CLASSICAL GUITAR

NOVEMBER 1992
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ANIELLO DESIDERIO

CARLO BARONE

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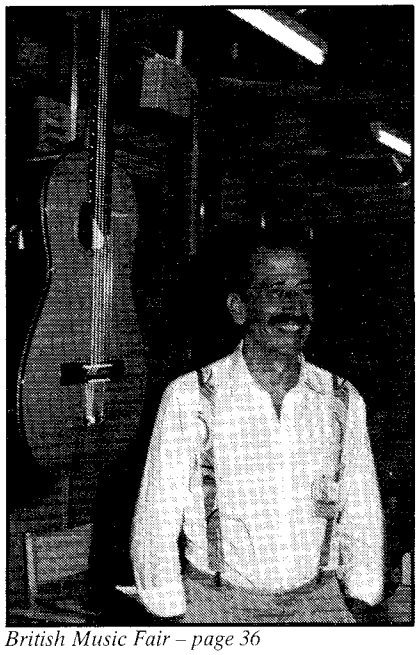
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ANIELLO DESIDERIO

Profiled by COLIN COOPER

BORN in Naples in 1971, Aniello Desiderio is tall, with a broadness to match, with muscular shoulders (developed by PE) and huge hands. He has wide tapering fingers, reminiscent of Segovia's. He could, you feel, have made a name for himself as a rugby footballer (though soccer is his preference) or a wrestler if nature had not endowed him with a superb musical talent. He is the guitar's John Ogdon; as large, as genial, as much of a virtuoso on his chosen instrument.

I first heard him play in the 1988 Havana International Competition, where he won a joint first prize with the local star, Joaquín Clerch. Aniello was only 16 then, but very nearly as big as he is now: an imposing yet calm and somehow benign presence on the platform. His playing entranced audience and jury alike. Danielle Ribouillault, editor of the French magazine *Les Cahiers de la Guitare*, leaned across and whispered to me 'He looks like a child but he plays like an angel'. She may of course have meant Angel Romero, but I think her thoughts were more celestial. Since then I have had the acute pleasure of hearing him play a number of times, in Hungary, in Paris and in the first Guitar Festival of Cambrils in Catalonia. Not once have I been disappointed. His playing goes from strength to strength. His technique is formidable; there is nothing so far written for the guitar that he cannot play, and it gives him the option to be totally and ruthlessly selective.

His tastes tend towards the contemporary, though he also loves Bach. His Walton was meltingly human; his Ginastera exciting to the *n*th degree: no one gets the last movement going as irresistibly as he does, and the way he plays the Scherzo has a magical lightness and velocity that has to be heard to be comprehended. Until then, please take my word for it.

Aniello Desiderio is the middle of three brothers, one of whom plays the piano, the other the violin. His father was a percussionist, but his mother is musical too. 'If she hadn't been musical,' says Aniello, 'she would have been driven mad by the sound of the guitar, the piano and violin all at once in one small house.' The family was not a wealthy one, and his parents, having the perception to see that they had a remarkable talent under their roof, made considerable sacrifices to ensure that young Aniello received the best possible teaching.

He studied the guitar with Bruno Battisti d'Amario and then with Stefano Aruta, still the teacher he acknowledges as his professor. Aruta has many good ideas about the left hand that seem to have worked exceptionally well for Aniello Desiderio, his star pupil. Flexibility and effortless fluency are the hallmarks of Aniello's wonderfully educated right hand. It is one of life's pleasures to watch him in action. He has also studied with Leo Brouwer, Costas Cotsiolis and Ernesto Cordero. He has won a couple of important first prizes in international competitions: the 'Maurizio Donia' in Messina, and later, in 1988, the Havana Prize, which was the one that brought him to the attention of the international guitar network and led to invitations to Greece, France and now Spain. He is still young enough to consider other competitions, such as Paris, simply for the career boost they can provide. But he is too good a musician to be competitively minded. No guitarist is less likely to play to the jury. No guitarist has less need to do so.

