

Eduardo  
**SÁINZ DE LA MAZA**  
(1903–1982)

**Guitar Music**

**Platero y yo • Campanas del alba • Habanera**

**José Antonio Escobar**



## Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza (1903–1982) Guitar Music

Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza was born on 5 January 1903 in Burgos, Spain. His brother, Regino, was seven years older, and studied piano and guitar. Eduardo began learning the basics of music from the age of six, but the family could not afford to send all their children to music lessons.

In 1910 the family moved north to San Sebastián where it is known that Regino continued his studies, including guitar with Luis Soria, at the local academy. Shortly afterwards, the family moved to Madrid, where Regino had lessons with Daniel Fortea (1878–1953), one of the former pupils of Francisco Tárrega. Regino gave his first solo guitar recital on 13 March 1913.

Eduardo began his guitar studies at around the age of ten, while Regino forged ahead with preparing for an international concert career. As there was now an established guitarist in the family, Eduardo began studying the cello, overshadowed by his brother's developing reputation.

In 1916 the family moved to Barcelona where Eduardo learned the guitar in addition to the cello but he had no ambitions for a concert career. He did, however, give his debut guitar recital at the age of 14 in the Sala Mozart. Later he studied cello at the Barcelona Conservatory, completing the course in 1917. He subsequently toured Spain as a cellist in a string trio, as well as appearing in 1919 in New York and New Orleans.

In 1925 Eduardo married an Italian pianist, Elda Giacomelli. Between 1928 and 1931 he studied composition with Enric Morera (1865–1942). At this time Eduardo composed a number of short works including pieces for violin and piano, and from 1933 he began to compose for guitar. During the Spanish Civil War he earned a living from arranging light music for dance orchestras under the name of Mario Yago.

Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza eventually applied his considerable energies to composition, supplemented with giving guitar lessons to talented individuals from various countries. His guitar works are acknowledged as being among the finest 20th-century contributions to the repertoire.

The *habanera*, an Afro-Cuban dance and song, combines European and African influences with roots in English country dance. In the early 19th century, French refugees from Haiti brought the *contredanse* to Cuba, a stylised French version of the English country dance. In Havana, black musicians syncopated the rhythms to create a sensuous, slow dance.

Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza's *Habanera* combines a plaintive theme with the distinctive dance rhythm. The elegant use of harmonics in the opening chords imparts a variety of sonorities, part of the effect produced using altered tuning, whereby the two bass strings of the guitar are lowered a tone to produce a rich instrumental texture. The piece was copyrighted in 1953.

*Campanas de alba* ('The Bells of Dawn'), a magical evocation of morning bells, uses the tremolo technique to provide a continuous melodic line akin to the playing of a mandolin. The piece is worthy to stand beside other eminent tremolo compositions such as Francisco Tárrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*, or Agustín Barrios Mangoré's *Un sueño en la floresta*. The work was copyrighted in 1963.

*Platero y yo* ('Platero and I'), originally a series of 138 prose-poems written from 1906 onwards by the Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881–1958), narrate the activities of Platero, a pet donkey. Sáinz de la Maza chose eight of these prose-poems as a basis for his suite. The first, *Platero*, describes the donkey, 'small, downy, and smooth', running to the meadow, brushing his nose against the flowers of 'pink, sky-blue and golden yellow'. *El loco* ('The Crazy Man') depicts the author riding 'dressed in mourning', his beard cut like a Nazarene's, wearing a narrow-brimmed hat. The gypsy children pursue him shouting, 'The crazy man, the crazy man!'. *La azotea* ('The Roof Terrace') is a place where Platero cannot go, but from the terrace one can hear the bells ringing, and there is a view over the vineyards. Also to be seen are a slow boat on the river, a girl singing while she combs her hair, and Platero drinking at the water trough. *Darbón* is Platero's doctor, 'as large as a piebald ox and as red as a watermelon', who has no teeth and spits into his handkerchief. His diet is mainly breadcrumbs. With

