

# STEVE COWAN

plays

Silvius Leopold Weiss

*Sonata V*

Manuel M. Ponce

*24 Preludios*

David Leisner

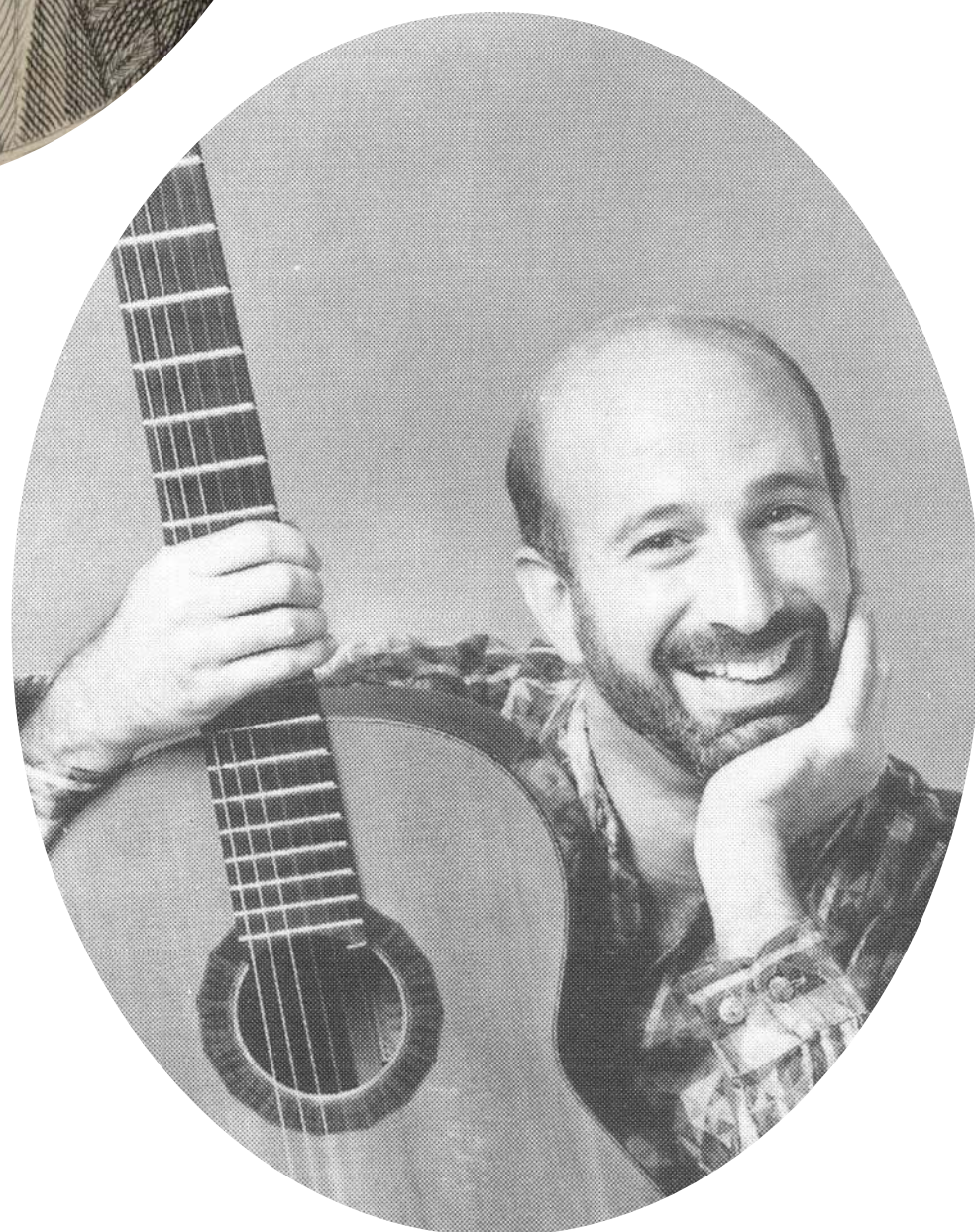
*...empty mind, open heart...*

**DXD**

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RECORDINGS**

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**SILVIUS LEOPOLD WEISS, (1687-1750)**

**SONATA V in G Major**

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| 1- I-Prelude .....    | 1:45 |
| 2- II-Allemande.....  | 4:13 |
| 3- III-Courante ..... | 2:39 |
| 4- IV-Bourrée .....   | 2:21 |
| 5- V-Sarabande .....  | 3:39 |
| 6- VI-Menuet.....     | 2:02 |
| 7- VII-Gigue .....    | 2:51 |

**MANUEL MARÍA PONCE, (1882-1948)**

**24 PRELUDIOS**

|                            |      |
|----------------------------|------|
| 8- I in C Major .....      | 1:31 |
| 9- II in A Minor .....     | 0:39 |
| 10- III in G Major .....   | 0:48 |
| 11- IV in E Minor .....    | 0:19 |
| 12- V in D Major.....      | 0:52 |
| 13- VI in B Minor .....    | 0:45 |
| 14- VII in A Major.....    | 0:54 |
| 15- VIII in F# Minor ..... | 1:56 |
| 16- IX in E Major.....     | 0:45 |
| 17- X in C# Minor .....    | 1:33 |
| 18- XI in B major.....     | 0:58 |
| 19- XII in G# Minor .....  | 1:07 |
| 20- XIII in F# Major ..... | 1:18 |
| 21- XIV in D# Minor.....   | 0:51 |
| 22- XV in Db Major .....   | 1:05 |
| 23- XVI in Bb Minor.....   | 0:47 |
| 24- XVII in F Major.....   | 0:57 |
| 25- XVIII in D Minor.....  | 1:34 |
| 26- XIX in Bb Major.....   | 1:09 |
| 27- XX in G Minor .....    | 0:46 |
| 28- XXI in Eb Major .....  | 1:10 |
| 29- XXII in C Minor .....  | 0:49 |
| 30- XXIII in Ab Major..... | 1:05 |
| 31- XXIV in F Minor.....   | 1:46 |

