



Laureate Series • Guitar



Virgile Barthe Winner 2025 Guitar Foundation of America (GFA) Competition

BOGDANOVIĆ • BUXTEHUDE • MAW • MENDELSSOHN • SCARLATTI



VIRGILE BARTHE

Guitar Recital

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|-----------|---|--------------|
| 1 | Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757) Keyboard Sonata, K.491/L.164/P.484 (arr. David Russell, 2000) | 5:26 |
| 2 | Keyboard Sonata, K.213/L.108/P.288 (arr. Claudio Giuliani, 1994) | 4:31 |
| 3 | Keyboard Sonata, K.492/L.14/P.443 (arr. Gérard Abiton, pub. 2011) | 4:45 |
| | Dieterich Buxtehude (c. 1637–1707) Suite, BuxWV 236 (arr. Julian Bream, 1967) | 8:27 |
| 4 | I. Allemande | 2:59 |
| 5 | II. Courante | 1:28 |
| 6 | III. Sarabande | 2:22 |
| 7 | IV. Gigue | 1:38 |
| | Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) Lieder ohne Worte, Book 1, Op. 19b (1829–32) | 3:49 |
| 8 | No. 6, BWV U78 ‘Venezianisches Gondellied’ (arr. Dušan Bogdanović, 2010) | 1:49 |
| 9 | No. 4, BWV U73 (arr. Virgile Barthe, 2025) | 2:00 |
| 10 | Lieder ohne Worte, Book 2, Op. 30 – No. 6, BWV U110 ‘Venezianisches Gondellied’ (1833–34) (arr. V. Barthe, 2025) | 2:59 |
| | Nicholas Maw (1935–2009) Music of Memory (1991) | 19:53 |
| | Dušan Bogdanović (b. 1955) Guitar Sonata No. 3 (2010) | 9:55 |
| 12 | I. Moderato appassionato | 2:43 |
| 13 | II. Lento rubato | 3:07 |
| 14 | III. Allegretto | 1:27 |
| 15 | IV. Allegro brillante | 2:38 |

Virgile Barthe

Guitar Recital

The Guitar Foundation of America's Competition presents to the world some of the finest guitarists of the younger generation. Over recent decades the standard of performance among younger players has risen to a high technical and interpretative level, which at one time was characteristic of only the most eminent recitalists. In this selection Virgile Barthe performs a wide range of works from the Baroque to the 21st century, bringing together diverse sonorities and musical creativity to be unified within the sheer versatility of the classical guitar. The recording includes both transcriptions and original compositions for the guitar, the true identity of the modern recital, performed with an impeccable virtuosity and profound interpretative artistry.

Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757), born in Naples, spent nearly 30 years of his professional life in the Iberian Peninsula. In about 1719 he was appointed as *mestre* to the Portuguese royal chapel of John V. Among his many duties was responsibility for teaching Princess María Barbara. In 1729, when the princess married Prince Ferdinand (son of Philip V of Spain), Scarlatti moved with his pupil to the Spanish court.

In 1738 Scarlatti's fame was enhanced throughout Europe by the publication of 30 of his *Essercizi* for harpsichord, dedicated to John V, who forthwith appointed him as a Knight of the Order of Santiago. The *Essercizi* were not merely 'exercises' but expressive and brilliant sonatas in binary form that would constitute Scarlatti's greatest legacy. Scarlatti continued writing them for the rest of his life, ultimately completing a total of 555 such works, an extraordinary achievement.

The great Scarlatti scholar Ralph Kirkpatrick saw him as 'influenced not only by Spanish music but also by the guitar. Though Scarlatti probably never played the guitar ... surely no composer ever fell more deeply under its spell'. It is therefore appropriate that the playing of Scarlatti's sonatas is popular among guitarists. Over recent years guitar arrangements of over 200 sonatas have been published.

Kirkpatrick commented in his biography and analysis of Scarlatti's life and works that *Sonata, K.491* imitates the sound of trumpets. The composer also uses the rhythmic effect of accelerating or slowing down over a basic unchanging pulse, breaking into continuous semiquavers after mixing quavers and semiquavers. This sonata has a processional atmosphere, and is very courtly.

Sonata, K.213 is in total contrast. This is one of Scarlatti's most profoundly expressive slow works with beautiful lines of melody and exquisite harmonies, ideally suited to the guitar's vibrato possibilities. *Sonata, K.492* once again takes us into the realm of virtuosity with brilliant scale runs and elegant chordal elements.

Dieterich Buxtehude, of German or Danish origin (scholars have been unable to verify his birthplace), is famous as one of the great composers of organ music, though he was also prolific in the writing of sacred vocal and instrumental music. In 1668 he took up residence in Lübeck in northern Germany, where he remained for the rest of his life as the organist and *Werkmeister* (secretary and treasurer) of the Marienkirche, one of the most important musical appointments in the country.

Julian Bream first transcribed the *Suite in E minor* in the late 1960s after finding it in a handwritten manuscript in German organ tablature in the Thomas Ihre collection at the University Library of Uppsala. Another version of the work is for keyboard. Bream commented that 'the character and spirit of this *Suite* is ideally suited to the guitar – a fact which led me to make this transcription which collates details from both sources'.

Felix Mendelssohn, a child prodigy, was famous throughout his musical career as a composer, conductor and pianist. It was Mendelssohn himself who designated these pieces as *Songs without Words*, namely a short piano work in the manner of a song. The *Songs* here are the well-known *Venetian Gondola Song* evocations, the equivalent of barcarolles.

