

RAPHAËL FEUILLÂTRE
guitar

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

WTC 1: Prelude No. 1 in C major BWV 846 (trans. R. Feuillâtre)

FRANÇOIS COUPERIN (1668-1733)

Les Barricades Mystérieuses (arr. A. Fougeray)

JACQUES DUPHLY (1715-1789)

Médée (arr. A. Fougeray)

(approx. 10 minutes)

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PANCRACE ROYER (1703-1755)

L'Aimable (arr. R. Feuillâtre)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Concerto in D major BWV 972 after Vivaldi (arr. J. Perroy)

Allegro

Larghetto

Allegro

(approx. 14 minutes)

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DOMENICO SCARLATTI (1685-1757)

Sonata in A major K 208 (arr. G. Abiton)

(approx. 4 minutes)

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MIGUEL LLOBET SOLÈS (1878-1938)

Variations on a Theme of Sor (La Folia)

(approx. 8 minutes)

- Intermission -

MIGUEL LLOBET SOLÈS (1878-1938)

Two Catalan folk songs

El noi de la mare - Cançó del lladre

JULIÁN ARCAS (1832-1882)

Fantasia on Themes from *La Traviata*

(approx. 11 minutes)

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ISAAC ALBÉNIZ (1860-1909)

Asturias (Leyenda) from Suite española No. 1

(approx. 6 minutes)

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FRANCISCO TÁRREGA (1852-1909)

Prelude No. 5 in E major

Prelude in F# minor

Prelude No. 6 in D major

AUGUSTÍN BARRIOS MANGORÉ (1885-1944)

La Catedral :

Preludio saudade

Andante religioso

Allegro solenne

(approx. 10 minutes)

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ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (1921-1992)

Adios Nonino (arr. C. Tirao)

(approx. 5 minutes)

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ROLAND DYENS (1955-2016)

“Clown Down” from Triaela

(approx. 5 minutes)

Johann Sebastian Bach

Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1

Prelude No. 1 in C major BWV 846 (trans. R. Feuillâtre)

The opening work of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* Book I (1722) is a pattern prelude, an affair of the utmost simplicity that features a continuous texture of 16th notes in a repeating pattern of five-note broken chords with the harmony changing on the first beat of every bar.



Without rhythm as a source of variety, it is the lava-lamp-paced shifts in tone colour and yearning suspensions of the harmony that generate the overall expressive effect of this quietly moving piece.

Many have called this prelude “an accompaniment in search of a melody” and Charles Gounod (1818-1893), whose famous *Ave Maria* is based on it, was certainly of that opinion.

François Couperin

Les Barricades Mystérieuses (arr. A. Fougerey)

François Couperin worked at the French Court from the 1690s to the late 1720s, establishing himself there as the leading French composer of harpsichord music.

Many of his pieces have fanciful descriptive titles that cater to the French nation's love of theatre and their desire to “see” what they are listening to. But the intended meaning of *Les Barricades mystérieuses*, one of Couperin's most famous pieces, can only be speculated on.

No matter, as the appeal of its *style luthé* texture, rippling with arpeggiated chords and rhythmically displaced harmonic tones, is self-evident to the ear.



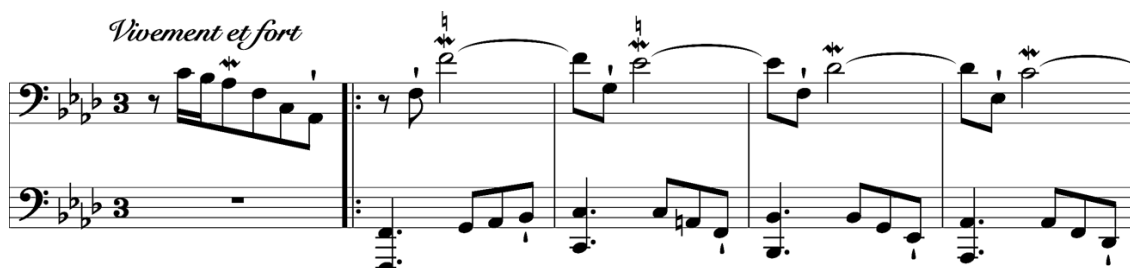
Composed as variations on a repeating bass line, it grants the listener a kind of deep satisfaction comparable to that of the Pachelbel Canon.

Jacques Duphly
Médée (arr. A. Fougeray)

Jacques Duphly began his professional life in music in the 1730s as an organist in his native Rouen but after moving to Paris in 1742, established himself as one of the capital's most in-demand harpsichord teachers. Known for his flamboyant and flashy style of keyboard writing, he published four books of *Pièces de clavecin* between 1744 and 1768.

