazione Accademia Internazionale di Imola since 2019. He also gives masterclasses at Italian conservatories and European academies and universities. In 2016 he was awarded the prestigious Golden Guitar for Teaching by the XXI International Guitar Convention of the City of Alessandria. [www.arturotallini.com](http://www.arturotallini.com)

Repertoire for solo guitar has gained in depth and quality in recent decades, with acoustic and electronic techniques enjoying an ever more imaginative coexistence. Arturo Tallini's recital explores contrasting approaches for his instrument, beginning with the ostinato textures of Reich's *Electric Counterpoint*, an acknowledged classic in this field. Tallini's transcriptions of early piano works by Cage create a mood of reverie, while Carter's *Changes* forms a mercurial dialogue. James Dashow's *iPiece* fuses acoustic and electronic elements to stunning effect, while Arthur Kampela's *Percussion Studies* have proved pivotal in exploring new sounds for the guitar.

## CHANGES

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|---|-------|
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\*WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

### Arturo Tallini

Electric Guitar ❶, Prepared Guitar ❷,

Classical Guitar ❸–❹, Vocalise ❺

Domenico Ascione, Pre-recorded tape of electric guitar ❶

James Dashow, Electronics ❹

A detailed track list, instrumentarium and publishers' details can be found inside the booklet.

Recorded: 10 July ❹, 10 August ❶ and 27 ❺, 28 ❸ and 29 October ❷❹ 2021

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