

Manuel  
**PONCE**

**Guitar Music • 4**

**Sonatina Meridional**  
**Thème varié et Finale**  
**(Versions 1 and 2)**

**Judicaël Perroy**



## Manuel Ponce (1882–1948)

### Guitar Music • 4

#### Sonatina Meridional • Thème varié et Finale (Versions 1 and 2) • Andante dalla Sonata II Variations sur 'Folia de España et Fugue' • Variations on a Theme of Cabezón

Manuel Ponce has been acclaimed as the founding father of twentieth-century Mexican music. His pupil, Carlos Chávez (1899–1978) said of him: '*It was Ponce who created a real consciousness of the richness of Mexican folk art.*' Segovia and Ponce met in Mexico in 1923, and from that time onwards the composer devoted himself to writing many pieces for the guitar, nearly all of them dedicated to Segovia. Of these compositions, which include preludes, suites, a concerto, variations, several sonatas, and works for guitar and harpsichord, Segovia has written: '*Large or small, they are, all of them, pure and beautiful.*'

Ponce, born in Fresnillo, Mexico, as well as being a composer was also a distinguished concert pianist and conductor. He first learned the piano with his older sister, Josefina. After further studies in Mexico City he travelled to Europe in 1904 where he took composition lessons in Bologna with Enrico Bossi (1861-1925) and Cesare Dall'Olio (1849-1906) (Puccini's teacher). Later he studied in Berlin with the renowned pianist, Martin Krause (1853-1918), who in 1883 had performed for Liszt.

Ponce returned to his homeland in January 1907 and taught the piano at the Conservatorio Nacional, Mexico City. In 1912 he gave a concert of his own music including the first performance of his *Piano Concerto*. During this period he established his credentials as one of the central figures of the rising Mexican 'nationalist' school.

From 1915 to 1917 the composer lived in Cuba during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). After returning to Mexico in 1917 he resumed his teaching post at the Conservatorio and conducted the National Symphony Orchestra, but between 1925 and 1933 he settled in Paris, where he studied with Paul Dukas in the same class as Joaquín Rodrigo. Moving back to Mexico in 1933 he became director of the Conservatorio. As a prolific writer, he published many articles in *Cultura musical*, one of several magazines he founded over his lifetime. During these fruitful

years his major works were written and performed.

In August 1930, Andrés Segovia wrote to Ponce requesting the composer to write a sonatina 'of a purely Spanish character'. Segovia performed the second and third movements in Madrid on 19th February, 1932, and played the entire work for the first time at the Palau de la Música Catalana, Barcelona ten days later. In 1939 the guitarist had the work published with Schott under the title of *Sonatina Meridional* (Southern Sonatina), and provided a subtitle for each movement. He recorded the piece in June, 1949 for HMV.

The *Sonatina* evokes the lyrical warmth of Iberia. The first movement (named *Campo* by Segovia), suggests the atmosphere of the countryside, while the last movement, *Fiesta*, has the rhythmic excitement and vitality that its name implies. The slow movement, *Copla*, is a superb example of the composer's lyrical gifts and his subtle mastery of harmony.

Two manuscripts of *Thème varié et Finale* exist and this recording is the first to offer the two versions. The first manuscript, dated 8th June, 1926, is similar to the actual published version (1928). In the second version the order of the variations is different and three of them, I, VIII, and IX are missed out. From a letter of 21st August, 1926, it seems the variations were first performed around that time by Segovia at Evian-les-Bains. *Thème varié et Finale* was published by Schott in 1928 and recorded for Decca in May, 1954.

Following the unusual opening theme with its reflective modulations, the Variations deploy a series of textures such as repeated chords, dialogue between bass and treble, a study in thirds, an *agitato* movement in triplets, a burst of scalic passages, and an emotive *molto più lento* section with a memorable melody and inspired harmonic progressions. The *Finale (Vivo scherzando)*, a dance in 3/8 time with the dynamism of a *tarantella*, evolves from filigree semiquaver runs to *glissando* chords, the momentum gathering force as

it proceeds to a middle section with snatches of melody, chromatic chords and intricate triplets. After the return of the *Finale*'s opening theme, a vigorous coda moves to a triumphant close.

*Variations sur 'Folia de España et Fugue'* were composed at Segovia's request following a letter from the guitarist to the composer in December 1929. In the space of a few months Ponce completed a set of twenty variations as well as a fugue and a prelude (not included in Schott's publication in 1932). Segovia first performed the work (including the *Prélude*) at the Grand Theatre, Geneva, Switzerland, on 2nd May, 1930 and recorded the composition (without the *Prélude*!) on 6th and 7th October of the same year.

Corazón Otero, one of the foremost Ponce scholars, described the work as 'one of the monumental works of the guitar'. This extended composition, rare at a time when many guitar works were relatively brief, includes aspects of various guitar techniques used by traditional composers. Thus Ponce deploys chordal textures, arpeggios, monody, harmonics, tremolo sustained legato, etc., as well as fugue. Many players have considered this to be one of the most challenging peaks of the repertoire, an Everest to be conquered. The passing of time has not diminished its appeal to modern generations of virtuosic guitarists.

