



Music Department
California Polytechnic State University

Kurt Gramckow
◆ *guitar* ◆

A Senior Recital in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for a Bachelor of Arts in Music

March 11, 2011

Friday at 7:30 p.m

Davidson Music Center

Room 218



Sponsored by the Cal Poly Music Department and College of Liberal Arts

Program
Senior Recital
Kurt Gramckow, guitar

- Cancion del Emperador*.....Luis de Narváez (fl 1526-49)
- The Frog Galliard* John Dowland (1563-1626)
- Cavatina* Stanley Myers (1930-1993)
- Cello suite 6, BWV 1012*..... Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
Prelude
Allemande
Gavotte I & II
- Vals, Op. 8, No. 4* Agustín Barrios Mangoré (1885-1944)

Intermission

- El Decameron Negro*..... Leo Brouwer (b. 1939)
I. El Arpa Del Guerrero
II. La Huida del los Amantes por el Valle de los Ecos
III. Ballada de la Doncela Enamorada

Arabic set

- Tahmilah Suznak* Traditional

Jinn Sawada, violin
Joel Demir, oud
Keeth CrowHawk Hershman, doumbek
Nic Garrison, nay
Patrick Bang, bass

- Taqsim* Improvisation
Joel Demir, oud

- 'Aziza* Mohammed Abd el-Wahhab (1899-1991)

Jinn Sawada, violin
Joel Demir, oud
Keeth CrowHawk Hershman, doumbek
Nic Garrison, nay
Patrick Bang, bass

Program Notes

Narváez

The guitar did not fully arrive at its current form until the nineteenth century, and began to be more accepted as an “art” instrument even more recently. As a result, many of the pieces we play from earlier periods are transcriptions from other instruments. “Canción del Emperador” by Spanish composer and vihuelist Luys de Narváez is an example of a piece that has actually been transcribed twice, first as an arrangement from voice to vihuela and more recently from vihuela to the guitar. “Canción del Emperador” is a setting of “Mille Regretz,” a four-part chanson by Josquin de Prez (c.1453 –1521).

That Narváez is able to translate convincingly a four-part, polyphonic vocal piece to the vihuela is a testament to his compositional skill. “Canción del Emperador” lets the gloom of the original chanson’s text seep through: “A thousand regrets at deserting you/ and leaving behind your loving face,/I feel so much sadness and such painful distress,/ that it seems to me my days will soon dwindle away.” Narváez maintains this mood and expertly translates four flowing, continuous vocal lines, hiding the inherent limitations of a plucked instrument.

Translating the vihuela work to the guitar is an easier endeavor. The vihuela is a six-course plucked string instrument that thrived in Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There are a few different tunings available for the instrument, but the most common of these is essentially the same as the renaissance lute. Because of this, I use the same relative tuning (3rd string lowered to F#) on this piece as I do on the John Dowland. This piece lacks any kind of technical fireworks; instead, the beauty and challenge of it is to not only imitate a human voice, but to imitate four on the same instrument.

Dowland

Just by listening to this piece one would have no way of knowing how morose the text is on which it is set, or the overall fixation on the melancholy of its composer. This galliard, one of Dowland’s 100 or so lute solos, is the basis for his song “Now, O now I need must part,” though it is unclear which version Dowland wrote first.

Little is known about Dowland’s background. He was very likely from an aristocratic background and was consistently supported by wealthy patrons. However, over the course of his life, he was consistently passed over for positions in the royal court, which he interpreted as a series of personal humiliations.

The galliard was a very popular dance form in the sixteenth century. Often paired with the slower, more processional pavanne, the galliard is a lively, fast-paced dance usually in a triple meter. Dancing to a galliard is an athletic affair; moving between hopping on the ball of one foot while kicking the other in the air, to a large ornamented jump between beats, to a resting position with one foot on top of the other. When I was first learning this piece, I was told not to rush the music at the end of the bar, lest I leave the dancer stranded mid-air.

John Dowland was particularly fond of the galliard, writing about thirty of them. Definitive versions of Dowland’s works are difficult to come by; Dowland’s more popular pieces exist in several different variants, and Dowland would most likely have performed his pieces in a very open, improvisatory manner.