Prolific British composer Nicholas Maw was born in Grantham, Lincolnshire. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music, London, with Paul Steinitz and Lennox Berkeley, and later in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Max Deutsch. Between 1998 until 2008, Maw served on the faculty of the Peabody Institute at Johns Hopkins University, where he taught music composition. He moved to Washington, D.C. in 1984. Among his works are the operas *The Rising of the Moon* (1970) and *Sophie's Choice* (2002).

In a programme note, the composer has described *Music of Memory* as 'a somewhat freely organised set of variations...on the Intermezzo from Mendelssohn's String Quartet in A minor, Op. 13'. The theme is not presented in its entirety anywhere in the work but separated in its parts and embedded throughout, 'so that the listener is reminded of its haunting presence even though the immediate musical events might seem considerably far-removed'.

Dušan Bogdanović, a Serbian-born American composer, has written works that are a synthesis of classical, jazz and ethnic music. He has published some 200 compositions including pieces for solo guitar, ensembles and orchestra, as well as building up an international reputation as both a recitalist and recording artist.

Guitar Sonata No. 3, dedicated to the Swiss guitarist Dominique Phillot and Claudio Verdon, was commissioned by the Festival International de la Guitare de Fribourg, and published by Doberman-Yppan in 2010. It is a truly virtuosic work in four movements with immense technical challenges. The sonata is a rich blend of compositional inspiration including the use of Messiaen's modes and the opening theme from Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* ('The Rite of Spring'), with influences also from Renaissance, jazz and Balkan music.

Guitarist Xavier Jara, who previously recorded the work, has described the complexities of the composition in his detailed commentary (Naxos 8.573797):

The work opens with voices of ascending and descending modes with a sense of fluidity, the tempo constantly changing. Then the composer switches from rubato quavers to *a tempo* semiquavers, the resultant virtuoso section recalling the opening but played at twice the speed. After a bridge passage, the music starts again with the original slow tempo. Three efforts for a climactic crescendo follow, the first developing with room to breathe, the second bringing in an inconclusive *accelerando*. On the third crescendo the tempo is doubled with rapid notes seeming to fly from the guitar in all directions. The same bridge passage now returns in a more developed form. For the last time the music grows from the bass to the top, the tempo being extremely varied. (Stravinsky's theme can be found in the bass and in the concluding soft notes of the movement.)

The second movement begins with an improvisational introduction, the bass line being reminiscent of the passionate singing of Balkan folk music. Starting quietly the music develops to an impressive *fortissimo*, all the time with an F natural pedal in the bass, the sixth string of the guitar being tuned up from E to F. As the piece reaches its loudest intensity Stravinsky's theme comes in the treble, followed by a new ethereal section of *Lento rubato*. Once more Stravinsky's melody ends the movement. The third movement is like a *scherzo* employing complex rhythmic changes where the time signature alters from bar to bar. Though the rhythms evoke eastern music there are also elements of jazz feeling.

The final section of this piece has a consistent rhythmic pulse however. At the finale we once again hear Stravinsky's theme in the treble. The final movement, which follows classical sonata form, also deploys complex rhythmic patterns. Stravinsky's theme plays a central role here, constantly recurring along with references to themes from the earlier movements. This development climaxes with passages akin to Rodrigo's harp techniques, imparting the feeling of spinning and more spinning. After a short bridge section we reprise the beginning of the fourth movement, progressing into a series of fortissimo lines and chords. Finally the lines disappear to leave just the violent chords and a heavy F pedal in the bass.

Graham Wade

Virgile Barthe



Photo: Jules Fournier

Virgile Barthe (b. 2003) began his formal musical education at the Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Toulouse, where he graduated under the guidance of Benoît Albert, following early studies with Samuel Chicharro. He is currently completing a Master's degree at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris with Judicaël Perroy, after receiving mentorship from Gabriel Bianco and Olivier Chassain. Barthe has garnered international recognition via numerous prestigious competitions: in 2024 he was awarded First Prize at the International Guitar Competition Maurizio Biasini, which led to his debut as a soloist alongside the Sinfonieorchester Basel, and in 2025 he received First Prize at both the Koblenz International Guitar Competition and the Guitar Foundation of America (GFA) Competition. He is regularly invited to appear at international festivals, and his repertoire ranges from Baroque music to contemporary works. He also performs in a flute/guitar duo with flautist Lucie Fischer, and teaches guitar at the Conservatoire of Saint-Maurice.



Photo: Jules Fournier

Virgile Barthe, winner of the 2025 Guitar Foundation of America Competition, presents works ranging from the Baroque to the 21st century performed with his impeccable virtuosity and artistry. This recital takes us from arrangements of Domenico Scarlatti's deeply expressive sonatas and Buxtehude's brilliant *Suite*, to the lyrical *Songs without Words* of Mendelssohn and the haunting *Music of Memory* by Nicholas Maw. The album closes with Dušan Bogdanović's *Third Sonata*, a truly virtuoso piece with its quotes from Stravinsky and musical influences from the Balkans, jazz and the Renaissance.

VIRGILE BARTHE

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Domenico Scarlatti (1685–1757)

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Dieterich Buxtehude (c. 1637–1707)

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| 4–7 | Suite, BuxWV 236 (arr. J. Bream, 1967) | 8:27 |
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Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

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| 8–9 | Songs without Words, Book 1, Op. 19b (1829–32) (excerpts) | 3:49 |
| 10 | Songs without Words, Book 2, Op. 30 – No. 6, MWV U110 ‘Venetian Gondola Song’ (1833–34) (arr. V. Barthe, 2025) | 2:59 |

Nicholas Maw (1935–2009)

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| 11 | Music of Memory (1991) | 19:53 |
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Dušan Bogdanović (b. 1955)

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| 12–15 | Guitar Sonata No. 3 (2010) | 9:55 |
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A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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Guitar by A. Heinzelmann, Berlin

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