

KNOW YOUR COMPOSERS

VARIACIONES Op 9 ON A THEME
BY MOZART
FERNANDO SOR
(1778-1839)

The guitar was not considered a classical instrument in the early nineteenth century and when Fernando Sor appeared on the concert scenery, he embarked on a quest to raise the guitar to the greatest musical level possible. He was introduced by his father to Italian opera as a boy and fell in love with music although he was expected to pursue a military career. It was also his father who introduced him to the guitar, an instrument he mastered when he was eight years old giving him the opportunity to enter the Montserrat monastery to continue with his musical education. He came back to Barcelona at 18 years old when his father died. At the same time, he received a commission in the corps de Villa Franca from General Vives. This was the time for him to write an opera and some guitar pieces. He did well by giving piano and guitar concerts and was promoted to full lieutenant but left the military school and came back to Madrid and luckily met the Duchess of Alba who became his patron and provided him with a studio for him to write music at his own pace. He went to Paris around 1813 and from there he went to give concerts in Moscow, Berlin, Warsaw and London where he lived from 1815 to 1823. In 1827 he decided to stop giving concerts and concentrated in the writing of music. In this period he wrote his famous ninety seven different studies. It must be said that, wherever he went, the popularity of the guitar increased so much that when he died the instrument went into obscurity for nearly two generations. Sor died at the age of sixty having rescued the guitar and taken it to new heights never achieved before. The Theme and Variation on Mozart's The Magic Flute, Opus 9 is one of Sor's finest pieces embodying his best characteristic as a composer. This is a most difficult piece to play and to perform it, the player must have achieved the uppermost levels of technical and musical virtuosity.

CAPRICHOS ARABES
FRANCISCO TARREGA
(1852-1909)

He was born in Villareal, Spain where the family lived in a house near the Saint Paschal Baylon sanctuary. His parents worked as housekeepers for the Mothers Clarisas and he was looked after by a babysitter. It is known that he fell down into a polluted irrigation channel nearby and as a result he contracted an incurable eye disease known as *ophthalmia* which he suffered all his life. As blindness was a threat, his parents moved to Castellon for the boy to take music lessons. Later, he met Eugeni Ruiz, a blind musician, who introduced him to music but it was Manuel González, another blind musician who introduced young Francisco to the guitar world. It happened that Julián Arcas, a famous concertist, heard the boy playing and advised his father to send him to Barcelona to enhance his studies but there, the boy joined a group of street musicians instead, therefore his father brought him back to Castellon. As the family was in a precarious position, Tárrega had to help by giving concerts in villages and later as a pianist at the Burriana's Casino. When he was studying at the Spanish Music Conservatoire his teacher, Arrieta, made a comment that made Tárrega take guitar as his final instrument, he said... *Guitar needs you, and you were born for her*. He won first prizes in both composition and harmony. And his chance came when he substituted his friend and guitar player, Luis de Soria in a concert in Alicante and from then on he never looked back. Nicknamed

as the *Saraste of the guitar*, he devoted himself to make the guitar a popular instrument. He met his wife, María Rizo, in 1880 and moved to Madrid and later to Barcelona; this was Tárrega's mature period. In Valencia, he met Conxa Martínez, a rich widow who sponsored him and his family by lending him a house in Barcelona where he wrote most of his masterpieces like *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* and *Capricho Árabe*. By 1906 he got ill and one side of his body was affected with paralysis. Although he painfully recovered and gave more concerts, in the morning of December 1909, he passed away peacefully leaving us his immense legacy. He is considered the father of modern classical guitar.

Capricho Árabe was written in Barcelona around 1890 whilst he was giving concerts accompanied by his adopted guitar made by Don Antonio de Torres from Sevilla who constructed them with a spruce top and rosewood on the back and sides of the instrument. The song evokes the sounds of the Laud and Bandurria Rondallas used to play Spanish folk in every province of the country.

