

About the Music

The guitar can be regarded as one of the world's most universal instruments. Nearly every musical culture has some plucked-string relative of the guitar, and it has the capacity to evoke the music of its cousins around the globe. In this spirit, tonight's program explores music inspired by a wide variety of folk music traditions, finding the unique features of each while weaving a thread of continuity among them. It is especially dedicated to those peoples and cultures who left their ancestral homelands to settle in unfamiliar places. The focus on these tales of migration, ancient and contemporary, led to William Kanengiser's "The Diaspora Project" of commissioning new works (see below), three of which are featured tonight.

Joaquin Turina (1882-1949) is regarded as one of the most important Spanish composers of the early 20th century, and his long collaboration with Andrés Segovia yielded a rich repertoire of solo guitar works. In his formative years, Turina studied in Paris and immersed himself in the Impressionist style. But he was encouraged by his friend Maurice Ravel to embrace the music of his homeland, and he returned to Spain to develop a personal style that deftly synthesized the two elements. *Fantasia Sevillana*, the first work he composed for the guitar, is a prime example of this hybrid style. Based on the fundamental dance-form of the *sevillanas*, the piece opens with flamenco-inspired strummed patterns and trumpet-like fanfares reminiscent of the famous bullfighting rings of Seville. The piece then morphs into an episodic fantasia, with lyrical melodies over sonorous chords, evincing the non-traditional harmonies championed by the Impressionist School. A slowly building ostinato culminates in a return to the furious strummed chords of the opening section.

John Duarte (1919-2004) was a respected guitarist, pedagogue, arranger, musicologist, author and composer from Great Britain. Perhaps best remembered for his hundreds of liner notes and polemic articles in guitar journals, he left a large catalogue of finely crafted compositions, often inspired by music of distinct world cultures. He turned to the traditional music of his homeland in his **English Suite** op.31, which carries the dedication: "To Andres Segovia and his wife on the occasion of their marriage" (without specifically naming Segovia's spouse in question!). Based on completely original themes, the piece nonetheless captures the essence of English folk music, while also serving as a musical portrait of a joyous wedding celebration in the countryside. The Prelude begins with a stately theme for the wedding party's processional, and features a contrasting middle section introducing the bride and groom. The lyrical Folk Song movement can be seen as a poignant exchange of vows, and the raucous Round Dance serves as a finale for the post-nuptial festivities.

Golfam Khayam (b. 1983) is a brilliant young guitarist, chamber musician, improviser and composer from Tehran, Iran, and she specializes in fusing traditional Persian music forms with contemporary elements. I commissioned Golfam to contribute a new work to "The Diaspora Project", an assemblage of seven new pieces focusing on issues of migration and assimilation. Golfam crafted this evocative and ethereal piece, **Lost Land**, that attempts to capture her

personal experience of having left Iran for years (to study in the US and Switzerland), and upon returning, finding her homeland to be almost unrecognizable. Most telling is the tempo indication she chose: “*adagio disorientato*. Using florid ornaments on a simple monody, the piece takes unsuspecting twists and turns in tonal centers, as if one is lost in a labyrinth of twisting alleyways. Adding to the open sonority of the cross-string ornaments, she asks that the sixth string be tuned down a fifth to low A, providing a rich and deep resonance to the work. Tonight’s performance will be the world concert premiere of *Lost Land*.

Bryan Johanson (b. 1951) was Professor of Guitar and Composition at Portland State University until his recent retirement, and now he devotes himself fulltime to his two favorite activities: writing music and beekeeping. An astonishingly prolific and eclectic composer, he has written hundreds of works for solo guitar and guitar in chamber settings, as well as complete string quartet cycles, concertos and symphonies. Commissioned for “The Diaspora Project”, **The Bootlegger’s Tale** carries these colorful comments by the composer:

My mother’s family immigrated from Ireland and settled in Ashville, North Carolina. The family business was making grain alcohol, which would then be sold to whiskey distillers for casking and aging. The ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, made the production or consumption of all forms of alcohol a federal offense. The family business suddenly became both highly profitable and highly illegal. My grandfather and his brothers, along with my great grandfather and a handful of his brothers, briefly became bootleggers, moving their operation from state to state. My grandfather and his brothers were all great story tellers and hard drinkers. Their tall tales of making and selling illegal whiskey while staying a step or two ahead of the law became lawn swing lore by the time they trickled down to me.

