

SHARON ISBIN | PACIFICA QUARTET

Souvenirs of Spain & Italy



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MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO

Quintet for Guitar and String Quartet,
Op. 143 (23:45)

- 1 I. Allegro, vivo e schietto (5:53)
- 2 II. Andante mesto (6:54)
- 3 III. Scherzo: Allegro con spirito, alla
marcia (4:49)
- 4 IV. Finale: Allegro con fuoco (6:02)

ANTONIO VIVALDI

ARR. EMILIO PUJOL/ED. SHARON ISBIN
Concerto in D Major, RV 93 (11:02)

- 5 I. Allegro (3:42)
- 6 II. Largo (5:00)
- 7 III. Allegro (2:16)

Sharon Isbin, guitar
Austin Hartman, violin
Mark Holloway, viola
Brandon Vamos, cello

JOAQUÍN TURINA

8 La oración del torero for string
quartet, Op. 34 (7:56)

LUIGI BOCCHERINI

Quintet for Guitar and String Quartet
in D Major, G. 448 (18:30)

- 9 I. Pastorale (4:45)
- 10 II. Allegro maestoso (6:43)
- 11 III. Grave assai — Fandango (6:59)*

TT: (61:36)

*Eduardo Leandro, castanets/tambourine

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PROGRAM NOTES *by Allan Kozinn*

In its purest form, the classical guitar's nylon (formerly catgut) strings and medium-sized resonating chamber yielded a sweet, rounded sound — but a soft-spoken one, compared with bowed and blown instruments. As a result, the guitar, in its classical incarnation, has for the most part been a lonely instrument, a solo voice singing a remarkably varied repertory that embraces everything from dolorous introspection to vigorous dance music, but typically on its own. The recording studio, of course, has always been a place where guitarists can redress the balance problems inherent in ensemble music, and relatively recently, guitarists of Sharon Isbin's generation have been using subtle sound reinforcement technology that has leveled the playing field in the concert hall as well.

But even before the advent of recordings and amplification, brave composers and guitarists (and before them, lutenists) have been intent on creating a concerto and chamber repertory for the instrument, and quite a few have successfully melded the guitar's timbres with those of orchestral instruments.

This recording brings together three notably successful combinations of plucked and bowed strings, all by Italian-born composers, although one was living in Spain and another (of Spanish ancestral origin) in the United States, when they composed their scores — and, as a *lagniappe* of sorts, a 20th-century Spanish work originally composed for four lutes, but most frequently heard in its later version for strings, as the Pacifica Quartet performs it here.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968) described himself as an “anti-modernist,” and indeed, he was more concerned with the continuity of the musical language than with the modernist fascination with developing techniques that swept aside the accepted conventions of tonality and structure. The scion of a Jewish family that settled in Italy after the expulsion from Spain, in 1492, he often used his heritage as inspiration — for example, in his Violin Concerto No. 2, composed for Jascha Heifetz in 1931. The following year, Castelnuovo-Tedesco met Andrés Segovia, who was at the start of his own

career and was encouraging composers to contribute to the guitar's repertoire. Castelnuovo-Tedesco immediately complied, supplying Segovia with the *Variazioni attraverso i secoli* (*Variations à travers les siècles*) a few months later. Castelnuovo-Tedesco continued to write solo guitar works for the rest of his life, as well as one of the first modern concertos for the instrument (in 1939), and the present Quintet — the first contemporary chamber work to put the instrument in the spotlight.

