

Michael Lorimer

Guitarist

Monday Evening, July 23, 1984, at 8:00
Rackham Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

Notes by Michael Lorimer

The baroque guitar

Tonight's concert begins with music for baroque guitar. This instrument compares to the modern guitar as the harpsichord does to the piano, and the baroque guitar shares with the harpsichord a more ethereal and crystalline sound than its modern counterpart. Technique for baroque guitar mixes strumming and plucking. In 1600 you would hear early players accompany singers and other instrumentalists and only strum, much in the way folk singers in our time strum. By 1630 you would see them pluck individual notes, and two decades later you would find them combining techniques with the refinement tonight's selections display.

The baroque guitar you hear tonight is an exact copy (by N.B. van der Waals, 1975) of a guitar Jean Voboam built in Paris in 1687 for Mlle de Nantes, Duchess of Bourbon, a daughter of Louis XIV.

The classical guitar

The classical guitar has six single strings rather than the baroque guitar's five pairs. It appeared at the end of the eighteenth century at the same time musical style changed, the classical era succeeding the baroque. Early classical guitar methods included instructions on how to make the guitar sound like other instruments—harp, oboe, trumpets, string quartet, almost anything but a guitar!—and new composers shunned idiomatic effects such as the strums featured on the baroque instrument. Their conception of the guitar continues today and is well expressed by the great Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia when he says, "The guitar is an orchestra seen from the wrong end of a telescope," and searching for words to criticize a student's performance, he once exclaimed, "It sounds like... like a guitar!" Even so, twentieth-century composers have increasingly included guitaristic materials in their works for the instrument, combining the aesthetics of baroque guitarists with those of later players.

The repertoire for this recital is to me as special as it is varied. It is some of my favorite music, new and old, and reflects a spectrum of the guitar's many colors.

Tarantelas (c. 1725) Santiago de Murcia
(c. 1680-c. 1740)

The *tarantela* is a frenzied Italian dance, until the early twentieth century believed to be the only cure for the bite of the large spider of the same name. In this one, Santiago de Murcia, guitar tutor to the first wife of Spain's Philip V, portrays the evolution of baroque guitar technique: first he writes only strummed chords, then an occasional plucked note, and finally a combination of plucking and strumming.

This concert is made possible, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Suite in C Major (1671) Francisco Corbetta
(c. 1615-1681)

Prelude	Menuet
Caprice de Chacone	Autre Chacone
Gigue	

One composer prominent in the pages of Murcia and other guitarists is the Italian gambler, guitarist, and courtier, Francisco Corbetta. His music spans development of the baroque guitar in Italy and France, and he was one of the first masters of the musical styles of both countries. Corbetta was the greatest baroque guitarist and was sought after as teacher as well as performer. His pupils included professional players and a vast number of blue-blooded amateurs—including Louis XIV, Charles II, Mme la Duchesse de'Orleans, the Duke of York (later King James II), and Princess Anne (later Queen). An epitaph reads:

Here lies the Amphion of our day, Francisque, that man so rare
Who made the guitar speak the true language of Love.

He won, with his harmonies, the hearts of prince and king
And some believe a genius directed his moving fingers.

If, passing by, you hear not his miracles, know that he never would have died
That he would have charmed Death himself, but, alas, unhappily, Death has no ears.

Corbetta's sentimental Suite in C Major appears at the end of his masterpiece *La Guitarre Royale* (1671). This book is dedicated to the King of England (Charles II) and for the most part consists of French dance suites, arranged like those of J. S. Bach, an order that seems to have originated with Corbetta. The Suite in C Major is, however, unique—in addition to a *menuet*, it includes a *gigue* with rhythms unlike others in the book, as well as two *chaconnes*, dances in the Spanish form we call "variations." Spain and the guitar's tie to variations go back to the very first ones printed: they are in Luys Milán's *El Maestro* (1538), a book for the guitar-like Spanish instrument, the vihuela. When Europeans usually wrote dance music in two sections (A A' B B') as Corbetta did in his *gigue* and *menuet*, Spaniards contributed variation form (A B C D...) in which, in one repetition strung after another, the dance casts itself anew. Variations on Old World dances like the *tarantela* migrated to the New World in the hands of Spaniards, including Murcia, just as music from the colonies, notably the *chaconne*, traveled back across the Atlantic played by musicians who were interchangeably called guitarists or *chaconistas*. On European soil *chaconnes* charmed with their continuity and hypnotic variety, disseminating widely. Corbetta's *chaconnes* are in fact Spanish New World music played by an Italian in the French court writing a book for the English king! They display the gamut of baroque guitar techniques, including extended strummed passages with remarkable harmonies, and give us a glimpse of how Corbetta sounded when he improvised.