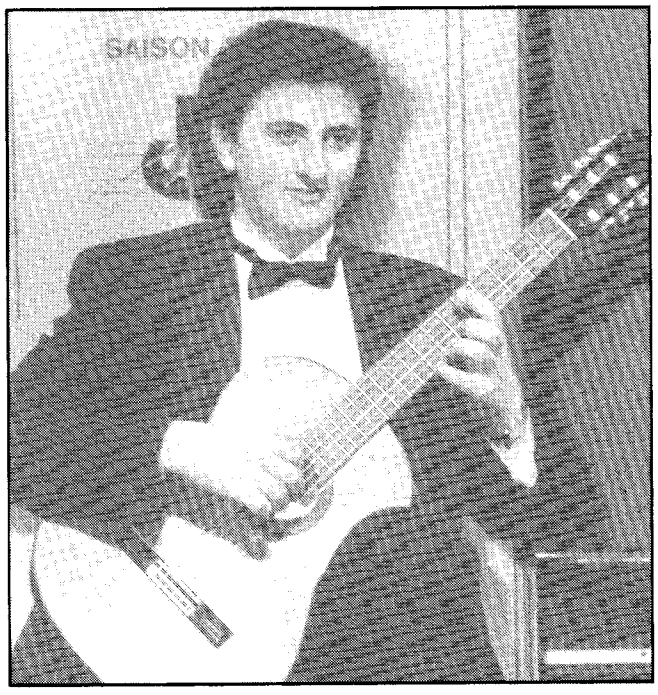


PHOTO: RADIO FRANCE

Aniello Desiderio

He practises for a minimum of four hours a day, extending sometimes to seven or eight, depending on circumstances. In 1991 he did a year's national service, which (not surprisingly) somewhat restricted his activities. No doubt he can defend his country militarily if he has to, but it is hard to imagine that he would be more useful behind a gun than behind a guitar, in which capacity he is bringing Italy musical prestige in the guitar world and, sooner or later, in the general world of music.

Aniello has a persuasive way with contemporary music. I remember a wonderful set of Bagatelles (Walton) in Paris; sunny, redolent of the warmth of Walton's adopted Italy, yet always rhythmically taut and compelling. He admires Britten too; and his mastery of the Ginastera Sonata has already been mentioned. A particular favourite is the Italian composer Nuccio d'Angelo, who lives in Florence. Aniello played his *Due Canzone Lidie* in Paris; remarkable pieces, in a contemporary language yet conveying a powerful musicality: a name to be reckoned with. D'Angelo won a first prize for his composition in Toronto, and again in Spain, in the Concurso Andrés Segovia, with his *Magie*. A guitarist himself, he sometimes plays in a large (40 players) guitar orchestra that also contains Paolo Paolini and Flavio Cucchi. Leo Brouwer has conducted this orchestra.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Dowland and Weiss are other composers admired by Aniello. He has played on television a lot, but he prefers a live audience, which generates a lot more emotion than a microphone can. Emotion — and no Italian is ever afraid to use the word — is perhaps the secret of Aniello Desiderio's success; his technique is phenomenal, even by today's incredibly high standards, but you cease to be aware of it: he hits

you so many times in the pit of the emotions, where it matters, that you cease to be aware of anything else. If you are stunned, I can assure you that it is a very delightful experience.

Like all great musicians, Aniello Desiderio has the knack of talking simply and to people three times his age. I find this a refreshing characteristic in the very young. It is in fact a reflection of his singleminded and clear-sighted attitude towards his art: for him, music is a natural activity which he is enabled to perform through the patience, dedication and good teaching that have led to the acquisition of a technique that you would have to travel far and wide in order to equal.

He has yet to make a record. When he does, he would like it to include Leo Brouwer's second Concerto (*Concierto de Lieja*), the Ginastera Sonata, Nuccio D'angelo's music.

He hopes to spend the rest of his life playing the guitar. 'I want to improve, because I think a guitarist is never perfect, you know? Never.' He also wants to play more with an orchestra, specifically with Leo Brouwer conducting his own second concerto.

His hobbies are exercising in a gym, and football. Physical activity is important after sitting and playing the guitar all day. But always the music comes first. 'I hope that in the guitar world in the future there will be a lot of guitarists who play with the idea of making music and not in order to display their technique. Today, now, there are a lot of guitarists who play without emotional commitment; they play only for technique, for speed, and to win competitions. And they forget about the music. The music is the most important thing.'

