



Marko Topchii

Winner 2023

Guitar Foundation of America
(GFA) Competition

BARRIOS MANGORÉ

BLIOKH

DOWLAND

DUMOND

GILARDINO

HAND

KOEHNE

POULENC

ROUSSEL

Marko Topchii: Guitar Recital

Barrios Mangoré • Bliokh • Dowland • Dumond • Gilardino • Hand • Koehne • Poulenc • Roussel

The versatility and historical range of the classical guitar in terms of tone colour and repertoire is invariably demonstrated by the world's leading players. In this recording we travel from a lute masterpiece of the Elizabethan age through the neo-Romantic cadences of the early 20th century, to music of the present day. This can be achieved on the guitar with no incongruity or sense of inappropriateness. The instrument positively embraces variety in all its forms. All that is required is an artist of both technical expertise and interpretative sensitivity. In Marko Topchii we have such a performer, who reveals the many voices of the guitar with virtuosic dexterity and passionate intensity.

In his youth, Albert Roussel joined the French Navy and during his travels was greatly influenced by oriental culture. Later, after studying with d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum, Paris, he taught there himself. In 1909 he revived old memories with a trip to India and the Far East. During the First World War Roussel served in the army and afterwards lived in Normandy and Paris, consolidating his reputation as one of France's most distinguished composers. He wrote over 80 works including four symphonies, a piano concerto, ballet music, songs and solo instrumental works.

Segovia, Op. 29 was premiered by Andrés Segovia, its dedicatee, in 1925. The opening waltz movement contrasts with a bolero in the middle section. This evocative piece, Roussel's only composition for guitar, is a portrait offering homage to a personality capable of both poetry and humour.

The compositions of the Paraguayan guitarist Agustín Barrios Mangoré are now an essential part of the repertoire. The revival of interest in his work was achieved in the main by the advocacy of John Williams, whose many performances during the 1970s of the music of this hitherto neglected composer drew wide attention to the sheer beauty of Barrios's art and stimulated considerable research into his life, recordings, and compositions.

Un sueño en la floresta ('Dream in the Glade'), one of the most sublime of the melodic pieces of Barrios, is a virtuosic tremolo study in which a plaintive theme is woven over a superbly imaginative accompaniment. As Barrios poetically expressed it, 'from the depths of the mysterious box there emerges a marvellous symphony of all the virgin voices of our America'.

Francis Poulenc, born in Paris, was mainly a self-taught composer whose outstanding abilities won him a place in Les Six, a circle of distinguished French composers which also included Auric, Durey, Honegger, Milhaud and Tailleferre. Profoundly influenced by Stravinsky, Poulenc wrote operas, ballets and other incidental music, orchestral and choral works, film scores, many piano and instrumental pieces, and a great quantity of songs.

Sarabande was regrettably Poulenc's only composition for guitar and was dedicated to Ida Presti, the great French guitarist. Its brevity is part of its fascination and the contrasting single notes against chords create their own sense of form and expressiveness.

Angelo Gilardino, born in Vercelli, Italy, was a composer, guitarist, teacher and musicologist. Between 1958 and 1981 he introduced to the repertoire a multitude of contemporary works for the guitar by many eminent composers, published by Edizioni Musicale Bèrben. Gilardino taught at the leading academies in Vercelli throughout his lifetime and was appointed artistic director of the Andrés Segovia Foundation of Linares, Spain, from 1997 to 2005. In 2009, the Guitar Foundation of America presented him with the Artistic Achievement Award for artists who have made outstanding achievements in the realm of the classical guitar.

Gilardino was a prolific composer of many solo works. In 1981 he began writing the first of *Studi di virtuosità e di trascendenza*, a project which eventually extended to 60 pieces across 5 volumes, the general title evoking the glorious tradition of the *Transcendental Études* for pianoforte by Franz Liszt.

Each *Study* is dedicated either to specific luminaries of the music or literary world or to other significant influences in the composer's experience. *Study No. 18*, for example, *El Rosario* ('The Rosary'), is a homage to Manuel de Falla. The guitarist, Cristiano Porqueddu, a specialist on Gilardino's music, has described this piece as 'a memorable extolling of the most sombre of [the] guitar's sounds, a voice from an ancient grotto speaking straight to the mystery of living things'. This study offers vigorous contrasts from percussive slurs to gentle lyricism. *Study No. 19* pays homage to Joaquín Turina, and under the title of *Jondo*

demonstrates the composer's instinctive affinities with the music of Spain. *Study No. 32* takes for its inspiration the painting by Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684–1721), *Embarquement pour Cythère* ('Embarking for Kythera'), where a group of people board the ship for the romantic Greek island of Kythera. The painting represents a *fête gallant* or an event celebrating flirtatious behaviour and extravagance during the Rococo era. The music is thus lyrical and evocative.

