



## Ekechai Jearakul

**2014 Winner**

**Guitar Foundation of America  
(GFA) Competition**

**WEISS**

**MERTZ**

**BERKELEY**

**LEGNANI**

**BROUWER**

**H. M. KING BHUMIBOL**

## Ekachai Jearakul: Guitar Recital

Sylvius Leopold Weiss • Johann Kaspar Mertz • Lennox Berkeley

Luigi Legnani • Leo Brouwer • H. M. King Bhumibol of Thailand

This journey through the many voices of the classical guitar begins with the baroque and concludes with three modern compositions influenced by jazz. On the way we encounter two nineteenth-century masters in Mertz and Legnani, and twentieth-century contrasts in music from England and Cuba. The guitar accommodates many voices and a multitude of styles without incongruity. The sheer variety of the instrument's repertoire never ceases to amaze and delight.

**Sylvius Leopold Weiss**, born in Breslau, capital of Silesia, (now Wrocław, Poland) in 1686, is now acknowledged as the greatest baroque lutenist of his epoch. Taught by his father, he studied the lute from an early age and eventually entered the service of aristocrats in Germany and Italy as a court musician. In 1718 he was appointed to the Dresden court where he joined the famous orchestra of the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. Weiss remained in this post until his death in 1750.

Weiss composed over 600 pieces for solo lute organized into suites or *Sonaten*. The majority of these are contained in two manuscripts, one located in the British Library, London, and another in the Sächsisches Landesbibliothek, Dresden. Weiss was also a renowned teacher, and among his pupils were the youthful Frederick the Great as well as the renowned lutenists Adam Falckenhagen and Johann Kropfgans.

An *Allemande*, a dance of German origin, has four beats in a bar which give it stability and dignity. The pace of the dance is quiet and steady. Weiss, like J.S. Bach, often began his suites with an *allemande* rather than a *prelude*, and in this instance the *Allemande* sets the key and mood for what is to follow. In contrast the more vigorous *Courante*, (the term derived from the French verb 'to run'), is like an effervescent stream with groups of semiquavers providing lively movement.

The *Passagaille* in D, one of the most well-known of Weiss's lute works, has been popular since Julian Bream first recorded it in 1964. Structurally a *Passagaille* is a series of variations constructed over a repeated bass. Weiss has composed a truly superb example of the genre which

develops through degrees of intricacy with increasing excitement and inventiveness.

**Johann Kaspar Mertz**, a virtuoso performer on both guitar and flute, was born in Pressburg (now Bratislava, Slovakia). He moved to Vienna in 1840 and made his concert debut at the Court Theatre of the Empress Carolina Augusta. In subsequent years, Mertz toured Moravia, Poland and Russia, gave concerts in Berlin and Dresden, and also played at the court of Ludwig of Bavaria. Shortly after his death from a heart ailment at the age of fifty, Mertz was posthumously awarded the first prize for his composition *Concertino* at the Brussels Competition of 1856. Mertz performed on various types of guitar, including eight- and ten-stringed instruments, from the 1840s onwards.

His prolific compositions include didactic and easy pieces, concert works, arrangements of Schubert, pieces for two guitars or guitar and piano, and fantasies based on famous operatic themes. Nikolai Makaroff (1810–1890), the eminent Russian guitarist, described his playing as 'marked by force, sweep, sensitivity, precision, expression and assurance' and praised his skill with 'every secret and effect of the guitar'.

Despite his output of over one hundred compositions, Mertz was neglected by guitarists for many decades, a revival of interest in his creative activities being achieved with Simon Wynberg's ten volume edition of his works (Chanterelle, 1985). Since that time his music has become a significant feature of the concert repertoire.

*Concertino* is one of Mertz's celebrated virtuoso works. It features brilliant octave patterns, *tremolo*, and, after the initial *Maestoso*, *Grandioso*, and *Quasi Andantino piacevolmente* sections, concludes with a vigorous *Allegro Brillante* and *Presto* finale. The piece was awarded first prize in the 1856 Brussels guitar composition and construction competition organized by Nikola Makaroff (Napoléon Coste came second). It was first published in the west in 1985 in the first volume of Simon Wynberg's collection of the complete Mertz guitar works, which also provided the relevant information about this piece.

