



Vojin Kocić

Winner 2017

Heinsberg International Guitar Competition

J.S. BACH • PASIECZNY • PONCE • REGONDI



Vojin Kocić: Guitar Recital

Johann Sebastian Bach • Marek Pasieczny • Manuel María Ponce • Giulio Regondi

Over recent decades, the standard of classical guitar performance (in terms of both technique and expressiveness) has risen sharply, as demonstrated in international guitar compositions. The programme presented here not only covers a wide historical range from the Baroque to the avant-garde, but also offers some of the most spectacularly challenging aspects of the established guitar repertoire. Each composition in the selection embodies a substantial musical experience, featuring virtuosity and interpretative insight at the same time as providing intense aesthetic pleasure as the guitar's versatile and eclectic character adapts to so many styles and textures.

Guitarists have been playing the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) ever since Francisco Tárrega transcribed a few movements from the solo violin suites. Baroque composers were generous in rewriting particular pieces for different instruments, and Bach was a shining example of this practice.

From the early days of his long career, Andrés Segovia (1893–1987) relished Tárrega's arrangements, while at the same time choosing further Bach pieces to play in recitals, including the famous *Ciaccona* (or *Chaconne*). Subsequent generations of guitarists extended their horizons even wider to encompass extensive transcriptions of cello and lute suites and entire partitas. Nowadays, the music of J.S. Bach is an integral aspect of every dedicated guitarist's programme.

The *Violin Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004* follows the traditional grouping of dance movements, concluding with a *Ciaccona*. The five dances are linked harmonically in that each begins with a progression of harmonies whose basses consist of the notes D–C sharp–D–B flat–A, emphasising the essential cohesion of the suite. The *Allemanda* serves the purpose of a prelude, introducing us to the mood of the suite through what the Dutch violinist, Jaap Schröder, has described as 'linear polyphony' involving harmonies implied through a succession of broken chords. Within the flow of semiquavers are a number of rhythmic shifts including dotted quavers, triplets and little bursts of demisemiquavers. The second movement, *Corrente*, fast in comparison to the *Allemanda*'s slower pace, is an ebullient work, flowing with energy communicated through triplets and vivacious dotted

rhythms. The dignified dance of the *Sarabanda* is subject here to an intricate web of note values and melodic inspiration, reinforced by embellishment. The atmosphere of the piece is profoundly serious, expressing the emotional heart of the four primary dance forms preceding the *Ciaccona*. With no intervening *bourrée* or *minuet*, the transition to the stately but lively *Giga* almost takes the listener by surprise. But this *Giga* in 12/8 time, a rhythmic amalgamation of opening triplets and fluent semiquavers, is neither boisterous nor especially close to the dance. Rather, it is a brilliant instrumental vehicle for a display of gentle virtuosity in its structural role as a mediator between the four dances of the suite and the mighty *Ciaccona* finale. Among Bach's suites the *Ciaccona* is the longest individual movement, creating an effect of monumental proportions. The *Ciaccona* in D minor, a combination of a long chain of intricate variations of great intensity and variety, is universally acknowledged as one of the greatest Baroque instrumental masterpieces.

Giulio Regondi (1822–1872), an acclaimed infant prodigy of the guitar, matured into an eminent artist and renowned composer. Born in Lyon, France, Regondi had made his debut in Paris by the age of seven, becoming known as 'The Infant Paganini'. In 1831 he arrived with his father in London, which was to be his home for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, in a somewhat mysterious occurrence, his father absconded with his son's earnings, leaving the boy dependent on the good will of strangers. Regondi, however, continued to triumphantly give concerts throughout Europe, also becoming a virtuoso of the concertina. He died of cancer in London in 1872 and is buried in St Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Kensal Green, London.