One cannot help being impressed by this young player. Like pasta, pizza, pecorino, extra virgin olive oil and the *vino nobile* of Montelpulciano, Aniello Desiderio is good news from Italy.

A DARK LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

By JOHN HUBER

THE guitar top is made of coniferous soft wood. Traditionally a variety of European spruce (Picea excelsa) was used, since about 1960 the use of North American Western Red Cedar (Thuja plicata) has become common. The availability of top quality spruce is quite limited today; first and even second growth timber from the European Alpine region has long since disappeared, and the terminal exploitation of Eastern European sources is well advanced. During the past 30 years the Pacific coastline of north western USA and Canada has been so extensively logged that quality timber is now found only 75 kilometres or more inland. The traditionally preferred neck material is 'Spanish' cedar (cedrela mexicana) from Cuba or Honduras, but mahogany (one of the khayas or swietenias) is normally used now due to the depletion of the preferred species. The fingerboard is made of rosewood (one of the varieties of Dalbergia) or, in more expensive instruments, of ebony (Diospyros).

The selection of the materials used for the back and sides of the guitar is more dependent on the projected sales price of the instrument than on the acoustic and/or structural suitability of the material for that purpose. For balance, the maker must compromise wood selection with the arching, wood thickness, and bracing of back and sides. Some rules exist to limit choices, for example, hard wood gives quick response but excessive stiffness can limit volume, etc, but most expert makers agree that the way in which the materials are used is more important than concentration on the specific differences between similar materials. Some (Torres and José Ramirez III for example) have argued that the materials of the sides and back are essentially unrelated to the guitar's musical quality. It is an established tradition that hard, dense, elastic woods that can be worked thin make good sides and backs, but many makers also acknowledge that the beauty of the figure of the wood is a very important, if non-musical feature, which must be given consideration during materials selection. The quality of the materials is definitely related to the ultimate quality of the guitar, but not necessarily in proportion to the suitability of the materials to the job. Expensive guitars are made from expensive materials to meet commercial expectations, not to meet structural or acoustic requirements. Guitars with expensive woods and high selling prices usually receive better workmanship than do cheaper instruments by the same maker; this fact rather than an innate superiority of materials tends to result in better guitars.

At the time of this writing the wood commonly known as Brazilian Rosewood or Jacaranda, (Dalbergia nigra), is favoured above all others. Another common material is Indian Rosewood (Dalbergia latifolia). Less expensive guitars use various species of mahogany (Swietenia macrophylla is favoured), maple (Acer campestre), or various (deciduous) nut or fruit woods. Spanish cypress (Cupressus sempervirens) is traditionally used for flamenco guitars and often for reproductions of historical instruments.

During the 1960s the use of ivory became an issue of moral responsibility, and many guitar makers stopped using it long before international legal restrictions on the trade in ivory were imposed. Guitarists were quick to understand, and did not object to the change. Suitable alternative materials were developed, and the guitar industry survived the situation without crisis. Now an even more important issue forces the guitar industry to take a stand. The threat of rain forest depletion is an important factor for all products which use tropical hardwood as a raw material. The guitar industry is not the largest consumer of tropical hardwoods, but it is a contributing factor to the logging industry. In today's uncertain world, saving our remaining resources is a clear challenge, demanding response from the modern guitar maker, and the guitarists who support him. Until now, this has not been a topic of much interest to the guitar world, except to inspire some makers to lay up a stock of desirable materials to ensure their future production, but a stand must soon be taken. We can wait until others decide the issues for us, or we can begin to study and react to the situation now.

Tropical rain forests are mainly found in three great areas which are characterised by the lack of a cold or a dry season: the Amazon drainage network, the Congo drainage network, and the island chain stretching towards Australia from south-eastern Asia. No other areas in the world can exhibit such a wealth or complexity of interacting species. Indeed, many scientists attribute the origins of most known life forms to these forests. Since the 1950s timber has been removed from these areas faster than it can grow, and consequent erosion from unprotected 'clear-cut' timberlands has removed much of them from further productivity. Already the main forest resources of Africa are gone; those of south-east Asia will be depleted by the end of this century, and the large-scale exploitation of South America is well under way. For the underdeveloped countries of these areas, the forests provide a major (low technology) export commodity. Just as important, the timber provides them with cheap energy (firewood), and attempts can then be made to convert the cleared land to the production of cash crops like rubber, coffee, palm oil, paper pulp, etc. Few of the local population of these areas feel that they cannot cut down a tree to supply their immediate needs just because a few wealthy citizens of New York, London, or Stockholm object. The extinction of species is under way every day. We are risking the complexity of life, and eventually we must pay the price. Even we guitarists must think about it.