The four episodes of The Bootlegger’s Tale are laid out like one of Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, with the narrator describing to his fellow travelers the life of a bootlegger. “Lament for a Broken Still” follows the narrator through his trials and tribulations of constantly moving the delicate still while struggling to keep it operational. “Ode to Whiskey, with a couple of doubles” extols the virtues of the actual product, alcohol. “Cat and Mouse Interlude” describes the conundrum faced daily by bootleggers; keeping their still’s location a secret. “Head for the Hills” is the hair-raising, adrenalin-pumping exit strategy of all bootleggers if they are discovered; drop everything and run.

Andrea Clearfield (b. 1960) is an award-winning American composer of music for opera, orchestra, chorus, chamber ensembles, dance, and multimedia collaborations. **Reflections on the Dranyen**, commissioned for “The Diaspora Project”, is one of a series of her works inspired by Tibetan music fieldwork that she conducted in a northern Himalayan region of Nepal to help preserve their musical heritage. One particular song she documented was *Dranyen Tsering Wangmo*, a *Tro-glu* or “festive song” praising the dranyen, a three-stringed plucked instrument central to Tibetan music. Clearfield uses this simple melody as a starting point for an evocative reflection of her travels to the Himalayas, reworking it into her own evocative and lyrical style. Beginning with an introduction replete with note-bends, open trills and glissandi, it moves into a fast, rhythmic section with the dranyen’s signature *dum-da, dum-da* pattern.

Building to a vigorous strummed climax, the opening material returns, ending with the faint heartbeat of a cultural heritage that struggles to survive.

Leo Brouwer (b. 1939) is unquestionably the most important living guitar composer. From his humble roots in his native Cuba, he has established himself as the guitar's preeminent voice, with a stylistic range that incorporates minimalism, avant-garde techniques, Latin and Caribbean elements, jazz, etc., while developing a unique and identifiable compositional voice. He crafted the two folk song arrangements presented here very early in his career, and they show his natural affinity for the resonance of the guitar and its potential for rhythmic groove. **Afro-Cuban Lullaby**, also known as "Canción de Cuna" (cradle-song) is a setting of the popular Cuban song "Drume Negrita". Pizzicato basses depict a mother tip-toeing into a nursery, as she sings the plaintive melody to lull her daughter to sleep. "Sleep, little one, sleep, even though the carnava! is going outside", she sings, until she tip-toes back out. **Danza Carecterística** is a setting of the popular carnava! song "Quítate de la acera" ("Get off the sidewalk!"). Usually attributed to the street-sweepers who clean up after the bacchanalian festivities, there are other possible interpretations of the narrative that might be considered.

Dušan Bogdanović (b. 1955) is one of the most inventive and idiosyncratic composers writing for guitar today. With a distinct and individual compositional voice rooted in Balkan modes and 16th century polyphony, he has written pieces in a wide variety of styles, including East Indian, Japanese, jazz, neo-Renaissance, and many others. But he has a particular affinity for African music, due to its common use of his favorite musical constructs: polyrhythm and polymeter. His **3 African Sketches** explores these elements, finding multiple ways to dissect and devolve a steady 12/8 groove. The outer movements, both marked *allegro ritmico*, also utilize a preparation of small staples on the treble strings, giving a wonderfully idiophonic rattle that evokes the *kora*, a traditional African harp. The middle movement is in three distinct and overlapping parts: an ostinato of gently rising and falling fourths, a bass melody derived from an existing African lullaby, and an obbligato descant that floats above the texture, each revolving in its own rhythmic and harmonic sphere.

Brian Head (b. 1964) is a Professor of Guitar and Composition at the USC Thornton School of Music, and also serves as the Artistic Director of the Guitar Foundation of America. His music draws on contemporary forms as well as typically American sources such as plainchant, spirituals, and other folk idioms. His "Sketches for Friends" is an early work, written as a set of remembrances of singular moments with important friends from his youth. **Lobster Tale** recalls a pleasant lunch during a summer music camp in Maine, shared with a cellist friend from Nashville. The music begins in a raucous bluegrass style, and then moves to a simple Puritan melody, attempting to reconcile his friend's southern drawl with the New England landscape. **Brookland Boogie** is a memory of Brian's trips from his Baltimore home to his jazz guitar lessons in Washington D.C., where he would take the train to the Brookland Metro Station and "boogie" to his lesson. Written in jazz-infused style, it begins with a groove reminiscent of an up-tempo version of Miles Davis' "So What", and moves to a middle section featuring a walking bassline and quasi-improvised jazz licks.

Notes by William Kanengiser