

Programme Notes By Dr. Emer Nestor

Thibaut Garcia, guitar

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Programme:

Dušan Bogdanović (b. 1955)

4 Pièces Intimes

1. Prière
2. Mouvement
3. La harpe de David
4. Chant

Gaspar Cassadó (1897 - 1966)

Suite for Solo Cello

1. Preludio - Fantasia
2. Sardana - Danza
3. Intermezzo e Danza Finale

Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916)

12 Danzas Españolas Op. 37, Vol. 2 No. 5,
'Andaluza'

Intermezzo from the Opera "Goyescas"

H. 65

12 Danzas Españolas Op. 37, Vol. 1 No. 2,
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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D minor,
BWV 1004

Benjamin Dwyer (b. 1965)

'sin título'

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Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959)

Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5, Mvt. I,
Ária: Cantilena

Stephen Goss (b. 1964)

Park of Idols

1. Jump Start
2. Cold Dark Matter
3. Fractured Loop
4. Malabar Hill
5. The Raw
6. Sharjah

INTERVAL

Dušan Bogdanović (b. 1955)

4 Pièces Intimes

1. Prière
2. Mouvement
3. La harpe de David
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As one of the twenty-first century's leading composers of guitar music, Serbian-born Dušan Bogdanović has garnered much attention for his inimitable musical vision, improvisational mastery and theoretical reflections. With a narrative punctuated by lyricism and rhythmic vitality, Bogdanović's *Quatre Pièces Intimes* blends a seamless musical tapestry of ethnic folk, jazz and classical traditions. Written in 1980, and dedicated to Croatian cellist Valter Dešpalj, this work melds elements of Levantine music (the region of countries bordering the eastern Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to Egypt) with the pentatonicism and complex rhythmic variations of the Bibayak Pygmies of Gabon (Africa). Bogdanović's composition explores the fascinating soundscape of cello and guitar through a kaleidoscope of distinctive musical colourings and textural experimentation.

The 'Largo tranquillo' setting of the opening movement frames the prayerful duet, in which the languid, lamenting cello line weaves carefully around a gentle, dissonant guitar accompaniment. The reflective mood dissipates, as the music gives way to the jagged, pulsating first bars of the second 'Allegro molto' movement. Both instruments converse and tumble amid ever-changing time signatures. A series of syncopated harmonics from the guitar eases the tension momentarily before the original rhythmic impetus returns. The pace gradually starts to slow, as both instruments rise to their tender close.

La harpe de David begins with double-stopped cello harmonics, creating an almost-haunting effect. A pensive guitar motif follows, reinforced by a luxuriously resonant cello theme. The movement comes to its peaceful end through a delicate harp-like arpeggio in the guitar line. An array of shifting time-signatures punctuates the finale, *Chant*, drawing *Quatre Pièces Intimes* to its conclusion with provocative intricacy.

Gaspar Cassadó (1897 - 1966)

Suite for Solo Cello

1. Preludio - Fantasia
2. Sardana - Danza
3. Intermezzo e Danza Finale

“Once, being in Berlin (1925), I went to a concert to hear Casals. The programme included the Bach Fifth Suite. This unsurpassed interpretation had such a great impact on me that I rushed to congratulate him...” Gaspar Cassadó

Inspired by the virtuosity and interpretative majesty of his teacher and mentor Pablo Casals (1876-1973), the young Catalan composer Gaspar Cassadó took ink to manuscript in 1926 to write his Suite for Solo Cello. The piece was dedicated to the German cellist Francesco von Mendelssohn (1901-1972) whose widowed mother, Giulietta (1871-1955) had a profound effect on Cassadó's life for over thirty years. She was his accompanist, companion, patron and, according to contemporary gossip, his lover.

Fragrances of Cassadó's many compositional influences waft across the bars of this Suite — J.S. Bach (1685-1750), Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). Interestingly, the composer never recorded this work and it remained in relative obscurity until the 1980s, when the Hungarian-American cellist János Starker brought it to the world stage.

Cassadó's Suite opens with a rhapsodic Prelude that blends elements of the Baroque sarabande with Ravel's flute theme from the ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) and Kodály's Sonata for Solo Cello Op. 8 (1915). The second movement, a dignified Sardana, envelops us within the national dance of Catalonia—a circle dance performed to the accompaniment of flute, drum and shawm (a medieval precursor of the modern oboe). The opening is played entirely in harmonics to mimic the high whistling sound of the *flaviol* (small Spanish flute) as it summons the dancers to the town square. Frequent changes in register on the cello capture the many interactions of the band.