Duphly's *Médée* from the *3e Livre* of 1756 is one of his most famous works. It purports to depict the murderous mindset and uncontrollable rage of the vengeful princess Medea, who was responsible for some of the most luridly gruesome murders in the narratives of Greek mythology.

The general mood of the piece is one of gleeful evil-doing and lust for vengeance.



Accordingly, the more bloodthirsty amongst members of our audience will want to imagine the large leaps in the treble line as the stabbing and slashing motions of our heroine as she cuts the throats of her own children to spite her husband Jason, leader of the Argonauts.¹

And connoisseurs of carnage will no doubt applaud the lumbering bass line as emblematic of the sterling effort she puts in to dismember the body of her brother Absyrtus.

Those fond of sticking needles in voodoo dolls, meanwhile, will admire the passages of running 16ths as representing the flames licking the cauldron used to boil the body parts of her husband's uncle King Pelias.

A fun piece, then, for the whole family.

¹ The band of heroic Greek sailors in search of The Golden Fleece, and not the Toronto football team in search of The Grey Cup.

Pancrace Royer

L'Aimable (arr. R. Feuillâtre)

Pancrace Royer was a major figure in the French musical establishment of the early to mid-18th century. Whether as music master to the royal children, composing works to be performed at the Opéra, or as director of the Concerts Spirituels, his entire professional career was spent in the service of King Louis XV (1710-1774) and his court. With such a wide range of duties, it is perhaps not surprising that he only had time to leave us one collection of *Pièces de clavecin*, published in 1746.

L'Aimable from that collection is a character piece in *rondeau* form, with a refrain and two intervening *couplets* or episodes. Like Couperin's *Barricades mystérieuses*, it features a continuous texture of 16th notes rich in suspended harmony notes that makes it particularly suitable for a guitar arrangement since it was from this style of lute music that the harpsichord repertoire in France originally derived its own style of writing.



Royer was described by a contemporary as *aimable et de la plus grande politesse* (likeable and unfailingly polite), so despite the tinge of pathos emanating from this minor-mode piece, it could well be a portrait of the composer himself.

Johann Sebastian

Concerto in D major BWV 972 after Vivaldi (arr. J. Perroy)

The 'interoperability' of musical scores between different types of instruments and performing ensembles was a major feature of music written during the Baroque era. It was thus entirely in keeping with Baroque practice for selections from Vivaldi's first collection of concertos, entitled *L'Estro armónico* and published in 1711, to be 'arranged' for keyboard by Bach during his employment at the court of Weimar a few years later. Nor is it a betrayal of Baroque norms, even centuries later, for French classical guitarist Judicaël Perroy (b. 1973) to arrange in turn Bach's arrangement for his own instrument.

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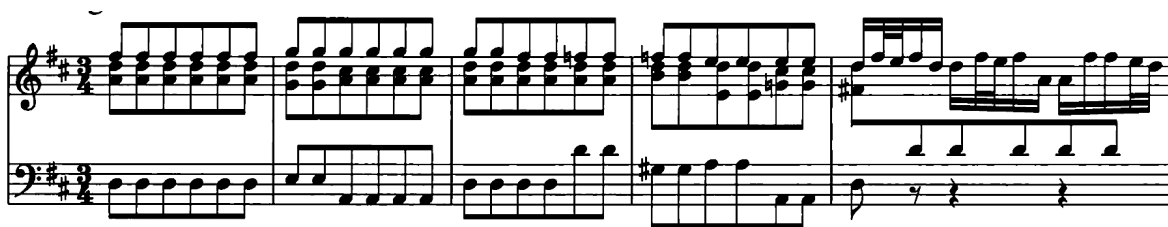
The opening *Allegro* begins with a series of stately chordal gestures from the 'orchestra' to introduce us to the key of D major that will be our constant companion throughout this work.



At various intervals the solo violin feels the need to expand upon these majestic sentiments in a series of 'noodling' passages intended to tickle the ear and set the foot tapping.



The *Larghetto* second movement gives a much more important role to the soloist. The movement opens with a series of chords from the orchestra in a throbbing rhythm, quavering between major and minor in a state of harmonic worry, until the chipper musings of the soloist arrive to bring a more optimistic mood to bear.



And throughout the movement the soloist maintains this bright-eyed mood of optimism in ornate passages of 32nds despite all the expressions of hand-wringing concern on the part of the orchestra.



