



Nikita
KOSHKIN
(b. 1956)

24 Preludes and Fugues for Solo Guitar • I

Asya Selyutina, Guitar

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

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The Well-Tempered Clavier, by J.S. Bach, is the renowned title of two sets of 24 preludes and fugues in all major and minor keys; *BWV 846–93*, composed between 1720 and 1742. This demonstrated that with the application of an appropriate tuning, keyboard instruments could play in all keys. This tuning was known as 'equal temperament' where the consonances are systematically made slightly impure so that none will sound dissonant. Thus the keyboard was divided into twelve equal semitones, as is employed on the pianoforte today.

This composition of sequences in all keys inspired various composers to follow Bach's example. Thus Chopin wrote a number of preludes covering all major and minor keys for piano solo – *24 Preludes, Op. 28*, originally published in 1839. But while Bach's *Preludes and Fugues* follow keys separated by rising semitones, Chopin's preludes are in the form of a circle of fifths, each major key being followed by its relative minor, and so on.

Alexander Scriabin's *24 Preludes, Op. 11* (1896) followed Chopin's *Preludes* in their organisation (cycling through all the major and minor keys). Between 1950 and 1951, Dmitry Shostakovich wrote *24 Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87* for solo piano, one in each of the major and minor keys of the chromatic scale.

In 1962 Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco composed *Les Guitares bien tempérées, Op. 199* ('The Well-Tempered Guitars') for two guitars. The 24 pieces are divided into four books, dedicated to the duo of Presti-Lagoya. Between 1984 and 1990 the Russian composer Igor Rekhin (b. 1941) composed *24 Preludes and Fugues* for solo guitar. Rekhin says of it 'I did my best to capture the ideas of contemporary musical culture and condense them into a cycle. I often consciously admired the classical and avant-garde and united them with elements of jazz, rock music and Latin-American rhythms.'

Nikita Koshkin (b. Moscow, Russia, 1956), guitarist, composer and teacher, began to study music at the age of 14 when his grandfather presented him with a guitar and a recording of Andrés Segovia. Soon afterwards he

decided this would be his future career. Koshkin studied guitar under George Emanov at the Moscow Conservatory and with Alexander Frauchi at the Russian Academy of Music, and was a composition student of Victor Egorov. He achieved international fame as a composer with *The Prince's Toys* (1980) and *Usher Waltz* (1984) and is now acclaimed as one of the major creative artists of the contemporary guitar.

Koshkin's *24 Preludes and Fugues*, dedicated 'To all the guitarists of the world', published in 2017, is a remarkable contribution to the guitar repertoire, demanding total virtuosity and a total interpretative clarity. The works cover a compendium of musical styles, moods, techniques, and the individuality of tonal colours, as well as instrumental effects such as percussive aspects, harmonics, and the endless complexities of contrapuntal writing for the six strings. The entire collection is a monument to one of the world's most eminent composers for the guitar.

Prelude in C major begins with a two part texture progressing through various keys before coming to rest on gentle chords. Then follows a meditative *Fugue* in three voices.

Prelude in A minor has an urgent and vivacious running bass over which a melody is placed. The *Fugue* is extended, developing from the opening statement into complex patterns in which treble chords are counterpointed by a marching bass. This leads on to six string strummed chords and rapid semiquavers in the bass, percussive effects and lively triplets. The coda includes further light percussive effects and pizzicato at the end.

Prelude in G major is a romantic *Adagio* with rhythmic chords and a poignant nostalgic element expressed through repeated notes. The *Allegretto Fugue* has a brisk Scarlatti-like momentum, occasionally bringing in reminiscences of the *Prelude* with the repeated notes embedded in the moving fabric of the fugal writing.

Prelude and Fugue in E minor feature one of the guitar's most natural tonalities. The *Prelude* has a delicate

pleading quality with fragments of melody expressing introspection and recollection. The *Fugue* begins with asking a question, being slightly syncopated in its opening statement. Developing in intensity it develops and progresses (as did the *Prelude*) through various keys before proceeding to chordal passages (written on two staves for clarity), and a soothing chordal finale.

Prelude in D major, again written on two staves, presents a keyboard-like texture, a treble melody played against intricate chords. Towards the end the melody stretches to the highest notes on the fingerboard, accompanied by broken chords. The *Fugue*, marked *Allegro*, begins with brisk quavers in the bass to which a melodic line is added. This progresses to a rapid cadenza of rippling arpeggios followed by poignant treble notes played against the bass, and a final recapitulation of the *Prelude's* opening statement.

Prelude in B minor is made up of sombre and complex chord progressions increasing in intensity, moving from five note chords to six note chords, some with quasi-jazz fingerings. The *Fugue*, marked *Allegretto*, in 6/8, is Bach-like in mood and modulates through a number of keys with a strong *gigue*-like momentum. A change comes with rapid semiquavers progressing to the coda and a brilliant finale run.

