

The NAXOS logo is a blue square with the word "NAXOS" in white, serif, all-caps font. Above the text is a stylized white icon of a classical building with columns.

NAXOS

A large, stylized rainbow graphic composed of multiple curved lines in various colors (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) that arch across the top and right side of the page.

Atanas
OURKOUZOUNOV
(b. 1970)

Cycling Modes
Sonatas Nos. 1–5

Kostas Tosidis, Guitar

Atanas Ourkouzounov (b. 1970)

Cycling Modes

Atanas Ourkouzounov is a foremost contemporary Bulgarian composer and guitarist. He grew up in Sofia, Bulgaria, where he began guitar studies with Dimitar Doitchinov. He continued his studies in Paris in 1992 with Arnaud Dumond, Alexandre Lagoya, and Olivier Chassain. In 1997 he graduated from the Paris Conservatoire and was awarded First Prize in guitar.

As a composer he has won many international awards, and has written over 80 works for guitar including solos, duos, quartets, instrumental ensembles, and two concertos. A large proportion of these have been published by Doberman-Yppan, Productions d'OZ, and Henry Lemoine. His works have been performed and recorded by leading guitarists from many countries.

Atanas Ourkouzounov has made a number of recordings himself and played concerts worldwide in Europe, the US and Japan, including recitals with the Japanese flautist Mie Ogura. He also teaches at the Conservatoire Maurice Ravel, Paris.

The composer has provided a short introduction to the works selected for this recording:

The five *Sonatas* presented here can be divided into two groups: the *First* and *Second Sonatas*, (composed between 1996 and 1998) and three *Sonatas* composed between 2014 and 2018. All the compositions show a clear influence of Balkan music in general, and more specifically Bulgarian traditional music. The musical language is mainly polymodal, with frequent use of asymmetric rhythm patterns.

The two first *Sonatas* were composed during my years at the conservatory – I played the *First Sonata* at my final exam. This piece was dedicated to Pablo Márquez, who inspired and advised me during its composition.

The *Second Sonata* shows the influence of Bartók's music. At the beginning we can hear a chordal quotation from *Piano Concerto No. 1* by the Hungarian composer.

The following *Sonatas* were developed in a more complex and personal style. The polymodal and polyrhythmical elements persist, as the Balkan inspiration, but the use of cyclical rhythm repetition becomes rare and modes are treated in a more complex way, often with a serial approach.

Throughout all my music, particular sound techniques such as pizzicato, tapping, percussion, etc., are often employed in order to recreate a soundscape texture that echoes the sound of traditional musical sources. *Sonata No. 4* is dedicated to Kostas Tosis, who was the origin of this recording project.

Sonata No. 1 is dedicated to the Argentinian guitarist Pablo Márquez. The work begins with fiery *pizzicati* and brilliant momentum with a time signature of 7/8 characteristic of Bulgarian dances. The textures include effects of drumming on the front of the guitar. An expressive *adagio* episode provides moments of relaxation of the tension, though increasing in excitement until a brief burst of energy for the final bars. The second movement, *Adagio quasi canzone* ('Slow like a song') is a compact statement with great emphasis in the first instance on the sonorities of the lower strings. The third movement, *Vivo*, is a virtuosic tour de force, with shifting time signatures (from 7/8 to 9/8 and 3/4), contrapuntal sections, and for the finale, vivid ornamentation and further percussive effects.

Sonata No. 2 'Homage à Bartók' opens *Allegro moderato, ritmico* with extended staccato chords which punctuate the opening theme. The middle part of this movement is darkly expressive as it explores the implications of the opening melodic statements with many answering voices and a general harmonic complexity. The second movement, *Scherzo*, begins in 5/8 at frantic tempo before developing into fragments of pizzicato and sudden moments of *adagio* leading us to the inner world of contemplation before the resumption of the enigmatic

perpetual motion. The coda is a statement of considerable technical originality with trills, drum effects and tremolo effects. The *Interlude* which follows takes us into an interior world of delicate sensibility, with gentle touches of expressive sonorities throughout. From here the music moves abruptly into the *Toccata* where rapid melodic themes are supported or contrasted against a complex bass line, once again with rapidly changing time signatures.