Regondi's achievements were lost to posterity for decades until his compositions were rediscovered, edited by Simon Wynberg and published by Chanterelle in 1981. His works combine virtuosity with touching intensity, pleasing to performers and audiences alike. *Introduction et Caprice, Op. 23* opens with an intricate *Adagio* in E major, full of stately themes, powerful chords, elaborate embellishment, and miniature cadenza-like bars, as well as rapid scale passages and fast arpeggio sequences. This is contrasted with a scintillating *Allegretto scherzando*. After the initial thematic

statement, various flights of fancy are offered in brilliant episodes, providing a dazzling display of pyrotechnics.

Manuel Ponce (1882–1948) has been described as the founding father of 20th-century Mexican music. His pupil, Carlos Chávez (1899–1978) said of him: 'It was Ponce who created a real consciousness of the richness of Mexican folk art.' Segovia and Ponce met in Mexico in 1923, and from that time onwards the composer devoted himself to writing many pieces for the guitar, nearly all of them dedicated to Segovia. Of these compositions, which include preludes, suites, a concerto, variations, several sonatas, and works for guitar and harpsichord, Segovia has written: 'Large or small, they are, all of them, pure and beautiful.'

Ponce, born in Fresnillo, Mexico, was also a distinguished concert pianist and conductor as well as a composer. He first learned the piano with his older sister, Josefina. After further studies in Mexico City he travelled to Europe in 1904 where he took composition lessons in Bologna with Enrico Bossi (1861–1925) and Cesare Dall'Olio (1849–1906), who was Puccini's teacher. Later he studied in Berlin with the renowned pianist, Martin Krause (1853–1918), who in 1883 had performed for Liszt. Ponce returned to his homeland in January 1907 and taught the piano at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música in Mexico City. In 1912 he gave a concert of his own music including the first performance of his *Piano Concerto*. During this period he established his credentials as one of the central figures of the rising Mexican 'nationalist' school.

From 1915 to 1917 the composer lived in Cuba during the Mexican Revolution. After returning to Mexico in 1917 he resumed his teaching post at the Conservatorio, and conducted the National Symphony Orchestra, but between 1925 and 1933 he settled in Paris, where he studied with Paul Dukas in the same class as Joaquín Rodrigo. Moving back to Mexico in 1933 he became director of the Conservatorio. As a prolific writer, he published many articles in *Cultura musical*, one of several magazines he founded over his lifetime. During these fruitful years his major works were written and performed.

Diferencias sobre la folía de España y fuga ('Theme, Variations and Fugue on La Folía de Espana') was composed at Segovia's request following a letter from the guitarist to the composer in December 1929. In the space of a few months Ponce completed a set of 20 variations as

well as a fugue and a prelude (not included in Schott's publication in 1932).

Corazón Otero, a foremost Ponce scholar, described the piece as 'one of the monumental works of the guitar'. This extended composition, rare at a time when many guitar works were relatively brief, includes aspects of various guitar techniques used by traditional composers. Thus, Ponce deploys chordal textures, arpeggios, monody, harmonics, tremolo, sustained legato, as well as fugue. Many players have considered this to be one of the most challenging peaks of the repertoire: an Everest to be conquered. The passing of time has not diminished its appeal to modern generations of virtuosic guitarists.

Dr Marek Pasieczny (b. 1980), the distinguished academic, composer, and guitarist, has performed and lectured worldwide. He studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the Karol Lipiński Academy of Music, Wrocław in Poland, and the University of Surrey, England, and has appeared at many international festivals. Pasieczny has composed for and collaborated with musicians such as Pat Metheny, David Russell, Roland Dyens, Pavel Steidl, Ana Vidović and Krzysztof Pelech among many others.

Phosphenes, inspired by Silvius Leopold Weiss' *Passacaglia*, was commissioned as a set piece by the International Guitar Festival for its Guitar Masters 2016 competition in Wrocław.