*Variations on a Theme of Cabezón*, Ponce's final work for the guitar, was dedicated to his friend and confessor, Dr Antonio Brambila and completed only two months before the composer's death. The theme is actually not from the music of Cabezón but from the sequence *O Filii et Filiae*, a Christian hymn attributed to Jean Tisserand (d. 1474).

The theme has altered time values from the original melody transforming it into a gentle dance in three-four rather than an ecclesiastical hymn. Of the six variations, four retain a firm allegiance to the theme with ingenious rhythmic embellishments while Variations I and V are permitted a little more freedom in quasi-baroque style. A *fughetta* concludes the work culminating in triumphant chordal patterns contrasted against elegant chromatic sequences.

The *Andante* from Ponce's *Sonata II* remains as a fragment from a lost manuscript and this is the first ever recording of the work. Segovia mentioned the existence of an *A minor Sonata* in two letters of 1926. But in a letter of 26th August, 1939, Segovia refers to the loss of this and other pieces from his ransacked Barcelona apartment during the Spanish Civil War. A copy of the *Andante*, however, was fortunately discovered by the eminent Italian guitarist, scholar, and editor, Angelo Gilardino, who forwarded a copy to Judicaël Perroy for this recording.

The *Andante* is surely one of the most expressive of all Ponce's compositions, moving from its tender opening chords towards a more vigorous chordal progression at the end. Such exquisite writing for the guitar raises many questions about what might have been the style and substance of the other movements of the lost sonata.

**Graham Wade**

Grateful acknowledgements are due to Miguel Alcázar's *Obra complete para guitarra de Manuel M. Ponce* (Conaculta étoile, Mexico, 2000) and Angelo Gilardino's comments on *Andante* (Sonata II).



### **Judicaël Perroy**

Judicaël Perroy is widely known as an extraordinary virtuoso classical guitarist and musician with several prizes to his credit. In 1997 he won first prize of the prestigious 15th Guitar Foundation of America (GFA) International Competition and Convention, which awarded him a tour of the United States and Canada with more than sixty concerts and master-classes. In Europe and Asia he is a favourite of audiences, with his performances in France broadcast live on France-Musique. Highly sought after and in great demand as a teacher, he is regularly invited to give master-classes at many of the top conservatories and universities around the world, and his students continue to win numerous top prizes in national and international competitions around the globe, while emerging as mature and rising stars of the classical guitar on the international music scene. Judicaël Perroy currently resides in Paris while he enjoys teaching at the Pôle d'Enseignement Supérieur de la Musique 93 in Paris, at the Pôle d'Enseignement Supérieur de la Musique in Lille and at the National Academy of Aulnay-sous-Bois and the Academy of Aubervilliers.

*Photo: Natalia Lipnitskaya*

Considered by many to be the founding father of 20th-century Mexican music, Manuel Ponce dedicated himself to composing for guitar after meeting Andrés Segovia in 1923. The evocative and warmly lyrical *Sonatina Meridional* is his response to Segovia's request for a work "of a purely Spanish character." The two versions of *Thème varié et Finale* with their inspired harmonic progressions are recorded together here for the first time, as is one of Ponce's most expressive pieces, the *Andante* from a manuscript lost during the Spanish Civil War. *Variations on a Theme of Cabezón* was his final work for guitar.



**Manuel  
PONCE**  
(1882–1948)

	<b>Sonatina Meridional (1932)</b>	<b>9:09</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>I. Allegro non troppo</b>	<b>4:16</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>II. Andante</b>	<b>2:40</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>III. Vivace</b>	<b>2:13</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Thème varié et Finale (version 2, 1928, edited Andrés Segovia)</b>	<b>8:28</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Variations sur 'Folia de España et Fugue' (1930)</b>	<b>23:22</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Variations on a Theme of Cabezón (1948)</b>	<b>4:53</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Thème varié et Finale (version 1, 1926)</b>	<b>7:45</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Andante dalla Sonata II (1926)*</b>	<b>4:40</b>

**\* WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

**Judicaël Perroy, Guitar**

Recorded at St John Chrysostom Church, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, 23–25 October 2014  
Producers: Norbert Kraft & Bonnie Silver • Engineer: Norbert Kraft • Editor: Bonnie Silver  
Booklet notes: Graham Wade • Guitar: G. Smallman, Australia • Strings: Savarez  
Publishers: Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG (tracks 1–5, 7); Tecla Editions (6); Private manuscript (8)  
Cover image: "Te protegeré siempre" (I will protect you always), etching by Fernando Perezniето  
(1938–2001) (by courtesy of the Perezniето family)



8.573285

DDD

Playing Time  
58:20



© & © 2016  
Naxos Rights US, Inc.  
Booklet notes in English  
Made in Germany  
[www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)