

# WIGMORE HALL

Sunday 13 July 2025  
7.30pm

MILOŠ guitar

Piatti Quartet

Michael Trainor violin

Emily Holland violin

Miguel Sobrinho viola

Jessie Ann Richardson cello

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968)

Allegro, vivo e schietto from Guitar Quintet Op. 143 (1950)

Alessandro Marcello (1673-1747)

Adagio from Oboe Concerto in D minor (pub.1717)

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805)

Guitar Quintet in D G448 'Fandango' (1798)

*I. Pastorale • II. Allegro maestoso •*

*III. Grave assai • IV. Fandango*

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Andante mesto from Guitar Quintet Op. 143

Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006)

Serenade for guitar and strings Op. 50 (1955)

Anon

Spanish Romance

Ástor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Libertango (1974)

*Interval*

Philip Glass (b.1937)

String Quartet No. 2 'Company' (1983)

*I. • II. • III. • IV.*

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Scherzo. Allegro con spirito, alla marcia from Guitar Quintet Op. 143

Pablo Casals (1876-1973)

Song of the Birds (1985) *arranged by Piatti Quartet*

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Finale. Allegro con fuoco from Guitar Quintet Op. 143

Harold Arlen (1905-1986)

Over the Rainbow from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) *arranged by Tōru Takemitsu*

Paul McCartney (b.1942)

Eleanor Rigby (1966)

& John Lennon (1940-1980)

Fool on the Hill (1967)

George Harrison (1943-2001)

Here comes the Sun (1969)



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Absorbing emotional contrasts govern **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's** Guitar Quintet Op. 143. The Italian-born, Los Angeles-based composer and pianist, prolific author of music for guitar, created the piece for his old friend Andrés Segovia, in response to a request from the Music Guild of Los Angeles. The commission, completed early in 1950, presented the opportunity for Castelnuovo-Tedesco to compose his first piece of guitar chamber music. 'It is a melodious and serene work,' he observed in his autobiography, 'partly neo-Classic and partly neo-Romantic.... I would say it is written almost in a Schubertian vein – Schubert has always been one of my favourite composers.'

Castelnuovo-Tedesco pays homage to Schubert with the *marche militaire* exuberance of the quintet's first movement. The guitar sets the march in motion with a single chord, then steps back as the strings let fly with a spiky first theme. In 'Schubertian vein', the music veers between major and minor modes, before a more chromatic second theme appears. These two ideas, equally appealing, jostle for attention, until the scales finally fall in favour of the march theme. *Mesto*, 'sad' or 'melancholy', defines the slow movement's mood. Nostalgic lyricism pervades its string introduction; the guitar's decisive entry reinforces the music's yearning quality, as does its turbulent counterpoint to the movement's principal theme. A second theme, marked 'Souvenir d'Espagne', changes the expressive weather with its seductive violin and guitar duet, while the main theme's impassioned return is offset by a coda infused with cadenza-like guitar flourishes and crystalline string harmonics.

A playful march, preceded by an introduction flecked with chiming harmonics, propels Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Scherzo*. Mechanistic rhythms launch the *Finale*, their insistent energy later softened by a big-hearted viola solo and soaring string counterpoint. The composer pulls a rabbit from the hat with his sudden swerve to a *canzone popolare*, a sweet Italian delight destined to adopt the rhythmic precision of the opening without losing its charm, even when things become 'Impetuoso e selvaggio' ('Impetuous and wild').

**Alessandro** and Benedetto Marcello, sons of a Venetian nobleman, were in demand as instrumental soloists and composers. The Oboe Concerto in D minor, formerly attributed to the younger Benedetto but in fact by Alessandro, is blessed with a slow movement of such haunting beauty that it has often been transcribed for other instruments, not least by JS Bach. **Luigi Boccherini's** guitar quintets were originally conceived for piano, string or flute quintet. His arrangements show considerable understanding of guitar technique and how best to balance the instrument against a string quartet. The *Fandango*, enthralling finale of the Guitar Quintet No. 4 in D, first published in 1798, evokes a dance form nourished by Moorish, Spanish and Spanish colonial influences.

**Malcolm Arnold's** friendship with the great British guitarist Julian Bream led to the composition of a fine concerto and the guitar Fantasy. The *Serenade* for guitar and strings, his first work for Bream, was conceived in 1955 with the amateur players of the Richmond Community

Centre String Orchestra in mind. As so often in Arnold's music, a wistful quality runs through the piece. Its presence in the guitar's singing introduction triggers the work's agitated central section and conditions the intense melancholy of its elegiac postlude.

*Spanish Romance* belongs to the 19th-century stock of salon pieces. Its popularity was secured in 1952 when Narciso Yepes's recording appeared in the soundtrack of the French war film *Jeux interdits*. The bonds connecting popular to classical music were further strengthened in the 1950s and beyond when **Astor Piazzolla**, having studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, returned to his native Argentina and created a series of remarkable theatre and dance works that embodied the vibrant spirit and rhythmic drive of his pioneering 'Nuevo Tango' style. The essential nature of Piazzolla's music is distilled in *Libertango*, the title of which marries the Spanish word for freedom to the dance form with which he is inextricably linked.

**Philip Glass's** Second String Quartet 'Company' takes its name from the title of Samuel Beckett's eponymous novella. The piece was written in 1983 to accompany a monologue based on Beckett's book. 'Beckett picked four places in the work which he referred to as the "interstices..."', notes Glass. 'Not surprisingly these four short movements have turned out to be a thematically cohesive work which now, as my String Quartet No. 2, has taken on a life of its own.' The *Song of the Birds* likewise gained life beyond its home in **Pablo Casals's** collection of encore pieces. 'I began the custom of concluding my concerts with the melody of an old Catalan carol, *Song of the Birds* ['El cant dels ocells']. It is a tale of the Nativity; how beautiful and tender is that tale, with its reverence for life and for man, the noblest expression of life! In the Catalan carol it is the eagles and the sparrows, the nightingales and the little wrens who sing a welcome to the infant, singing to him as a flower that will delight the earth with its sweet scent'.

**Harold Arlen** left his mark on the history of Broadway and Hollywood with a succession of hit tunes. The golden age of Hollywood musicals, fashioned during a time of global crisis, offered moviegoers a welcome refuge from news of economic depression and armed conflict. Arlen's ballad 'Over the Rainbow', from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), earned its composer an Academy Award and eternal fame. The Beatles and producer George Martin earned artistic immortality by subverting overworked pop music conventions. *Eleanor Rigby* underlined their revolutionary credentials with its meditation on loneliness and use of a double string quartet in its studio recording, released in 1966 on the band's *Revolver* album. **Paul McCartney's** ballad *The Fool on the Hill*, from the *Magical Mystery Tour*, enters the world of an outsider shunned by society yet blessed with innate wisdom, while *Here comes the Sun*, from the *Abbey Road* album of 1969, was **George Harrison's** optimistic response to the personal and commercial tensions that ultimately caused The Beatles to disband.

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