



Armen Doneyan

2015 Silver Medal
Guitar Foundation of
America (GFA) Competition

DUBEZ
LEGNANI
TANSMAN
TÁRREGA
TURINA
BROUWER
VILLA-LOBOS

Armen Doneyan: Guitar Recital

**Johann Dubez • Luigi Legnani • Alexandre Tansman • Francisco Tárrega
Joaquín Turina • Leo Brouwer • Heitor Villa-Lobos**

The rich variety of the guitar repertoire in terms of historical period and national colour is represented in this selection of music by composers from several countries. The power of the instrument to create a sense of place and atmosphere is also fully brought into focus here with musical flavours from Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain, Cuba and Brazil. The sheer diversity is an integral aspect of the guitar's allure over several centuries. Along with the pianoforte, the guitar is one of the most versatile instruments known to humanity. But when performance on the guitar is taken to the point of virtuosity, as in these compositions, it also becomes a profound art which has flourished for several centuries, establishing an enduring instrumental tradition in the salon and concert hall.

Johann Dubez, born in Vienna, is one of the less well known guitarists of the nineteenth century, perhaps because he composed fewer pieces than players such as Regondi and Mertz, both of whom may well have taught him at some point. Dubez became an accomplished performer on various instruments including violin, mandolin, harp and zither, as well as guitar. He began his musical career as a violinist in the local theatre and for a while was 'harpist and chamber virtuoso' in the service of Countess Jeanne Esterházy. He also played the melophone, a kind of accordion and until 1873 led the Dubez String Quartet. The guitar pieces in manuscript form are now to be found in the collection of the Swedish mathematician Carl Oskar Boije af Genäs. Dubez became president of the Vienna Zither Union founded in 1875 and was made an honorary member of the Prague Zither Society.

Fantaisie on Hungarian Themes opens with a declamatory *Allegretto* section of brisk flourishes leading to a cadenza covering the gamut of the guitar's range. This leads to the first theme, *Csárdás; Hontalan*, originally a piano work by Benjamin Egressy which appeared in 1848 titled *Hontalan* (The Man without a Fatherland). The *Hunyadi-March* (from the opera *Hunyady László* (1844) by Ferenc Erkel), follows with its poignant melody, complemented by a technically challenging *Allegretto* episode with rapid passages in the guitar's highest register played *con fuoco*

(with fire). The next theme, marked *Vivace*, is *Friska from; Csárdás; Hontalan*. The *csárdás*, a Hungarian dance originating in the first part of the nineteenth century, had slow sections (*lassan* or *lassú*) and fast ones (*friska*). An *Allegretto* comes now, a two-part working of the *Hunyadi March*. After this there is the famous *Rákóczi March*, which served as the Hungarian national anthem until 1844. An *Allegro* section follows using the tremolo technique to create a flowing melody. After a further hearing of the *Csárdás; Hontalan*, in a different key, the composer includes another interpretation of the *Hunyadi March* with the melody on the lower strings. A recapitulation of the fast *Csárdás* provides a coda complete with guitaristic fireworks in the climactic bars.

Luigi Legnani, one of the leading guitarists of the generation following Fernando Sor and Mauro Giuliani, composed over 250 works and gave recitals throughout Europe. His friendship with Paganini has been well publicised though it seems unlikely that they actually performed concerts together. In his final years Legnani became a guitar maker of considerable renown.

Fantasia, Op. 19, published by Arturia of Vienna in 1822, is a virtuosic work admirably demonstrating the spirit of the nineteenth-century guitar. The full panoply of brilliant scale runs, fast chromatic passages, sweeping arpeggio patterns, split octaves, chordal sections, interaction between bass and treble, and so on, are deployed here in profusion. The piece begins with an introductory *largo* section before the advent of the main *Allegro* movement with its varied textures and sonata-like structure. Behind the thrust and energy of the music is not only the influence of composers such as Sor but the piano style of virtuosi pianists such as Liszt at their most extrovert, as Legnani displays the technical dexterities within his characteristic musical vocabulary.

The Polish composer, **Alexandre Tansman**, having been introduced to Andrés Segovia during his stay in Paris in 1921, was soon persuaded to write for the guitar. His compositions include operas, ballets, nine symphonies, concertos, film scores, vocal and chamber music and works for piano and other solo instruments. In the 1920s and 1930s he toured the United States, Europe, the Middle East and

India, appearing as the soloist in his own piano concertos. He became a French citizen in 1938 but the war forced him to move to America, where he established close friendships with composers such as Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Milhaud. He returned to France in 1946.