By the time the concerto was complete, Castelnuovo-Tedesco had decided to leave Italy, where his music had been banned, and where the country's new (1938) racial laws made life untenable. Heifetz sponsored his immigration to the United States, where he settled in Beverly Hills and quickly found work in as a prolific composer of film scores, including those for *Tortilla Flat*, *And Then There Were None*, and *Gaslight*.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco's Quintet for Guitar and String Quartet (Op. 143) had its genesis in another encounter with Segovia, who had come to Los Angeles at the start of 1950 to play the concerto Castelnuovo-Tedesco had written for

him in 1939. After the performance, Segovia was invited to perform with the city's chamber music society. At first, he demurred, citing a paucity of chamber repertoire. But never one to let an opportunity slip away, he added that he would accept the engagement if Castelnuovo-Tedesco composed a chamber piece for him. The composer accepted on the spot. By February 7, he had completed the first of the work's four movements; on March 5, he had completed the full score. A year later, Segovia returned to Los Angeles to play the premiere with the Paganini Quartet.

An urbane work, rich in vibrant themes and dialogues among individual lines, the Quintet is a work Castelnuovo-Tedesco later recalled as "one of my best chamber works, not only as a work for the guitar." He described the piece at length in his autobiography, *Una Vita di Musica: Un libro di ricordi* (*A Life of Music: A Book of Memories*, edited by James Westby, 2005):

The Quintet has a simple, flowing, almost Schubertian lyricism (and you know how much I love Schubert!). The first movement is particularly Schubertian; the Allegro

vivo e schietto is one of the most concise and stringent movements I have ever written. However, the second movement, the “Andante mesto,” is my favorite, with its long and touching melodic phrasing in which a typically Spanish melisma emerges (in the central part); in fact I wrote above it, “Souvenir d’Espagne.” This is followed by a spirited third movement, Scherzo alla Marcia. The Quintet ends with a fiery Finale in 6/8, very contrapuntal but also interrupted, in the middle, with the more languid rhythm of a habanera, another “Souvenir d’Espagne.”

The Concerto in D major (RV 93) is the most enduringly popular of the four chamber works Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) composed with the lute as a solo voice, the others being a second concerto, in D minor, and a pair of trio sonatas, in G minor and C major. All but the D minor Concerto were composed while Vivaldi was traveling in Bohemia — most likely in Prague — between 1729 and 1731. It was not published in Vivaldi’s lifetime, but the manuscript survives (it is at the Turin National University Library, in Turin, Italy), showing it to have been scored

for two violins, lute and a bass line that would typically have been the foundation of a basso continuo — the flexible support ensemble that usually included a cello, with a harpsichord or theorbo filling out the harmonies. The manuscript also shows a dedication: *P S E Il Con: Wrttjij* — or, Per Sua Eccellenza Il Conte Wrttbij, most likely Count Johann Joseph von Wrtby, who was known to have been an avid lutenist.

Modern performances often transfer the lute part to the guitar and have the cello hold down the continuo line, without the help of harmony instruments, although period instrument ensembles are increasingly playing the work as scored. The version Sharon Isbin and members of the Pacifica Quartet offer here is by Emilio Pujol, who reassigned the second violin part to the viola, creating a more evenly-balanced ensemble.

Guitar historians and listeners fascinated with the instrument’s modern development will relish the degree to which this edition offers a kind of authenticity that looks back at the guitar world at the turn of the century, when Pujol’s sensibilities were

formed during his time as a student of Francisco Tárrega, the last great virtuoso guitarist-composer of the 19th century. Pujol was also an influential teacher — he presided over master classes in Spain nearly until his death, at 94, in 1980 — as well as a pioneering musicologist who rediscovered and transcribed the early repertory of the guitar and its antecedents. Often, as in this case, he struck a balance between fidelity to the original, and revisions that, to his ear, yielded more balanced sound when played on modern instruments.

Instrumentation aside, the work itself is a vital three-movement score, with a pair of Allegro movements surrounding a dreamy Largo in which the guitar's bittersweet, dotted-note meditation is accompanied by sustained string chords, and is expanded upon deftly by Sharon Isbin in her own ornamentation. The opening Allegro is a modified Rondo movement, with its opening full ensemble figure serving as a Ritornello, and the solo line offering major and minor key elaborations and chromatic climbing figures, all at a lively tempo. And the finale, in a brisk 12/8 meter, has the character of a rustic Italian dance, with the solo line — as in the first movement — elaborating on the rhythmic figures

introduced by the full ensemble. The Spanish composer Joaquín Turina (1882–1949) was, like Castelnuovo-Tedesco, one of many composers who responded plentifully to Segovia's call for new works. But *La oración del torero* (The Bullfighter's Prayer), Op. 34, was not among his guitar pieces. Composed in 1925 and lasting less than ten minutes, it is a moment of distilled fervor — a blend of anxiety and introspection, intended to capture the few moments a bullfighter spends in a small, incense-filled chapel, praying for God's protection before going out to face the bull.

