



ALL CLASSIC

PER PÅLSSON & JESPER SIVEBÆK
SCANDINAVIAN GUITAR DUO



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Per Pålsson and Jesper Sivebæk's collaboration started in their student days at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, Esbjerg, Denmark, when their professor, Jørgen Bjørslev, encouraged the two very different personalities to play together.

Their career as *Scandinavian Guitar Duo* seriously took flight when they won 1st prize in *Denmark's Radio's* prestigious *Chamber Music Competition* in 1993. Although some of the best and most widely recognised chamber ensemble formats – such as the string quartet, the wind quintet and the piano trio – participated in the competition, the duo consistently spell-bound both jury and audience with their dynamic and captivating performances, thereby elevating the guitar to the highest ranks of chamber music.

This remarkable event has since been followed up by further exclusive awards. These include the special *Segovia Award* from the illustrious *Leonie Sonning Foundation*, an achievement made all the more impressive when one takes into account that this prize (based on a fund donated by the legendary Spanish guitarist Andres Segovia after receiving the *Leonie Sonning Music Prize* in 1974) was only to be awarded once, and to any instrumentalist, which resulted in a wait for 20 years.

Now an acclaimed ensemble, *Scandinavian Guitar Duo* have played many concerts in Europe, United States and China. They perform regularly at international festivals, give masterclasses and broadcast on radio and television. They are now both professors at the *Royal Danish Academy of Music* in Copenhagen.

A joy of playing and radiance on stage, combined with versatile and exciting concert programmes, have become trademarks of the *Scandinavian Guitar Duo*.

Concert reviewers praise the duo's musicianship and repeatedly highlight their unique intuitive interaction, where the two instrumentalists create a medium through which the essence and nature of the music itself is expressed without technical or communicative barriers.

The duo's playing has gained much international praise, with one of the world's most recognised classical guitarist John Williams remarking about the duo:

"The best interpretation I have yet heard, the contrasts in their playing are impressive ..."





Scandinavian Guitar Duo:

“Our way of practising was something special from the day we met. We not only got along very well personally but were also good at practising and rehearsing.

“Working-time” was inspiring, – we had, and still have, what feels like a free space when we rehearse. Any ideas, – phrasings, sounds, colours, timbres, orchestration, ways of interpretations are tried out – and we mainly discuss on the instruments rather than talk. Big and small thoughts are discussed, and we think, this is what makes us still form a duo with equal joy after 30 years of “marriage”. The works we play develop constantly over the years, so even with old repertoire we continue to find new ways of interpretation.

When once playing for the Swedish guitar professor Per-Olof Johnson, he came up with the query... *“is it possible to play with the same freedom in a duo as when you play solo?”*

That has since been one of our main goals as a duo, and we try constantly to achieve this kind of freedom in our interaction, changing any second from having the leading role, listening, following, challenging ... – and when we succeed, it’s all worth it.

Even though everything is rehearsed and planned, an almost telepathic contact can then occur. It is as if you know what the other person is doing before it happens, and that gives us room to create a highly distinctive form of expression. Almost as if two musicians seem to become one, but still remain two.

It has been said about our duo that we seem to play without a safety net. We are proud of this statement, especially because this is a way to reach beyond the stage and give the audience a memorable experience.”



G.F. HÄNDEL *Chaconne* HWV 435

Georg Friedrich Händel is regarded as one of the greatest composers of the Baroque era, mostly known for his numerous oratorios, cantatas, operas and concertos. His works for harpsichord though, are today lesser known, in spite of the fact that great pianists like Edwin Fisher had the *Chaconne HWV 435* in their repertoire.

In his own age, Händel's harpsichord suites were highly appreciated and loved, and the edition from 1733 *Suites de pièces pour le clavecin, second volume*, from which the *Chaconne* derives, was sold out and republished two times during his lifetime.

Händel was an amazing harpsichord player and organist, and also a fantastic and esteemed improvisor. Story tells of a *Harpsichord duel* in 1708 with Domenico Scarlatti, arranged at the instigation of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, who diplomatically, after the 'fight', declared the result a draw.

In the dedication of the first part of the suites, Händel humbly wrote: "... if it meets with a favourable reception: I will still proceed to publish more, reckoning it my duty, with my small talent, to serve a nation from which I have received so generous a protection ..."



The *Chaconne* became known in the guitar world when the French guitar duo *Presti-Lagoya*, transcribed it for two guitars, adapted for their eminent and colourful playing. Fascinated by the piece and the duo's rendition, we were inspired to attempt the *Chaconne* as well.