The manuscript for Tansman's *Passacaille* is dated September 1953 and bears the dedication à *Andrés Segovia, l'unique*. This music was among the documents discovered by Angelo Gilardino in the Segovia Archives in Linares, Spain, written for Segovia but never performed in public concerts by him. The composition, originally titled *Pièce en forme de passacaille*, opens with a simple statement of the *ostinato* on which the work is founded followed by ten variations. These comprise a variety of textures and techniques with increasing harmonic and technical complexity including tremolo. The inspiration behind the piece is predominantly that of J.S. Bach in an intricate web of fugal ingenuity. In an introduction to the posthumous works of Tansman, Frédéric Zigante observes that it is 'a majestic composition in which the solemn baroque style is combined perfectly with the flexible, subtle, sometimes mobile and sometimes static harmony of Tansman's music'.

Francisco Tárrega was a personality of immense significance in the guitar's development in terms of technical innovations, compositions, and the art of arrangement. His advocacy of new concepts of guitar construction in the work of Antonio de Torres (1817–1892), the great Spanish luthier, has proved influential right up to the present time. Tárrega established new playing methods and also composed some of the finest music for the instrument. In many exquisite miniatures, often influenced by Chopin, he established a unique Spanish romantic voice for the guitar which has enchanted public and players ever since.

La traviata (The Fallen Woman), an opera by Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), based on Alexandre Dumas's play *La Dame aux Camélias*, is the tragic story of Violetta Valery, a courtesan, and her love for Alfredo Germont. Violetta forsakes her former way of life to be with Alfredo. But Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father, persuades Violetta to give up her lover. The rejected Alfredo, unaware of Violetta's sacrifice of her own happiness, humiliates her in public, throwing his gambling winnings in her face as if in payment for her services. In Act III Alfredo is told of Violetta's true

situation. He hurries to Violetta's side but she is suffering from tuberculosis and dies in his arms.

Tárrega follows Mauro Giuliani's penchant earlier in the nineteenth century for arranging operatic themes for guitar. The instrument's best *cantabile* attributes are exploited here in a rich assortment of Verdi's remarkable melodies. Plucked strings can never achieve the range of passion of such an opera, but here the guitar becomes a small orchestra in a virtuosic display of romantic intensity.

Joaquín Turina (1882–1949), pianist and conductor as well as composer, was born in Seville, one of the great Andalusian cities. In 1905 he went to Paris and studied with d'Indy and Moszkowski, forming friendships with both Falla and Albéniz. On returning to Madrid he spent the rest of his life in the creation of music deeply representative of Spanish culture. Among his prolific compositions, including symphonies, piano pieces, operas, chamber works and incidental theatre music, he wrote several solos for guitar inspired by the art of Andrés Segovia.

The first movement of *Sonata* (1931) combines several guitar textures characteristic of southern Iberia – rapid scale passages, arpeggios in the bass contrasted against a sequence of melodic fragments, and a catchy *Allegretto tranquillo*. These elements establish the lyrical nature of the work. The slow movement is evocative of flamenco song, the *cante jondo*, and also includes shifting chordal patterns along the fingerboard, reminiscent of Andalusian harmonies. The last movement, *Allegro vivo*, begins with a vivid three-eight rhythm and a combination of scale runs and strummed chords. A second theme, *Allegro moderato*, in two-four, introduces more angular rhythmic patterns. After the repetition of the opening motif, the composer recalls the second theme of the first movement with its dotted rhythms. An exciting coda concludes the piece with strummed chords and contrasting scale passages.

Leo Brouwer, from Cuba, one of the most innovative contemporary composers, is also a renowned conductor and recitalist. His prolific output ranges from a multitude of guitar pieces to concertos, chamber music, and scores for well over a hundred films. His guitar works have evolved over four decades embracing the avant-garde and the experimental as well as neo-romanticism. *Rito de los Orishas* (*Rite of the Orishas*), was given its première by the dedicatee, Álvaro Pierri, at the Festival de Radio France, in

October 1993, a few months after its composition. 'Orishas' is the Yoruban word for the gods worshipped by the African slaves.

The first movement, *Exordium – conjuro* (Introduction – Incantation/Exorcism), in ternary form with an episodic middle section and a modified recapitulation, celebrates a ritual where evil spirits are vanquished. Isabelle Hernández, Brouwer's biographer, points out that this movement is created from three fundamental cells, a repeated sound in groups of three in the manner of an *ostinato*, an ascending scale in rapid figurations, and a theme characterized by a descending minor third followed by an ascending major second. The second part, *Danza de las diosas negras* (Dance of the Black Goddesses), comprises three dance elements interspersed by darkly atmospheric episodes named 'evocations'.