It is hard not to think that Bach modelled the slow movement of his Italian Concerto, with its similar opening



and rhapsodic passages in 32nds after just such a Vivaldi slow movement.

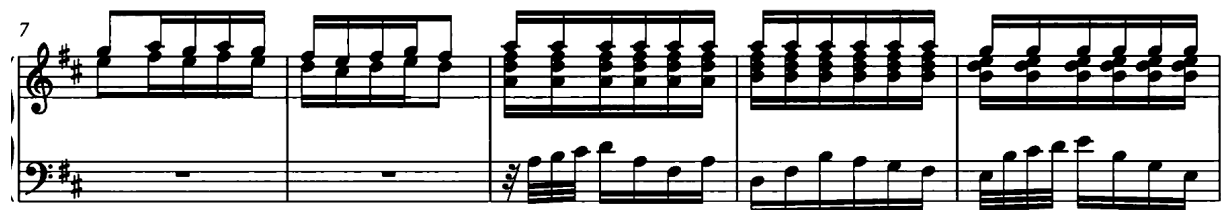
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Vivaldi's *Allegro* finale is in a danceable triple meter and characterized by the propulsive motoric rhythms of the *concerto grosso*.

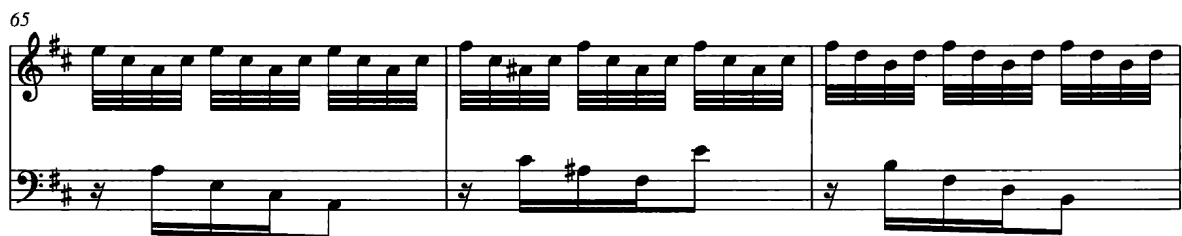
It opens with a series of trumpet calls from the orchestra



before bursting into a hammering full-chord tutti ideal for guitar strumming.



The solo instrument counters with even more exciting arpeggio passages in 32nds that give this short movement its most exciting moments.



Domenico Scarlatti

Sonata in A major K 208 (arr. G. Abiton)

M. Feuillâtre ends the Baroque part of his program with an intriguing little sonata by Domenico Scarlatti. Marked *Adagio e cantabile*, it features a recurring pattern of syncopations, evident from its opening bars.



What makes this sonata unusually 'flavourful' is Scarlatti's harmonic daring, especially in the second half of this binary movement in which he combines the first half's syncopations with bolder, more dramatic chord choices, influenced perhaps by his roots in the spicier chordal textures of Neapolitan opera.



Miguel Llobet Solès

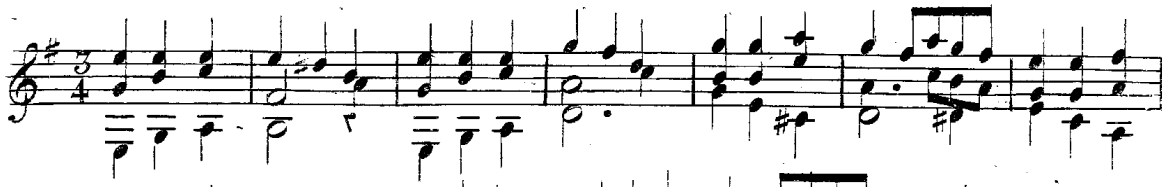
Variations on a Theme of Sor (La Folia)

If Raphaël Feuillâtre appears today on the same concert stages that host pianists, singers, violinists and cellists, this is largely due to the pioneering activity of Spanish guitarist Miguel Llobet Solès, who more than a century ago brought the guitar into the world of international concert touring. In doing so he introduced modern audiences to many of the works of Heitor Villa Lobos (1887-1959), Manuel Da Falla (1876-1946) and Manuel Ponce (1882-1948) while also providing classical guitarists with a large number of his own new works and transcriptions with which to fill their programs.