The version we have made and present in this recording has been transposed into the key of D major, to better suit the register of the original and flow of the voicing. This is very often a necessary procedure when arranging music for harpsichord/piano or other instruments for the guitar. We also feel it adds some brilliance to the piece.

The *Chaconne* starts dramatically, then presents the theme and continues with rising intensity to the middle section. Changing at this point to the minor key with a beautiful variation which features a new harmonic structure and bass line, it adds further new creative and fanciful variations before returning to the beginning major section and ending with a virtuoso finale.

By means of 21 variations, Händel creates a musical spectrum of great breadth and gives us a riveting musical story full of vitality and poetry.

FERNANDO SOR *L'encouragement* op. 34

This wonderful piece by Fernando Sor has followed us for a long time, as it was one of the first works we played together as students at the Music Academy.

The edited version by Sor's friend Napoleon Coste, in which the leading voice interchange between the two guitars, provided us from the outset with the opportunity to discover and enjoy the dialogue playing of chamber music – a path we have followed ever since as regards the way we perform and also make our own transcriptions.

We find *L'encouragement* one of the best and most rewarding duets from the classical period. It has an everlasting freshness, and we have played it so many times in concert with great joy, never being bored and always finding it highly engaging and open to new angles of interpretation.

Sor seems to have found a perfect balance in this work, and this makes him comparable with such great classical composers as Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, who unfortunately did not write for the guitar.



L'encouragement starts with an adorable melodic line that is slightly reminiscent of Mozart's *Komm lieber Mai....* It is so beautiful and naturally shaped, shifting to a short melancholic minor section and then modulating so as to come back to the opening theme to conclude the introduction and make us eager for more to come.

A theme, simple and joyful, is the point of departure for three imaginative variations and a smooth transition brings us into a wonderful swaying waltz and a short but brilliant conclusion.

In *L'encouragement* we have all one can wish for in a typical Viennese-classical piece, enveloping us in the atmosphere of the salons of Paris, London and Vienna with its elegance, virtuosity, fresh liveliness and twinkle in the eye. Truly encouraging!

ENRIQUE GRANADOS *Valses Poeticos*

"His strangely vivid music pursues you like certain perfumes, more persistent than strong ..."

This was said by the French composer Claude Debussy about the Music of Enrique Granados and this collection of waltzes indeed does not consist of impressive, flashy virtuoso showpieces in any way, but rather of delicate, uncomplicated jewels of nature. The wonderful gestures and emotions they evoke remain with us for a long time, lingering in the memory.

Granados seems to be in love with the waltz, and he takes us on a wonderful journey in a different 'Schumannesque' lyrical musical character, showing us the great variety hidden in this intimate dance.

After a joyful introduction, *Vivace molto*, we start off with the noble and elegant *Melodico*, going to the swaying *Tempo de Valse noble*, the darker melancholy of *Tempo de Valse lento*, the bouncing playfulness of *Allegro humoristico*, the graceful *Allegro elegante* and the introspectively lyrical *Quasi ad libitum (sentimental)*. The fanciful and sparkling butterfly



choreography of *Vivo* brings us through an energetic, but also metre-changing and teasing *Presto* before we return to the sweetness and calm of the beautiful *Melodico*.

A youthful, fresh and romantic recollection, more of the distant salons of Paris or Vienna than of the dusty roads of Catalonia.

Though not specifically Spanish in expression, like his *Spanish Dances*, the *Valses Poeticos* lend themselves beautifully to be arranged for two guitars, and we feel this work goes perfectly hand in hand with Fernando Sor's *Lencouragement* and the *Dolly Suite* by Gabriel Fauré.

Granados dedicated the waltzes to another great Spanish pianist, composer and friend, Joaquín Malats, and continued to play them throughout his life, even in New York shortly before he died tragically in 1916.

GABRIEL FAURÉ *Dolly Suite* op. 56

The inspiration for us to arrange and play the *Dolly Suite* by Gabriel Fauré, came from the live recordings made by Julian Bream and John Williams – who, just as the *Presti-Lagoya* duo, formed an exciting partnership of two very different and magnificent guitarists.

As no published version was available, we made our own transcription, with some different choices in the arrangements than those heard in the Bream/Williams version.

We feel that the *Dolly Suite* is extremely suitable for two guitars, and were happy when, after winning a *Danish Radio Chamber Music Competition*, a pianist member of the jury, said to us that she thought the guitar version worked even better than the original for piano, 4-hands duet.