Platero he is as gentle as a child. When he sees a flower or a little bird he laughs, but laughter ends in tears as Darbón looks toward the cemetery, muttering 'My little girl, my poor little girl'. In *Paseo* ('Ride') the poet rides Platero through summer paths lined with honeysuckle, the donkey occasionally nibbling at the sparse grass. The blueness of the sky gives the writer great joy. But soon the ride ends as they hear the rattle of the well chain. Both the narrator and Platero enjoy a drink of water; 'that liquid snow'. *La tortuga* ('The Tortoise') is a reminiscence of when the poet and his brother were schoolboys. Coming home from school one day in August, they see a tortoise in the grass. They pick it up and wash it, and identify it as a Greek tortoise. As children, they played tricks on the tortoise, keeping it on its back for days, or swinging it on a trapeze. Later, the tortoise disappears for months before showing up among the coal or in the waterpipe. At the end of the prose-poem, the tortoise reappears – 'reborn', yet eternally ancient: 'it seems to have given birth to itself for another century'. *La muerte* ('Death') finds Platero stretched out on his bed of straw, unable to stand up. Darbón is in attendance and says nothing can be done, the cause of his malady possibly being a poisonous root. By noon Platero has died, his belly swollen up like a globe. At the end, a beautiful butterfly flies through the ray of sunlight coming from the tiny window, its three colours shining. In *A Platero, en su tierra* ('To Platero, in his Land') the narrator mourns for the donkey. Since Platero's death, years have passed and things have changed. Platero is now alone in the past, and lives in eternity. *Platero y yo* is one of Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza's most admired works. Each movement creates its own special mood with individual colours. Like the prose-poem itself, the music is profoundly romantic, celebrating the beauty of nature and the charm of Platero.

*Homenaje a la guitarra* ('Homage to the Guitar') was awarded Second Prize in the 1961 Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française competition for new guitar works, and is dedicated to Regino Sáinz de la Maza (First Prize was won by Joaquín Rodrigo's *Invocación y danza*). The composition begins with expressive chords in harmonics progressing towards an inventive episode founded on melody with arpeggiated accompaniment. This is followed by an interlude of gentle arpeggios. The music evolves into

a virtuosic section with the melody played high up on the fingerboard, again with subtle accompaniment. After a recapitulation of the early material, a short coda leads back to the opening chordal harmonics.

*Homenaje a Toulouse-Lautrec* ('Homage to Toulouse-Lautrec'), dedicated to Regino, was first published in 1967. Here, Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza pays tribute to the great French artist with a gentle waltz. After a short introduction, the main theme, both poignant and nostalgic, is presented. A middle section, marked *con fantasia*, offers a moment of reflection before the reprise of the opening.

*Confidencia* ('Confidence'), an intimate prelude dedicated to the Swedish guitarist 'my friend Gunnar Lif', begins with an *Andante espressivo* introduction in 9/8 before the main theme, in the style of a *barcarolle*, is introduced in 6/8. The use of three-note chords against repeated bass notes gives the composition its sense of serenity. *Confidencia* was first published in 1971.

*Homenaje a Haydn* ('Homage to Haydn'), copyrighted in 1957, takes the form of a minuet, harmonised in four parts and structured in three parts. The first section recalls a triumphal 18th-century processional, while the second part develops a romantic approach in Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza's characteristic voice and style.

The *bolero*, originally a popular dance or song, originated in Spain towards the end of the 18th century. Its popularity in both the court and the theatre continued through the 19th century, becoming part of the traditional music of Andalusia, Castile and Mallorca. *Bolero*, dedicated to Regino, is believed to be Eduardo's earliest fully accomplished solo guitar work, being copyrighted in 1936. The rhythmic opening, with its attractive melody, is complemented by a slower middle section before the main theme returns.

*Sonando caminos* ('Dreaming Paths'), copyrighted in 1965, is a reflective work beginning with a slightly melancholy series of chords before introducing a melody in the treble with arpeggiated accompaniment. The opening statement is repeated again until a gentle middle episode brings in another theme followed by the reprise of the opening and a delicately reminiscent coda.

*Evocación criolla* ('Creole Evocation'), dedicated to Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza's pupil, José J. Henríquez,

begins with flowing arpeggios supporting a gentle tune. A middle section, marked *Tempo non rigido: Con fantasía*, brings in elements of rhythmic dance, some chords being played near the bridge for a metallic effect. The work was copyrighted in 1980.