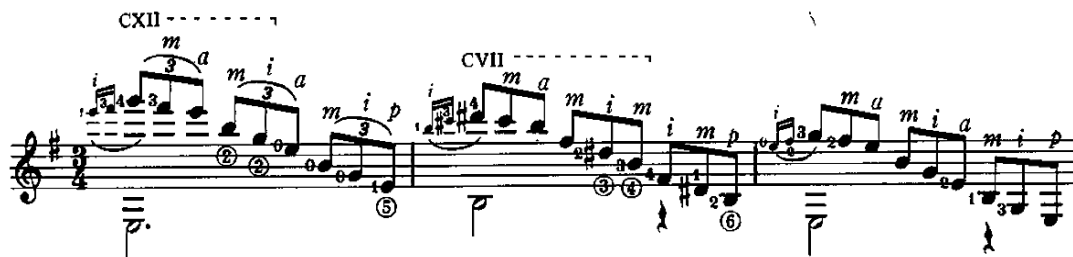
Amongst these was his 'treatment' — part borrowing, part enlargement — of a set of variations by Catalan guitarist-composer Fernando Sor (1778-1839).

Sor's Variations Op. 15 are based on the harmonic framework of *La Folia*, a traditional tune from the Iberian Peninsula that has inspired sets of variations from more than a hundred composers throughout music history.

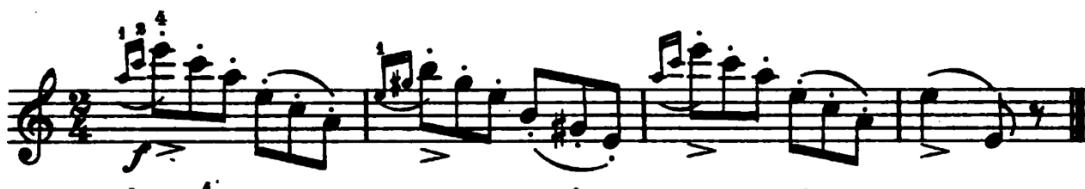
Sor's theme statement and first two variations are presented literally before Llobet Solès adds eight more variations of his own. The theme is given in stately quarter notes that emphasize the harmonies used, with little melodic interest apart from recurring sigh motives.



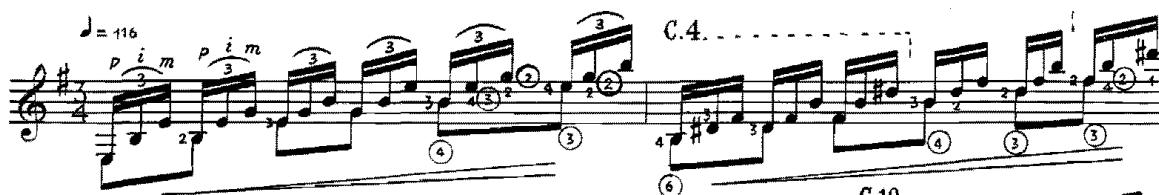
Sor's first two variations are pleasant enough but are only a warm-up for the technical challenges Llobet Solès introduces in his own variations that follow. These include the tricky slide figures that introduce Variation 3,



which bear an uncanny resemblance to the first variation in Paganini's Caprice No. 24:

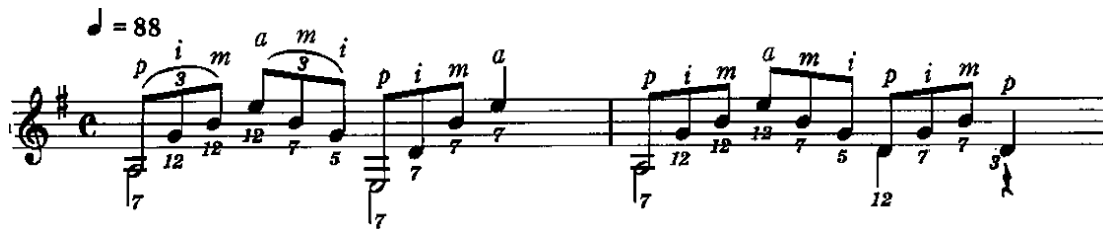


and the manic 'arpeggios-within-arpeggios' of Variation 6:

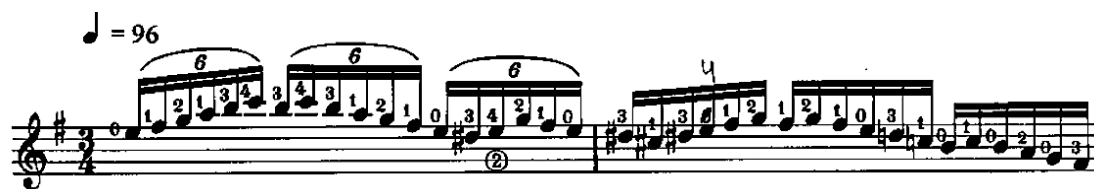


Then we get to catch our breath with an *Intermezzo* in the major mode before the real fireworks begin.