French classical guitarist, lute player, composer and educator Arnaud Dumond is one of the most eminent guitarists on the international scene and has participated in numerous masterclasses across more than 65 countries. Dumond was the first French guitarist to win First Prize in the Paris Radio France Guitar Competition and has also won many other prestigious international competitions: as a student he graduated in classical guitar from the École normale de musique de Paris, his teacher there being Alberto Ponce. He also studied with Narciso Yepes, Emilio Pujol and John Williams.

Dumond is a prolific composer who has not only written extensively for the guitar, but also works for strings, choir, orchestra and various ensembles along with several guitar concertos. His *Comme un hommage à Ravel* is a brilliantly imaginative piece, combining rippling arpeggios with a poignant melodic line

John Dowland, one of the great Elizabethan musicians, was both composer and lutenist. His music is profound and varied, in his solo lute works, consort writing and in a uniquely inventive output of songs. He travelled extensively in Europe and became royal lutenist for Christian IV of Denmark in 1598. In 1612 he was appointed as one of the 'King's Lutes' at the court of James I.

The terms 'fancy', 'fantasy' or 'fantasia' were adopted in the Renaissance as instrumental compositions not related to any dance form with diverse characteristics intended to display the player's mastery. *Fantasia, P. 71*, an extended piece of 84 bars, begins with a descending chromatic hexachord repeated 27 times throughout. This develops into an intricate contrapuntal scheme followed by episodes for two voices with the chromatic theme repeated in the upper register. The finale is primarily in three-part counterpoint culminating in the last two bars with descending chromatic notes in the highest part.

A graduate of the Mannes College of Music in New York, Frederic Hand was a Fulbright Scholar to England and a student of Julian Bream. His solo performances in North and South America and Europe have received the highest critical acclaim and his playing has been heard on the scores of numerous films. Hand's various scores for television scores earned him an Emmy Award. He has served on the faculties of several universities and is currently a faculty member of The Graduate Center, City University of New York. He has been an affiliate artist with the State Arts Councils of Colorado, Arizona, Washington and California.

In 2023 the Guitar Foundation of America commissioned him to compose the set piece for its International Concert Artist Competition. The work, entitled *Undercurrents*, has been described by the composer as 'a musical representation of the variety of emotions that we commonly carry just below the surface of our daily lives. These myriad thoughts and feelings propel us throughout the day. The score should be performed with great interpretive latitude and personal expression'.

Konstantin Bliokh, born in Kharkiv, Ukraine, is currently living in Tokyo. He graduated from the Kharkiv National University in 1998 (having studied classical guitar with Sergey Moskalenko and composition with Gennadiy Frolov), and was awarded a PhD degree in physics in 2001. He has written more than 40 musical compositions, mostly for classical guitar, and published more than a hundred scientific papers. Among his works are a chamber opera, a suite for guitar and strings, two guitar quartets, six guitar sonatas, several guitar suites and piano cycles, among others. His music has been widely performed in Ukraine and abroad. Bliokh has been awarded First Prize in several international composing competitions.

The composer has kindly provided an introduction to his sonata:

I titled this work *Sonata No. 6 'Kharkiv'*. There is no special musical programme relating to this title as such, but I composed my *Sonatas Nos. 3 to 6* while living in different countries and cities and gave them the corresponding titles: *No. 3 'Galway'* (Ireland); *No. 4 'Wako-shi'* (Japan); *No. 5 'Canberra'* (Australia). These are kind of my personal dedications to these places.

Kharkiv (Ukraine) is special, because this is my hometown. During the COVID pandemic I spent two years with my family there, and composed *Sonata No. 6*. After that I returned to Japan and just a few months later war came to my (and

also Marko Topchii's) homeland. Therefore, I would like to dedicate this sonata to the frontier city of Kharkiv and, most of all, to its citizens suffering from the war.

Now, about the key compositional elements of this piece. The first and fourth movements are based on the interplay between the twelve-tone principle and the G major tonal centre, natural for the guitar. The first movement is based on the interaction of the G major triad G–B–D of the open guitar strings 2–3–4, an ascending motif 1 using the notes E–F sharp–A–C sharp (originally on the string 1), and a descending motif 2 using the notes E flat–C–B flat–A flat (originally on the bass string 6). These elements supplement each other to almost make up twelve tones (apart from the missing F), and the motifs alternate with ostinato fragments where each note in the G major triad is step-by-step moved by a semitone up or down.

The second movement is a *Scherzo* involving numerous semitones in accented chords and fast passages, as well as chromatic melodic motion in the bass voice. It is almost atonal in some fragments, but has an overall tonal centre of A minor.

The third movement is a meditative *Adagio* based on a theme composed within a pentatonic scale of D–F–G sharp–A–B and ostinato chords involving open bass strings E–A–D and the semitone B–C.