BEHIND THE SCENES

BARRY MASON IN CONVERSATION WITH CARLO BARONE

A series of interviews with people who are making things happen in the guitar world

SOME years ago I was sent some publicity about a guitarist who specialised in 19th century guitar music, called Carlo Barone. Because his name was unfamiliar to me – I had not seen any recordings made by him, or any concerts advertised in London – I thought very little about it, other than that he was a lone servant of the 19th century, trying hard to make this music more popular in the guitar world. It was not until I met him in Arezzo (Italy) that I realised that he was not a loner, studying the music by himself in his garret, but the head of a very large organisation called 'Archivio Generale Italiano delle Fonti Musicali' (AGIF). The more we discussed his musical philosophy and research, the more I came to realise the man before me was one of the few guitarists who had spent most of their careers in the pursuit of studying the guitar music of the 19th century.

Our interview took place in the evocative medieval town of Arezzo, where, armed with a bottle of wine and a plate of olives, it seemed appropriate to be discussing the influence that the great Italian 19th century guitarists had on the rest of Europe.

BM: *How and when did you start playing the guitar?*

CB: When I was six years old I went to have my hair cut and saw the barber's guitar, and I asked him 'what's that?' He told me – it was like a game – and then: 'would you like to try it? And he lent me the guitar for a week. After that, my father bought me a very small guitar and I started to study the instrument. Throughout my youth I continued my musical studies alongside a classical education, studying literature, poetry and science. Although I started the guitar when I was very young I always enjoyed it, as well as the organ and piano which I studied for ten years. I was organist in a church for many years, while at the same time becoming aware of composition and musicology.

You are now an acknowledged expert on the 19th century guitar – how did this come about?

At first, and while I was a student, I played all sorts of different classical repertoire, and also electric guitars, but gradually I came to love the music of the 19th century, and from then on I searched out more and more of the repertoire, which was very little published in those days. Although I had some of the well-known studies, and some songs and chamber music I realised that there must be much more repertoire available, and I began to read all I could about the period, and fine as much music as possible, going back to original sources. My education helped me here. I knew that if you wanted to know what the Greeks or Romans thought about something you have to go back and read original texts – not just easy translations – and the same applies to music: if you want to find out about a period you have to do a lot of reading and playing the music yourself.

Did you have to alter your original guitar technique substantially to play the 19th century guitar?

Carlo Barone

I think 19th century music should be played on original instruments – or copies – and therefore it is impossible to play with exactly the same right-hand technique as on a modern instrument. In my opinion we have to make a compromise, especially with the problem of whether to play with nails or not. This is particularly difficult if, as most of us do, we want to play music by more than one composer, as they all had differing ideas on the nails. I personally have found the right balance somewhere between the Aguado technique of the short nails, and playing with no nails at all. With this sort of very short nail, such as I use, one can also play the repertoire originally written for no nails, such as Carulli.

Not satisfied with researching just the solo guitar repertoire from the 19th century, you have started a foundation for 19th century chamber music involving the guitar – tell us something about it.

The AGIF (Archivio Generale Italiano delle Fonti Musicali) is a non-profit making organisation which started about eight years ago. The organisation is based in Vigevano, but there are centres also in Rome and Turin, and in the USA we have connections with universities in Kansas City and Philadelphia. One of our main functions is to compile an archive of all the

printed and manuscript pieces from the 19th century to be found in Italian libraries.

Our idea is that we should have a real centre, where students, scholars and performers can have access to all the music, in microfilm or copies, so that the music can become better known. We don't plan to publish all the music, just to make it easily available to those who want it. If anyone is interested in joining the organisation we try to keep the costs very low – only lire 20,000 (about £10) to join, and then the cost of the photocopying or printing for any music ordered.

