

Program
Los Angeles Guitar Quartet

Overture to “Il Barbiere di Siviglia”

Giocomo Rossini (1792-1868)
(arr. J. Dearman)

The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet begins tonight’s program with Giacomo Rossini's **Overture to "Il Barbiere di Siviglia"**, one of the most popular of his uniformly brilliant opera overtures, and one which has taken on a life of its own apart from the opera it introduces. The work has become a staple of the symphonic repertoire, as well as a frequent sound-track to cartoons, most notably in the classic Bugs Bunny adaptation. It has been arranged for a variety of genres, and a version for guitar quartet has a natural affinity due to the Andalusian setting of the action. John Dearman's realization is an excellent example of the rather "democratic" philosophy of arrangement that LAGQ frequently employs. The four members of the quartet are treated as equal voices, and nearly all prominent melodies are distributed antiphonally within the ensemble.

Music from the time of Cervantes

Jácaras

Diferencias Sobre Guárdame las Vacas

Diferéncias Sobre Las Folias

El Villano

Con Pavor Recordo El Moro

Oy Comamos y bebamos

(arr. W. Kanengiser)

Anon, XVI C.

Luys de Narvaez

Antonio Martín y Coll

Antonio Martín y Coll

Luis Milan

Juán de Encina

This set of “**Music from the Time of Cervantes**” sprung out of a project LAGQ developed with the British actor/comedian John Cleese. In March 2009, Los Angeles Guitar Quartet with Cleese premiered a one-hour presentation of excerpts from Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote de La Mancha* with recitations from the book accompanied by arrangements of music that Cervantes could have heard in his lifetime. The project has been further developed over the past few seasons and continues to tour throughout the US and Canada with Firesign Theatre member Philip Proctor. Some of this rich and varied repertoire from the Spanish Renaissance was originally penned by vihuela composers, while others were scored for organ or vocal ensemble.

Jácaras, (“*No hay que decir primor*”), is an anonymous *canción* from the 17th century. The *jácaras* form was common in theatrical settings, such as *entremeses*, and they frequently depicted picaresque characters engaged in rowdy and lascivious behavior. This particular setting sings the praises of a certain woman of ill repute whose beauty “*se rompe el aire*” (loosely, “she knocks you out”).

Diferencias sobre Guárdame las vacas, by the vihuelist Luys de Narváez, is a *romanesca*, one of many pieces based on this popular tune (“watch my cows for me”). Found in his important publication *Los seys labors del Delphín de Música de cifra para tañer vihuela* (1538), it is generally regarded as the first printed version of a variations form in music history. Martín y Coll’s

Diferéncias sobre las folias is a set of variations contrasting on the famous harmonic progression, *Folias de Espana*, one of the most frequently-adapted musical sources in the history of composition. **El Villano** (“The Rustic”) is a country dance from the anthology “*Flores de Música*” collected by Antonio Martín y Coll, an 18th century keyboardist and musicologist. Although published in the mid-1700s, this work features many selections that would have been extant in the

early 17th century. **Con Pavor Recordó el Moro** (“The Moor recalled with anguish”) is a setting by Luys Milan of another ancient ballad. It features the famous words “*mi descanso es pelear, mis armas las duras peñas*” (“combat is my rest, and my trappings hard rocks”), which is directly quoted by Don Quixote in his first scene in the inn. The set concludes with **Oy comamos y bebamos**, a four-voice *villancico* from the *Cancionero Palacio* written by Juan de Encina. Raucous and earthy, its opening stanza expressed the concerns of the everyday Spaniard in the 16th century: “*Hoy comamos y bebamos, y cantemos y holguemos, que mañana ayunaremos*” (Today we eat and drink, and sing and make merry, for tomorrow we must fast”).