A phosphene is a phenomenon characterised by the experience of seeing light without any light actually entering the eye. Phosphenes are often experienced as spots of light that blur the vision, but as they begin to fade, the vision becomes clearer until it is fully restored. Taking this image as the structural basis, the piece begins with an opaque presentation of Weiss's *Passacaglia*. At the end the main theme becomes clear when the phosphenes have finally subsided, the result offering a contemporary twist in postmodern language on variation form – theme and variations being presented in reverse order.

The work consists of ten variations preceding the arrival of the theme, each exhibiting fragmentary visualisations of Weiss' work, corresponding not only to his main theme, but also to the rhythmic and harmonic structures of his original variations, featuring arpeggios, and an ostinato bass line among other devices.

Graham Wade

Vojin Kocić

Born in Serbia in 1990, Vojin Kocić began playing guitar at the age of eight, studying with Jovica Milošević and Darko Karajic. He went on to study with Anders Miolin at the University of Arts in Zurich, Switzerland, and was awarded a Bachelor of Arts, Master of Specialised Music Performance and Master of Pedagogy Diploma. Kocić also studied with Oscar Ghiglia at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy, where he was the only guitarist to be awarded the Diploma d'Onore. Kocić has been the recipient of over 50 international awards, including first prizes at the 2014 Credit Suisse 'Grand Prix Jeunes Solistes' in Switzerland, the Citta di Gargnano in Italy 2009, and the International Guitar Competition 'Ruggero Chiesa' in Italy. In 2017 he was awarded First Prize at the International Guitar Festival and Competition in Heinsberg, and subsequently recorded his debut album for Naxos. In 2018 Kocić was awarded First Prize at the 51st Michele Pittaluga International Guitar Competition (Alessandria, Italy), the prize for which was the opportunity to record his second album for Naxos, as well as a 50-date concert tour scheduled for 2019. Kocić has given over 200 concerts around Europe, and has performed as a soloist with ensembles such as the Symphonic Orchestra of the Radio-television of Serbia, the Orchestergesellschaft Zürich and the Orion String Trio. His concerts have been broadcast by Radio SRF 2 Kultur (Switzerland), NPO Radio 4 (Netherlands) and Rai (Italy), among others. He regularly gives masterclasses, and often sits on the juries of international music competitions. Kocić plays on the Masaki Sakurai (2017) and Greg Smallman (2010) classical guitars, and uses D'Addario strings.



Photo: Andrej Grlic

Vojin Kocić, winner of the 2017 Heinsberg International Guitar Competition, presents a recital that not only covers a wide historical range but also includes some of the most challenging works in the guitar repertoire, of which Ponce's *La Folía* variations is considered a veritable Everest to be conquered. Following a long and distinguished tradition, Kocić's own arrangement of Bach's *Second Violin Partita* is crowned by the greatest of Baroque instrumental masterpieces, the monumental *Ciaccona*. Regondi's prodigious talent is reflected in his scintillating *Introduction et Caprice*, while Pasieczny's *Phosphenes* was composed as a test piece for a guitar competition.

VOJIN KOCIĆ

Guitar Recital

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685–1750)

Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004 (1720)

(arr. Vojin Kocić for guitar)

34:44

1 I. Allemanda

6:14

2 II. Corrente

2:51

3 III. Sarabanda

4:34

4 IV. Giga

4:44

5 V. Ciaccona

16:13

Giulio REGONDI (1822–1872)

Introduction et Caprice, Op. 23 (1864)

10:53

6 Adagio – Allegretto scherzando

Manuel María PONCE (1882–1948)

7 Diferencias sobre la folía de España y fuga ('Theme, Variations and Fugue on La Folía de España') (1930)

29:37

Marek PASIECZNY (b. 1980)

8 Phosphenes (After Sylvius Leopold Weiss) (2016)

6:44

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Guitar: D. Perry, Winnipeg, Canada [1–7]; P. Bernabe, Madrid, Spain [8] • Photo of Vojin Kocić: Andrej Grilec



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Playing Time
82:15



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