Turina composed the work for the *Quarteto Aguilar*, a lute quartet, although the lutes at hand were neither the small Renaissance instrument nor its larger Baroque descendent, but rather, a set of mandolin-like Spanish instruments of different sizes and pitches. Appearing just as Spanish music was buoyed by a wave of nationalism, and suiting that spirit perfectly in both musical accent and subject matter, the *Oración* was an immediate success. But Turina realized that it would not have a life of its own, internationally, unless he published a version in a more conventional scoring;

so in 1936, he reworked the piece, creating editions for string quartet, string orchestra, and piano trio.

When Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805) wrote his Guitar Quintet No. 4 in D major (G. 448), in 1798, the guitar had not yet found its place on the world's concert stages, although it was making some headway: a thin-waisted, double-strung version of the instrument was popular at the French court, and there were guitarist-composers working diligently in Italy and in England. Still, the instrument was at its most popular in the land of its birth, Spain — the country where Boccherini worked from 1768 until his death.

The son of a noted cellist and double bassist, Boccherini traveled widely, and his ability to soak up the musical accents of the places he visited — the nascent Classical style in Vienna and hints of flamenco in Spain, for example — helped him develop the suave cosmopolitan style that informs the D major Guitar Quintet. Boccherini studied the cello and composition in Rome before moving to Vienna with his father, who found them both positions in the

court orchestra in 1757. He returned to Lucca in 1764, with positions in theatre orchestras and churches, and shortly thereafter he was working in Milan with Giuseppe Sammartini's orchestra. He toured Europe in 1766 with the violinist and composer Filippo Manfredini, and ended up in Paris, where Boccherini remained for two years, building his reputation as a composer of stylish chamber works.

In Paris, he struck up an acquaintance with the Spanish ambassador to France, who persuaded Boccherini to move to Spain, where he quickly ingratiated himself to the royal family by dedicating a set of quartets to Prince Don Luis, the brother of King Charles III. The prince employed him immediately, in his dual capacity as a virtuoso cellist and as a composer — an appointment he held until the prince's death, in 1785, whereupon he became chamber music composer to Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia — a job he was able to meet without relocating from Madrid.

The Guitar Quintet was one of about a dozen he supplied to François de Borgia, the Marquis of Benavente — a Spanish nobleman who played the

guitar and wanted versions of some of his favorite Boccherini chamber works with adapted guitar parts. These were, in other words, not newly composed works, but arrangements of existing pieces. In the case of the Guitar Quintet No. 4, the source for the first two movements was the Quintet in D, Op. 10, No. 6 (G. 270, from 1771), with the finale drawn from the Quintet in D, Op. 40, No. 2 (G. 341, from 1788). Thanks to the modern popularity of the guitar, the resulting guitar version, first published in 1925, is far better known now than either of the originals.

It begins with a graceful Pastorale movement, built on a lovely, rocking theme, traded between the strings and the sweetly harmonized guitar line. In the Allegro maestoso, the guitar is in a mostly (although not entirely) accompanimental role, complete with full-bodied strummed passages for emphasis, while violin lines — and Boccherini's own instrument, the cello — take the lead much of the time.

The third movement begins with a Grave assai. It's tempting to note that this slow section reprises the gently melancholy spirit of the opening Pastorale, but of course, the movements are taken from different works, composed 17 years apart. And in any case, the main business of the movement is the stunning Fandango, a vigorous Spanish dance in which the guitar moves easily between refined detailing and hard-strumming flamenco effects, while a castanet part further emphasizes the music's folkloric roots and the strings contribute effects of their own, including glissando passages that underscore the festive spirit.