UN TIEMPO FUE ITALICA FAMOSA
Preludio-Nocturno-Scherzino
JOAQUÍN RODRIGO
Marqués del los Jardines de Aranjuez
(1901-1999)

Rodrigo was the last of the great Spanish neo-romantics whilst not neglecting folk musical traditions he chose to celebrate the truly Spanish components of his country's art-musical past including baroque. Born in Valencia, he contracted diphtheria which left him almost completely blind from the age of three. He was taught harmony and composition by Francisco Antich and received lessons from musicians Enrique Gomá and Eduardo López Chavárri; but it was Rafael Ibáñez, employed by his family to help him, who opened the world for him, he lent his eyes to Rodrigo and became his friend and secretary, reading to him literary master pieces together with books on philosophy. By 1927, Joaquín went to Paris to be taught for five years by the French Master, Paul Dukas in the École Normale de Musique, by this time he was already writing music and met Manuel de Falla who supported him in his career. During these years, he met Victoria Kahmi, an excellent Turkish pianist whom he married in 1933 and they went to settle in Valencia. She was an important collaborator in many respects of Rodrigo's work as a composer. In this period, he wrote his most important songs and piano pieces. He continued his studies of musicology in France at the Paris Conservatoire and later at the Sorbonne. The best known work of Rodrigo is the *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra premiered in Barcelona in 1940, closely followed in popularity by his *Fantasia para un gentilhombre*. Other guitar concertos included a *Concierto Madrigal* for two guitars and *Concierto Andalúz* for four guitars.

Rodrigo was frequently honoured throughout his life in many different countries and in Spain, the most significant were the Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el Sabio, Gran Cruz del Merito Civil, Medalla de Oro al Mérito en el Trabajo y en Bellas Artes, The National Music Prize (twice), Doctor (honoris) causa of several universities, Director of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando and the Fundacion Guerrero. He was raised to the nobility by H.M. Juan Carlos I, King of Spain with the title *Marqués de los Jardines de Aranjuez* when celebrating his 90th birthday. At the time of Rodrigo's death, preparations for his centennial in 2001 were already in hand but he died two years early. The composer's only daughter, Cecilia, founded the publishing house of Ediciones Joaquín Rodrigo in 1989 and ten years later the

Victoria and Joaquín Rodrigo Foundation was created. In spite of Rodrigo not playing guitar, he is best known by his works composed for the instrument. *Un Tiempo fue Italica famosa* in three movements was written in 1981 and was premiered in 1989 at the Protestant Cathedral, San Diego, California, USA and runs for about seven and a half minutes.

WALTZ Op 8, No. 4
EL ULTIME CANTO
MAXIXE
AGUSTIN BARRIOS
(1885-1944)

Born Agustin Barrios in Paraguay, he developed his skills as a guitarist when he was very young. At the age of thirteen he was awarded a grant to study at Colegio Nacional Asuncion. After graduation he was dedicated to give concerts in Paraguay and by 1908 was well known in his country. Historical evidence suggests that Barrios was the first guitarist to be recorded (according to Artigas and Atlanta 1910-1913). Although he was most successful in his career and despite his recordings and prodigious output, his name had entirely disappeared after his death. Due to independent publications of his works by Baltazar Benítez and Richard Stover and the recording released by John Williams during the 70s, Barrios' immensely valuable contribution to the 20th century repertoire of the guitar has been finally recognised. The music of Barrios is basically inspired by the Romantics. Barrios' mind and the structure of his thoughts were romantic with great command over musical form. He was a virtuoso and composer in one, he lived first in Argentina and Uruguay, then for 15 years in Brazil and in 1934 he came to Europe and made his debut in Brussels and gave concerts in Germany and Spain. The influence of Chopin is noticed in her *Waltz Opus 8 No. 4*, we have to notice that the *valse* was a popular ballroom dance in Barrios' times and one whose musical genre appealed to South Americans. *El Ultimo Canto* and *Maxixe* are also included in the programme.

INTERVAL

CHACARERA UTUTA
JUAN FALÚ
(b. 1948)

Juan Falú is a self taught musician and an occasional singer, his musical career started in Tucumán and later went on to win the National Music Award (2000). He has been acclaimed by the critics and press as an outstanding artist many times. He uses his knowledge of the several Argentine folk rhythms when playing guitar. He was born an improviser and added to this, his own charisma, we have a performer with a unique style. He has toured Central and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. His recordings are well received in Argentina and abroad and his works have been edited in his country as well as in Belgium, Costa Rica and France. He is fully involved in the organisation of *Festival of the World Guitars*, one of the most well known international events in the region. He presently teaches in the Manuel de Falla Conservatoire in Buenos Aires where he has created the first curricula for *folklore* and *tango*. *Chacarera Ututa* is a work written in a chacarera rhythm from the North-east region of Argentina particularly from Santiago del Estero. It is danced by a couple in a way similar to an amorous courting. The author carefully considers the choreography of the dance although he has kept traditional harmonies. Technical strength and lively expressivity is needed when playing the piece.