

# AN IDEA

ANTONIO JOSÉ  
LEO BROUWER  
SERGEY RUDNEV  
MALCOLM ARNOLD  
AGUSTÍN BARRIOS MANGORÉ

*Kristina Värld, Guitar*



**SIMAX**  
classics

1 **Sergey Rudnev: The Old Lime Tree** 06:52

**Malcolm Arnold: Fantasy for Guitar, Op. 107** 12:26

2 I Prelude 01:22

3 II Scherzo 02:34

4 III Arietta 02:30

5 IV Fughetta 01:23

6 V Arietta 01:54

7 VI March 01:30

8 VII Postlude 01:13

**Agustín Barrios Mangoré: La Catedral** 07:27

9 I Preludio saudade 02:06

10 II Andante religioso 01:54

11 III Allegro solemne 03:27

**Antonio José: Sonata Para Guitarra** 20:26

12 I Allegro moderato 06:47

13 II Minueto 03:12

14 III Pavana triste 05:47

15 IV Final 04:40

16 **Leo Brouwer: An Idea (Passacaglia for Eli)** 03:36

*Kristina Värlied, Guitar*

# THE TWO MAIN TRENDS OF GUITAR MUSIC IN THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS

by Fabio Zanon

While an imponderable urge to express feelings and ideas in sound is the inner motivation for a composer to write music, oftentimes it is the specific place and occasion for a public performance that sets the framework. Today, the solo recital institution is, in the classical music field, taken for granted to such an extent that we adopt as concert material music originally written with no other purpose than being played and listened to, at home, by the same person. It is

... well-known, though, that a solo concert,  
... where a single person delivers an  
... hour(s)-long program of music written for  
... a single combination of instruments,  
... where the general public gets a ticket to  
... undergo the whole experience in reverent  
... silence is rather recent - with a few  
... exceptions, that habit was established by  
... Liszt in the 1840s.

... The guitar was a latecomer to the format  
... and has never tightly fit into it. After the  
...

pioneering work of Tárrega, it was the generation of Llobet and Segovia, in the 1920's, who set some trends that still persist - the most significant of whose was the creation of a canonical repertoire written by contemporary composers who are not guitarists, starting with Falla, Torroba and a few others. Nevertheless a more flexible format, long-forgotten by pianists, violinists, etc., is that of the guitarist-as-a-composer, which many times stays in the borderline between a classical concert and something else - precisely what Liszt did at the start of his career. Music written by guitarists constitutes a significant area of the guitar repertoire today, and Kristina Vårlid has devised a programme where those two branches intersect.

At the same time when Segovia and a few others were developing the guitar solo format in Europe, **Agustin Barrios** (1885-1944) was roaming the Americas with his personal blend of Romantic creation. Born in Paraguay and largely self-taught, Barrios lived the adventurous life of a traveling virtuoso. With the not-so-clear purpose of eventually reaching the USA and Europe, his career spread from Buenos Aires up North; he lived in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Venezuela and Central America, and played to enormous acclaim in major capital cities as well as in remote villages in the Amazon or the Andes where hardly any European

music had ever been heard; at a certain point he even performed in a native Indian chief attire. His music is skillfully designed to equally serve all sorts of audiences: the humble folk recognize themselves in his inspiration, while the sophisticated listener admires his skill and finesse.

***La Catedral*** appears in his concerts starting in 1921; for many years it was played in two movements, evocative of a visit to the San José Cathedral in Montevideo: the andante conjures tolling bells and the mystical feeling inside the building, where the allegro represents the profane hustle of city life outside. After a visit to Havana in 1939 a third movement appears, Saudade, a Portuguese word denoting a longing for things past and far away. As a triptych it evokes Bach's organ music pretty much as Cesar Franck did in his Prelude, Fugue and Variation; it is also one of the greatest creations of a composer whose reverberations are still felt today.

Proof of that is the output of Russian composer **Sergei Rudnev** (1955), who has written a large number of pieces which try to rescue his native country's folk and popular song tradition in a classical guitar format, akin to that employed by Barrios in his folk-oriented pieces. Rudnev was born in 1955 and raised in a village near the Volga; later he became a guitar professor at Tula. That explains his strong

affinity with Russian folksong; he has declared he tries, in his compositions, to encapsulate the meaning of those songs within a peasant way of living, as transformed by people who sing them generation after generation. **“The Old Lime Tree”** comes from an urban tradition of romance singing, which was later absorbed and modified within a rural context. It is a nostalgic melody, ingeniously developed in the form of variations, each one exploring different textures and arpeggio patterns in a rhapsodic flow.

In an apt juxtaposition, in this recording, La Catedral precedes Antonio José’s formidable **Sonata**, as both pieces contain neo-Baroque and Franckian elements.

**Antonio José Martínez Palacios** (1902-1936), who signed his music only with his given names, born in Burgos, Spain, had his musical upbringing as an organist. His early compositions denote a scintillating talent, which was praised by Ravel at the time. Unfortunately, he belonged to the tragic 1927 generation decimated by the Spanish Civil War; while many artists went to live abroad never to return, others like Antonio José and García Lorca were executed - José at age 33, leaving a modest catalogue of choral and orchestral works.