Another objective is to try to find out more about how to play and interpret this music – not only for the guitar, but other 19th century instruments. We have found original tutor books for the instruments, and now we have a college, where for three years, after their formal musical training, students can learn the specific techniques of the 19th century on original instruments. We have an important collection of original instruments, and the course is particularly for players of the guitar, flute, fortepiano and violin. Chamber music is a particularly important part of the course, and especially chamber music with the guitar. The final objective is to organise concerts, because if the music is only in the library it is dead – we want to make it come to life. From the school we organise many concerts in Italy, and Europe and the USA, so that the best students can have the experience of playing in public. We also hold a competition in Verbania for young musicians playing on original instruments (or copies) the solo and concerto repertoire of the 19th century.

Postscript:

After talking to Carlo Barone I felt that an Aladdin's Cave of new repertoire had been opened up to me. Having thought I knew about 19th century repertoire, reading his expansive catalogue shows that in Italy alone, there is a mass of unexplored music just waiting to be played. He has recently published some of this music, including pieces for chamber ensemble, and a concerto for two guitars and orchestra. Much of the music is published by G. Zanibon, where, although the text is very clear, there are numerous printing errors. The original text is also given, so you can easily check anything that seems dubious.

Carlo Barone, as well as being a soloist and chamber musician, also directs an exciting festival devoted to 19th century guitar music, 'Estate Chitarristica sul Lago Maggiore', each summer. For anyone interested in further details of his organisation, the address is: AGIF Via G Silva 28, 27029 Vigevano, Italy.

PATHWAYS

PLAYING *PIANO* ON THE GUITAR

PART 1

By ROY BREWER

ONE of the few things which musicians agree about is that compared with, say, a trombone, the guitar is not a very loud instrument. One would think that, once established, this rather obvious fact would be thought less interesting than some of the guitar's more positive attributes; but not at all! Its lack of volume seems to have become something of an obsession for some makers and players. It is as though flautists and trumpeters were to spend all their time complaining that they can't play chords!

In an otherwise interesting article, 'The sound of the guitar', in the present series (CG, June 1992) Paul Hurley wrote (rather oddly when one re-reads his title!) that the guitar 'cannot be heard', and that this is the 'major reason why [it] has not been taken fully into the family of classical instruments'. Well, I would have to admit that an instrument which you can't hear could be something of a musical disadvantage, but perhaps what he really meant was 'can't be heard two streets away'.

So first of all let's make sure that we are talking about the same things. Volume, in this context, is a matter of how loud a sound *can* be produced, whether by a guitar or a mighty organ. Whatever the instrument's capabilities in this direction, hopefully nobody plays it as loudly as possible *all* the time. So what, maybe, we should be discussing is not so much volume as dynamic range, which opens up a different, and more important, set of questions.

Hearing is both subjective and relative. The purring of a cat in a quiet room can seem quite loud whereas – or so it appears – however high the decibels, performers at open-air pop concerts are never considered too noisy by their audiences. How we experience sounds has a lot to do with the circumstances and conditions under which they are produced. Anyone who has been kept awake at night by a dripping tap can testify that normal human hearing is capable of immense acuity and discrimination. To take a more musical example, the audience at a clavichord recital usually begins by finding this, the quietest of all keyboard instruments, a bit of a strain to listen to; yet – and this is not only my experience – in a very short time the ears become so finely attuned to the slight sounds that all the subtleties of interpretation and dynamics which the player is capable of producing, from *piano* to *forte*, can easily be distinguished. For want of a better phrase, it's a matter of 'aural perspective'.

As I said, sound is relative as well as subjective. When a naturally quiet instrument such as the guitar is played together with less reticent ones a different situation arises. A classical guitar can easily be drowned by a symphony orchestra in full voice, and it is up to composers, not performers or makers, to ensure that it isn't. (Properly handled, discreet amplification can do much to redress the balance; but that's another issue). Let us remain with the classical guitar in the solo role in which it is now most often played.