Julian Bream once commented that the music of Sir **Lennox Berkeley** (1903–1989) evoked ‘natural and pleasing things about life’. Berkeley’s immense range spanned vocal and instrumental compositions, chamber and orchestral works (including four symphonies and eight concertos), five operas, an oratorio, film music and many pieces for keyboard. His other guitar works were *Quatre Pièces pour la guitare* (written probably between 1927 and 1932 for Segovia but only recently discovered by Angelo Gilardino), *Songs of the Half Light* (1964), *Theme and Variations* (1970), and the *Guitar Concerto* (1974).

*Sonatina, Op. 52, No. 1* (1957), dedicated to Julian Bream, is a work that beneath its elegance imposes strenuous technical demands on the performer. The first movement displays the guitar’s *cantabile* potential while the development’s rapid scales and vibrant climactic strumming momentarily conjure up images of the traditional Spanish guitar. The second movement creates fragments of melody on the lower strings contrasted with expressive chords, its harmonies growing ever more complex but ending poignantly and peacefully. The *Rondo* has tremendous verve and uses many effects, including *tremolo*, *arpeggios*, *cantabile*, and (in the coda) pedal notes on open strings and a final vigorous strumming.

**Luigi Legnani**, one of the leading guitarists of the generation following Fernando Sor and Mauro Giuliani, composed over 250 works and gave recitals throughout Europe. His friendship with Paganini has been well publicised though it seems unlikely that they actually performed concerts together. In his final years Legnani became a guitar maker of considerable renown.

*Fantasie, Op 19*, published by Arturia of Vienna in 1822, is a virtuosic work admirably demonstrating the spirit of the nineteenth-century guitar. The full panoply of brilliant scale runs, fast chromatic passages, sweeping arpeggio patterns, split octaves, chordal sections, interaction between bass and treble, and so on, are deployed here in profusion. The piece begins with an introductory *largo* section before the advent of the main *Allegro* movement with its varied textures and sonata-like structure. Behind the thrust and energy of the music is not only the influence of composers such as Sor but the piano style of Beethoven at its most extrovert, as Legnani displays the technical fireworks within his characteristic musical vocabulary.

**Leo Brouwer**, from Cuba, one of the most innovative contemporary composers, is also a renowned conductor and recitalist. His prolific output ranges from a multitude of guitar pieces to concertos, chamber music, and scores for over a hundred films. His guitar works have evolved over four decades embracing the avant-garde and the experimental as well as neo-romanticism. *Rito de los Orishas* (*Rite of the Orishas*), was given its première by the dedicatee, Álvaro Pierri, at the Festival de Radio France, in October 1993, a few months after its composition. Orishas is the Yoruban word for the gods worshipped by the African slaves.

The first movement, *Exordium – conjuro* (Introduction – Incantation/Exorcism), in ternary form with an episodic middle section and a modified recapitulation, celebrates a ritual where evil spirits are vanquished. Isabelle Hernández, Brouwer’s biographer, points out that this movement is created from three fundamental cells, a repeated sound in groups of three in the manner of an *ostinato*, an ascending scale in rapid figurations, and a theme characterized by a descending minor third followed by an ascending major second. The second part, *Danza de las diosas negras* (Dance of the Black Goddesses) comprises three dance elements interspersed by darkly atmospheric episodes named ‘evocations’.

**H. M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej**, born 5th December 1927, is the King of Thailand. Having reigned since 9th June 1946, he is the world’s longest-serving current head of state and the longest-reigning monarch in Thai history. The king is a painter, photographer, author and translator as well as an accomplished saxophonist and composer. His prolific output of compositions includes fox-trots, waltzes and Thai patriotic music. He is an accomplished saxophonist and has performed with leading jazz artists such as Benny Goodman, Stan Getz, Lionel Hampton and Benny Carter.

The three pieces form a miniature jazz triptych of delightful melody and romantic sentiment. The first of the three is *Love Light In My Heart*, a sweet, lyrical love song composed in 1950. Next comes a sophisticated piece with a distinct blues influence, *Oh I Say*, written in 1955. Finally we hear *Magic Beams*, composed in 1958. This opens with a languidly introspective melody, followed by a brilliant finale.