Variation 8 is played entirely in harmonics



while the equally 'Paganini-esque' Variation 9 is played by the left hand alone.



The final variation seems to echo even more strongly the figuration in the 24th Caprice of Paganini — a composer who, it should be noted, also took an interest in and wrote works for ... the guitar.

Julián Arcas

Fantasia on Themes from *La Traviata*

The 19th-century Spanish guitarist and composer Julián Arcas is less well-known than his famous student Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909) but his more than 80 compositions and transcriptions are an important part of the guitar repertoire.

Arcas' *Fantasia on Themes from La Traviata*, composed around 1860, is a kind of potpourri of melodies from Verdi's 1853 opera, presented in the kind of accelerating scene structure that Rossini used in his operas.

It starts with a slowish introduction casting sly hints at the melodic content to come.



It then proceeds to its central lyrical section and concludes with a rousing *Allegro* finale featuring Violetta's famous paean of praise to personal pleasure, *Sempre libera*.



Miguel Llobet Solès

Two Catalan folk songs

The late 19th century saw a surge of Catalan nationalism in Spain, one fervently supported by the distinguished composer and musicologist Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922) who taught at Barcelona's Municipal Conservatory of Music while Miguel Llobet was a student there in the 1890s. (Pedrell's other students included Albeniz, Granados and Manuel Da Falla.)

Llobet responded to a plea from Pedrell to promote a distinct Catalan musical identity by issuing a collection of Catalan folk songs arranged for guitar, written between 1899 and 1918. These arrangements soon became among the most popular in the repertoire, largely due to their championing by Andrés Segovia (1893-1987).

* * *

El noi de la mare (The Mother's Baby) is a traditional Christmas song, the words of which ask "What shall we give to the newborn child?" And in keeping with its Nativity theme, it is composed in the rhythm of a lilting lullaby, with many a comforting and lulling pedal tone in the bass register.



This work became famous as one of Andrés Segovia's favourite encores.

Cançó del lladre (Song of the Thief) relates the life and nostalgic regrets of a career criminal languishing in prison, singing of the freedom he has now lost.



The resonance of the widely spaced guitar sonorities that Llobet writes is almost pianistic while occasional passages in harmonics convey the despair the thief feels in the cramped limited confines of his cell.



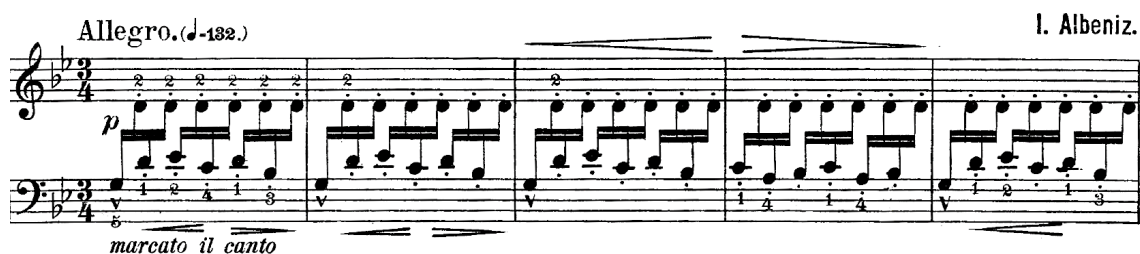
Isaac Albéniz

Asturias ("Leyenda") from Suite española No. 1

The best-known piece of Spanish guitar music, Albéniz's *Asturias*, began as a work for piano. First published as a prelude to Albéniz's *Chants d'Espagne* in 1892, it was posthumously re-published as part of the composer's *Suite española* just before the First World War with the title *Asturias* and the subtitle *Leyenda* (legend), under which names it is known today.