Another important aspect of musical sounds is that their carrying power, or penetration, compared with their volume, changes in relation to their 'purity', i.e. the presence or absence of lower and upper partials. In common with other stringed instruments played with the fingers the sympathetic vibration of a guitar's strings when struck produces a complex 'mix' of sounds, rich in lower and upper partials, and subtly modified by its resonating chamber, or body. The fact remains that it is the vibration of the strings which *initiates* the sound. The piano, with its mechanism and longer strings, can initiate a bigger sound, but the guitar cannot: it produces a quieter, more 'coloured' sound. Less harmonically coloured sounds are more forthright: for example, a piccolo or descant recorder played *pianissimo* is easily audible at a considerable distance, even in combination with other instruments. For these reasons alone a guitar could not be made to sound very much louder without becoming a quite different instrument.

The development of a musical instrument is shaped by its history, and in particular by the social and musical roles which, over the centuries, it has played. The Baroque guitar was rarely heard solo. It served in mainly accompanying, or continuo, roles and allowed the virtuoso's limelight to fall on more robust personalities. By the 19th century public concerts had arrived and many instruments were undergoing the modifications demanded for the performance of music with wider dynamics and a broader sound spectrum, such as that written by Weber and Beethoven. The flute did not earn its present place in a full symphony orchestra until, around 1832, Boehm redesigned it as a more assertive, more flexible instrument. For similar reasons the pianoforte triumphed over its keyboard antecedents, such as clavichords and harpsichords.

The guitar did not share in this trend because it had no traditional place either in the orchestra or in the concert hall. From the early 1800s onwards guitar recitals were being given in Europe by celebrated soloists such as Sor and Giuliani, but they were salon affairs and often regarded by the public and critics more as novelties than serious musical events.

Sor himself was well aware that the guitar was considered too self-effacing to gain much of a following from a musical public growing up on a rich diet of large-scale choral and orchestral works; yet it is Sor who is on record as saying, with a perceptiveness rare both then and since, that the only reason he would want more volume from a guitar would be 'in order to diminish it', a nice understanding of the essential difference between volume and dynamics!

The construction of classical guitars changed significantly in the 20th century, often in an attempt by makers such as Torres to build more volume and responsiveness into their instruments than early classical makers, such as Panormo and Lacôte, had achieved. As guitarists we must be grateful but, bearing in mind Sor's observation (to say nothing of the present-day concern with 'authenticity' in the instruments and playing techniques of earlier times) not be too hasty in

assuming that anyone who succeeds in making a guitar which can be played louder than its contemporaries or predecessors has, in any musical sense, done everyone a valuable service. Some monstrous hybrids have been conceived in the name of 'improved' guitars!

Incidentally (and paradoxically) when I mentioned in one of the monthly Capotasto columns I used to write for this magazine that I had bought a modern copy of a Panormo guitar which the maker had subtly 'beefed up' to improve the response of the lower strings and obtain a more balanced sound than the original, an indignant letter in the correspondence columns accused him, and me, of 'desecration': you can't win!

If the reader is beginning to wonder whether this hair-splitting has much relevance to guitarists who play privately, and are therefore less likely to suffer from a neurotic suspicion that they cannot be heard in the back row of the stalls, let me suggest otherwise.

When learning the guitar the discovery of the apoyando stroke can be quite thrilling. Suddenly it is possible to get a healthy burst of sound. After that, if we're not careful, it's MF all the way! Despite the fact that a pianissimo stroke on the timpani, or a wisp of sound from a solo violin, can easily be heard by everyone in the Albert Hall, the guitarist may persist in the belief that unless he plays as loudly as he can nobody is going to hear him. What nonsense!

In his excellent book *Guitar Technique* (OUP, 1990) Hector Quine states that the limited dynamic range of the guitar is 'not necessarily the handicap that is sometimes supposed', and that 'even this restricted dynamic range is seldom exploited to the full by guitarists.' This sound observation is directly relevant to my present discussion.

By far the largest part of the solo repertoire of the classical guitar was written either as salon music or chamber music, and the same can be said of many modern pieces. The guitar can hardly be blamed if it does not hold its own in the orchestra or on the bandstand where, in any case, it has never had a place. We have inherited an instrument of considerable complexity and unique intimacy, with an entrancing sound. To complain that we cannot play it as loudly as we might want to is not only foolish, it is also ungrateful. Indeed it is tempting to suggest that Mr Hurley, or anyone else who bangs on about the guitar's lack of volume, should take up the tuba if they want to make a *really* big sound!

The last word can go to Gaspar Sanz (1640 - 1710) who wrote that the guitar's faults and virtues 'lie in whoever plays it, and not in the guitar itself'.