El Amor Brujo

Introducción y escena

En la cueva – La noche

Canción del amor dolido

El aparecido – Danza del terror

El círculo mágico

A media noche

Danza ritual del fuego (arr. I. Krouse)

Escena

Canción del fuego fatuo (arr. S. Tenant)

Pantomima

Danza del juego del amor

Las campanas del amanecer

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

(arr. W. Kanengiser)

Manuel de Falla was one of the greatest Spanish composers of the 20th century, and despite the fact that he only wrote one very brief piece for guitar, arrangements of his music have become a staple of the guitarist's repertoire. Some of the most popular are individual movements from his ballet **El Amor Brujo**, scored originally for full orchestra and mezzo-soprano. About twenty years ago, I decided to attempt to arrange the entire ballet for four guitars. What is lost in orchestral color is perhaps gained in the authentic gypsy sonority of the guitar, which de Falla in some way was trying to convey in his original. Set in a gypsy camp, the story deals with Candelas, a beautiful young girl, who is being courted by Carmelo. Complicating matters, the spirit of her former lover, a soldier killed in battle, haunts her and the gypsies. The piece opens with a strong theme that represents the jealousy of the ghost. Later, we find ourselves “In the Cave” with a brooding mystery. In “The Song of Sorrowful Love,” Candelas sings of the pain of an unattainable Love. The ghost then flies into the cave and the gypsies launch into “The Dance of Terror”. Striving to rid themselves of the apparition, they join hands around the Fire, and have a séance in the gentle “Magic Circle”. They then try to exorcise the ghost in the furious “Ritual Fire Dance” which ends with insistent chords as they try to stamp the spirit out into the fire. Magic, it seems, cannot break the spell, as the ghost reappears, and Candelas sings of the fleeting nature of Love in “the Song of the Will o’ the Wisp”. It is then that she decides to use love instead of sorcery, and she persuades her friend Lucia to dance a seductive Tango (in 7/8 time) to lure the ghost away. At the end of this “Pantomime” movement, the opening theme of the ghost is just a whisper. This leaves Candelas and Carmelo free to exchange the kiss that will break the spell, as they dance a bulerías in “The Dance of the Game of Love”. In the “Finale” Candelas sings to the ghost: “I am the fire in which you are consumed; I am the sea in which you drown!” As the “Bells of Dawn” peal triumphantly, we find that love, not witchcraft, is the most powerful sorcerer.

Intermission

Circus Polka

**Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)
(arr. J. Smith)**

This unlikely guitar quartet arrangement of a piece for Circus Orchestra by Igor Stravinsky is an special tribute to an important figure in the history of LAGQ: Professor James Smith, the chairman of the USC Classical Guitar Department for 35 years, who passed away in 2010. Prof. Smith's inventive arrangements for guitar quartet were some of the earliest pieces in the LAGQ repertory when they were just students, and his example inspired a tradition of exploring new works for adaptation that LAGQ employs to this day.

Igor Stravinsky was a recent émigré to the United States when, in 1942, he was asked to create a piece for the Ringling Brothers Circus, which would be choreographed by George Balanchine. The commission involved staging a piece for "50 ballerinas and 50 elephants". The resultant piece, "Circus Polka", carries the dedication "For a Young Elephant". The oft-quoted story of the negotiations for this commission goes as follows: Balanchine: "I wonder if you'd like to do a little ballet with me."

Stravinsky: "For whom?"

Balanchine: "For some elephants."

Stravinsky: "How old?"

Balanchine: "Very young."

Stravinsky: "All right. If they are very young elephants, I will do it."

The piece mixes the raucous cacophony of a circus band with delicate high melodies meant to evoke tight-rope walkers. The finale features a bi-tonal quotation of Schubert's *Marche Militaire*.