Allan Kozinn writes about music and musicians for the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Opera News, and other publications.

Sharon Isbin

Acclaimed as “the pre-eminent guitarist of our time,” multiple GRAMMY winner Sharon Isbin has been soloist with nearly 200 orchestras and has given sold-out performances in the world’s finest halls. Winner of the Toronto, Madrid, and Munich Competitions, Germany’s Echo Klassik, and *Guitar Player’s* Best Classical Guitarist awards, she created festivals for Carnegie Hall and NPR, and has appeared on *All Things Considered*, *CBS Sunday*, and the cover of 50 magazines. She performed in Scorsese’s Oscar-winning *The Departed*, the first internationally televised 9/11 memorial, the White House by invitation of President Obama, and as the only classical artist in the 2010 GRAMMY Awards. PBS performances include *Tavis Smiley*, the *Billy Joel Gershwin Prize*, and the acclaimed documentary *Sharon Isbin: Troubadour*, seen by millions around the globe and winner of an ASCAP Television Broadcast Award.

Isbin’s 30 recordings include the historic *Alma Española* with mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard, *Sharon Isbin: 5 Classic Albums*, *Guitar Passions*, her GRAMMY-

winning *Journey to the New World* with guests Joan Baez and Mark O’Connor, which spent 63 consecutive weeks on top *Billboard* charts, and her Latin GRAMMY-nominated concerto disc with the New York Philharmonic, the orchestra’s only recording with guitar. Recent performance highlights include a commission for her by Carnegie Hall for its 125th anniversary; a 21-city Guitar Passions tour with jazz greats Stanley Jordan and Romero Lubambo; and collaborations with Sting, Steve Vai, and Amjad Ali Khan. She has premiered over 80 works composed for her by some of the world’s finest composers.

Isbin’s teachers include Andrés Segovia, Oscar Ghiglia, and Rosalyn Tureck, with whom she collaborated on landmark editions/recordings of the Bach lute suites. Author of the *Classical Guitar Answer Book*, she directs the guitar department at the Aspen Music Festival, and is the founding director of the guitar department at The Juilliard School.

www.sharonisbin.com

Pacifica Quartet

Simin Ganatra, violin
Austin Hartman, violin
Mark Holloway, viola
Brandon Vámos, cello

Recognized for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and often-daring repertoire choices, over the past 25 years the Pacifica Quartet has achieved international recognition as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. Named the quartet-in-residence at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in March 2012, the Pacifica was previously the quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and resident performing artist at the University of Chicago. The ensemble received a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance. In 2017, the Pacifica Quartet was appointed to lead the Center for Advanced Quartet Studies at the Aspen Music Festival and School.

Formed in 1994, the Pacifica Quartet quickly won chamber music's top competitions including the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award. In 2002, the ensemble was honored with Chamber Music America's Cleveland Quartet Award and appointment to

Lincoln Center's The Bowers Program (formerly CMS Two). The Quartet was awarded a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2006 and named "Ensemble of the Year" by *Musical America* in 2009.

The Pacifica Quartet has carved a niche for itself as the preeminent interpreter of string quartet cycles, harnessing the group's singular focus and incredible stamina to portray each composer's evolution, often over the course of just a few days. Having given highly acclaimed performances of the complete Carter, Mendelssohn, and Beethoven cycles around the world, the Quartet presented the monumental Shostakovich cycle in Chicago, New York, Montreal, and London, in Wigmore Hall.

The members of the Pacifica Quartet live in Bloomington, IN, where they serve as quartet-in-residence and full-time faculty members at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. Prior to its appointment, the Quartet was on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana from 2003 to 2012.

www.pacificaquartet.com

CREDITS

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Sharon Isbin plays a guitar by Antonius Mueller with Savarez strings

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