



Srdjan

BULATOVIĆ

Darko

(b. 1972)

NIKČEVIĆ

(b. 1971)

Feel the Moment

Meditative Mediterranean Guitar Music

Srdjan Bulatović, Darko Nikčević,
Guitars

Srdjan Bulatović (b. 1972) • Darko Nikčević (b. 1971)

Feel the Moment

Darko Nikčević and Srdjan Bulatović, the internationally renowned guitar duo from Montenegro, are acclaimed for their virtuosity and exciting performances providing a unique blend of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern mysticism. For more than a quarter of a century, they have performed for national and international audiences, presenting their own compositions which evoke the multiple qualities of classical and flamenco guitar. Their works are varied in terms of character, style, technique, rhythm and tempo, and share a common thread of Montenegrin traditional music, movie soundtracks, world music and popular contemporary movements.

The Duo's comments on their compositions provides a useful introduction to their music:

'The process of making our music is unusual, because our music often comes to us completely unexpectedly. The inspiration comes from the uniquely wonderful nature that surrounds us and through the characteristic rhythms and melodies familiar since childhood which continue to resonate among the emotions and experiences of our everyday life.'

Each composer has provided notes about his compositions, beginning with Srdjan Bulatović:

Imagination: This is a composition in which the unreal becomes real. It is a work designed to tap into the listener's creativity and open their imaginations. The introduction contains modern-sounding harmonies that complement the open strings, giving them a mystical sound. The guitar is tuned with the first string tuned to D, the second to A, the sixth to D, with a melodic line that is both memorable and easy to listen to. The piece is inspired by contemporary guitar music and also contains some of the characteristic classical guitar techniques.

Feel the Moment: This piece encourages the listener to grab some free time and enjoy the moment. There are rare times when music, through its beauty, can evoke our emotions and ennoble our soul, leading us to daydream and find inner peace and contentment. *Feel the Moment* is in 4/4-time, and the guitar has an unusual tuning (the first string is tuned to D, the second to A, and the sixth to D). The melodic line is simple, pleasant to listen to and memorable.

Concentration: *Concentration* encourages the listener to switch their thoughts from the perceptual to the sensory. It asks us to consider ourselves, our motivations and our thoughts and ideas. By listening we can develop our powers of perception, memory, and concentration. The music is in 4/4-time and has the same tuning as *Feel the Moment*. The work is imbued with a complex set of mystical-sounding overtones and here dexterity and precision are required from the Second Guitar during performance. The melody contains various rhythmic figures and 'double sounds' and is inspired by contemporary works of art-music for classical guitar and also ambient music and film music.

Romantic Minutes: I wrote this piece during minutes spent experiencing the deepest, most beautiful emotions, and I sought to translate these feelings into music. The simple melodic themes that intertwine throughout the work are aimed directly at the listener. The tempo is slow; the time-signature changes from 4/4 to 6/8 to 2/4. This is music whose purpose is to evoke beautiful feelings during moments spent in solitude.

Musical Excitement: With its simple melody and harmonies, *Musical Excitement* seeks to inspire in listeners feelings of satisfaction and elation that arise from the act of unburdening. It is a meditative composition written in 6/8-time with a slow tempo, a romantic-sounding melodic theme and some unusual harmonic accompaniment.

Life: This work is a reminder of the most precious thing we possess: life. Cheerful and simple melodies bring relief, nudging the listener to play, socialise and enjoy life. I wrote this piece when life had returned to the streets of our cities after lockdown during the Coronavirus pandemic. We became more aware of what life means and began to appreciate it much more. *Life* is fast-paced, in 4/4-time, and its melodies and harmonic accompaniment are simple and clear. The work is directly influenced by specific flamenco guitar techniques and music.

Relaxation: This is a piece to provide relief and relaxation from everyday obligations. The time we dedicate to ourselves regenerates us; relaxing melodies can bring new energy into us. That energy suppresses the stress within us and gives us the motivation to search for new inspiration. This work is written in 6/8-time and is inspired by romantic music written for the guitar. The introduction and first part evoke Renaissance lute music, while the second part has more modern melodies and harmonies. There are also elements of neo-Classicism and neo-Baroque music.

The following are comments by Darko Nikčević:

Drama: The strange new reality of the pandemic hit home in early May 2020, when I felt as though I were living in a television drama in which we were all participants. Through my spirituality and the search for meaning I was able mentally to fight back and return to my real life, not the imposed one. I found my way out through music. *Drama* draws heavily on flamenco, utilising many of its techniques (*rasgueado*, *picado*, *apagando*, *golpe*). I deliberately made it an extremely demanding piece to play (including tuning the First Guitar's sixth string to B) so that it would require a lot of practice time and leave less time for me to think about everyday life.