Sonata No. 3, dedicated to the Croatian guitarist Zoran Dukić, is subtitled '*Cycling Modes*'. The composition opens *Vivo* with statements of the modes chosen, each being punctuated with a harmonic. After the opening statement a middle section, marked *Poco rubato*, offers complete contrast with chordal interludes. The movement ends with a virtuosic *Vivo* of gathering intensity before a gentle coda. A slow movement follows, opening with chords in harmonics separated by tiny filigrees of rapid arpeggios. This evolves to sinister fourths in triplets followed by a *Capriccioso pesante* episode and further alternate interludes varying from *agitato* to *calmo, lontano*. The final movement, *Presto nervoso*, is a dazzlingly energetic exploration of perpetual motion in 10/16 time, alleviated by calmer moments of *poco rubato*. After the outburst of energy and intensity a slow coda provides resolution and calm.

Sonata No. 4, written in 2016, is dedicated to Kostas Tosis. After a *poco rubato* opening, the music launches into *Allegro con spirito*, the time signature changing at significant points from 7/8 to 9/8, and back again. This develops into a *Più lento* section of quiet expressiveness before later exploding into great agitation with the return of *Allegro con spirito*. The final pages bring in huge chords of quasi-orchestral magnitude. The second movement, *Lamentoso*, once more has shifting time signatures. The *Sonata* takes on a tragic expressiveness at this time with complex harmonies and contrapuntal effects between treble and bass, punctuated by sad harmonics. The final

movement, *Allegro inquieto*, once more explores perpetual motion with treble chords contrasted against the harmonic bass line. A sombre middle episode returns us to the contemplative and the profound before a *scherzando* section leads back into a recapitulation of the *Allegro inquieto* atmosphere. Finally the music comes to rest with a passage marked *Con tensione* and a final gentle *lontano*.

Sonata No. 5, written in 2018, is dedicated to the Greek guitarist Dimitris Kotronakis. The first movement, *Movimento fluida*, begins with gentle poignant discords of complex harmonic textures. After this short introduction, the instruction changes to *Allegro moderato*, using both the higher notes of the guitar and an accompanying bass. This evolves towards a short passage of descending notes and a *rubato lamentoso* interlude of poetic intensity before the return of *Allegro moderato*. This introduces giant chordal effects and a kind of rhythmic atonal dance before the subtle *Rubato lamentoso* conclusion. *Scherzo diabolico* follows, a vigorously dissonant application of diabolical chords and changing time signatures, percussive and violent in mood with much agitation and, needless to say, highly virtuosic in its performance. A gentler pizzicato section follows before the advent of *Allegro ritmico* where the former agitation returns with even greater anguished intensity. But once more the movement ends with some serenity. The final movement, *Partite variate*, begins with a melody over moving chords. After this somewhat meditative opening comes moments of *Vivace preciso*, with their vividly agitated mood. This contrasts with the following short *pesante* ('heavy') broken into by a wild *Presto* of great brilliance. When this interlude has worked out its fury and passion, a *misterioso* section takes us into introspection and quietness, with a further *drammatico* statement to provide an appropriate finale, the last harmonic resounding like a distant bell.

Graham Wade

Immediately following my first album of five contemporary sonatas (*Unreal City*) I began to prepare my next project. The idea of recording the first five *Sonatas* of Atanas Ourkouzounov came from recording an album of his music with the Miscelanea Guitar Quartet. His music has always challenged and intrigued me: the harmonic and rhythmic musical language, rooted deeply in his Balkan heritage, connects profoundly to my own upbringing. This inspiration proved to be ample fuel for recording during my residency in Salzburg. At that point in time I was already playing the *First* and *Second Sonatas*. The *Fourth* was dedicated to me and shortly in my hands to premiere. I contacted Atanas, asking for the scores of the *Third* and *Fifth Sonatas*. His response was enthusiastic and plans to record the whole set were made right away.



