

NAXOS

Celil Refik
KAYA

Guitar Works

Sketches, Vol. 1 • Sonata No. 1 • Sonatina

Celil Refik Kaya



Celil Refik Kaya (b. 1991)

Guitar Works

Celil Refik Kaya is a contemporary performer/composer in the great tradition of guitarists who have created their own individual contribution to the repertoire. His music is a blend of many influences depending on the nature of each piece. We are therefore fortunate that Maestro Kaya is forthcoming in explaining the background to his compositions and consequently many passages below are quoted directly from the composer's own introductions to the works.

Graham Wade

Guitar Sonata No. 1 in D major (2017)

Sonata No. 1 presents an American sound by using pentatonic melodies and jazz chord progressions, as well as musical elements inspired by composers such as Aaron Copland and John Williams. These various influences include jazz ballad, French impressionism and Spanish folk music, as well as various South and North American composers. The idea of composing a larger guitar work came from the aspiration to perform a sonata that both guitarists and audiences would appreciate in my recitals.

In the first movement multicultural elements are structured within the context of traditional sonata form with its three main sections of exposition, development and recapitulation. Within this framework there is plenty of scope for modification. The recapitulation in particular allows individual artists to use their own colours, spacing and dynamics.

The slow movement progresses from poignant melodic statements to varied time signatures, inventive modulations through various keys, and arpeggiated clusters of notes of a virtuosic nature. The last movement, *Scherzo-Finale*, offers a brilliant bass melody against treble chords followed by the inversion of the melody to the higher notes. A slower march-like section gives a temporary respite from the ongoing momentum before the climactic finale.

From My Window (2020)

From My Window was commissioned by the Brazilian guitarist Mario da Silva Junior, the dedicatee of the work. It was among a number of commissions where composers were invited to reflect on themes of quarantine and isolation. My contribution is based on these reflections of isolation during the Covid-19 outbreak. During this period I lived in Texas and Oklahoma and finished the piece in Oklahoma City.

During the difficult times of the pandemic I tried to reflect hope and peace and the feelings I had when I looked from my window instead of an intense fear. These feelings were not overly intense but more neutral feelings as I was meditating on the idea of good and bad as part of life, just like life and death. Although we spent the majority of our time inside our houses, looking from a window was oddly freeing, knowing that no matter what happens, nothing lasts forever and there is an entire world outside of our house. What keeps us alive is hope, and when we lose hope there is nothing.

Guitar Sonatina (2012–13)

I began composing my first guitar sonatina in 2012, while I was a Master's student at Mannes, and completed the third movement in 2013 in Austin at the age of 22. The work reflects an important period of my life, my time in New York City and my move to Austin for my Doctoral studies.

While my original goal was to create a substantial concert piece I could perform in my own recitals, *Sonatina* also carries a deeply personal dimension, expressing my hopes, joy, love and longing.

Prelude No. 1 for Guitar (2008)

I wrote this at the age of 17. At the time, I had severe flu and was confined to bed, unable to practise the guitar. In that stillness, I composed the entire work in one sitting, through-composed and without the instrument in hand. The piece is shaped by my early fascination with Latin American guitar music.

Sketches, Vol. 1 (2019)



Sketches is a group of pieces inspired by selected works of art by my father, Mehmet Refik Kaya. Dr Kaya is a professional sculptor, painter, performer and composer. When I was a kid, I grew up watching and seeing him complete these sketches, and I was inspired by them to create these works of art. He describes them as fantastic-surreal-style sketches created with an improvisatory style rather than planned. Although the idea of composing pieces based on his sketches was always in my mind, I had never attempted to write them until quarantine started. I always wanted them to be special. With the encouragement of my father and my close friend Tom Clippinger, I have completed the first set and have dedicated them to Tom.



Bridge is the first piece of the set, and is a musical portrayal of the fantastic and galactic nature of the sketch. The modal character of the work reflects this unknown universe. The piece has two sections that represent the journey within the composition. The introduction and arpeggios section refer to the journey into this universe. The last section is broader and calmer in atmosphere, which is symbolic of the person's arrival to this universe after passing over the bridge.

Bosporus, or Bogaz ('throat' in Turkish), is the name given to the natural strait that divides Asia and Europe and unites the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. My father's family has lived in Istanbul for seven generations, and it is the city where I grew up. As a result of all the cherished memories and emotional connections I have to this city, it has a special place in my heart. Additionally, this ancient city carries with it all the memories of past empires, people's pains and joys, and has always had an alluring beauty.

I used the Turkish mode or *makam* called *Kürdilihicazkâr* throughout this piece. I remember my grandfather, who was one of the last performers of the old classical Turkish music tradition, saying this *makam* was the 'Istanbul *makam*'. With it, I tried to portray the atmosphere of Istanbul through the eyes of my father.

Blind Fisherman is an imaginary portrayal of a Turkish Black Sea fisherman. This piece has an avant-garde character with traditional Black Sea rhythms as well as Turkish music modes such as *hicaz*. In this piece, as well as in the *Blind Fisherman's Wife*, there is an intense use of fourths. The use of fourths is a prominent character of Turkish Black Sea music. Many instruments in the Black Sea region are tuned in fourths, and the music itself is generally played with parallel fourths.

As the Black Sea is wild in nature, I illustrated the wildness of the Black Sea and the fisherman's difficult journey within it.

Blind Fisherman's Wife is another imaginary portrait. The themes and rhythms of the blind fisherman and his wife resemble each other in that both are from the Black Sea. *Blind Fisherman's Wife* uses even more intense fourths with irregular metres such as 7/8, which I derived from one of the versions of a Black Sea regional folk dance, the *horon*. The expressive peak of this piece is the B section that is inspired by Black Sea folk songs.