Myers

If you have seen the 1978 film *The Deer Hunter*, you likely will recognize this piece from it. Written by the English film composer Stanley Myers, a version of this piece actually first appeared in the film *The Walking Stick*. Myers was a prolific composer, writing for cabarets, musicals, and over 100 film and television scores.

I am often exasperated that the classical guitar is so often typecast in a one-dimensional way: nostalgic, Spanish-flavored prettiness, meant to be mostly ignored in the background. Nevertheless, the guitar does have a certain intimate, delicate quality, which this piece captures perfectly. The recording used in the film was by John Williams (not to be confused with the film composer of the same name). However, this piece actually needed to be modified for the solo guitar: the ringing melody notes were recorded separately from the arpeggiated accompaniment. Arranging the piece for solo guitar ends up making the piece more difficult than it sounds, as great care needs to be taken to keep these separate lines ringing simultaneously.

Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach was the preeminent composer of the Baroque period and one of the most significant figures in musical history. During his life, Bach was known primarily as a virtuoso organist; it was only after his death that his skill as a composer was fully realized. Bach's six suites for solo cello (BWV 1007-1012) were most likely written between 1717-1723, while Bach was serving as Kappellmeister (music director) in Cöthen, Germany. Bach spent most of his career as a church composer and organist, positions that required him to produce huge numbers of cantatas and other sacred works. In contrast, Prince Leopold's church in Cöthen was Calvinist, using less music in its services. The extra compositional freedom provided by this position led to a brief but intense period of secular musical output. This cello suite is a product of that time.

Bach's cello suites are labeled as *allein*, meaning solo, or unaccompanied. This is something of a misnomer. Rather, the suites are self-accompanied; the accompaniment is embedded in a single melodic line along with the "solo" melody part. The solo line in Bach's solo cello music uses melodic leaps, arpeggiation, and multi-stopped chords to imply polyphony or two or more simultaneous musical lines. The solo line will jump back and forth in register, with each stop providing a point that connects to a coherent melody. Bach wrote these suites with a masterful idiomatic understanding of the cello, fully written to the possibilities of the instrument. In playing these suites on the guitar, it does not suffice merely to transfer the notes from one instrument's clef to the others. To do so would be to combine the inherent limitations of the cello with that of the guitar. Instead, the guitar—as a more harmonically capable instrument—can fully realize, rather than just imply, the polyphony written into the music.

Each cello suite is a set group of stylized dances, preceded by an introductory prelude. The prelude is meant to introduce the overall character, or *Affekt* of the suite, tying together the dance movements that follow. The dances of the suite follow a set rhythmic and harmonic structure; the prelude is meant to sound much more improvisatory. This prelude accomplishes this with irregular phrase lengths, weak and avoided cadences, and slow harmonic rhythm. Following the prelude, an allemande is a slower movement. The length of time between phrases in this movement allows for a huge range of interpretational choice. Finally, I will be playing a pair of gavottes from this suite. These are lively, upbeat pieces based on dance music.

Barrios

Agustín Barrios Mangoré is an example of the rare artist who is able to combine inspired, improvisatory creativity, with complete technical control over his or her instrument. Born Agustín Pío Barrios in Paraguay, Barrios took an early interest in music, immersing himself in the folk music of his homeland. By the age of 13, his talents were evident enough to earn him a scholarship to the Colegio Nacional in Asunción, where in addition to formally studying music, he distinguished himself in mathematics, journalism, and literature. Despite the formality of his education, Barrios maintained close ties with the folk traditions of his homeland, learning Guaraní, the native language of Paraguay.

The dichotomy between Barrios' proud Paraguayan heritage and his more Eurocentric education can be seen in his musical output. Barrios modeled many of his pieces after folk songs from Central and South America. At the same time, his pieces imitated Baroque, Classical, and Romantic styles. The power of this dichotomy can be seen in some of his later concerts, where he would bill himself as “Nitsuga Mangoré – the Paganini of the Guitar from the Jungles of Paraguay.” He would play the first half of the concert in a tuxedo, playing transcriptions of J.S. Bach, Chopin, Granados, and others. Then, after the intermission, he would come out as Mangoré (a Guaraní chieftain who resisted the Spanish conquest), and play his own works while wearing a full feather headdress.