Thanks to Ronny Wiesauer for the endless help – without him this album wouldn't have been recorded. Thanks to my family: Dimitris, Eirini, Ifigenia and Maria. To my sponsors Alector Guitars, Knobloch Strings and Guitarlift. Special thanks to my second family: Kiriaki, Kostas, Giorgos T., Maria, Anna, Sofia, Giorgos N., Ricardo, Diego, Pedro, Ivan and the Miscelanea Guitar Quartet for their support during this process.

This album is dedicated to my father Dimitris.

– Kostas Tosidis

Kostas Tosidis



Kostas Tosidis is a classical guitarist, performer, researcher and pedagogue. He studied at the Agios Pavlos Conservatory in Thessaloniki and the Mozarteum University Salzburg, Austria, where he obtained his Master's degree with distinction and became Eliot Fisk's assistant. Tosidis has won several international prizes with the Miscelanea Guitar Quartet, of which he is one of the founding members, and as a soloist. He has performed concerts throughout Europe and the US, and has recorded five albums featuring both solo and chamber music repertory. Since September 2016 Tosidis has been a PhD candidate at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, with his research exploring the possibilities of playing arrangements of contemporary pieces for cello, violin and viola on the guitar without losing the music's intention or style, and he has subsequently arranged Ligeti's *Sonata for Solo Cello* which has been published by Edition Schott. His doctoral research includes commissioned works by composers such as Atanas Ourkouzounov, Marios Joannou Elia, Feliu Gasull, Marco Döttinger, Giannis Papakrasas and Yorgos Nousis. Kostas Tosidis plays a guitar by Alector Guitars, uses Knobloch strings and a guitar rest by Guitarlift.

www.kostastosidis.com

www.kostastosidis.com



Photo: www.shotbyvit.com

Award-winning Atanas Ourkouzounov is one of Bulgaria's foremost composers and has written prolifically for the guitar. These five sonatas reveal elements of Bulgarian national music – sometimes through a textured soundscape that includes percussive elements – cast in forms that are often rhythmically asymmetric. Teeming with complex harmonies, contrapuntal effects and poignant depth, the sonatas are a vivid contribution to the contemporary guitar repertoire.

Atanas
OURKOUZOUNOV
(b. 1970)

	Sonata No. 1 (1996)	9:17
1	I. Allegro assai	3:53
2	II. Adagio quasi canzone	2:14
3	III. Vivo	3:05
	Sonata No. 2 ‘Hommage à Bartók’ (1997)	9:10
4	I. Allegro	3:12
5	II. Scherzo	2:02
6	III. Interlude	1:41
7	IV. Toccata	2:05
	Sonata No. 3 ‘Cycling Modes’ (2014)	12:06
8	I. Vivo	4:13
9	II. Poco rubato	4:38
10	III. Presto nervoso	3:06
	Sonata No. 4 (2016)	13:09
11	I. Allegro con spirito	5:02
12	II. Lamentoso	3:58
13	III. Allegro inquieto	4:00
	Sonata No. 5 (2018)	14:53
14	I. Movimento fluido	5:14
15	II. Scherzo diabolico	3:53
16	III. Partite variate	5:39

Kostas Tosidis, Guitar

Recorded: 27–29 December 2017 **1–3** **8–13**, 28 January 2018 **4–7** and 13 October 2018 **14–16**

at the Studio of the Mozarteum University Salzburg, Austria

Producers: Ronny Wiesauer, Atanas Ourkouzounov • Engineer: Ronny Wiesauer

Booklet notes: Graham Wade • Publishers: Éditions Henry Lemoine **1–7**, Doberman-Yppan **8–16**

Sponsors: Alector Guitars, Knobloch Strings, Guitarlift, Anemi

Cover image by Andrii Shelenkov (iStockphoto.com)

© & © 2019 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com