Evening at Home: This piece came about one quiet night in March 2021 spent in the comfort of my home with the woman I love. I've never been so inspired. The simplicity and beauty of something so common and everyday led me to compose this romantic piece in just a few days. It is written in 2/4-time and has a simple melody, conveying the simplicity of the domestic setting. Some unusual harmonies provide additional interest.

Mind Circle: I composed this piece in the summer of 2020 as a way of escaping my state of mind, which was constantly overthinking things. I decided that thinking was futile, and so I devoted myself to making music. *Mind Circle* is in 5/4, a time signature common in European folk cultures, including Montenegrin traditional music. The First Guitar has the unusual tuning of D, A, D, F sharp, B, E, while the Second Guitar has a simple 'drop D' tuning of D, A, D, G, B, E.

Inner Beauty: Here I was inspired by the inner beauty of the person I am closest to, and I composed this piece entirely in her presence and with her blessing. The New Year's celebrations at the end of 2020 led me to look for beauty in the people around me, but also within myself. Beauty is all around us, but it is made and created by our experiences. The composition is written in the slow tempo of 4/4-time and contains several modulations. The accompanying guitar plays arpeggio figurations throughout.

2020: April 2020 marked the beginning of the strangest year of our lives. During the moments of greatest isolation when like everyone else I felt such uncertainty, I tried to understand what was happening to humanity and where the crisis was leading. I translated my conclusions into music as a means of artistic expression. The history of the Balkans and of my homeland came to life within me then, so it was completely natural for me to compose in the typically irregular Balkan metre of 7/8.

Time Perception: I wrote this piece in early 2021 with the idea of challenging the listener's experience of the relativity of the passage of time. The piece was recorded using a metronome, but the notes of the melody have different shifting values – crotchets followed by quavers followed by triplets (which create the impression time accelerating) then back to crotchets then quavers then triplets. The piece ends where it began, with the accompanying guitar playing in the style of a ticking metronome. The message is that we are all just a short part of the absolute time of the universe.

Preludio rasgueado: This solo work is a sequel to my composition *Preludio arpeggio* recorded on our first Naxos album, *The Sea* (8.573943). The new work has the same (unusual) tuning (sixth string tuned to C sharp) and the same harmonic structure as *Preludio arpeggio*, but while *Preludio arpeggio* is performed with an arpeggio technique, *Preludio rasgueado* (as the title suggests) uses the *rasgueado* flamenco technique. Another difference with *Preludio rasgueado* is the addition of a second guitar performing a solo tremolo. Using the overdubbing technique, I recorded several more guitars playing the solo as though in unison.

Graham Wade, Srdjan Bulatović and Darko Nikčević

Notes edited by Graham Wade



Photo: Bojana Sekulović

Srdjan Bulatović



Photo: Jovan Mandić

Srdjan Bulatović, born 1972 in Podgorica, Montenegro, is a guitarist and composer. He completed his doctorate on *The Influence of Flamenco on the Development of Classical Guitar Playing Techniques* at the Faculty of Music Arts in Belgrade. He has performed internationally including at Carnegie Hall in New York. He is the author of *The Collection of Compositions and Études* for classical guitar (2003) and co-author, with Darko Nikčević, of the textbook *Guitar for Beginners* (published in 2006, 2011, 2013 and 2016). His solo albums include *Guitar* (1998), which was the first classical music recording made and released in Montenegro, *Live in Belgrade* (2010) and *Fuoco* (2012). He recorded *Caffe* (2012) with flautist Boris Nikčević. With Darko Nikčević he recorded *Duo* (2001), *Nostalgia* (2005), *Touch of Montenegro* (2011), *Synergy* (2012), *Ritmico* (2015), *The Best of Montenegro* (2016), *Balkan, Mediterranean, Orient* (2017) and *The Sea* (Naxos 8.573943, 2018). Bulatović is the founder and director of the classical guitar festival Guitar Days in Podgorica. He is a recipient of Montenegro's most prestigious accolade, the Thirteenth of July Award.

