



# Bokyoung Byun

Winner 2021  
Guitar Foundation  
of America (GFA)  
Competition

C. ASSAD

BROUWER

CASTELNUOVO-  
TEDESCO

KAYA

LAM

LUIZ

PONCE

SEIXAS



# Bokyung Byun

## Guitar Recital

Bokyung Byun, one of the most formidable classical guitarists of the younger generation, presents here a wide variety of compositions from diverse nationalities and eras. The guitar's versatility is such that it can offer harpsichord music from the 18th century and works from the 21st century as well as acknowledged masterpieces of the 20th century with equal authority and authenticity. In a dazzling display of virtuosity, bravura, and immense sensitivity, the artist takes us through many moods and cultural styles.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, born in Florence, Italy, studied composition and piano at the Istituto Musicale Cherubini and later at the Liceo Musicale of Bologna. His teachers were Pizzetti and Casella, members of the Società Italiana di Musica, a group of influential composers with whom Castelnuovo-Tedesco became closely associated.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's interest in writing for the guitar began with his introduction to Andrés Segovia (1893–1987) – who had travelled to Italy with Manuel de Falla – at the Venice International Festival in 1932. As a result, he was to compose over a hundred works for the instrument, including concertos, chamber music, many solos and some of the finest pieces for two guitars.

In 1939, as a result of Mussolini's anti-Jewish edicts, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was obliged to seek refuge abroad. After settling in California, he became a prolific writer of film music between 1940 and 1956, in the same period composing more than 70 concert works.

*Tre preludi mediterranei, Op. 176* was written in 1955 in memory of his friend Renato Bellenghi, not long after the composer had visited Florence in the summer of 1954. The preludes, originally revised and edited by the German guitarist Siegfried Behrend, are substantial virtuosic compositions with various unusual features.

*Serenatella* ('Little Serenade'), marked *Allegretto*, opens with a gently harmonised, lively theme which leads to passages of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's favourite three-part chords played over a complementary bass line. This preliminary section leads on to a lively *Scherzando* with similarly voiced chords before a return of the opening theme. The work progresses to a *dolce* climactic statement.

*Nenia* can be defined as a poetic composition written in praise of a deceased person. Beginning in the unusual key (for guitar) of E flat, the work is marked *dolce e languido* ('sweet and languid'). It presents a kind of rhapsody in 5/4 time, structured with gentle triplets played freely with much rubato before moving on *a tempo*, occasionally changing the time signature to 4/4. Soon another mood enters, marked as 'a little agitated' but also 'expressive and lamenting'. A final section marked *dolce* (and later *dolcissimo*) advances towards a very calm conclusion.

The third prelude, *Danza*, is a virtuosic movement of rapidly alternating treble two-note chords and bass notes leading onto cadenza-like episodes of grand chords and stirring rhythms before the return of the opening textures. An *andantino* episode, marked 'languid and a little melancholic', reverts to a meditative mood before the restatement of the wild dance rhythms progresses to a *fortissimo* climax of chords in the higher register.

Manuel Ponce (1882–1948) was the founding father of 20th-century Mexican music. His pupil, Carlos Chávez 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, was also a distinguished concert pianist and conductor as well as a composer. 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 and Cesare Dall'Olio, who was Puccini's teacher. Later he studied in Berlin with the renowned pianist, Martin Krause, who in 1883 had performed for Liszt.

Ponce returned to his homeland in January 1907 and taught the piano at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música in 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. 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.

Two manuscripts of *Thème varié et Finale* exist. The first manuscript performed here, dated 8 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.

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

João Luiz (b. 1979), Brazilian guitarist, composer and educator, first began studying the guitar with Henrique Pinto and later enrolled at Mannes School of Music, New York as a student of Michael Newman. He was later awarded a doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music where he studied with David Leisner. He made his debut at the Aspen Music Festival in July 2010 as a member of the Brasil Guitar Duo and since then has performed extensively world-wide and recorded some 20 albums. A number of works by leading guitar composers such as Leo Brouwer, Clarice Assad, David Leisner and Paulo Bellinati have been written for him. In 2021 he was appointed to the faculty of Mannes School of Music.

João Luiz's own compositions unite many different styles of music and he is particularly concerned to 'include more students from diverse backgrounds, and highlight the unique role of the guitar in integrating the worlds of classical, jazz, and Latin American music.'

*Prelude No. 4*, commissioned by and dedicated to Louis O'Neill, was written in Brooklyn, New York, in December 2018. The work, marked *Andante*, begins with a short introduction of sustained arpeggiated chords followed by intermittent compact melodic lines. This progresses to a compact harmonised section featuring abrupt jazz-like rhythms. A subdued episode with a repeated accompaniment and subtle bass line leads to a more agitated mood, utilising rapid chordal patterns reminiscent of the music of Villa-Lobos. The piece concludes with a gentle coda.

