

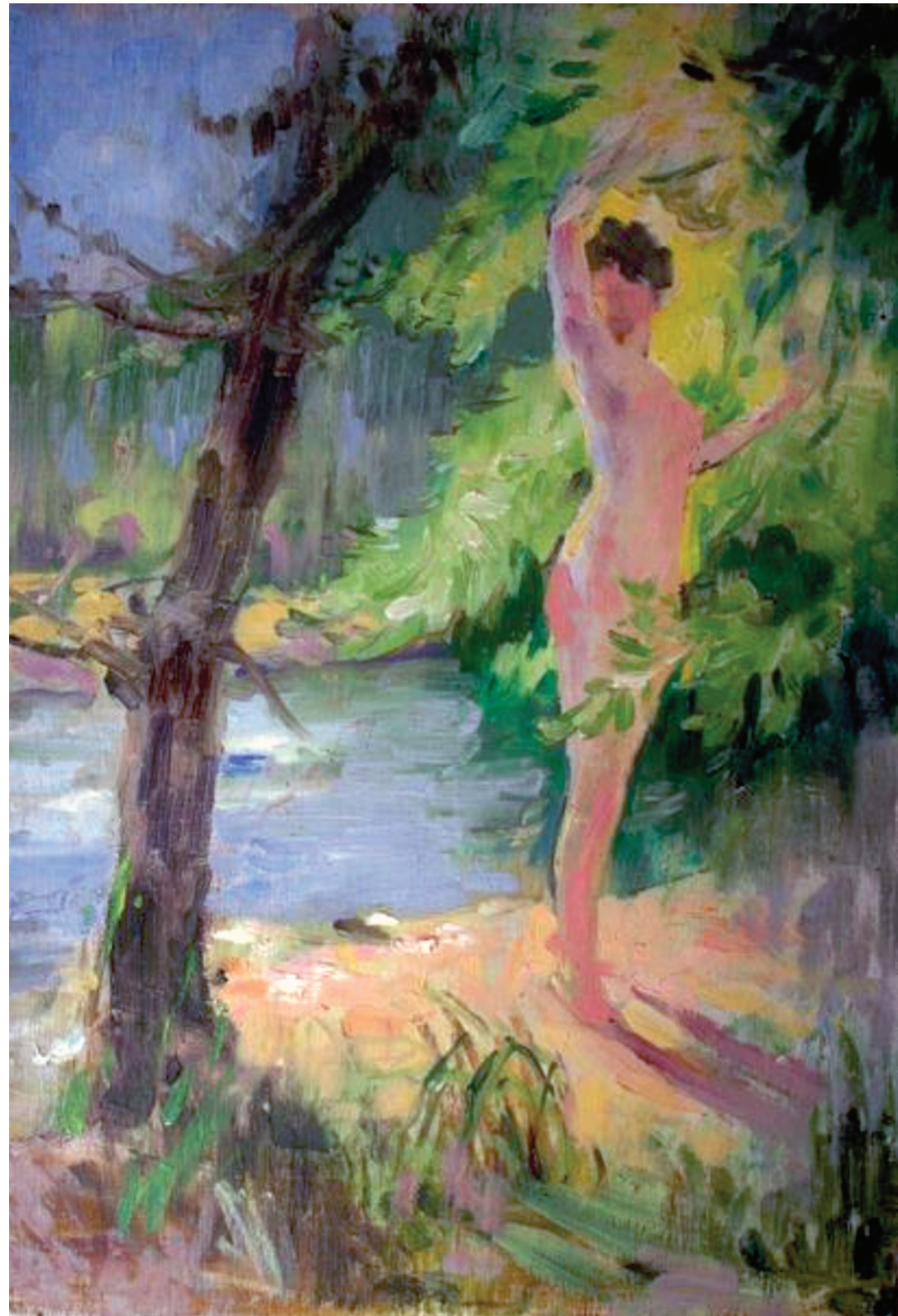


Miguel
LLOBET

**Canciones populares
catalanas**

**DEBUSSY
FUJIMOTO
ISAJI
RAVEL
SOR**

Koki Fujimoto, Guitar



Miguel Llobet (1878–1938)

Canciones populares catalanas

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Miroirs – No. 4. Alborada del gracioso

(arr. Koki Fujimoto)

Maurice Ravel, the son of a Swiss engineer and a mother of Basque origin, entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of 14 to study piano and harmony. In 1897 he joined the composition class of Gabriel Fauré, and two years later wrote *Pavane pour une infante défunte* which interprets the old courtly world through contemporary harmonies. Ravel went on to write some of the most expressive piano repertoire of the 20th century as well as operas, ballet music, orchestral and choral works, and songs with piano.

Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso* ('The Jester's Aubade', 1904–05) was originally one of a set of five pieces for piano entitled *Miroirs*. The term '*alborado*' ('morning song', or 'aubade'), is qualified by '*del gracioso*' which means 'of the jester' as frequently depicted in Spanish comedy. The virtuosic piano work contains many evocatively Spanish touches such as reminiscences of strummed guitars, snatches of ornamented melody, and intricate rhythmic episodes. Roger Nichols, an authority on the composer, commented that Ravel 'turns the keyboard instrument into a huge guitar'. Thus it seems appropriate to return the work to plucked strings.

Fernando Sor (1778–1839)

Fantaisie et Variations brillantes, Op. 30

Fernando Sor, one of the great guitarists of his era, was a prolific composer. He wrote many progressive exercises (or lessons) for his pupils, but is mainly remembered for his concert works, including sonatas, sets of variations, fantasias, études, minuets, waltzes, divertimentos and songs, among others. He also composed orchestral works, ballets, an opera and some choral pieces, all now lost to posterity.

Sor was described by the critic, François-Joseph Fétis (1784–1871), as 'the Beethoven of the guitar'. However it seems in retrospect that Sor's compositions were more influenced by Haydn and Mozart. Certainly, as he explained in his *Guitar Method*, Sor wanted the guitar to represent a miniature orchestra capable of many varieties of timbre, often imitating instruments such as trumpet, oboe, or even the harp.

His *Op. 30, Fantaisie*, dedicated to his friend Aguado, was first published in 1828. The work is based on 'two favourite Aires' and opens with a slow introduction before the theme is played. Four variations then follow until the final movement, an exciting *Allegretto*. This is indeed one of Sor's finest masterpieces, encapsulating the genius of the early 19th-century guitar.

Miguel Llobet (1878–1938)

Canciones populares catalanas

Miguel Llobet, born in Barcelona, was one of the most influential guitarists of the early 20th century, and a major influence on Andrés Segovia. Llobet studied with Francisco Tárrega, and made his concert debut in 1900 in Malaga, Spain. He played in Paris in 1905 and became associated with the leading musicians of that era including Claude Debussy. Llobet later toured South America, and in 1926 made several recordings. He died from pleurisy in Barcelona in 1938 at the age of 59.

A prolific composer for the guitar, Llobet is particularly loved and admired for his arrangements of Catalan folk songs. His mastery of harmony and melodic expressiveness is superbly exemplified here in these 13 superbly evocative miniatures.

Koki Fujimoto (b. 1992)

Aki no Sankan Nigiri

Koki Fujimoto has kindly contributed an introduction for his composition *Aki no Sankan Nigiri* (*Autumn's Three Sushi Rolls*):

I wrote this piece in the fall of 2018 for a concert I was performing in Germany. It reminded me of the sushi I ate in Japan that summer, and that nostalgia was the starting point for the composition. But the content of the piece has almost nothing to do with sushi. Rather, the number three is

important, and I chose to compose the piece in three movements in reference to this. Each chapter is also made up of a small triptych or uses the number three. It mixes melodies and harmonics evocative of Japanese culture, eventually becoming extremely quiet before fading into silence. A short text, written by Ayako Kaisho and Hiroshi Kogure – two friends of mine – is read aloud at the beginning, followed by three played pieces:

貫 (ikkan)
貫 (nikan)
貫 (sankan)

Ceci n'est pas Sushi
Je ne suis pas Sushi
Mais il n'y a pas de souci

*This is not sushi
I am not sushi
But no worries*

Sunao Isaji (b. 1968)

Tropical Count

Sunao Isaji describes *Tropical Count* as follows:

A few years ago, I took a small boat trip upstream along one of the Amazon River's tributaries with a local acquaintance. It was just meant to be a quick sightseeing trip. But after we started rowing, a while – it could have been just a few minutes, or it could have felt like more than an hour – we were floating on the open water, but before we knew it, we were enveloped in such dense jungle that it felt like we were ascending a narrow path surrounded by trees. A world of vibrantly coloured flowers dotted among the deep green. We had entered a remote area, where the overlapping leaves obscure the sunlight, and only a faint light reaches. Looking back now, it felt more like we had been drawn in by something than that we were lost.