Regino Sainz de la Maza seems to be the only Spanish guitarist whose reputation

could rival Segovia’s in the 1930s. Many composers were inspired by his intense and cultured style, including Antonio, who wrote this sonata for him in 1933. Nevertheless, the piece only came to light through the hands of Venezuelan guitarist Ricardo Iznaola, a pupil of La Maza’s, in the late 1980s, and quickly became central to the repertoire thanks to its multiple interpretative possibilities. The first movement is a rather personal take at neo-classicism: while the first theme has the bounce of a baroque anglaise and is written in a strict sonata-form, the second theme is much more ambiguous and seems to suggest, like Beethoven’s op.111, the struggle and hesitation of the composer at his writing desk. While the influence of Ravel is evident in the inner movements, Minueto and Pavana Triste, the last one balances the first with extensive quotation passages, absorbing both the cyclic form of Franckian extract and a discreet nationalism in the choice of a rhythm of rumba for its main theme.

While La Maza, Segovia, Pujol and a few others were responsible for the invention of a neo-Romantic and Spanish guitar repertoire in the first half of the 20th Century, it fell on Julian Bream the task of developing it to multiple directions in the second half. As a British guitarist, he soon realized he had to create his own vision of where the guitar had to go to. Accordingly, starting with Britten, Berkeley and Malcolm

Arnold in the 1950s hardly a year went by without a commissioned premiere, some of them written by equally distinguished composers like Henze, Tippett or Takemitsu. Upon his retirement in the 2000s, Julian Bream established a Trust to continue with this work.

**Malcolm Arnold** (1921-2006) wrote two works for guitar and orchestra and this *Fantasy* op.107 for Bream. Born in Northampton, he trained as a trumpet player and became principal trumpet at the London Symphony, a position he relinquished in 1948 to become a full-time composer. His fluency and imagination were legendary. Not only did he compose dozens of major orchestral and chamber works, but he also wrote many film and TV soundtracks, including the Oscar-winner *The Bridge over River Kwai*. Although much of his music is meant to be clever and fun to play, he was able to settle for a dense argument, as one can sense in his nine symphonies and partially in this *Fantasy* in seven movements.

Written and premiered in 1971, but never recorded by Bream, it has a suite-like outlook and shapes various external references in a homogenous whole. It doesn't take much imagination to hear the orchestral trumpet & timpani fanfare at the outset, followed by a jazz-like peroration (Arnold and Bream shared a fascination

for Django Reinhardt). The second movement adopts jazz-like effects as well in a fleeting toccata. While the first arietta seems to be inspired by Villa-Lobos's 5th prelude, the accomplished fughetta clearly blinks an eye to Bach's fugue BWV 1000 in its repeated-note subject and subsequent passage-work. Both works were often played by Julian Bream. The second arietta is more introspective, and next comes a humorous march, written over a cross-string snare-drum-like effect. The finale sums it up with a return to the first movement fanfare.

**Leo Brouwer**, born in Cuba in 1939 has, in his distinguished career as a composer, guitarist and conductor, pointed at a third way for the contemporary guitar, where an ecumenical and highly cultured approach to composition embraces both the vast canon of Western classical music and the sociologically relevant roles of the guitar in the ocean of folk and popular traditions. As such, a short, magical and unpretentious piece like *An Idea - Passacaglia for Eli* (written as a token of friendship to professor Eli Kassner, the doyen of classical guitar in Canada) is the perfect end to this recording: a wedding between the two main trends of guitar music in the last hundred years.





**Kristina Vårlid** (b. 1994) from Stavanger, Norway, is already an internationally acclaimed classical guitarist after winning several competitions and awards. Among them are 1st prize in Antwerpen International Guitar Competition 2017 and the Koblenz International Guitar Academy Award at the Koblenz International Guitar Competition 2018. She was named best music student in The Netherlands in 2017 when winning Grachtenfestival Conservatorium concours. In 2018 she became a part of the prestigious “Walk of Fame” at the Hanze University in Groningen.

Kristina is fascinated by the vast variety of sound you can produce with the guitar and likes to explore and go beyond its limitations in dynamics, sustain and colours. As a musician she looks at music thinking everything is possible, discovering new ideas with a creative approach to her repertoire and making it her own.

She got her first guitar when she was 6 years old, and started taking lessons at the age of 8. In 2013 she started her bachelor at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland studying with professor Allan Neave. In 2014 she continued at the Prince Claus Conservatoire in Groningen, The Netherlands, with Sabrina Vlaskalic as her teacher, completing her bachelor degree in 2017 with the highest mark and cum laude. Kristina has continued her studies in Oslo with the artist diploma degree (diplomstudiet) at the Norwegian Academy of Music with professors Erik Stenstadvold and Otto Tolonen.

Kristina is very passionate about performing and thrives being on stage where she feels a very strong connection with the audience. She has performed in several major venues including The Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Kristina Vårlid has also performed as a soloist with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, as well as given performances on national TV and radio in The Netherlands.

[www.kristinavarlid.com](http://www.kristinavarlid.com)



Private photo

'An Idea'. Leo Brouwer and Kristina Vårlid working together in Groningen on 22 May 2017

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Kristina Vårlid plays on a guitar made by Andrés D. Marvi  
and performs on D'Addario strings exclusively



Sena

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*Kristina Værlid, Guitar*



*Dedicated to my best friend, Sabrina Vlaskalic (1989-2019)*



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