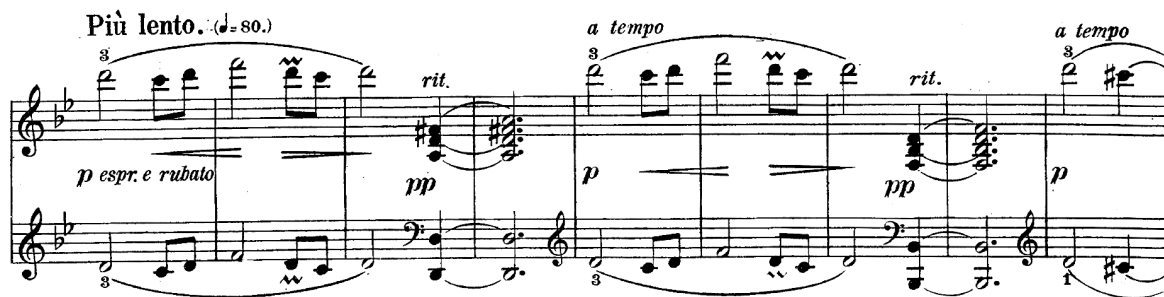
The publisher was quite mistaken. This work has nothing to do with Asturias and everything to do with the southern Spanish region of Andalusia. Andalusia is the cultural homeland of the flamenco tradition, an art that developed under gypsy influence to embrace a passionate amalgam of guitar-playing, singing, wailing, dancing, stomping, clapping and finger snapping, the sonic echoes of which Albéniz transferred with consummate skill to the keyboard.

Many transcriptions of this piano work exist for the guitar, but the most popular is undoubtedly that of Andrés Segovia, who transposed it from its original G minor to the more guitar-friendly key of E minor, allowing the fingers of the right hand to play on an open string the work's most ear-catching riff: a chiming pedal note in the treble that constantly sounds while the guitarist's thumb picks out melody notes down below.



This opening section is structured as a long crescendo, eventually punctuated by brusque exclamatory full chords played *rasgueado* (strummed with the fingernails), in imitation of the sharp heel-stomp of a flamenco dancer.

The piece is in three parts. Its more soulful and pensive middle section features a free-floating melody with minimal accompaniment



that eventually returns to the 'busy bee' hum of the work's opening section.

Francisco Tárrega

Prelude in E major - Prelude in F# minor - Prelude in B minor

Francisco Tárrega (pronounced TAR-ray-guh) is one of the founders of the modern repertoire for the classical guitar and was a leading force in its transformation from a mere accompaniment for the human voice to being a concert instrument in its own right.

He began to play both the piano and guitar at an early age but only received professional training in these instruments at the Madrid Conservatory in his early 20s. With a thorough grounding in theory, harmony and piano he began to compose in a Late Romantic style mixed with elements of Spanish folk music.

His influence was considerable, not just as a teacher of important guitarists such as Llobet Solès but also as the composer of almost 80 original works and 120 transcriptions — many of them guitar adaptations of works for piano by Beethoven, Chopin and Mendelssohn. These were the pieces that filled the programs of Andrés Segovia for his first recitals in the early 20th century.

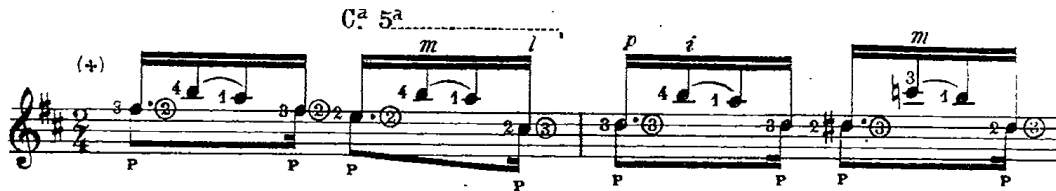
Tárrega's Preludes are mostly short one-page character pieces like many of those in Chopin's set of Preludes Op. 28.

The *Prelude in E major* is an almost lullaby-ish piece based on the simplest of harmonies, occasional pedal points, and a pervasive dotted rhythm that gives it a gentle 'rocking' rhythm.



The *Prelude in F# minor* is a thoughtful little intermezzo in clear-cut phrases with a wistful melody and simple chordal accompaniment.

The *Prelude in B minor* illustrates Tárrega's harmonic skill in a *moto perpetuo* texture of continuous 16th notes, buried within which is a wayward melody in a dotted rhythm with a mind of its own.



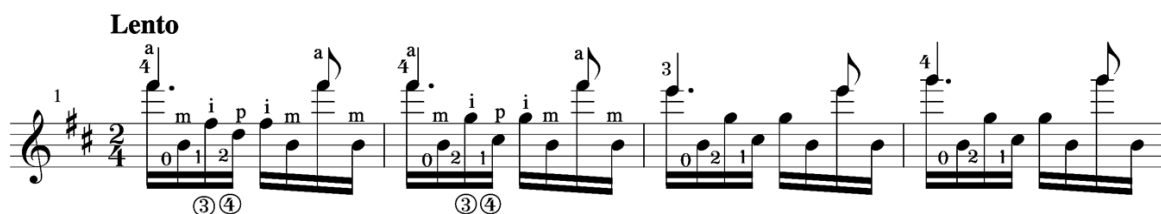
Augustín Barrios Mangoré

La Catedral

The Paraguayan guitarist Augustín Barrios, who added Mangoré to his name in tribute to his indigenous ancestry, was a prodigiously talented performer and one of the first guitarists to make recordings, his first being in 1911. His career largely centred on South America, and he was forgotten for many years until John Williams brought his music back into view in the 1970s.

