

WIGMORE HALL

Friday 21 June 2024
7.00pm

MILOŠ guitar

Silvius Leopold Weiss (1686-1750)

Fantasia (1719)
Passacaille

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

The Arts and the Hours from *Les Boréades* (1763)
arranged by Michael Lewin

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Menuet from *Suite in B flat* HWV434 (1733)
arranged by Michael Lewin

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D minor for solo
violin BWV1004 (1720)

Interval

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

Asturias (Leyenda) from *Suite Española* Op. 47
(1886)

Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757)

Sonata in D minor Kk32 *arranged by Michael
Lewin*

Agustín Barrios Mangoré 1885-1944)

La Catedral (1921 rev. 1939)
*I. Preludio saudade • II. Andante religioso •
III. Allegro solemne*

François Couperin (1668-1733)

Les Baricades mystérieuses (pub. 1716-7) *arranged
by David Russell*

Mathias Duplessy (b.1972)

Amor Fati (2022)



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Music dictionaries generally define the guitar as an instrument that speaks when someone plucks or strums its strings. Yet such a simple description draws attention away from the guitar's singing qualities to focus exclusively on the beginning of each sound and not its gradual decay or, put another way, its lyrical nature. Most if not all of the works in this evening's programme reveal the guitar's capacity for weaving polyphonic lines. They also depend on the instrument's capacity for producing subtle contrasts of voicing and articulation, the mastery of which is arguably of greater and certainly no less value to the true virtuoso's art than the mechanical ability to play fast and loud.

Silvius Leopold Weiss and his slightly older contemporary Johann Sebastian Bach belonged to a central European world of courtly, church and civic music making shaped by the Protestant Reformation. The two men, who met at least once and probably crossed paths on other occasions, were renowned performers – Bach at the keyboard, Weiss on the lute – and prolific composers for their respective instruments. **Weiss's** *Fantasie* and *Passacaille*, the latter possibly conceived as the finale of a *Suite in D*, stand as enduring monuments to his art. They were revived and introduced to a new audience in the 1950s by the guitarist Julian Bream and have since entered the mainstream of the guitar repertoire. MILOŠ's arrangement draws the ear to the intricate contrapuntal dialogue at play in both works.

The first in Andrés Segovia's *Guitar Archive* series, published by Schott in 1926, set benchmark standards for transcribing instrumental compositions for guitar. Each of the edition's many volumes contained modern works, original pieces for guitar and 'Classical Transcriptions', the latter often devoted to music by **Johann Sebastian Bach**. Segovia's Bach arrangements included a majestic transcription of the concluding *Chaconne* from the Partita No. 2 in D minor for solo violin. The piece presents a set of progressively elaborate melodic variations underpinned by a short chord sequence repeated 64 times, above which the soloist spins a complex web of polyphony.

There is a stately, archaic feel to **Domenico Scarlatti's** wistful Sonata in D minor, an ideal subject for translation to guitar. **Michael Lewin's** arrangement of the well-known *Menuet* from Handel's *Suite in B flat* HWV434 preserves the intense beauty of its original keyboard incarnation and adds to it the guitar's great clarity of line and infinite variety of timbres.

In the penultimate act of his five-act *tragédie lyrique* *Les Boréades* (1763), **Rameau** includes an exquisite *Entrée* for Polymnie (or Polyhymnia), the muse of sacred poetry and hymn, dance and eloquence. It has gained an independent life (and a fresh title) as *The Arts and the Hours*, aided by Víkingur Ólafsson's recent

transcription of the piece for solo piano. The work's charm stems from the bell-like scales that flow through its opening bars and the heartfelt melodic refrain that rises from them. It is performed this evening in an arrangement by Michael Lewin, Head of Guitar at the Royal Academy of Music since 1987. **François Couperin**, who thrived as a composer to the court of Louis XIV, was renowned for his keyboard suites and the so-called character pieces they often contained. The latter are distinguished by titles that evoke a particular image or mood. *Les Baricades mystérieuses*, performed this evening in Glasgow-born guitarist **David Russell's** suave arrangement, began life as the fifth number in Couperin's *Ordre No. 6*, a suite of keyboard pieces in the French style.

Agustín Barrios Mangoré, a native of Paraguay, was one of the first guitarists to make gramophone records. He built his international reputation in the early 1920s with a series of recordings for the Odeon label and, above all, his virtuoso compositions for guitar. *La Catedral*, overtly influenced by the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, dates from 1921. The piece began life as a composition in two movements, marked *Andante religioso* and *Allegro solemne*. Barrios wrote an additional *Preludio saudade* during a visit to Cuba in 1938, a decade after he recorded the work in its original form. *Preludio saudade* establishes an atmosphere of nostalgic melancholy from which emerges the *Andante religioso*, with its evocation of a sacred procession into a grand cathedral, bell-like opening chords and the spirit of Bach at the organ. The pace of street life pulses through the *Allegro solemne*, a world in perpetual motion, driven by a repeated rondo theme, punctuated by the sounds of cathedral bells, and intensified by increasing dissonances as the music dashes towards its brief chordal coda.

French composer and multi-instrumentalist **Mathias Duplessy** began playing guitar at the age of six and made his professional debut twelve years later. *Amor Fati*, a term usually translated from the original Latin as 'love of one's fate', was commissioned by and written for MILOŠ. He gave its world première in New York City in October 2022. The work explores the eternal yet ever-changing theme of Life and Fate. Duplessy's eclectic musical language spans numerous influences: flamenco and jazz; classical and klezmer; and sometimes even pop. The piece is highly programmatic, although Duplessy intends that it should tell a different story to each listener. *Amor Fati* begins on a single note and travels through intense stages of internal reflection and personal drama. It makes fierce technical demands on the player and retains its emotional intensity throughout.

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