Darko Nikčević

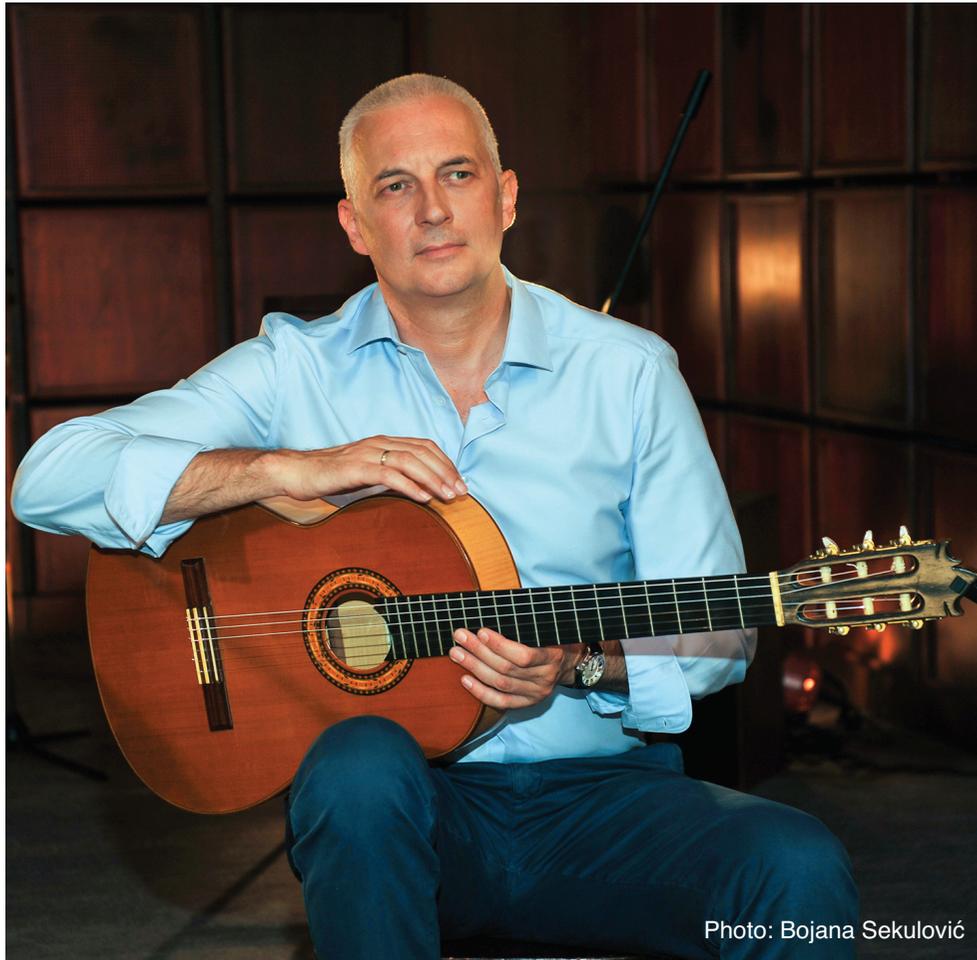


Photo: Bojana Sekulović

Darko Nikčević, born 1971 in Nikšić, Montenegro, is a guitarist, composer, producer and audio engineer. In addition to classical music, which he has played since childhood, his discovery of flamenco, with its advanced guitar techniques, opened up new expressive possibilities. Intensive studies in jazz and harmony have also contributed to his compositional style. He has written over 50 works. His knowledge of audio technology has enabled him to record and produce numerous albums with his colleague Srdjan Bulatović. He also worked on the first album of instrumental music to be recorded and released in Montenegro, *Flamenco* (Radio and Television of Montenegro, 1994) and, with classical guitarist Srdjan Bulatović, the albums *Duo* (2001), *Nostalgia* (2005), *Touch of Montenegro* (2011), *Synergy* (2012), *Ritmico* (2015), *The Best of Montenegro* (2016), *Balkan, Mediterranean, Orient* (2017), *The Sea* (Naxos, 2018) and *Peninsula* (Naxos, 2020). With the flamenco group Duende he recorded an album of his own compositions, *Slovenia* (2003). He is a recipient of Montenegro's most prestigious accolade, the Thirteenth of July Award.

www.duogitara.com

Darko Nikčević and Srdjan Bulatović, the internationally renowned guitar duo from Montenegro, are acclaimed for their virtuosity and for exciting performances that blend influences from the Mediterranean and the Middle East. This programme captures the spontaneous nature of their musical creativity and documents the strange period in which the world first stood still under the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing on a shared Balkan heritage and using eloquently transparent melodies, these pieces express uncertainty and isolation as well as the deepest and most beautiful of emotions, from inner peace and contentment to a cheerful appreciation of life itself.

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1 Imagination (2020)	4:22	2 Drama (2020)	3:17
3 Feel the Moment (2020)	5:15	4 Evening at Home (2021)	3:34
5 Concentration (2020)	5:18	6 Mind Circle (2020)	3:13
7 Romantic Minutes (2020)	4:48	8 Inner Beauty (2020)	5:58
9 Musical Excitement (2020)	3:49	10 2020 (2020)	5:59
11 Life (2020)	3:54	12 Time Perception (2021)	6:15
13 Relaxation (2020)	5:38	14 Preludio rasgueado (2020)	3:16

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Srdjan Bulatović, Guitar I 1 3 5 7 9 11 13,
Guitar II 2 6 8 12 14

Darko Nikčević, Guitar I 2 6 8 12 14,
Guitar II 1 3 5 7 9 11 13, Guitar Solo 4 10

Recorded: 18 February 1, 11 February 2 13, 5 February 3, 23 December 4 9, 29 January 5,
13 February 6, 16 February 7, 20 February 8, 31 March 10–12, 9 February 14 2021 at Studio 6,
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