The vast musical output of **Heitor Villa-Lobos** covers a huge canvas of symphonies, concertos, choral and chamber music, as well as many instrumental works. Through his art the vitality of Brazilian culture found full twentieth-century expression. Yet it is his guitar music which still attracts fervent popularity. His deep understanding of the instrument enabled the composer to write in a truly distinctive personal style creating beautiful melodies as well as the effects of tonal colours of open strings against fretted notes to develop fascinating patterns of shifting chords.

Twelve Études, written in Paris in the late 1920s and dedicated to Andrés Segovia, are a true landmark in twentieth-century guitar development, though not published until the 1950s. Segovia commented that these studies 'consist of formulas of surprising efficiency for the technical development of each hand, and at the same time have a 'disinterested' musical beauty, without an educational aim, but with a permanent aesthetic value as concert pieces... Villa-Lobos has made a gift to the guitar's history of the fruits of his talent as vigorous and delightful as that of Scarlatti and Chopin'.

Etude No. 1 is one of the guitar's most famous right hand studies. Turibio Santos has described the work as 'a small *Bachianas brasileiras*, an ingenious miniature. While the use of open strings and chromatic harmonies in a single pattern allows the guitar its maximum dynamic capacity, *The Well-Tempered Clavier* is always present'.

Etude No. 12 is a study of *glissando* applied throughout the fingerboard to parallel chords. A middle contrasting episode presents an exciting repeated bass effect before the return of the first section. This is acknowledged as one of the most technically challenging of the twelve, requiring pinpoint precision and perfect control to achieve the necessary articulation.

Graham Wade

Armen Doneyan

Born in 1989, Armen Doneyan began his study of the guitar at the age of six with Alexandre Gérard. He continued his musical education with Daniel Lavialle, then with Ramon de Herrera at the Conservatoire National de Région de Paris where he won first prize in 2008. Entering the Conservatoire à rayonnement départemental d'Aulnay-sous-Bois the same year, he studied with Judicaël Perroy. Two years later, while he was still studying with Judicaël Perroy, he entered the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris to study also with Roland Dyens and Jean Marc Zvillenreuther, obtaining his master's degree in 2015. He also benefited from Jeremy Jouve's advice during summer and master classes. In 2009 his passion for chamber music led to the formation of the Duo Solea with the French cellist Michèle Pierre. Armen Doneyan is a laureate of the Banque Populaire Fondation, and plays Savarez strings.

The guitar's range and sense of national colour are celebrated in this recital by Armen Doneyan, the exciting young French virtuoso, with music from Hungary, Poland, Italy, Spain, Cuba and Brazil. His programme includes Luigi Legnani's *Fantasia, Op. 19* with its scintillating Listzian brilliance, as well as the fiery and evocative *Fantaisie on Hungarian Themes* by Johann Dubez. The pivotal figure of Francisco Tárrega, who established a unique Spanish voice for the guitar, is included as is the vivacious, flamenco-influenced *Sonata* by Turina. A contemporary master, Leo Brouwer, is represented by his evocative *Rito de los Orishas*.



ARMEN DONEYAN

Guitar Recital

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|--|--------------|---|--------------|
| Johann DUBEZ (1828–1891) | | Joaquín TURINA (1882–1949) | |
| 1 Fantaisie on Hungarian Themes | 10:07 | 5 Sonata | 11:39 |
| Luigi LEGNANI (1790–1877) | | 6 I. Lento | 4:00 |
| 2 Fantasia, Op. 19 | 7:31 | 7 II. Andante | 4:27 |
| Alexandre TANSMAN (1897–1986) | | 8 III. Allegro vivo | 3:08 |
| 3 Passacaille | 5:47 | Leo BROUWER (b. 1939) | |
| Francisco TÁRREGA (1852–1909) | | Rito de los Orishas | 13:59 |
| 4 Fantasia on Themes from La traviata | 6:56 | 8 I. Exordium – conjuro | 4:23 |
| | | 9 II. Danza de las diosas negras | 9:36 |
| | | Heitor VILLA-LOBOS (1887–1959) | |
| | | 10 Etude No. 1 | 1:55 |
| | | 11 Etude No. 12 | 2:23 |

Recorded at St John Chrysostom Church, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, 3–6 March 2016
 Producers: Norbert Kraft & Bonnie Silver • Engineer & Editor: Norbert Kraft • Booklet notes: Graham Wade
 Publishers: Editions Chanterelle (track 1); Jos. Weinberger, Leipzig (2); Berben Edizioni Musicali, Ancona (3); Schott Music GmbH (5–7); Doberman Editions (8–9); Editions Max Eschig (10–11)
 Guitar: J. Redgate, Australia • Cover photo of Armen Doneyan: Juliette Ruez



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Playing Time
60:47



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Booklet notes in English