MUSIC SUPPLEMENT

EDITED BY NEIL SMITH

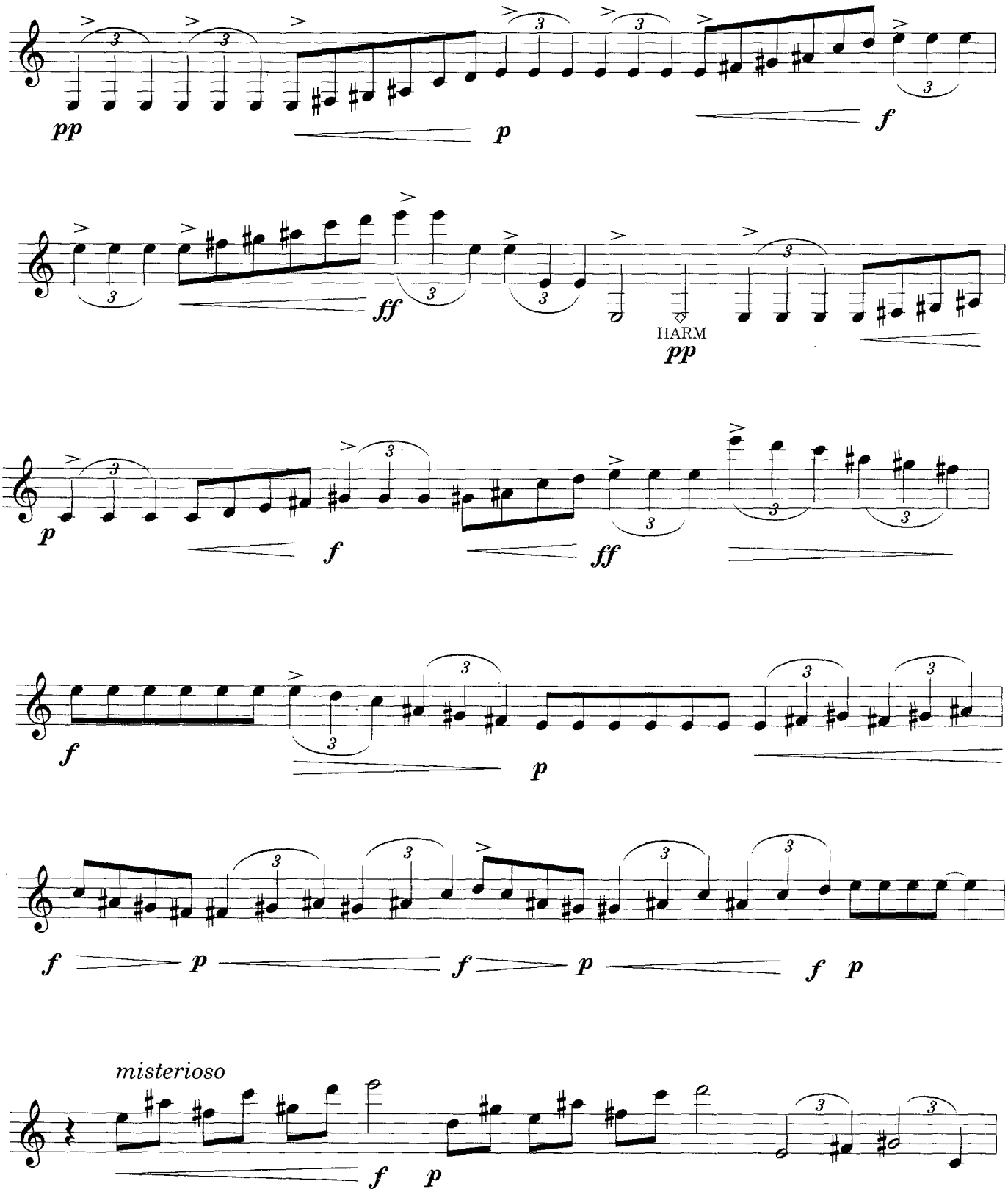
BAILECITO by Pieter van der Staak
Bailecito (a little dance) is from a superb set of Five South American Pieces from Broekmans & Van Poppel. This piece is copyright BVP and appears with the kind permission of the publisher and composer. Other pieces in the set are Aire Colombiano, Vals Venezolano, Pampeana and Choro.