Prelude in A major once again relies on chordal textures in a hymn-like majestic progression involving ingenious modulations. The solemnity of the *Prelude* contrasts against the exuberance of the *Fugue* which recalls Baroque flights of fancy with a vigorous contrapuntal dance in three/four.

Prelude in F sharp minor offers a skittish melody over a playful staccato bass. The second half changes the emphasis with a different melodic mood. The extended *Fugue* is a virtuosic piece with dazzling perpetual motion and a two-part contrapuntal effect requiring immense dexterity.

We return to another of the guitar's most convenient keys in the E major pairing. Thus the *Prelude* starts in a traditional romantic mood before advancing into the realms of modulation. The *Fugue* may take the listener by surprise with its *Andante* tempo and initial quiet approach. But the texture soon thickens and becomes a complex technical work of three voices of great independence, again often moving away from the home key. Towards the end the opening mood returns and all is resolved amicably.

C sharp minor may be an unfamiliar key for most guitarists. The *Prelude* begins solemnly with single bass notes to which a melody is added. A Bach-like passage follows after which the two part texture returns. The composition evolves to larger chordal statements which are succeeded by arpeggio flourishes, and a coda with subtle use of harmonics to delineate the melody. The *Prelude* ends peacefully. The *Fugue* begins in traditional Bachian style, gradually increasing the complexity of its three-part writing. At the end a rapid triplet run and giant chords conclude before a few bars of retrospective fugal writing.

Prelude in B major evokes a sense of a 19th-century study. However Koshkin's writing remains firmly rooted in the contemporary with its modulations and technically advanced concepts as the piece progresses. The *Fugue*, in 2/4 time, begins at a steady pace and makes playful use of little rhythmic devices which imitate each other.

The *Prelude in G sharp minor*, marked *Andante*, opens with weighty chords and dotted rhythms in the French style. The *Fugue* begins jocularly with a tiny slurred fragment of melody wafted back and forth, requiring immense technical control and clarity. The work covers the whole fingerboard and makes no concessions to any performer, demanding a complete virtuosic mastery of the instrument.

Graham Wade

Asya Selyutina

Photo: Evgeny Evtuykhov



Russian classical guitarist Asya Selyutina regularly appears as a soloist, in chamber music ensembles, with orchestras and as a juror at competitions. Selyutina has performed in Russia, Ukraine, Italy, Turkey, Israel, Norway and Germany, and was the first Russian guitarist to perform at musical festivals in India, Bhutan and Iran. Selyutina has received awards at several international guitar competitions, including in Belgorod, Voronezh and Saint Petersburg (Russia), Ukrainka and Kiev (Ukraine), Arhanes (Greece), Belgrade (Serbia), and Borgo Val di Taro and Gorizia (Italy). She graduated from the Alfred Schnittke Musical College, the State Classical Academy in Moscow and the Hochschule für Musik 'Franz Liszt' Weimar, where she studied with Thomas Müller-Pering. She also took masterclasses with guitarists such as Elena Papandreou, Fábio Zanon, Philippe Villa, Zoran Dukić, Jason Vieaux and Odair Assad among others. In 2009 her debut album was released by Kreuzberg Records, and was highly acclaimed by press and celebrated guitarists. Contemporary composers have written works dedicated to her. Selyutina teaches as associate professor in the classical guitar department of the State Classical Academy, RGU Kosygin, Moscow. www.asyaselyutina.com

Moscow-born Nikita Koshkin won international fame for his 1980 score *The Prince's Toys* and has since established himself as one of the greatest creative composers for the contemporary guitar. His *24 Preludes and Fugues for Solo Guitar*, of which this is the first volume, is a compendium of musical styles, colours and effects. It is both a virtuosic tour de force and an expressively complex undertaking that demands unremitting technical command and absolute interpretative clarity from the performer.

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1 Prelude in C major	1:18	13 Prelude in A major	2:07
2 Fugue in C major	2:21	14 Fugue in A major	2:30
3 Prelude in A minor	1:33	15 Prelude in F sharp minor	2:19
4 Fugue in A minor	4:33	16 Fugue in F sharp minor	2:09
5 Prelude in G major	2:30	17 Prelude in E major	2:07
6 Fugue in G major	2:18	18 Fugue in E major	2:55
7 Prelude in E minor	2:12	19 Prelude in C sharp minor	3:41
8 Fugue in E minor	2:45	20 Fugue in C sharp minor	2:26
9 Prelude in D major	2:08	21 Prelude in B major	1:09
10 Fugue in D major	2:40	22 Fugue in B major	2:08
11 Prelude in B minor	2:19	23 Prelude in G sharp minor	3:06
12 Fugue in B minor	2:46	24 Fugue in G sharp minor	2:04

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