(pause)

Fantasia Sevilliana (1925) Joaquín Turina
(1882-1949)

Joaquín Turina, noted composer of character pieces for piano and *zarzuelas* (Spanish light comic operas), also composed for guitar. Here, in a fantasy on *sevillianas*, a jubilant dance from Seville, Turina lends his charming, impressionistic, flamenco-influenced style to a showpiece he composed in the 1920s for Andrés Segovia.

Study Without Light (1954) and Remembrance (1955) Andrés Segovia
(b. 1893)

Andrés Segovia, who put guitar on the twentieth-century concert stage with his performances of music written for him, including Turina's, and pieces he arranged, such as Albeniz's, appears here in guise too little-known, that of Segovia the composer. Segovia wrote the first of tonight's selections in the early 1950s when he recuperated from a eye operation and lay for several weeks in one position with his eyes bandaged. He remembered the severe pain he felt in his fingertips when he began playing the guitar after events had once before prevented his practicing, and this time, to keep his left hand calouses, he found a way to continue playing. He wrote *Study Without Light* and dedicated it to his friend José Rubio, who stayed at his bedside day and night and prevented him from moving his head. *Remembrance* is romantic and recalls the harmonies of the nineteenth-century composer Robert Schumann.

Zambra Granadina and Sevilla (c. 1885) Issac Albéniz
(1860-1909)

The compositions of Spain's great composer Isaac Albéniz were influenced to a high degree by both the guitar and Flamenco music, and thus speak naturally on the guitar. The legendary Spanish guitarist Francisco Tárrega arranged Albéniz's works and an appealing (though undocumented) tale says that Albéniz, upon hearing Tárrega play some of his piano compositions, declared the music had found its rightful home. Tárrega's practice of playing Albéniz's music has been enthusiastically followed by guitarists to this day.

Zambra Granadina portrays a gypsy party, the *zambra*, as you could have heard it in the 1890s in the caves of Granada. As the music begins, you can imagine the rhythmic hand-clapping of gypsies who sit against a cave's white walls in straight-backed chairs and surround an open area of red brick floor in which, to the plaintive wail of gypsy song, urged on by the strains of a guitarist and onlookers' cries, individual dancers appear: now one springs in gay exuberance, now one writhes in passionate trance.

Sevilla begins with *sevillianas* rhythms characteristic of the Andalusian capitol. The middle section portrays a singer and a guitar accompanist.

Arranged by Andrés Segovia.

INTERMISSION

Great American Guitar Solo (1982) C. Curtis-Smith
(b. 1941)

From the pungency of its harmonies to the tang of its rhythms, this piece is decidedly American. It uses a full range of guitar tones and colors—in the middle, where the music is mischievous and plays hooky, you can hear even the sounds of a caliope the composer heard in front of a tulip garden in Holland, Michigan, the day he conceived *GAGS*. Curtis-Smith's choice for *GAGS*'s form—variations in general, *chaconne* in particular—is especially apt and arises, aside from any knowledge he had of the guitar's historical link to *chaconnes* which I explain in my Corbetta program note, from the composer's fascination with *chaconnes* and their similarity to rock and jazz forms. Curtis-Smith used *chaconne* variations in his first symphony before he wrote *GAGS*, and later, in his string trio and second symphony.

Composer-performer C. Curtis-Smith has won numerous piano competitions in addition to over thirty important awards and grants for composition, including the Guggenheim Fellowship, an award from the American Academy Institute of Arts and Letters, three NEA grants, two Rockefeller Awards, seven ASCAP Awards, the Prix du F. Salabert, and the Koussevitzky Award at Tanglewood. The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Boston Musica Viva, New Arts Trio, Igor Kipnis, David Burge, William Albright, and Michael Lorimer are among those who have commissioned C. Curtis-Smith. Dennis Russell Davies conducted Curtis-Smith's *Great American Symphony* last fall in New York's Avery Fisher Hall and has scheduled upcoming performances in Stuttgart, California's Cabrillo Festival, and Indianapolis. C. Curtis-Smith has taught composition at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and received the Distinguished Faculty Scholar Award in 1979 from Western Michigan University where he is Professor of Music.