The final movement, *Intermezzo e Danza Finale*, unfurls as a series of meditations in which sharp, abrupt rhythms bring the snap of castanets to life, while flamboyant arpeggio patterns and idiosyncratic four-note descending bass lines echo the harmonies of the Spanish folk music style. The music gathers momentum in a fiery foot-stomping Jota (Spanish dance in triple time—a freer type of waltz), whirling the work to its exciting and vibrant conclusion.

Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916)

12 Danzas Españolas Op. 37, Vol. 2 No. 5, 'Andaluza'

Writing in the Musical Times in 1916, French writer and champion of Spanish music George Jean Aubrey (1882-1949) introduced the music and life of Enrique Granados y Campiña to the British public:

“Granados's music is not fit for large concert rooms: it is...confidential music. Granados has lived only through love; every work of his is an amorous disclosure, the expression of a hope, of a joy, of a regret. He is a man who lingers over his memories as over the letters from a beloved and now departed woman; but there is also in him the eternal versatility of amorous youth. Everything in him was drawing him toward a sort of melancholy; and it was not so much for us as for himself that he composed his pianoforte pieces.”

While conventional European traditions serve as the foundation stone upon which Enrique Granados built his unique musical language, the heart of his compositional style belongs to Spanish and Catalan folk music.

Compared by critics at the time with the Norwegian nationalist works of Edvard Grieg, Granados's 12 Danzas Españolas were composed for piano between 1887 and 1890. Praised by Jules Massenet (1842-1912) and Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), the vignettes of Spanish life were first published in four sets of three dances. Granados only gave names to two of the dances (No. 4 and No. 7) and the titles of the remaining ten were assigned by the publisher. Rich in melodic expression and rhythmic diversity, the Danzas are the product of a decidedly sophisticated and delicate sensibility.

No. 5 'Andaluza' is the most famous of the dances and one of the best-known pieces by Granados. Written in A-B-A form, the work is dark and passionate, with gypsy rhythms and expressive melodies that reflect the chromatic inflection integral to the Andalusian folk cultures. A sense of excitement and mystery is conveyed through agitated syncopations, while the velvet cello melody, with its refined ornamentation and flamenco-style contour, swells above an undulating and hypnotic guitar accompaniment.

Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916)

Intermezzo from the Opera "Goyescas" H. 65

"I am enamoured with the psychology of Goya, with his palette, with him, with his muse the Duchess of Alba, with his quarrels with his models, his loves and flatteries. That whitish pink of the cheeks, contrasting with the blend of black velvet; those subterranean creatures, hands of mother-of-pearl and jasmine resting on jet trinkets, have possessed me..." Enrique Granados

From 1909 to 1911 Granados was drawn to the vivacious atmospheric depictions of life in Madrid, as depicted in the art work of Spanish painter Francisco Goya (1746–1828). He set about capturing the vitality and colours of these paintings in his Goyescas piano suite (1911) and El pelele (1914). On the advice of American pianist Ernest Schelling (1876-1939), who had debuted the piano suite in the US, Granados based a one-act opera with three tableaux on the music of the Goyescas piano pieces. Unusually, the libretto was written after the music, and its writer, Spanish librettist Fernando Periquet y Zuaznabar (1873-1940), struggled with the task.

Set in Madrid at the turn of the nineteenth century, Paquiro, a bullfighter, flirts and jokes with a group of young people in the Campo de la Florida. His fiancée, Pepa, arrives and is soon followed by Rosario, a noblewoman, who is looking for her lover, Fernando—a captain in the Royal Guard. Paquiro invites Rosario to a dance at a tavern that evening, however, Fernando arrives just in time to announce that he will be taking her himself. A furious Pepa seeks vengeance on Rosario and instigates a quarrel between Fernando and Paquiro. A duel is arranged and Paquiro murders Fernando. Heartbroken, Rosario drags Fernando's lifeless body back to her garden where he dies in her arms.

Following the realisation that the first version of the opera was too short for the change between scenes I and II, Granados wrote the orchestral Intermezzo in one night in his hotel room, just days before the American premiere. He also arranged a piano version of the piece.

Originally scheduled to premiere at the Paris Opéra, the events of World War I redirected proceedings to New York's Metropolitan Opera in January 1916. The work was given five shows and Granados was persuaded to delay his return to Spain to perform a concert in the White House. However, while travelling back to his homeland, Granados drowned in the English Channel when his ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat. The captain of the S.S. Sussex claimed that Granados unfastened his lifejacket to save his wife and the pair disappeared into the blue sea in a last embrace.

Even though the opera Goyescas is rarely performed today, the Intermezzo, with its intense lyricism and melodic vulnerability, has become a popular addition to the concert repertoire. The piece has enjoyed numerous arrangements for varying combinations of instruments over the years.