Finally, the fourth movement is based on the complete twelve-tone theme consisting of two phrases including motifs 1 and 2 from the first movement: G–F–B flat–A flat–C–E flat–D and E–B–C sharp–A–F sharp. This theme is presented in its prime and retrograde forms. There are 'dialogues' between the first string, basses and open middle strings, similar to the first movement. In the culmination, the twelve-tone theme is performed using the parallel motion of the standard guitar G major chord with open middle strings across twelve positions.

Graeme John Koehne, Australian composer and music educator, is best known for his orchestral and ballet scores, as well as his chamber music and instrumental works. Born in Adelaide, he studied composition with Richard Meale at the Elder Conservatorium of Music. After graduation Koehne studied at Yale University on a Harkness Fellowship enabling him to take lessons with Louis Andriessen and Virgil Thomson. He returned to Australia in 1986 to be appointed as lecturer in composition at the Elder Conservatorium of Music where he is now head of composition.

A Closed World of Fine Feelings and Grand Design was commissioned and given its first performance by Timothy Kain with funds provided by the Australia Council. The composition, in ternary form, develops in intensity from introspective chordal groupings through repetition. A middle section modifies the texture to include the treble strings, with arpeggiated chords providing a vivid contrast before the recapitulation of the first part.

Graham Wade

Marko Topchii

Ukrainian-born guitarist Marko Topchii has been the winner of 55 international guitar competitions, among them the 50th Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition (2023), the 56th Tokyo Guitar Competition (2013), the 6th JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition (2014) and the 50th Michele Pittaluga International Guitar Competition in Alessandria (2017). Born in 1991 in Kyiv into a musical family, he started to play the guitar when he was only four under the guidance of Volodymyr Homenyuk. At the age of 21 he graduated from the Kharkiv Conservatory where he studied with Vladimir Dotsenko, continuing his education with a three-year postgraduate programme at the Kyiv National Academy of Music with Yuri Aleksik (both Honored Artists of Ukraine). In 2018 he joined the professional studies programme at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music with Judicaël Perroy, and is currently continuing studies with him on the Master's programme (soloist) at the Haute école de musique in Geneva. Topchii has performed at Carnegie Hall (New York), Salle Cortot (Paris) and Yamaha Ginza Hall (Tokyo), among many others. He often appears with orchestras, having performed more than 15 concertos for guitar and orchestra. Topchii uses strings provided by the Augustine Strings company, and has recorded this album on a guitar made by Julian Dammann, Germany. www.topchii.com

This recital by Marko Topchii, winner of the 2023 Guitar Foundation of America Competition, ranges widely across the repertoire, from a Renaissance lute masterpiece by John Dowland, through early 20th-century neo-Romanticism, to the technical challenges of the present day. The programme includes the only works for guitar composed by Roussel and Poulenc – both of which are endlessly evocative. Barrios Mangoré’s sublime *Un sueño en la floresta*, three *Studies* by Angelo Gilardino, the competition’s set piece by Frederic Hand, and Konstantin Bliokh’s contemporary *Sonata No. 6 ‘Kharkiv’* complete Topchii’s diverse programme.

MARKO TOPCHII

Guitar Recital

<p>Albert ROUSSEL (1869–1937) 1 Segovia, Op. 29 (1925) 2:33</p> <p>Agustín BARRIOS MANGORÉ (1885–1944) 2 Un sueño en la floresta (before 1918) 8:29</p> <p>Francis POULENC (1899–1963) 3 Sarabande, FP 179 (1960) 3:01</p> <p>Angelo GILARDINO (1941–2022) Studi di virtuosità e di trascendenza (1981–88) 14:28</p> <p>4 No. 18. El Rosario (Omaggio a Manuel de Falla) 4:46</p> <p>5 No. 32. Embarquement pour Cythère (Omaggio a Jean-Antoine Watteau) 5:27</p> <p>6 No. 19. Jondo (Omaggio a Joaquín Turina) 4:11</p>	<p>Arnaud DUMOND (b. 1950) 7 Cinq Hommages français – No. 5. Hommage à Ravel (Comme un hommage) (1998) 4:02</p> <p>John DOWLAND (c. 1563–1626) 8 Fantasia in G minor, P. 71 (date unknown) (transposed to E minor) 6:15</p> <p>Frederic HAND (b. 1947) 9 Undercurrents (2023) 5:12</p> <p>Konstantin BLIOKH (b. 1976) Sonata No. 6 ‘Kharkiv’ (2021)* 16:15</p> <p>10 I. Moderato 5:26</p> <p>11 II. Scherzo 2:28</p> <p>12 III. Adagio con libertà 4:08</p> <p>13 IV. Andante poco rubato 4:05</p> <p>Graeme KOEHNE (b. 1956) 14 A Closed World of Fine Feelings and Grand Design (1997) 8:58</p>
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*** WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

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