Three "Post-Bop" Classics

So What

Blue in Green

Giant Steps

(arr. M. Greif)

Miles Davis

Miles Davis

John Coltrane

The **three "Post-Bop" Classics** jazz arrangements celebrate a generally lesser-known form of jazz: Post-bop. Jazz is most often associated with the popular Big Band and Bebop eras of the 30's and 40's. But jazz evolution continued throughout the 20th century and indeed continues today. Starting especially in the late 1950's, jazz began assimilating myriad disparate influences. In addition to swing rhythms, African, Cuban, Brazilian, and later, Rock rhythms became part of the language. In addition to familiar diatonic chord progressions, the harmonic experience broadened to range from wild chromaticism to simple modal harmony (or maybe even no harmony, as in the case of Free Jazz). So What (1959), by Miles Davis is one of the first modal jazz tunes. It was recorded on the immensely popular album, Kind of Blue. The entire chord progression consists of only two alternating tonalities: D dorian and Eb dorian. The up-tempo LAGQ arrangement starts with an introduction in which the four guitarists trade ideas, creating a kind of pointillistic texture. Eventually, the familiar melodic riff is presented, followed by a series of solos. A kind of Minimalistic jam section ensues which eventually carries us to the restatement of the original melodic material. Blue in Green (1959), from the same Davis recording, was originally a moody ballad, featuring Bill Evans's rich pianistic touches. In the quartet arrangement, a Minimalistic intro

sets up a gently percolating straight-eighth pulse. We then hear the melody, followed by solos, each featuring a different mood or voice. The arrangement winds down with a freer, almost choral-like presentation of the chord progression, an homage to the original Bill Evans outro. Giant Steps (1960), by John Coltrane, was a turning point in modern jazz. Never had a jazz tune moved so quickly through such disparate keys at such virtuosic speeds. The tune continues to this day to be a rite of passage for any serious jazz player. The LAGQ arrangement begins with, as so many jazz performances do, one instrument cryptically, sparsely announcing the changes. One by one, the others join in, picking up on melodic suggestions and passing these ideas around. The tune builds chorus by chorus, and not until the end (in somewhat of a Coltrane tradition) is the melody is finally stated.

Paisaje Cubano con Lluvia

Leo Brouwer (1939-)

Paisaje Cubano con Lluvia (*Cuban Landscape with Rain*) is a one of a number of works inspired by “Cuban Landscapes” by the vastly influential guitarist/composer Leo Brouwer. Now celebrating his 70th birthday, Brouwer has become revered as one of the most innovative and creative contemporary guitar composers. This piece is among his earliest works for guitar quartet, and it received its premiere recording by LAGQ in 1987. Adding to the others in the “Landscape” series (Landscape with Rumba, with Bells, with Sadness, et cetera) this particularly evocative piece is a fine example of musical/environmental sensitivity in Brouwer’s writing. It features a rather remarkable portrayal of a rainstorm on a tropical island; starting gently, it builds, as wind, rivulets of water, and finally a hailstorm pass, ultimately receding into the final drops falling of the jungle flora.

“Carmen Suite”

Aragonaise
Habanera
Seguidilla
Toreadors
Entr’acte
Gypsy Dance

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)
(arr W. Kanengiser)

The oft-repeated commentary that “the best Spanish music was written by Frenchmen” could certainly find its detractors, but justification for such a stance does gain some credence in light of the authentic Iberian character of George Bizet’s **Carmen**. In addition to being one of the most beloved and enduring operas of all time, this work has found a home on the symphonic stage, most notably with an orchestral suite of some of its most popular excerpts. In this arrangement of six movements from Carmen for guitar quartet, a special emphasis was put on retaining the distinctly Spanish sound of the music, which finds a natural home on the guitar. The current suite begins with the Aragonaise, with strumming fanfares and imitations of castanets. Next is the timeless Habanera, a sensual aria based on a melody by Iradier that explores the lyric possibilities of a single line melody on the guitar. It is followed by the flamenco-inspired Seguidilla, which explores a wide range of articulations and colors available on guitar quartet. The ever-popular Toreadors features boisterous strummed chords and extended trills, while the delicate Entr’Acte is a gradually-

unfolding masterwork of lyric counterpoint. The final Gypsy Dance creates a slowly-building tension with repeated staccato figures, finally erupting in the famous and furious coda.

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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Los Angeles Guitar Quartet is managed by

Frank Salomon Associates
121 W. 27th Street, Suite 703
New York, NY 10001-6262
www.franksalomon.com
Managing Associate: Barrie Steinberg