Barrios' “Vals,” Op. 8, No. 4 is an example of both this wide range of influences, as well as Barrios' skill in fitting pieces to the instrument. The piece opens with a very European waltz, moving to a slow, majestic trio, where the bass-note melody evokes a cello. Then a bell-like *campanella* section has a very improvisatory feel. Barrios was known for his remarkable improvisatory skills in concert, so this is probably no coincidence. The piece then moves back to the waltz section, before a fun, but difficult coda marked “Velo” (fast).

Brouwer

Leo Brouwer is a Cuban guitarist, conductor, and composer, and is one of the best living guitarist-composers. Brouwer's style has evolved dramatically over the years—*Decameron Negro* is an example of what Brouwer calls “National Hyper-Romanticism”—a return to Afro-Cuban roots and a brash, though often tonal, sense of harmony. The three movements of the pieces are based on love stories from Africa, collected by the German anthropologist Leon Frobenius.

“El Arpa Del Guerro” (The Warrior's Harp) exemplifies Brouwer's mastery at dramatically contrasting brash rhythmic segments with more lyrical ones. This movement is in 5/8 meant to be felt as if in 1, and generally follows a sonata form. This movement also showcases Brouwer's penchant for developing ideas by repeating and gradually expanding small motifs. In this movement, a warrior is banished for playing the harp. When his people are invaded, he is again condemned, but escapes with his lover.

“La Huida del los Amantes por el Valle de los Ecos” (Flight of the lovers through the valley of echoes) follows their escape. The movement begins boldly and steadily and becomes more frantic. This movement provides another example of Brouwer developing a piece by expanding small motivic “cells.” The central part of this movement follows the lovers' escape and seems to depict horse hooves echoing off a canyon wall.

“Ballada de la Doncela Enamorada” (Ballad of the young girl in love) contrasts a lyrical love tune with more rhythmic moments. This movement combines the most lyrical melodic material with some of the most difficult parts of the piece.

Arabic Set

The pieces that I have played so far have been part of the Euro-American art music tradition. The rest of the concert will feature Arab art music. This short set will open with a *Tahmilah* (an instrumental musical form). Next, a *Taqsim* (a type of structured improvisation) will transition us from one *Maqam* (Arabic mode) to another. Finally, we will play a hugely popular piece by the Egyptian composer Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab.

For the rest of the concert, I will be playing the oud. Developed in antiquity, the oud is often thought of as a parent to the European lute—the word “lute” comes from the Arabic “al oud,” though because the oud has continued to develop since the two instruments’ paths diverged, it is now more akin to the lute’s cousin. The oud has 11 strings: five paired courses, and a single bass string. The instrument is fretless, which allows for Arabic music’s more precise control over intonation, as well as allowing for so-called “neutral” tones that do not exist in Euro-American music.

Tahmilah Suznak

Similar to titles such as “Rondo in D,” the name of this piece likewise describes both the form of the piece, and what key (or in this case, what *Maqam*) the piece is in. The *Tahmilah* is an instrumental genre of music, usually performed by a chamber ensemble, known as a *Tahkt*. The *Tahkt* you see before you is fairly typical: a percussionist (in this case playing the *doumbek*), a *nay* (a reed flute), a violin, an *oud* (two in this case), and a bass. The *Tahmilah* begins with an introductory section that outlines the overall feel of the *Maqam*. Then, short improvised solos alternate with precomposed responses.

This *Tahmilah* is in a *Maqam* (melodic mode) known as *Suznak*. In western music, a mode is mostly a collection of pitches. In Arabic music, the *Maqam* prescribes not only which notes to use, but also common melodic patterns, expected melodic development, and other information.

Taqsim

The *Taqsim* is a genre of instrumental improvisation. *Taqsim* (the plural form of the word) can be performed either solo or with a drone or percussion accompaniment. A *Taqsim* is often played before pieces, as a way to introduce and explore a particular *Maqam*. *Taqsim* also modulate in ways that demonstrate how the *Maqam* system fits together.

‘Aziza

This is a hugely popular piece by the Egyptian composer Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahhab. It is in Kurd, a *Maqam* whose notes correspond to the Phrygian mode. However, the piece also flirts with the *Maqam Nahawand* on G, which contains the same pitches as G harmonic minor. This is a very fun, upbeat piece to play!

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