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MGQ

*Four Elements*

2009

*Concert Programme*

**Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor BWV 565**  
**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**  
**Arranged by Peter Karutz**

It is certain that Johann Sebastian Bach would not have known the full extent to which his *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor* would become popularised in western music. Originally for pipe organ, it is one of a handful of toccata and fugues written by Bach for the instrument, and has been arranged for a multitude of instrumental ensembles from orchestra to rock band. Perhaps the reason for the popularity of the work is the captivating and dramatic *Toccata*. Completely improvisatory in style, with its suspenseful arpeggios, unexpected pauses and resounding unpredictable chord resolutions, the *Toccata and Fugue* is a *tour de force* of the 'Baroque organ.' A prolific improviser, Bach may well have improvised a toccata such as this, indeed, he must have improvised many toccata-like passages on his journey of discovering the world of sound and colour possibilities amongst the organ's multiple keyboards, pipe stops and foot pedals! The *Fugue* which follows the *Toccata* opens with the main theme which is derived from the melodic ideas in the *Toccata* and with true improvisatorial skill, Bach has manipulated and contorted this theme into a unified and interesting listening journey.

**Maria de Buenos Aires (selections from)**  
**Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)**  
*Tangata del Alba and Tema de Maria*  
**Arranged by Christopher Donovan**

The tango operita, *Maria de Buenos Aires*, formed the beginning of a twenty-year collaboration between Astor Piazzolla and Horacio Ferrer. The music for the operita was completed in 1968 after Ferrer gave Piazzolla a finished libretto along with many stylistic suggestions for the work. *Maria de Buenos Aires* personifies the tango as *Maria* and through a blend of tango forms we witness her birth, life, death and rebirth. *Tangata del Alba* conveys the wondering of *Maria's* lost shadow through the city after she has been buried.

**Los Cuatro Elementos - Francis Kleynjans (1951\*)**  
*La Tierra (Earth), El Aire (Air) and El Fuego (Fire).*

Born in Paris in 1951, Francis Kleynjans is probably the most prominent French composer for the guitar. He has composed over 600 pieces ranging from solo guitar to ensemble and film scores. 'Los Cuatro Elementos' (The Four Elements) takes the listener on an enchanting journey through elements of nature, sonically depicted through a landscape of rich and interweaving melodies.

~ Interval ~

**'Three Bagatelles' - William Walton (1902-1983)**  
*Allegro (lively), Alla Cubana (in the Cuban style) and Con Slancio (fervent, impetuous and hasty!).*  
**Arranged by Jeremy Tottenham**

The three bagatelles being performed here form part of the original set of 'Five Bagatelles' originally composed for solo guitar and premiered by the eminent British classical guitarist Julian Bream in 1972. Widely performed on the solo instrument, they stem from a very active and burgeoning time for English classical guitar composition (the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century). This was triggered mainly by the arrival on the English music scene of high quality classical guitar players such as John Williams and Julian Bream. Both Williams and Bream have between them commissioned and inspired many new compositions to be written for the instrument.

In addition to William Walton, prominent English composers such as Malcolm Arnold, Peter Maxwell – Davies, Stephen Dodgson, Lennox Berkeley and Benjamin Britten have all contributed to the guitar's repertoire with fine works that have all stood the test of time. The 'Five Bagatelles' have also been transformed into orchestral arrangements by Walton himself, therefore it is fitting that one should hear these beautiful short pieces in the form of guitar quartet arrangements with all the colours available in guitar's palette of sonority.

**Omphalo Centric Lecture**  
**Nigel Westlake (1958\*)**  
**Arranged by Antony Field**

*Omphalo Centric Lecture* has become the most played piece of percussion repertoire worldwide. The work started as a trio for bass clarinet and two percussionists and later Westlake arranged the work for marimba quartet, log drum, splash cymbal and shaker. It is inspired in part by African Balafon Music (African Xylophone) and the piece takes its name from the title of a painting by Paul Klee which direct and centred simplicity inspired the composer. Like African Balafon Music, the piece is also (in the words of the composer) "...a celebration of life through rhythm, energy and movement." Westlake achieves this through complex rhythmic layering between instruments; in the same manner with which Paul Klee brings movement to a form within a visual context. The word 'omphalo' (*orig. omphalos*) is Greek for 'naval,' so one might interpret the title as 'Navel Centric Lecture'!

**Coonowrin**  
**Robert Davidson (1965\*)**

*Coonowrin* takes its name from Mount Coonowrin situated in the Glasshouse Mountains in Queensland. It is a prominent peak in the area and is unique in having a column of rock protruding like a crooked neck, hence the local name 'Crook Neck.' Davidson states "...*Coonowrin* is my response to landscape and the piece has some shadowy intuitions about the Aboriginal stories surrounding it... I find my relationship with the landscape around where I grew up is getting more emotionally overwhelming... At the time of composing the piece, I was regularly making weekend trips to climb the Glasshouse Mountains and the impression of Coonowrin from the top of Tibrogargan and Beerwah left its mark on the piece. The cyclical nature of the piece is connected in my mind with the timelessness that overtakes me in the region."



***Four Elements* CD available after the concert**