"Marchita El Alma..." (c. 1900) Manuel Ponce
(1882-1948)

Manuel Ponce wrote the famous song *Estrellita* and was one of the first to explore and extol the musical folklore of his native Mexico. Segovia's favorite of the many composers with whom Segovia collaborated, Ponce wrote a rich catalogue of guitar music from the time he met Segovia in Paris in the 1920s. The sweet, innocent song on tonight's program comes from earlier and is one particularly beautiful *canción Mexicana*, music from which Ernesto García de León drew inspiration composing the sonata which follows.

Arranged by Michael Lorimer.

Sonata No. 1 (1982) Ernesto García de León
United States première (b. 1952)

Allegro
Canción
Son

Ernesto García de León's Sonata No. 1 is a superb example of contemporary Mexican guitar composition. Its first movement, *Allegro*, begins with rhythmic, dance-like music that gives way shortly to a lyric, song-like theme. Like characters in a play, these two elements discourse throughout the rest of the movement, appearing in varied feature, sometimes alone, sometimes in combination with each other. *Canción* opens in a distressed mood which becomes increasingly peaceful and gentle until its sweet close clearly evokes

turn-of-the-century Mexican song. One melody repeats throughout, remaining essentially the same, while the harmonies, like the mood, become more consonant each time the melody returns. After the relief of the section which follows, in which the melody relaxes on a fluid, sonorous accompaniment of arpeggiated chords, we hear the first section again, but with new ears. The last movement, *Son*, exploits dance rhythms of the composer's native state Veracruz, in a festive, virtuosic manner, always with the feeling that you are going somewhere or looking for something, and that you are finding happy surprises along the way. The composer says, "The important thing is that you feel the music. Do not worry about understanding it! Let it carry you. Let it show you places words cannot explain, places that belong to sound's realm and can only be felt."

Although he is presently little-known on this side of the border, Ernesto García de León has participated in numerous conferences of Latin American and Hispano-American composers. He is one founding member of Mexico's "Nova Guitarra Musica," a group of guitarists and composers dedicated to disseminating contemporary guitar music. His Sonata No. 1 is heard this evening for the first time in the United States.

From Etudes (1929) and Preludes (1940)Heitor Villa-Lobos
(1887-1959)

A guitarist himself, the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos enthusiastically dedicated himself to writing for our instrument, and his *Suite Populaire*, *Etudes*, and *Preludes* have become mainstays of the solo guitar repertoire. When this music was written, its idiomatic style was so rare in classical guitar music that one would have had to go all the way back to baroque guitar music to best find parallels. Each piece demonstrates Villa-Lobos' seemingly unending ability to discover new, exotic and colorful guitaristic resources. "Has anyone ever written more sublimely for guitar?" asked one critic about Villa-Lobos' music. Certainly it is among the most engaging work of the century, exploiting as it does the open strings and natural harmonics, as well as the left-hand slur and glissando, the resonance of arpeggios, and the mellow timbres of the bass strings sounded in the upper registers.

About the Artist

Michael Lorimer, a favorite protégé of Andrés Segovia, caught the attention of American audiences in the early 1970s through tours arranged by the great impresario Sol Hurok. His popularity soon extended beyond the shores of America. The first American guitarist invited to perform in the U.S.S.R., he toured major cities in 1975 and was received with such enthusiasm that he was immediately re-engaged for a 1977 tour. He has appeared in Israel, throughout Europe, on most major North American recital series, and with the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Louisville, New Orleans, and San Francisco.

Lorimer's command of an extensive repertoire is unique. His concerts reflect his enthusiasm for music of many periods and styles and often combine traditional classics, Americana, new music, and baroque guitar music performed on an original instrument. In addition to concerts, he gives master classes at universities and conservatories from coast to coast. He is an engaging spokesman in demand for experimental programs in arts presentation. For the academic years 1980-1982, Mr. Lorimer was Distinguished Visiting Professor of Music at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington.

In the television field, PBS has presented a special about him, "The Artistry of Michael Lorimer," and in publishing, Mel Bay distributes the *Michael Lorimer Edition* which numbers over twenty volumes and includes arrangements as well as a special forum for new music, the *Composers Series*. Michael Lorimer writes for *Guitar Review*, and from 1976-1982, he contributed a widely-praised, monthly column to *Guitar Player*.

Away from music, he reads ardently on an expanse of subjects from sciences to arts. When not on tour, he can often be found digging in the garden of his Santa Barbara home or with his wife running on a nearby beach.

Mr. Lorimer's concert this evening marks his fifth Ann Arbor appearance.