Since his concert debut at the age of six, Turkish American guitarist and composer Dr Celil Refik Kaya (b. 1991) has received many high accolades. He was the youngest contestant to win First Prize in the 2012 JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition, and is a prize winner of international guitar competitions across Europe and the US. He is currently the coordinator of guitar studies and teaching at the New Jersey City University.

*Sonata No. 1* opens *Allegro moderato*, with lyrical themes contrasted against episodes of arpeggios, varied developments of the theme, and subtle modifications to the opening melodies, leading to a short but lively coda. The second movement, *Andante espressivo*, is richly romantic, moving from the opening meditative mood to a *cantabile* rhythmic barcarolle style before advancing to a more turbulent episode. The piece ends with gentle chords played freely.

*Scherzo-Finale* presents an optimistic mood recalling a tarantella type dance of great energy. As the work proceeds the momentum builds up in perpetual motion up to the final note.

Dr Angel Lam (b. 1978) is a prolific composer, originally from Hong Kong and now living in the US. Her music has been performed worldwide, and received a remarkable number of accolades including a GRAMMY nomination.

*Little Snow* was commissioned by the Guitar Foundation of America for Jitsupa Petchmark, guitarist and mentee of the GFA, and is dedicated to the memory of the composer's father, and to her daughter. Angel Lam describes *Little Snow* as being inspired by the following memory:

'My daughter was born on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the lunisolar calendar, the day of 'little snow'– the first snowfall that marks the beginning of winter. Last January in the middle of winter, my father departed the world suddenly, and unexpectedly. They missed meeting each other in this world during the pandemic year.

Years and years ago, when I was much younger, my father told me a dream he had of a little girl who looked like a snow fairy, with plump white cheeks and a round body, who had walked through a light, snowy landscape ... to come visit me. My father heard the sound of a plucked instrument, which he could not forget ... a song about life, of joys and sorrows.'

In *Little Snow* the expression marks denote the nature of the work. The work begins with *Contemplative, deeply felt, with liberty*, moves on to *Questioning* followed by a tremolo section marked *Ethereal, light snow*, the latter concluding with arpeggiated chords, *Uncompromising with destiny*, before a calm coda, *Resolute and lyrical*.

The GFA has issued the following comments about their sponsorship of this composition:

'The Guitar Foundation of America is committed to cultivating Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access in the international guitar community and in the repertoire published for the instrument. Many factors, including a composer's race, gender, and sexual orientation, have historically created a narrow representation of our community in the classical music canon. For this first volume of the GFA Spotlight Series, the GFA commissioned seven new works by composers of colour ... These commissioned pieces and transcriptions were premiered by students in the GFA Mentorship Program in 2021.

With this collection, the guitar takes a step towards a more inclusive and representative repertoire that nurtures creativity and inclusion for generations of guitarists to come. Growing the canon enriches the musical experiences of our entire international guitar community through exposure to diverse perspectives and voices, complementing the invaluable lessons we learn from the existing contributions of pieces that form the canon.'

José António Carlos de Seixas (born in Coimbra, Portugal, 1704, died in Lisbon, 1742) was the leading Portuguese composer of his era. At the age of 14 he became organist of Coimbra Cathedral before moving two years later to become organist at the Royal Chapel, Lisbon. There he remained for the rest of his life. Though he is said to have written over 700 keyboard toccatas only 88 have survived due to the devastating Lisbon earthquake in 1755.

From 1720 both Carlos de Seixas and Domenico Scarlatti were employed at the Royal Chapel. Whereas Scarlatti wrote his sonatas in the single or paired binary sonata form, Seixas also composed sonatas with several movements. *Sonatas No. 23*, marked *Adagio*, and *No. 24, Allegro*, offer a contrast between meditative and brilliant styles, both being ideally suitable for transcription to guitar.

Leo Brouwer (born 1939, Havana, Cuba), has been universally acclaimed as one of the most challenging and innovative of contemporary composers. He 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.

*La Gran Sarabanda*, commissioned by the Guitar Foundation of America for the 2018 International Concert Artist Competition, was composed from November 2017 to January 2018. The music presents a virtuosic set of variations on the traditional theme of *Folia de España*.

After a short introduction of great rhythmic and harmonic ingenuity, the main theme is introduced, notable here for its ornamented complexity. Four variations follow, each with a vividly defined character. Variation I, marked *presto*, demands rapid technical acrobatics, moving across the whole fingerboard; variation II, *Maestoso*, is in vivid contrast with weighty chords and the theme well delineated; while variation III moves into the realm of agitated brilliance. Variation IV also produces guitaristic fireworks followed by a return to variation I before a brief coda and a double *fortissimo* final chord.

Clarice Assad (b. 1978), Brazilian-American composer, pianist, arranger and singer, is a member of the fabulously gifted Assad family. Her father is Sérgio Assad, who, along with her uncle Odair Assad, are two of the world's leading guitarists, while her aunt is the singer and songwriter Badi Assad. Clarice first studied at Roosevelt University, Chicago, and the University of Michigan. For some time in the 1990s Clarice moved to France to stay with Sérgio Assad, and while there studied piano and improvisation with Nathalie Fortin, a professor from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Paris. Eventually after returning to Rio de Janeiro she went to the US to study film scoring at Berklee College of Music in 1998.