Enrique Granados (1867 - 1916)

12 Danzas Españolas Op. 37, Vol. 1 No. 2, 'Oriental'

12 Danzas Españolas 'Oriental' evokes the exoticism of the Moors and gypsies who lived in the southern region of Andalucía. The dance is both mysterious and filled with captivating charm. Written in three-part form, the opening section retains a classical simplicity within a Middle-Eastern ambience. Granados's curving arabesque-like accompaniment imbues the narrative with an entrancing air of solemnity. The plaintive melody of the second section conveys a rustic quality, reticent of the music of the gypsies as they soulfully recount their plight. Carefully placed embellishments suggest the roll of the castanets throughout. The opening theme returns to conclude this exquisite musical snapshot of nineteenth-century Spain.

INTERVAL

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004

Midway through his six-year tenure as Capellmeister to Prince Leopold of Anhalt in Cöthen, Bach wrote six sonatas and partitas for solo violin. It has been suggested that Partita No. 2 was envisaged as a tombeau in memory of Bach's first wife, Maria Barbara Bach, who died in 1720.

As one of the most famous concert pieces within the canon, the chaconne is a work of astonishing virtuosity and architectural beauty in which Bach pushes the boundaries of both instrument and form. Intrigued by the musical possibilities offered by the work's unusually long chain of complex variations, the chaconne has been arranged and adapted for numerous instruments and ensemble combinations since the nineteenth century.

In his epic treatment of the chaconne style, Bach takes a dignified, declamatory, eight-bar chord sequence and develops it into thirty-one continuous variations. The seamless motion from the keys of D minor to D major, and back to D minor again separates the movement into three large sections, further compounding the weightiness of the movement. Undoubtedly, this skilfully-crafted Chaconne makes huge demands on both the technical skill and artistic capabilities of the performers.

“On one stave, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagined that I could have created, even conceived the piece, I am quite certain that the excess of excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind. If one doesn't have the greatest violinist around, then it is well the most beautiful pleasure to simply listen to its sound in one's mind.”

Johannes Brahms to Clara Schumann (1877)

Benjamin Dwyer (b. 1965)

'sin título'

New commission by Music Network

Guitarist and composer, Benjamin Dwyer, has given concerts worldwide and has appeared as soloist with all the Irish orchestras, the Neubrandenburg Philharmonic Orchestra (Germany), the Santos Symphony Orchestra (Brazil), VOX21, the Vogler String Quartet (Germany) and the Callino String Quartet (UK). He is the guitarist in Barry Guy's Blue Shroud Band, which headed the bill at the Krakow Autumn Jazz Festival in 2014 and 2016.

Dwyer's compositions are regularly performed internationally and he has been the featured composer at the Musica Nova Festival (São Paulo), the Bienal de Ribeirão Preto (Brazil), the National Concert Hall's Composers' Choice, the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra's Horizons series and MUSIC21 (Dublin). Recent major works include Umbilical, a re-working of the Oedipus myth, which received its UK première in 2013 and was released on Diatribe Records in 2017 featuring Barry Guy, Maya Homburger and David Adams. His work for solo viola entitled imagines obesae et aspectui ingratae was premièred by Garth Knox in 2014 at the Bernalda Festival, Spain. The Fidelio Trio premièred his Nocturnal, after Benjamin Britten (piano trio) at Kings Place London in October 2015. The song cycle, Sobre los Ángeles, was premièred last year at the Barrow River Arts Festival by soprano Sylvia O'Brien and the composer.

Recent CD recordings include *Twelve Études* (Gamelan Records, 2008), *Irish Guitar Works* (El Cortijo, 2012), *Scenes from Crow* (Diatribes Records, 2014) and *Umbilical* (Diatribes Records, 2017). The *Alchemia Sessions Live* from the Autumn Jazz Krakow 2014 (4-CD set) for Notwo Records and Barry Guy—*The Blue Shroud* on Intakt Records were both released in 2016. *A niente... a CD of contemporary Irish guitar music* will be released on Farpoint Records this year.

Dwyer is an elected member of Aosdána (the Irish Academy of creative artists) and an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, London (ARAM). He earned a PhD in Composition from Queen's University (Belfast), and is currently Professor of Music at Middlesex University, London.

