



Reginald
SMITH BRINDLE

Complete Works for Solo Guitar • 2

Sonatas, Songs and Dances

Duilio Meucci, Guitar



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SMITH BRINDLE
(1917–2003)

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1	Vita Senese (1948)	3:27
	Sonatina Fiorentina (1948)	10:57
2	I. Allegro ma non troppo	4:49
3	II. Adagio	2:51
4	III. Allegro assai. Vivace	3:17
5	Canzona (1980)	3:36
	Guitar Sonata No. 2 ‘El Verbo’ (1976)	7:51
6	I. Moderato espressivo, ma delicato	3:10
7	II. Adagio, lirico	3:27
8	III. Vivo	1:14
9	Serenata No. 2 (1946)	5:32
	Guitar Sonata No. 3 ‘The Valley of Esdralon’ (1978)	12:21
10	I. Molto moderato, espressivo	4:02
11	II. Allegro	1:54
12	III. Molto moderato, come prima	1:44
13	IV. Con moto, scorrevole, ma moderato	1:56
14	V. Tempo I	2:45
15	Danza Pagana (1948)	3:54
	Guitar Sonata No. 4 ‘La Breve’ (1978)	10:31
16	I. Moderato	4:11
17	II. Poco adagio	3:33
18	III. Allegro non troppo	2:47
19	Fuego Fatuo (1948)	3:21
	Guitar Sonata No. 5 (1979)	10:49
20	I. Con spirito, moderato	4:33
21	II. Lento solenne	2:32
22	III. Con moto	3:44
23	Scherzo (1946)	2:38

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Reginald Smith Brindle, British composer and writer, born in Cuerden, Lancashire, studied various musical instruments throughout his life including the guitar, clarinet and saxophone, and later the organ. But his gifts lay particularly in the direction of composition and scholarly research. During the Second World War he served in Africa and Italy in the Royal Engineers. From 1946 to 1949 he studied music at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, before going to Italy to further his compositional work with Pizzetti and Dallapiccola, and Germani for organ.

Although Smith Brindle composed a variety of compositions including an opera, he is best known for his guitar music. This was first featured in various Julian Bream recitals from the late 1950s onwards. From 1957 to 1970 Smith Brindle pursued a distinguished academic career lecturing at the University College of North Wales, and from 1970 to 1981 as professor at the University of Surrey. His scholarly publications over the years included *Serial Composition* (1966), *Contemporary Percussion* (1970), *The New Music: The Avant-garde since 1945* (1975), and *Musical Composition* (1986).

Vita Senese ('Siena Life'), written in 1948 when the composer was 31, is a musical sketch of one of the great Italian medieval cities, renowned for its architectural beauty and cultural history. The work begins with a flourish of arpeggios before progressing to stately chords. Chordal strumming follows before a faster episode with emphasis on bass melodies. The finale is a recapitulation of the opening succeeded by lyrical melodic lines and the same stately chords. The ending uses delicate harmonics and a final eloquent chord.

Sonatina Fiorentina ('Florence Sonatina'), also composed in 1948, is dedicated to the great Spanish guitarist and pedagogue Emilio Pujol, and celebrates the universal magnificence of the great city of Florence. The work begins with a light lyrical episode marked *Allegro ma non troppo*. This leads to one of the main themes of the first movement, a gently lilting section with balanced interplay between chordal accompaniment and interlaced semiquavers. This in turn leads to a third episode reverting to the same tempo as the opening with delicate quavers in both bass and treble. Also notable is the return to stately chords similar to those in *Vita Senese*. The opening theme is recapitulated before an intensifying coda progressing to strummed chords in the final bars.

The slow movement, marked *Adagio*, is a gentle lullaby with expressive melodic lines and beguiling harmonies. The contrasting third movement is toccata-like, beginning *Vivace* before introducing an *adagio* episode. The remainder of the third part presents a tarantella rhythm leading up to expansive strummed chords for an exciting climax.

Canzona is a beautifully evocative song with a variety of textures including six-string chords, wistful quavers, and lively groups of semiquavers (at times reminiscent of jazz patterns). The predominant mood is of a poignant melancholy atmosphere of aspects of Italy and the composer's own disposition.

Guitar Sonata No. 2 'El Verbo' ('The Word') was written in the mid-1970s and published in 1978. The work begins with contrasts between sonorous chords in the bass followed by short clusters of semiquavers, a pattern which will be echoed in subsequent movements. Structurally therefore the sonata is highly unified, though the patterns of semiquavers become extended and more complex as the piece proceeds. At various points two textures are exploited – a bar of syncopation and a contrast with three-part chords over repeated basses. The second movement, *Adagio, lirico*, takes elements of the first movement, and slows them down, but remains rooted in the fragmented moments of its predecessor. The final movement, *Vivo*, on the contrary, speeds up the process, taking things to their logical extremity with a climactic strumming finale.

Serenata No. 2, written in 1946, is one of the composer's early forays into the sound world of the classical guitar. The music here is deeply romantic and lyrical, at times touchingly sentimental with elements of pure song.

Guitar Sonata No. 3 'The Valley of Esdralon', dedicated to the Italian composer and scholar Angelo Gilardino, refers to a plain in Israel which historically has been the site of many conflicts. The Valley of Esdralon, located between the Jordan Valley and the Plain of Sharon, is also known as the Plain of Armageddon or the Jezreel Valley.