Over subsequent years Clarice Assad has created a formidable output of a wide variety of music including guitar music, piano works, pieces for large and small chamber ensembles, more than a dozen orchestral works, a guitar concerto, stage works and electronic music.

*The Last Song* is a beautiful exercise in expressive melody and has been arranged for a variety of musical contexts including piano and orchestra, two guitars and piano, and solo guitar. The piece begins with a short introduction before the main theme enters. Not only does it offer extensive threads of melodic inventiveness but it also presents exquisite harmonies and modulations.

**Graham Wade**

## Bokyung Byun



Photo: Molly Pan

Praised by *Classical Guitar* magazine, Bokyung Byun enjoys a reputation as one of the most sought after guitarists of her generation, and holds the distinction of being the first female winner of the prestigious JoAnn Falletta International Guitar Concerto Competition. Byun has excelled in the competitive circuit, winning numerous awards including the Grand Prize at the Guitar Foundation of America International Concert Artist Competition. Byun's debut recording in 2020, featuring works by Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Ponce, Walton and Sierra, garnered critical acclaim in *American Record Guide* and *Soundboard* magazine. Born in Seoul, Korea, Byun began playing guitar at the age of six. She holds Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Southern California. Byun is currently on the guitar faculty of California State University, Fullerton.

[www.bokyungbyun.com](http://www.bokyungbyun.com)

**Bokyung Byun, winner of the 2021 Guitar Foundation of America (GFA) Competition and one of the most formidable classical guitarists of the younger generation, presents here a wide variety of music from diverse nationalities and eras. From 18th-century Classicism and 20th-century works inspired by the mastery of Andrés Segovia, to the eclectic works of today, Byun takes us through many moods and cultural styles in a dazzling display of virtuosity, bravura and immense sensitivity.**

## **BOKYUNG BYUN**

### **Guitar Recital**

<p><b>Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco</b> (1895–1968) <b>Tre preludi mediterranei, Op. 176</b> (1955) <span style="float: right;"><b>12:12</b></span></p> <p><b>1 No. 1. Serenatella</b> <span style="float: right;">3:17</span></p> <p><b>2 No. 2. Nenia</b> <span style="float: right;">4:31</span></p> <p><b>3 No. 3. Danza</b> <span style="float: right;">4:17</span></p> <p><b>Manuel Ponce</b> (1882–1948)</p> <p><b>4 Thème varié et Finale</b> (First version, 1926) <span style="float: right;"><b>8:56</b></span></p> <p><b>João Luiz</b> (b. 1979)</p> <p><b>5 Prelude No. 4</b> (2018) <span style="float: right;"><b>3:15</b></span></p> <p><b>Celil Refik Kaya</b> (b. 1991) <b>Guitar Sonata No. 1 in D major</b> (2017) <span style="float: right;"><b>14:05</b></span></p> <p><b>6 I. Allegro moderato</b> <span style="float: right;">5:46</span></p> <p><b>7 II. Andante espressivo</b> <span style="float: right;">4:56</span></p> <p><b>8 III. Scherzo-Finale</b> <span style="float: right;">3:17</span></p>	<p><b>Angel Lam</b> (b. 1978)</p> <p><b>9 Little Snow</b> (2021) <span style="float: right;"><b>7:40</b></span></p> <p><b>Carlos de Seixas</b> (1704–1742)</p> <p><b>10 Keyboard Sonata No. 23 in D minor – I. Adagio</b> (c. 1720–42) (arr. R. Oliveira for guitar) <span style="float: right;"><b>1:37</b></span></p> <p><b>11 Keyboard Sonata No. 24 in D minor – Allegro</b> (c. 1720–42) (arr. R. Oliveira for guitar) <span style="float: right;"><b>2:08</b></span></p> <p><b>Leo Brouwer</b> (b. 1939)</p> <p><b>12 La Gran Sarabanda</b> (2018) (extended version) <span style="float: right;"><b>9:24</b></span></p> <p><b>Clarice Assad</b> (b. 1978)</p> <p><b>13 The Last Song</b> (2010) (arr. B. Fogo, D. Russell and O. Vesely for guitar) <span style="float: right;"><b>4:01</b></span></p>
---	---

Recorded: 20–21 December 2021 at St. Paul’s Church, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada  
 Session producer, engineer and editor: Norbert Kraft • Booklet notes: Graham Wade  
 Publishers: A. Forlivesi & C. Edizioni Musicali, Firenze **1**–**3**, Schott Music GmbH & Co. KG **4**,  
 Guitar By Masters LLC **5**, Les Productions d’Oz **6**–**11**, Ediciones Espiral Eterna **12**,  
 Virtual Artists Collective Publishing **13**

Guitar by Dieter Müller, Biedenkopf • Cover photograph by Molly Pan

© & © 2022 Naxos Rights (Europe) Ltd • www.naxos.com