

# Emanuele Buono, classical guitar

## Program Notes

by Kuan Teoh

### **Etude No. 4 - Adagio Cantabile by Giulio Regondi (1822-1872)**

Giulio Regondi was born in Genoa, Italy, and raised by a foster father who nurtured his talent for the guitar. After being presented as a child prodigy in several European cities, he eventually moved to London, which was, inconceivable as it may seem today, considered a center of guitar culture at the time.

This etude is the fourth of 10 by Regondi. Basic in form but deep in expression, it begins with a simple line accompanied by chords. A key change occurs in the second section where the composer builds a romantic movement out of broken chords in the bass underneath a beautiful songlike melody.

### **Divertimento op. 13 no. 2 by François de Fossa (1775–1849)**

#### **Largo cantabile, Rondò allegro**

“The guitar is a miniature orchestra in itself.”—Ludwig van Beethoven.

Perhaps the least known composer in this program, François de Fossa was born in the south of France. He joined the army at the age of 17 and remained in the army for most of his life. Little is known of his musical training and much of this virtuoso guitarist’s life has yet to be uncovered. We do know that he was a friend of Dionisio Aguado whose guitar method he translated, and that he transcribed Luigi Boccherini’s guitar quintets. We also know that he spent some time in Madrid, where he was known as the Haydn of the guitar for, not surprisingly, transcribing some of Haydn’s pieces for guitar. For example, de Fossa’s Divertimento op. 13 no. 4 is a guitar transcription of parts of two Haydn’s symphonies, the Andante from symphony no. 53 in D, “L’Imperiale,” and the Rondo Allegro a transcription of the final presto movement from symphony no. 85, “La Reine,” one of five of the Paris symphonies.

In this program we have de Fossa’s second divertimento from op. 13. While not a transcription of a Haydn symphony, it is an example of the composer’s exploration into varied musical form. The first movement, Largo Cantabile, is written in two sections. The first section mimics the recitative of an opera in which a single voice is accompanied by equally simple bass lines or chords. The second section is what one would expect of a guitar composition from the period, still with a little recitative and added complexity, foreshadowing the movement to come.

The beginning of the second movement, like the first, is an exercise in simplicity. A catchy introduction and a repeating theme that can only be described as quite tame, but the true fireworks happen in the final and longest section of the movement. Snappy exchanges of motifs between voices and lightning-fast ornamentation accent the section with fast triplet scale runs providing rhythmic variety. A truly dazzling finish worthy of Giuliani, Regondi, and other masters of the day.

### **Suite no. 6 in D minor by Sylvius Leopold Weiss (1687–1750)**

#### ***Fantasia, Alemande, Courante, Bourrée Sarabande, Menuet, Giga***

This work by lutenist and composer Weiss, a contemporary of J. S. Bach, consists of the typical movements adopted during the Baroque era to form a suite. Classical guitar aficionados familiar with Bach's lute suites will recognise the various styles of movements in this suite.

For a brief history of the lute I turned to Edward Martin, a frequent performer in Europe and the US known for his recordings and teaching. His most recent recording, *Courante*, with lutenist Thomas Walker received a 5-star rating in *Early Music Today*. Martin is on the faculty at the College of St. Scholastica and teaches privately in Duluth. He is the author of countless articles and program notes for his own and other recordings. The following is taken from a copy he graciously sent me of the notes he wrote for the recording *L'Infidèle* by Eduardo Egüez.

The lute, with its very privileged position in the musical culture of Europe, was the instrument for all walks of life—it was the instrument of choice of both amateur and professional players alike, many of whom developed their art to such high acclaim that they were among some of the most renowned and well-paid artists of their time. This instrument had such widespread appeal that 50,000 compositions for it have survived. In a span of 150 years from the early Renaissance, musical styles slowly evolved, the lute itself was transformed from the early Renaissance 5 or 6-course lutes (tuned mainly in fourths) through many various transitional tunings; the term “course” refers to either a single or pair of strings-- for example, a 5-course lute would have 5 pairs of strings, making for a 10- stringed instrument. These transitional tunings finally culminated in the “d—minor tuning” of the early Baroque. In 1630 to 1640, this “classical” tuning became the standard in performing music on the lute, and it lasted for another 150 years or more, until the lute was, for a time, abandoned for more strongly voiced stringed instruments, to be revived only in the 20th century. In its long period of popularity, versions of the lute were played in central Europe, in France, England, Holland, Scotland,

Germany, Bohemia, Czech lands, Italy, Austria, and even Scandinavia. The final instrumental version—the 11-course lute—had 6 courses on the fingerboard, and another 5 added basses, which were mostly played for deeper basses, not fingered with the left hand.

In the middle to late 17th century France, musical styles of lute compositions were transformed from the polyphony of the Renaissance to a highly refined musical language, where the musical expression was described as subtle, intricate, and highly sonorous, and where emphasis was on the beauty of the sound of the instrument itself. It was not until the death of Froberger in 1667, when the structure of the “classical suite” finally was formed. In it, “core” dances included the stately and delicate Allemande in its binary form; this latter dance was essentially very melodic. The capricious Courante in ternary form was subtle and graceful, much unlike its Italian “Corrente” counterpart; this dance was certainly the most refined and ambiguous of them all with unexpected turns in harmony, and was the favorite of lutenists, judging by the extant number of Courantes. The Sarabande, coming from the Zarabanda, was originally a fast dance at the end of the suite, or partita, before it mutated to a slow, sensuous dance in ternary form. The concluding movement was the Gigue, with its quick, staccato-like nature. The suite, or partita, was a melding of the German Allemande, the French or Italian Courante, the Spanish Sarabande, and the English Gigue.

The 11-course lute lasted for almost 70 to 80 years in an essentially unaltered state. After the lute declined in France, with the last publication in 1699, the German, Austrian, and Czech lands continued the tradition, where a new generation of lutenists, including Phillip Franz LeSage de Richee, Jacques Bittner, Georg Weichenberger, Wolff Jacob Lauffensteiner, Johann Anton Losy, Wenzel Ludwig von Radolt, Kroppfgans, Ernst Gottlieb Baron, and Sylvius Leopold Weiss, reshaped its sonorities.

### **Three Pieces by Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909)**

#### ***Granada, Cataluña, Sevilla***

These well-known pieces by Isaac Albeniz round out the program. Originally written for the piano, these pieces have been transcribed many times over for the guitar. It is said that Albeniz himself preferred Francisco Tarrega’s transcriptions over the others and in fact preferred Tarrega’s transcriptions to the original piano versions.