The six short character-pieces that were published together as the *Dolly Suite*, were written by Gabriel Fauré between 1893 and 1896. Several of them as birthday presents to the daughter of the composer's mistress Emma Bardac, Hélène, also called Dolly. Obviously a very creative and inspired period in Fauré's life.

Fauré was usually not fond of descriptive titles for his compositions, but with the charming movements of the *Dolly Suite* he made an exception.

We personally like that very much, and for us it is as if the pieces inspire a memory, as when turning the pages of an old photo album from childhood and looking at pictures from Dolly's everyday life.

The suite starts gently with a cradle song. *Berceuse*, actually an earlier work composed in 1864 during his studies and this tender little piece was originally entitled *La Chanson dans le jardin*.



Fauré changed the piece and title and gave it to Dolly as her first birthday present.

The next three pieces were written to celebrate her second birthday, New Year 1895, and her fourth birthday.

The title of *Mi-a-ou* was initially *Messieu Aoul* – Dolly’s way of pronouncing Monsieur Raoul, which was what Dolly called Raoul, her elder brother. Fauré later shortened it to *Mi-a-ou* in the published version. It has a lot of joyous energy, perhaps reflecting the character of the 13-year-old Raoul.

Fauré nostalgically portrays the garden of the Bardac family in *Jardin de Dolly*, using subtle harmonic changes, interesting modulations, and interaction between the themes. *Kitty-valse* which comes next is a whirling portrait, this time of their lively family dog Ketty jumping and spinning around.

Like *Berceuse*, the movements *Tendresse* and *Le pas Espagnol* were written earlier, not for any special event related to Dolly, but added to the suite. *Tendresse* is a beautifully lyrical piece, maybe reflecting the relation between Dolly and her mother. The musical language becomes more complicated here and chromaticism and uncommon harmonic changes possibly foreshadow the music of the French impressionist composers Ravel and Debussy.

Le pas Espagnol which ends the suite is inspired by a bronze equestrian statue that Dolly loved. As we know, French and Spanish composers were deeply fascinated by each other’s music, and Fauré gives us an exhilarating grand finale full of Spanish colours, rhythm, passion and fire.

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- VE** Danish National Vocal Ensemble
- RH** Recorder/Harpsichord
- SW** Spoken words
- CH** Chinese
- RC** Recorder Concertos
- BJ** Borup-Jørgensen
- IS** Instrumental Solo
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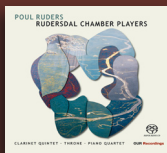
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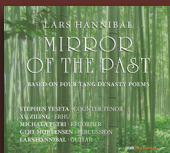
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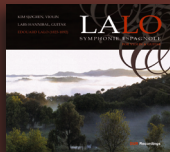
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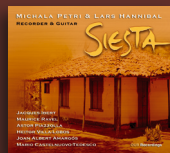
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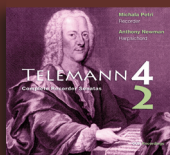
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GEORG FRIEDRICH HÄNDEL (1685-1759) *

- 1 **GRANDE CHACONNE IN G MAJOR**
HWV 435.....10.50

FERNANDO SOR (1778-1839)

L'ENCOURAGEMENT OP. 34

- 2 **INTRODUCTION**.....3.39
3 **THEME**.....0.48
4 **VAR. 1** 0.37
5 **VAR. 2** 1.40
6 **VAR. 3** 1.22
7 **VALSE** 2.55

ENRIQUE GRANADOS (1867-1916) *

VALES POETICOS

- 8 **VIVACE MOLTO**.....1.15
9 **MELODICO** 1.31
10 **TEMPO DE VALS NOBLE** 1.24

- 11 **TEMPO DE VALS LENTO** 2.07
12 **ALLEGRO HUMORISTICO** 0.48
13 **ALLEGRETTO (elegante)** 1.41
14 **QUASI AD LIBITUM (sentimental)**.....1.42
15 **VIVO**.....0.47
16 **PRESTO** 1.07
17 **MELODICO**.....1.42

GABRIEL FAURÉ (1845-1924) *

DOLLY SUITE OP. 56

- 18 **BERCEUSE**.....2.44
19 **MI-A-OU**.....1.45
20 **JARDIN DE DOLLY**.....2.48
21 **KITTY VALSE**.....2.13
22 **TENDRESSE**.....3.15
23 **LE PAS ESPAGNOL**.....2.16
TOTAL.....51.15

**Arranged by Scandinavian Guitar Duo.*



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