*Laberinto* ('Labyrinth'), dedicated to Narciso Yepes, was written in 1967. Technically challenging, it consists of

compact groups of harmonies accompanying a lively melodic line. José Manuel González, editing this work, commented that in this composition the two most powerful influences on the music of Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza, jazz and impressionism, are clearly evident.

**Graham Wade**

Grateful acknowledgement is due to the scholarship of Thomas Schmitt's biographical study, *Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza. Guitarrista, compositor, profesor* (Ediciones El Gato Murr, 2012).

### **José Antonio Escobar**

José Antonio Escobar was born in 1973 in Santiago, Chile. After graduating with honours from the Conservatory of Music, University of Chile, Escobar continued his studies with Franz Halász at the Hochschule für Musik in Augsburg, Germany. Through the influence of his first teacher, the lutenist Ernesto Quezada, he became interested in early instruments of the guitar family, such as the lute and vihuela, and he subsequently attended early music courses and masterclasses with renowned specialists such as Hopkinson Smith and Eduardo Egüez. He combines his interest in early music with the contemporary, paying particular attention to Latin American and Spanish composers. He has been awarded numerous prizes in leading international guitar competitions, including First Prize and the Special Audience Prize at the Francisco Tárrega International Guitar Competition in Benicàssim, Spain. He has performed internationally in venues such Carnegie Hall, New York, the Royal Festival Hall, London, the Musikverein, Vienna, and the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, Moscow, in addition to making several successful recordings. Escobar plays with Savarez strings. [www.joseantonioescobar.cl](http://www.joseantonioescobar.cl)

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The brothers Eduardo and Regino Sáinz de la Maza made significant contributions to the great lineage of Spanish guitar music in the 20th century (Regino's compositions are on 8.572977). This selection of Eduardo's music reflects his technical and expressive breadth, whether in the magical tremolo study *Campanas del alba* ('The Bells of Dawn') or in the series of romantic and virtuosic homages paid to Haydn, Toulouse-Lautrec and his own instrument, the guitar. *Platero y yo* ('Platero and I'), a sequence of eight pieces narrating the activities of the donkey Platero, celebrates the beauty of nature, irradiated by glorious colour, and is one of his greatest masterpieces.



## Eduardo SÁINZ DE LA MAZA (1903–1982)



### Guitar Music

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|--|------|---|------|
| <b>1</b> Habanera (1953)   | 3:13 | <b>11</b> Homenaje a la guitarra<br>(‘Homage to the Guitar’) (1961)               | 6:57 |
| <b>2</b> Campanas del alba (‘The Bells<br>of Dawn’) (1963)             | 4:39 | <b>12</b> Homenaje a Toulouse-Lautrec<br>(‘Homage to Toulouse-Lautrec’)<br>(1963) | 5:10 |
| <b>3</b> I. Platero  | 4:34 | <b>13</b> Confidencia (‘Confidence’)<br>(1970)                                    | 3:59 |
| <b>4</b> II. El loco (‘The Crazy Man’)                                 | 2:51 | <b>14</b> Homenaje a Haydn (‘Homage<br>to Haydn’) (1957)                          | 3:36 |
| <b>5</b> III. La azotea (‘The Roof Terrace’)                           | 2:41 | <b>15</b> Bolero (1936)   | 3:55 |
| <b>6</b> IV. Darbón  | 3:33 | <b>16</b> Soñando caminos (‘Dreaming<br>Paths’) (1963)                            | 5:23 |
| <b>7</b> V. Paseo (‘Ride’)   | 3:03 | <b>17</b> Evocación criolla (‘Creole<br>Evocation’) (1978)                        | 4:58 |
| <b>8</b> VI. La tortuga (‘The Tortoise’)                               | 2:28 | <b>18</b> Laberinto (‘Labyrinth’) (1967)  | 4:38 |
| <b>9</b> VII. La muerte (‘Death’)                                      | 2:47 |   |      |
| <b>10</b> VIII. A Platero, en su tierra (‘To<br>Platero, in his Land’) | 3:06 |   |      |

### José Antonio Escobar, Guitar

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Playing Time  
72:08



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