**DAVID LEISNER, (1953)**

**...empty mind, open heart... (dedicated to Steve Cowan)**

|                                         |      |
|-----------------------------------------|------|
| 32- I-empty your mind.....              | 4:35 |
| 33- II-it flows through all things..... | 3:25 |
| 34- III-the equilibrium crumbles.....   | 1:50 |
| 35- IV-open your heart .....            | 2:32 |

**MANUEL MARÍA PONCE, (1882-1948)**

|                               |      |
|-------------------------------|------|
| 36- PRELUDIO in B Minor ..... | 2:26 |
|-------------------------------|------|

## **Sonata V in G Major S.L. Weiss (1687-1750)**

Sylvius Leopold Weiss was one of Germany's most accomplished musicians of the Baroque era. Considered amongst the greatest lutenists of all time, he composed exclusively for the instrument until his death in 1750. His Sonata V in G Major is written in the style of a French Suite, which is a collection of pieces characterized by their standardized structure, ornamental embellishment, contrasting tempos, and reliance on French dance forms. The individual movements of this suite share recurring themes, and the melodies retain a charming elegance and simplicity throughout.

Many guitarists have arranged this piece, as the similarity between lute and guitar allows for effective results. This performance is the result of close examination of the various manuscripts and existing arrangements, and includes a few personal touches.

## **24 Preludios Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948)**

Composed between 1928-1929, Manuel Ponce's 24 Preludios is a collection of short pieces for solo guitar, each one in a different key. Originally conceived as student pieces to accompany a pedagogical project that Andrés Segovia was working on, the verdict was that they were too difficult to serve this purpose. This assessment led to omissions in the early publications and recordings, causing many to underestimate the music potential they had as a

complete set. Within the Preludios you will find great stylistic contrast, ranging from fleeting impressionism to masterful neo-baroque counterpoint and arrangements of popular Spanish and Mexican songs.

The performance on this recording is indebted to the 2020 publication by Piera Dadomo and Tilman Hoppstock. This unique Urtext edition contains refined fingerings, alternate versions, and an analytical supplement with important information about each Prelude. The most striking difference from other publications is the sequence of pieces, which remains closer to the manuscript and concludes with the dramatic Preludio in F Minor, transcribed by Tilman Hoppstock with a clever scordatura.

## **...empty mind, open heart... David Leisner (b. 1953)**

Dedicated to the luminary Steve Cowan, ...empty mind, open heart... is a four-movement suite that centers around the intervals of a fifth and a tritone. It was written in 2018. The opening movement is a meditation. The aleatoric rhythms and pacing of the notes are guided by the breathing of the performer, according to some specific instructions in the score. Out of that atmosphere emerges a fluid, serene series of arpeggios in irregular rhythms in the second movement. Each new chord changes only one or two notes at a time in a gradual evolution over time. The third movement is a study in rhythm, sometimes dizzying. And the piece ends with a heartfelt, mostly quiet soliloquy.

Quotes from the Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu, as translated by Stephen Mitchell, provided inspiration for each of the movements. They are:

1. Empty your mind of all thoughts.  
Let your heart be at peace.

2. There was something formless and perfect before  
the universe was born.  
It is serene. Empty.  
Solitary. Unchanging.  
Infinite. Eternally present.  
It is the mother of the universe.  
For lack of a better name, I call it the Tao.  
It flows through all things. inside and outside, and  
returns to the origin of all things.

3. When man interferes with the Tao, the sky beco-  
mes filthy.  
the earth becomes depleted.  
the equilibrium crumbles. creatures become extinct.

4. Without opening your door, you can open your  
heart to the world.

*David Leisner*

## **Preludio in B Minor – M. M. Ponce**

Composed shortly after Ponce moved to Paris in 1927, this Preludio was written with clear influence from the impressionist tendencies of the time. Ponce uses modality and frequent modulations, producing a compelling and evocative atmosphere.

The piece was originally published in 1928 by Schott, but I primarily used a later text by Miguel Alcázar, which is closer to the original manuscript. Following Segovia's suggestion, I chose to apply a capotasto on the second fret. In his letters to Ponce, he claimed the capo "softens the sound of the normal guitar and wins in subtlety and poetry."

## STEVE COWAN

Described as “an elegant musician with a strong, crisp sense of rhythm” (American Record Guide), guitarist Steve Cowan has performed throughout Canada, the United States, Europe, and New Zealand. International highlights from recent seasons include concerto performances with Ensemble Del Arte (Germany), the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra (New Zealand) and two solo albums with HR Recordings (Spain).

As a chamber musician, Steve performs regularly with Forestare, a Montréal-based string ensemble. His duo

with guitarist Adam Cicchillitti has premiered 21 new works and released an album of Canadian music titled FOCUS (Analekta, 2019); their next recording, Impressions intimes (Analekta, 2021), features original arrangements of Debussy, Ravel, Mompou and Tailleferre. As of 2022, he is also the newest member of the renowned Canadian Guitar Quartet.

Steve is a first-prize winner at eight international competitions and is currently a guitar instructor at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University in Montréal.



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Bruno Boutin guitar, 2018, Augustine strings.  
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*HR Recordings is a label by DISCOS EMEC, S.L. Madrid, Spain, +34913659430*

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