At this stage in his compositional career, Smith Brindle wrote several sonatas included on this recording, centred on the late 1970s. Though each one has its own structure and development it is useful to compare them as branches from the same tree, as it were. The sonatas are therefore individual entities but also have a familial relationship.

Sonata No. 3 has five movements in all but each one grows from the opening chords which resonate in terms of the echoes and loneliness of the deserted valley. From the first statement of the chords, they are subjected to every kind of exploration including intense ornamentation, repeated flurries, melodic fragments and chordal progressions. The first movement is marked *Molto moderato, espressivo*, while the second movement is a ferocious *Allegro*. In the third movement we return to the essential mood of the first movement. The fourth movement takes us into complex rhythms and harmonic progressions which are resolved in the final movement by a recapitulation of the sonata's opening, now broken into by a final cascade of strummed chords.

Danza Pagana, published in 1948, is a tribute dedicated to Andrés Segovia. As such it is self-consciously 'Spanish' complete with strummed chords and Iberian harmonic progressions. There are also some slow expressive bars where Segovia could have brought out his immaculate tone qualities. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, Segovia never included the work in his repertoire.

Guitar Sonata No. 4 'La Breve', a work commissioned by the International Guitar Week, Zwolle, Holland, written in 1978 and published in 1980, again falls into the era of the composer's very creative 'sonata' period of the late 1970s. The first movement, growing out of two resonant six-string chords features a poignant upward movement covering almost the instrument's entire range. This is perhaps the most deeply emotional point of all Smith Brindle's guitar sonatas. The slow movement follows through in this sensitive mood, with soft chords and lyrical interludes of semiquavers. Later sustained bass notes add a feeling of solemnity. The third movement presents a kind of syncopated dance with virtuosic interludes creating the sense of onward momentum, developing the innate harmonic implications of the chordal moments.

Fuego Fatuo ('Will-of-the-Wisp'), published in 1948 and dedicated to Andrés Segovia, is another creditable attempt to fulfil the Maestro's need for modern repertoire. Once more this did not enter Segovia's repertoire. The piece is in the form of a rondo where an exciting dance contrasts with shorter lyrical interludes, proceeding to a vigorous strummed finale.

Guitar Sonata No. 5, written in 1979 and published in 1982, presents in its first movement a variety of guitar sonorities from gentle sustained chords to drum effects, brilliant scale runs and chords strummed with the thumb before progressing to a calm mood kept at a moderate tempo. This episode covers the whole range of the guitar. The final page is full of characteristic bravura and climactic thrills with rapid arpeggio patterns and brilliant chords.

The second movement, marked *Lento solenne*, consists of six-string chords sliding up and down the fretboard with an almost hypnotic effect. The last movement, *Con moto*, relies on the formulae of traditional guitar arpeggio patterns ingeniously exploited in a contemporary manner and full of felicitous surprises. The work ends with a dramatic clashing of chords.

Scherzo, written in 1946 and regrettably unpublished, is a superb piece of dynamic guitar composing full of vivacity and movement. It is a fine representation of the best of Smith Brindle's early style.

Graham Wade

With grateful thanks to Federica Castaldo, Marco Rossi and Giuliana Carbone of Fondazione Pietà de' Turchini for the venue for this recording; Paolo Montella for his tireless work and endless patience; Marco Balestrieri for the realisation of the videos; Steve Thachuck for support with the research; Alban Smith Brindle for the help and the kind concession of the photographic archive material; and Antonia La Torre for the love, support and encouragement.

This work is dedicated to my family and all those who love music.

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Duilio Meucci



Photo: Andrej Grilc

A pupil of Angelo Gilardino, Duilio Meucci studied at the Haute école de musique de Genève under Dušan Bogdanović. Since 2008 – the year of his recording debut – he has pursued a career that combines the development of an eclectic solo repertoire alongside the exploration of chamber music and improvisation. He has collaborated with numerous artists and ensembles, including Tommaso Lonquich, Miriam Prandi, Marcello Nardis, Quartetto Felix, Marco Salvio and the OEOAS (Orchestra Elettroacustica Officina Arti Soniche). In 2013, he made his debut with an orchestra in the Grande Salle of the Haute école, performing Guido Santórsola's *Concerto for Two Guitars and Orchestra*. He is the dedicatee of works such as *Sonatina-Lied N.7* by Angelo Gilardino and *Trois à propos* by Dušan Bogdanović, pieces he also edited and recorded with Francesco Venga on the album *Pièces Intimes* (NovAntiqua Records). In 2021 he was awarded the Chitarra d'Oro for Best Video at the International Guitar Convention in Milan, and in 2023 was invited to lecture at the 50th edition of the Guitar Foundation of America convention at the Manhattan School of Music. A year later, he gave the Italian premiere of Smith Brindle's *Concerto for Guitar and Orchestra* at the invitation of the conservatory of Benevento. Meucci made his label debut for Naxos with the first volume in this series (8.574476).

Reginald Smith Brindle pursued a distinguished academic career with numerous scholarly publications, but as a composer it was the impact of Italy and his studies with Pizzetti and Dallapiccola that coloured much of his music. Works such as *Vita Senese* ('Siena Life') and the *Sonatina Fiorentina* express the cultural and architectural magnificence of these great Italian cities. The later guitar sonatas expand into ever deeper emotions and moods as Smith Brindle explores the entire range of the guitar to stunning effect.

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***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Duilio Meucci, Guitar

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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