Black Sea folk songs are usually about love or nature, and the people of the Black Sea, just like the wildness of its geography, are hardworking, joyful and emotional. All the elements of the music are used to portray these characteristics in this piece. As my mother is from the Black Sea, it encouraged me even more to incorporate some of the musical elements of the traditional Black Sea Turkish music.

Theme and Variations on *Yavuz Geliyor Yavuz* (2023)

My primary purpose in writing this piece is because *Yavuz Geliyor Yavuz* is the perfect folk song for writing variations. With its free use of irregular metres, it lends itself for many variations, making it great for a concert piece. Although I have written theme and variations works in the past, this one is the most extensive, and the one I enjoyed writing the most.

Yavuz Geliyor Yavuz is a special folk song for me, mostly because it carries a lot of characteristics of Black Sea Turkish music, with its archaic colours. It allowed me to express my cultural heritage freely and thoroughly.

This is why the theme plays such a crucial role for writing variations. I often look at folk songs and dances to see which ones would be the best to arrange and would sound the best on guitar, and this is one of my favourites. I am sure people from neighbouring regions would find this piece close to their hearts as well and I hope everyone will enjoy performing it.

The background to the folk song: *Yavuz Geliyor Yavuz* is a naval military folk song from the First World War. When the War started in 1914, the primary goal of the Ottoman General Staff was to liberate Kars, Batumi and Ahiska, which were occupied by the Russian Empire as a result of the Russo-Turkish War in 1877. One of the goals was also to reach Baku, and prepare an environment for the Azerbaijani Turks to establish a separate state.

This was seen as a long term goal to establish strategic and economic relations between Turkic countries. In order to achieve these goals, the war on the eastern front was inevitable. Before winter set in, it was necessary to reinforce the third army in Erzurum. In 1914, there was no railway line or highway extending from western Anatolia to Erzurum.

The Ottoman General Staff wanted to take control of strategic positions with a quick manoeuvre. The troops were to be sent to Trabzon by sea, but civilian ships were under threat from Russian ships and their speed was low. The battlecruiser *Yavuz* was the best option to carry the troops, because it was both the fastest and had the highest firing range in the Ottoman Navy. *Yavuz* was originally a German battlecruiser named *Goeben*, ordered by the Ottoman State. Later the name was changed to *Yavuz*. It is said that those who sang this folk song were waiting at piers in Ordu or Perşembe and watching for the *Yavuz*, which was coming from Ünye and Fatsa in the western direction, passing by Cape Vona.

This folk song is the story of the soldiers who said farewell to their loved ones because the *Yavuz* took the soldiers to the unknown, separated from their parents and loved ones to become martyrs. This is why in Turkish culture the *Yavuz* is associated with glory, honour and dignity.

The *Yavuz* is also the ship that carried the coffin of the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The coffin was wrapped with the banner of the crescent and star. The ship departed from Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul, in November 1938, and carried his body to İzmit. In the Turkish Navy, the flag of each ship withdrawn from service is transferred to a new ship. A new ship will then carry the same name and banner. The flag of the frigate *Yavuz* is currently carried by the TCG *Yavuz* frigate F-240, and so the legacy is kept alive.

Celil Refik Kaya
Edited by Graham Wade

Celil Refik Kaya

Photo: Orhan Cem Çetin



Since his concert debut at the age of six, Turkish American guitarist and composer Dr Celil Refik Kaya has received many high accolades. He was the youngest contestant to win First Prize in the 2012 JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition, and is a prizewinner of international guitar competitions across Europe and the US. In 2017 he was named Rising Young Musician of the Year by the Donizetti Classical Music Awards in Istanbul and awarded a prestigious fellowship from Harvard University's Dumbarton Oaks. Dr Kaya has performed in concert halls and festivals, giving solo performances at Carnegie Hall, Het Concertgebouw, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival and Ankara International Music Festival among others, and numerous radio broadcasts and concert performances throughout the United States, Europe and Turkey. Kaya's first recording, *Morel: Guitar Music* (8.573514) was critically acclaimed by American Record Guide. He has also recorded works by Carlo Domeniconi and Agustín Barrios Mangoré for Naxos. Celil Refik Kaya is currently the coordinator of guitar studies and teaching at the New Jersey City University and Kean University.

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Celil Refik Kaya is a contemporary guitarist and composer in the great tradition of artists who have created their own unique contribution to the repertoire. *Sonata No. 1* is characterised by various stylistic resemblances which include South and North American composers, jazz chord progressions, French impressionism and Spanish folk music, whereas the *Sonatina* expresses more personal emotions. Kaya's Turkish background can be heard in his variations on the folk song *Yavuz Geliyor Yavuz*, which, like the *Sketches*, has its origins in art and music close to the composer's heart.

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(b. 1991)

Guitar Sonata No. 1 in D major (2017)	13:19	8 Prelude No. 1 for Guitar (2008)*	3:34
1 I. Allegro moderato	5:31	Sketches, Vol. 1 (2019)*	17:21
2 II. Andante espressivo	4:29	9 No. 1. Bridge	4:43
3 III. Scherzo-Finale	3:19	10 No. 2. Bosphorus	4:24
4 From My Window (2020)*	5:45	11 No. 3. Blind Fisherman	3:16
Guitar Sonatina (2012–13)*	9:51	12 No. 4. Blind Fisherman's Wife	4:58
5 I. Andante	3:52	13 Theme and Variations on <i>Yavuz Geliyor Yavuz</i> (2023)*	9:10
6 II. Adagio	3:10		
7 III. Allegro	2:49		

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Celil Refik Kaya, Guitar

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