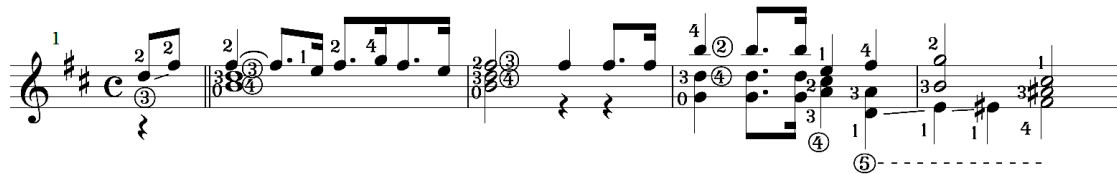
La Catedral (The Cathedral) was originally a two-movement work composed in 1921 with a prelude movement added in 1938. The style of this three-movement work is Late Romantic but with a backward-looking reverence for the Baroque.

This is best exemplified by the opening 'pattern' prelude subtitled *Saudade* (Nostalgia), a movement in continuous 16th-note motion with a melodic line that sings out at the top of the texture.

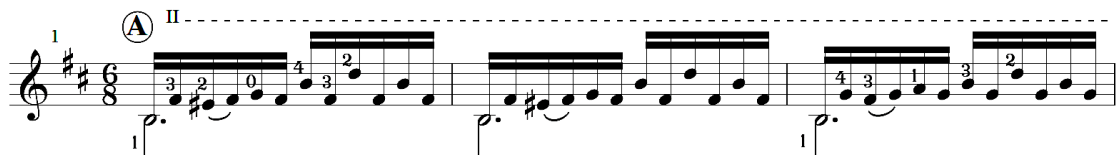


The *Andante religioso* 2nd movement dates from 17 years earlier, but its inspiration is equally Bachian. In 1921 the composer was staying in the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo where he could hear from his hotel room the bells of the nearby Cathedral of San José.

In this movement he imaginatively enters the cathedral, attracted by the tolling of the bells, and finds an organist is playing Bach.



Exiting the cathedral in the final movement, he rejoins the hustle and bustle of secular life propelled through the streets of the city by the *moto perpetuo* energy of daily life.



John Williams' recording of this work in 1977 was the beginning of Barrios' re-emergence as a guitar composer of major importance.

Astor Piazzolla

Adios Nonino (arr. C. Tirao)

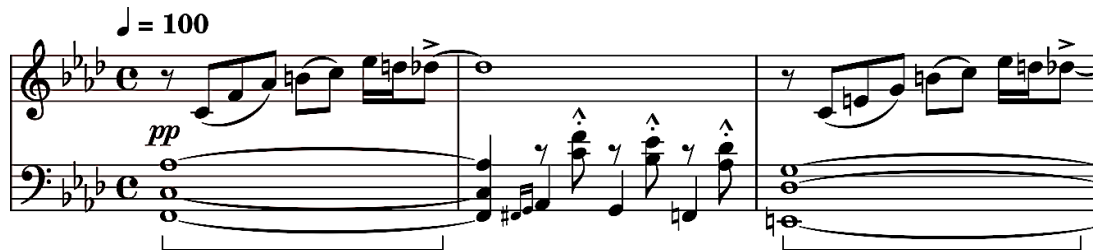
The Argentinian composer and performer Astor Piazzolla is credited with moving his country's most famous musical genre from the dance hall into the concert hall, by incorporating elements of jazz, classical and folk idioms into his own creation: the *nuevo tango*.

The tango's mood of wistful nostalgia is elevated to a heart-breaking level of anguish in *Adios Nonino* (Bye-bye Grandad), composed in 1959 or 1960 (accounts differ) immediately after hearing the news of his father's death while the composer was on tour in Central America.