**Graham Wade**



**Ekachai Jearakul**

In 2014 Ekachai Jearakul became the first Asian guitarist to win the prestigious Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition (GFA). This prize entails a fifty-concerts tour in many countries culminating in a Carnegie Hall début in New York City. Between 2003 and 2014 Jearakul earned an impressive list of honours, including twelve first prizes at prestigious international guitar competitions in Europe, Asia, and North America. He has performed in over sixteen countries, including Thailand, China, France, Korea, Russia, Greece, Japan, Austria, England, Italy, Germany, Mexico, the Philippines, Indonesia, Spain, Singapore and the United States. In 2011 he commissioned new arrangements and made a recording of music by the King of Thailand, His Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej. Born in 1987 in Thailand, Ekachai Jearakul started guitar studies at the age of thirteen. His professional training, as a full scholarship student, began at Mahidol University College of Music, where he completed a Bachelor in Music degree in Classical Guitar Performance with Paul Cesarczyk. Subsequently he went on to earn a Master's degree in Guitar Performance at Salzburg's Mozarteum with Marco Tamayo. Since 2007 he has been sponsored by Thai Bev "Sangsom" Thai Talent, and in 2013 he became a Yamaha artist. [www.Ekachaiguitarist.com](http://www.Ekachaiguitarist.com)

In 2014 Ekachai Jearakul became the first Asian guitarist to win the prestigious Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition (GFA). Winner of numerous awards and an international artist, he has selected a recital that takes the listener on a journey from the baroque beauties of Weiss through nineteenth-century classics by Mertz and Legnani, concluding with three modern compositions influenced by jazz.



## EKACHAI JEARAKUL

### Guitar Recital

<b>Silvius Leopold WEISS</b> (1686–1750)		<b>Luigi LEGNANI</b> (1790–1877)	
<b>Suite No. 13 in D for Lute</b> (arr. Ekachai Jearakul)		<b>8 Fantasie, Op. 19</b>	<b>7:23</b>
<b>1 Allemande</b>	<b>3:50</b>	<b>Leo BROUWER (b. 1939)</b>	
<b>2 Courante</b>	<b>3:20</b>	<b>Rito de los Orishas</b>	<b>12:16</b>
<b>3 Passagaille</b>	<b>4:06</b>	<b>9 I. Exordium – conjuro</b>	<b>4:15</b>
<b>Johann Kaspar MERTZ</b> (1806–1856)		<b>10 II. Danza de las diosas negras</b>	<b>8:01</b>
<b>4 Concertino</b>	<b>7:56</b>	<b>H. M. King BHUMIBOL (b. 1927)</b>	
<b>Lennox BERKELEY</b> (1903–1989)		<b>Three Selected Songs by</b> <b>King Bhumibol</b>	<b>10:41</b>
<b>Sonatina, Op. 52, No. 1</b>		<b>11 1. Love Light In My Heart</b> (arr. Frederic Hand)	<b>3:16</b>
<b>5 I. Allegretto</b>	<b>5:06</b>	<b>12 2. Oh I Say</b> (arr. Andrew York)	<b>3:59</b>
<b>6 II. Lento</b>	<b>3:27</b>	<b>13 3. Magic Beams</b> (arr. William Kanengiser)	<b>3:24</b>
<b>7 III. Allegro non troppo</b>	<b>3:36</b>		

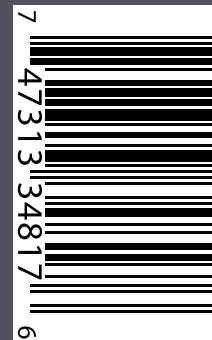
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Booklet notes: Graham Wade • Publishers: Editions Chanterelle (track 4); Chester Music (5–7);  
Doberman Editions (9–10); tracks 1–3 & 8 public domain; tracks 11–13 unpublished  
Guitar: Mathias Dammann, Passau, Germany • Cover photo of Ekachai Jearakul: S. Guy  
Sponsored by Bangkok Dusit Medical Services



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Playing Time  
62:00



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Booklet notes in English