Before long, something strange caught my eye on the other side. It looked human, yet had an unnatural appearance. Its unstable form seemed to be both standing and floating. It seemed like a creature lacking something, something excessive. What's more it possessed an indescribable elegance, and was dressed in formal attire. Formal attire in this jungle? My acquaintance told me that it was a Tropical Count. With even the title of his nobility containing the word 'tropical' it truly seemed like a being that could only be called a Tropical Count. And what's even more surprising was that in one hand they were holding a guitar. This work recalls and recreates the music of the Tropical Count that was played there – distorted, refined, harsh, and beautiful.

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Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Danse bohémienne

Claude Debussy entered the Paris conservatoire at the age of ten where it seemed he was destined to become a concert pianist. But he soon concentrated on composition, winning various prestigious awards including the Grand Prix de Rome (1884). Ultimately, Debussy's immense output included operas, ballets, incidental music and dramatic works, orchestral pieces, choral and chamber compositions, songs, and many solo piano masterpieces.

Danse bohémienne ('Bohemian Dance') is believed to have been written around 1880. Thus it is not characteristic of his later style but is an interesting milestone in his development as a composer for piano. On the guitar the work becomes a virtuoso undertaking full of vigour and energy brought to life in a brilliant manner.

Graham Wade

Koki Fujimoto



Koki Fujimoto is a classical and electric guitarist who is active as both a composer and performer. His passion for the guitar runs the full gamut of the genre, from working with synthesizers and electric guitar to performing 19th-century guitar music on period instruments. Born in Tokyo, he studied guitar with Noboru Muraji, Tomonori Arai, Kiyoshi Shomura, Tsuneo Ema and Ansgar Krause, composition with Miyuki Shiozaki, Sho Ueda and Sunao Isaji, and conducting with Masayuki Honda. Fujimoto is a laureate of numerous prestigious international competitions, including the 2018 Koblenz International Guitar Competition, the 2011 Tokyo International Guitar Competition, the 2009 Internationales Gitarrenfestival Heinsberg, and the 2008 Weikersheim International Guitar Competition.

Japanese guitarist Koki Fujimoto presents a recital of evocative pieces from France, Spain and Japan. He begins with his own arrangement of Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso*, a work shimmering with Spanish guitar evocations, and continues with one of Sor's finest masterpieces, the *Fantaisie et Variations brillantes*. Miguel Llobet was one of the most influential guitarists of the 20th century and a prolific composer for the instrument. His mastery of harmony and melodic expressiveness can be heard in the exquisite miniatures celebrating Catalan folk music. They preface two expressive works from Japan – Fujimoto's *Aki no Sankan Nigiri* and *Tropical Count* by Sunao Isaji. Ansgar Krause's arrangement of Debussy's earliest known piano piece, *Danse bohémienne*, concludes the album.

Miguel
LLOBET
(1878–1938)

Canciones populares catalanas

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|----------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Maurice Ravel (1875–1937): Miroirs – No. 4. Alborada del gracioso (1904–05)
(arr. Koki Fujimoto [b. 1992])** | 6:36 |
| 2 | Fernando Sor (1778–1839): Fantaisie et Variations brillantes, Op. 30
(pub. 1828) | 12:34 |
| | Miguel Llobet (1878–1938): Canciones populares catalanas (1899–1918) | 22:36 |
| 3 | El testament d'Amelia – Cançó del lladre – Lo fill del rei | 4:55 |
| 4 | Plany – La filadora – Lo rossinyol – El mestre | 7:14 |
| 5 | L'hereu riera – La nit de Nadal – La filla del marxant | 5:07 |
| 6 | La pastoreta – La preçó de Lleida – El noi de la mare | 5:20 |
| 7 | Koki Fujimoto (b. 1992): Aki no Sankan Nigiri (2019)* | 4:37 |
| 8 | Sunao Isaji (b. 1968): Tropical Count (2010)* | 9:51 |
| 9 | Claude Debussy (1862–1918): Danse bohémienne (1880)
(arr. Ansgar Krause [b. 1956]) | 2:19 |

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING **OF ARRANGEMENT**

Koki Fujimoto, Guitar, Narrator 7

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