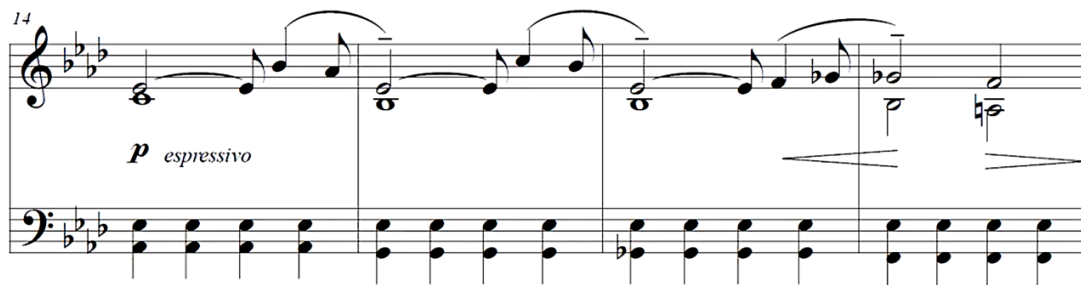
Originally written for *bandaleon*, the concertina-type instrument popular in Argentina that Piazzolla adopted as the signature musical vehicle for his tangos, it has been arranged by the composer for more than 20 kinds of instrumental ensembles.

Raphaël Feuillâtre plays an arrangement by Argentinian guitarist Cacho Tirao (1941-2007), who was a member of the Astor Piazzolla Quintet.

The work is in A-B-A-B form, with its A sections dominated by a plangent tango melody in the minor mode that rises in an energetic arpeggio only to end its phrase with a biting crestfallen semitone descent that ends, precipitously, on the last 8th note of the bar.



The B sections are more lyrical and quietly commemorative, featuring a chain of falling intervals, emblematic of sorrowful weeping.



Adios Nonino is likely Piazzolla's most famous piece, having become the anthem of homesick Argentinian ex-pats around the world. It was performed at the wedding of Dutch Crown Prince (now King) Willem-Alexander in homage to his bride, Argentinian-born Máxima Zorreguieta.

Roland Dyens

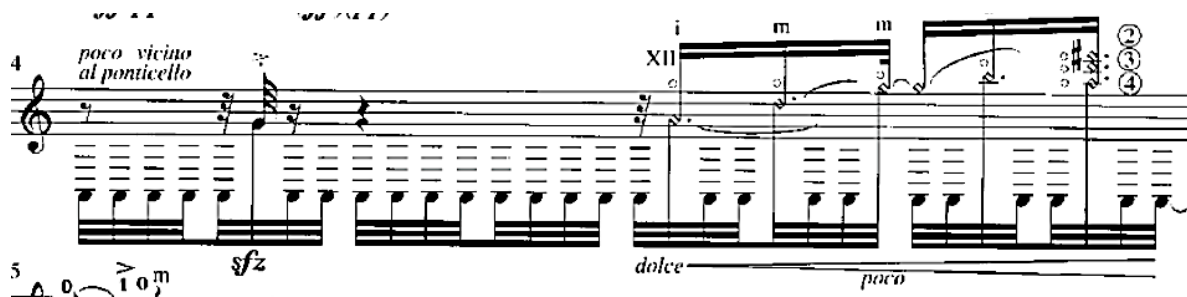
Clown Down from Triaela

The late French guitarist, composer and arranger Roland Dyens (Professor Ronald Dyens to his students at the Paris Conservatoire) was described as having had the hands of a classical musician but the mind of a jazz player. At home playing Bach Suites or arranging the compositions of Thelonius Monk and the *chansons* of Edith Piaf, he had a particular fascination with the vital rhythms of Brazilian music, especially that of Heitor Villa-Lobos.

His three-movement suite *Triaela* was composed between 2001 and 2002 and has been a favourite at guitar competitions ever since. Its 3rd movement, entitled *Clown Down* and subtitled *Gismonti au cirque* (Gismonti at the circus) is inspired by the compositions of Brazilian pianist and self-taught guitarist Egberto Gismonti (b. 1947).

Gismonti has a particular fascination with the low sounds of guitars equipped with extra bass strings, so Dyens' *Clown Down* uses *scordatura* (the re-tuning of strings) to achieve those kinds of effects on the standard concert guitar by tuning the lowest string, E, down a 5th to A.

And this low A pounds like a racing heartbeat through this piece, with an ostinato pulse that supports any number of exciting build-ups and jagged off-beat accents poking out of the wildly heterogeneous textures in the score.



Extended techniques abound in this piece, with the performer mixing it up between standard fretting and harmonics, and between traditional plucking of the strings and full-on hand-slapping his instrument — all in the service of generating ever-greater chaotic excitement and emotional exuberance.

The perfect piece with which to end a recital.

Donald G. Gíslason 2024