Benjamin Dwyer has kindly provided the following note on his piece, 'sin título':

sin título ('without title') is based on a madrigal by Carlo Gesualdo da Venosa (1566–1613). But the aim was less a tribute to the great madrigalist than a need to have a structure upon which to create a new work. The madrigal chosen therefore also remains *sin título*, as I don't wish to direct attention towards any similarities or differences that may exist between the two works. The nature of a cello and guitar duet is completely different to a five-part vocal work; however, the cello part does absorb melodic lines drawn from the vocal parts—sometimes from the base, sometimes from the soprano and alto lines. The complex, interrelated nature of Gesualdo's madrigal writing refuses a simplistic reduction to mere melody and accompaniment, and thus the very nature of the original is radically transformed.

Despite its vocal source, this is an instrumental work for cello and guitar. While the cello part plays melodic lines, I also wanted to make sure that timbre, texture, microtonality, rhythmic articulation and tonal variation played a significant role in the final result of those 'melodies'. The guitar part's role is predominantly supportive to the cello's lines, but considerable skill is required to maintain a deceptive simplicity, as the unusual harmonic formations are far from easy to execute.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 - 1959)

Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5, Mvt. I, Ária: Cantilena

Villa-Lobos wrote his nine *Bachianas Brasileiras* in homage to 'the great genius of Johann Sebastian Bach' who he considered 'a kind of universal folkloric source, rich and profound... [a source] linking all peoples'. The suites were designed to adapt a variety of Baroque harmonic and contrapuntal procedures to Brazilian music. Initially, almost every movement was assigned a dual title which alluded to various movements of Baroque Suite forms and popular Brazilian musical styles.

Ária is one of Villa-Lobos's most famous works. Written in 1938 and 1945, its two movements were scored for soprano and an eight-cello ensemble. The term 'cantilena' refers to a sustained or lyrical vocal line, usually for solo voice, and translates as 'lullaby'. The Italian verb *cantilenare* means 'to hum' and this unspoken quality was employed by Villa-Lobos in the original version of the *Ária*, which concludes with a hummed line for solo voice.

The *Ária* (Cantilena) opens with pizzicato guitar, steadied by a consistent, yet-asymmetric, 5/4 meter. As the sonorous cello intones a beautifully poignant melody, the meter becomes shapeless, shifting to suit the needs of the plaintive theme. The middle of the *Ária* features a more rigid structure, as the 5/4 pulse returns and the melodic line dissolves into a series of falling phrases. In the original composition, the singer switches from vocalise to Portuguese at this point, reciting a poem by Ruth Valadares Corrêa about the moon 'gently appearing beyond the horizon, embellishing the eventide, like a sweet maid preparing herself till she's dreamily gorgeous'. After the conclusion of the poem, the wordless melody resumes.

Stephen Goss (b. 1964)

Park of Idols

1. Jump Start
2. Cold Dark Matter
3. Fractured Loop
4. Malabar Hill
5. The Raw
6. Sharjah

Commissioned by cellist Leonid Gorokhov and guitarist Richard Hand in 2005, *Park of Idols* is based on a painting by the surrealist artist Paul Klee (1928). The work is an exciting, cornucopia of musical styles in which the worlds of classical, jazz and avant-garde rock come together. Welsh composer Stephen Goss selected six 'idols' as inspiration for each individual movement: Frank Zappa, Dmitri Shostakovich, Pat Metheny, John McLaughlin, Allan Holdsworth, and Robert Fripp. Some musical references are almost complete transcripts of compositions, whereas others are merely abstract reflections of the persona and his style.

Jump Start is a tribute to the unconventional stylings of American musician, composer, filmmaker and activist, Frank Zappa. *Cold Dark Matter* is based on Cornelia Parker's 1991 art installation of an exploded garden shed in which all the contents are frozen in suspended animation. Here, elements from Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14 provide the soundtrack to such a scene. *Fractured Loop* is a reimagined jazz piece from Pat Metheny, which appears in Herbie Hancock's jazz standard, *Cantaloupe Island*. The movement is a virtuosic *tour-de-force* for the guitarist, while the cellist plays a restrained pizzicato bass line underneath.

The tranquil *Malabar Hill* references *Dawn* from the New-York based jazz-rock fusion ensemble, the Mahavishnu Orchestra—led by English guitarist John McLaughlin. The work segues straight into the dream-like solo guitar movement of *The Raw*, which is based upon the harmonic language of English guitarist Allan Holdsworth. Within the movement, the harmonies twist and turn, leaving the listener to relinquish expectations and to abandon control to the mesmerizing sonorities. The final movement, *Sharjah*, pays tribute to the progressive rock band King Crimson and their song 'Sartori in Tangier'. The cellist imitates the wild guitar fashion of the legendary Robert Fripp. The set culminates in a psychedelic pastiche of avant-garde rock and jazz that deftly displays the multifarious musical capabilities of this instrumental combination.