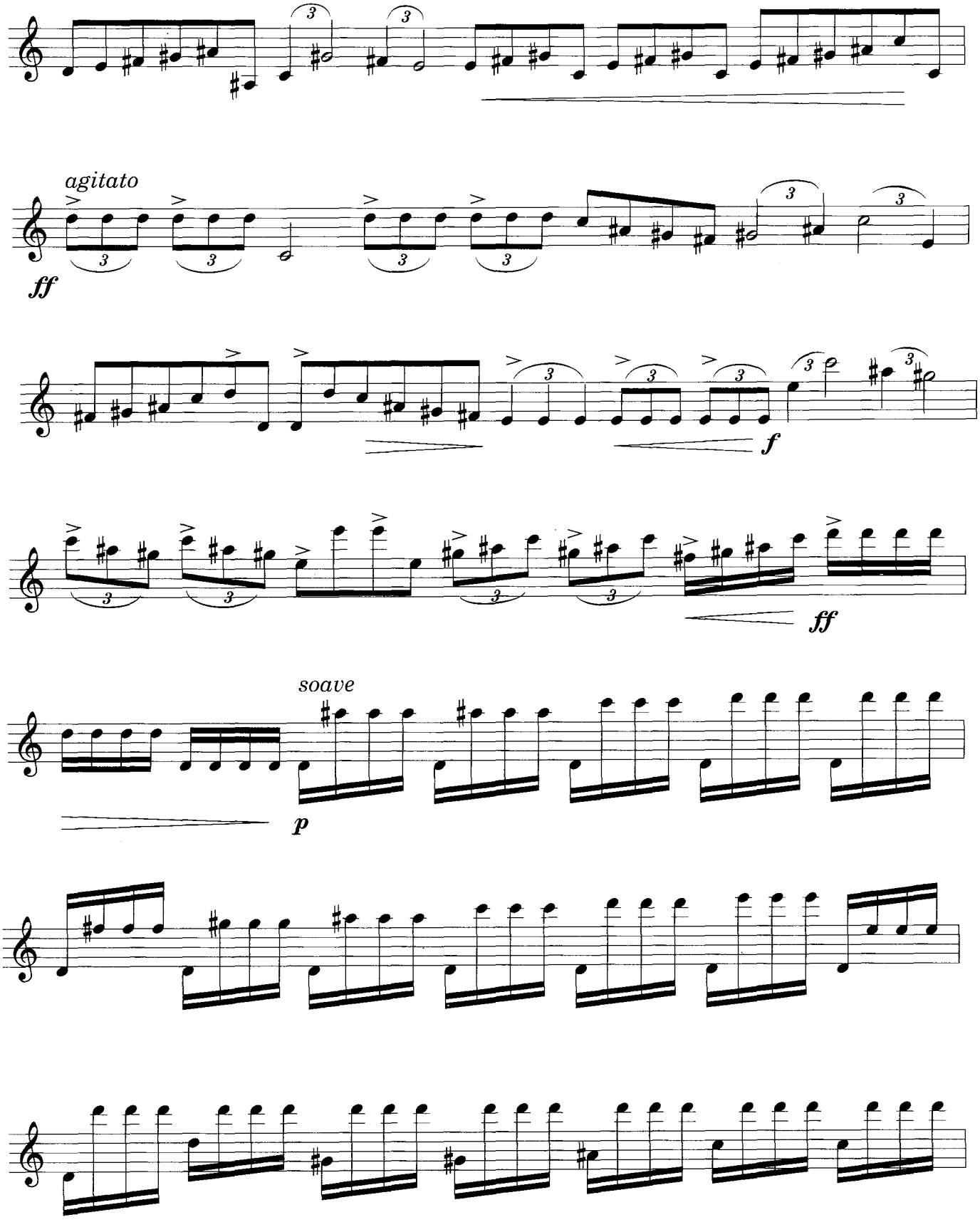
PROWLING by Mickie Ritchie
This whole tone piece works well on the guitar. I (N.S.) played the triplets on one string as much as possible using an extended left hand reach.

PROWLING

Mickie Ritchie

Andante

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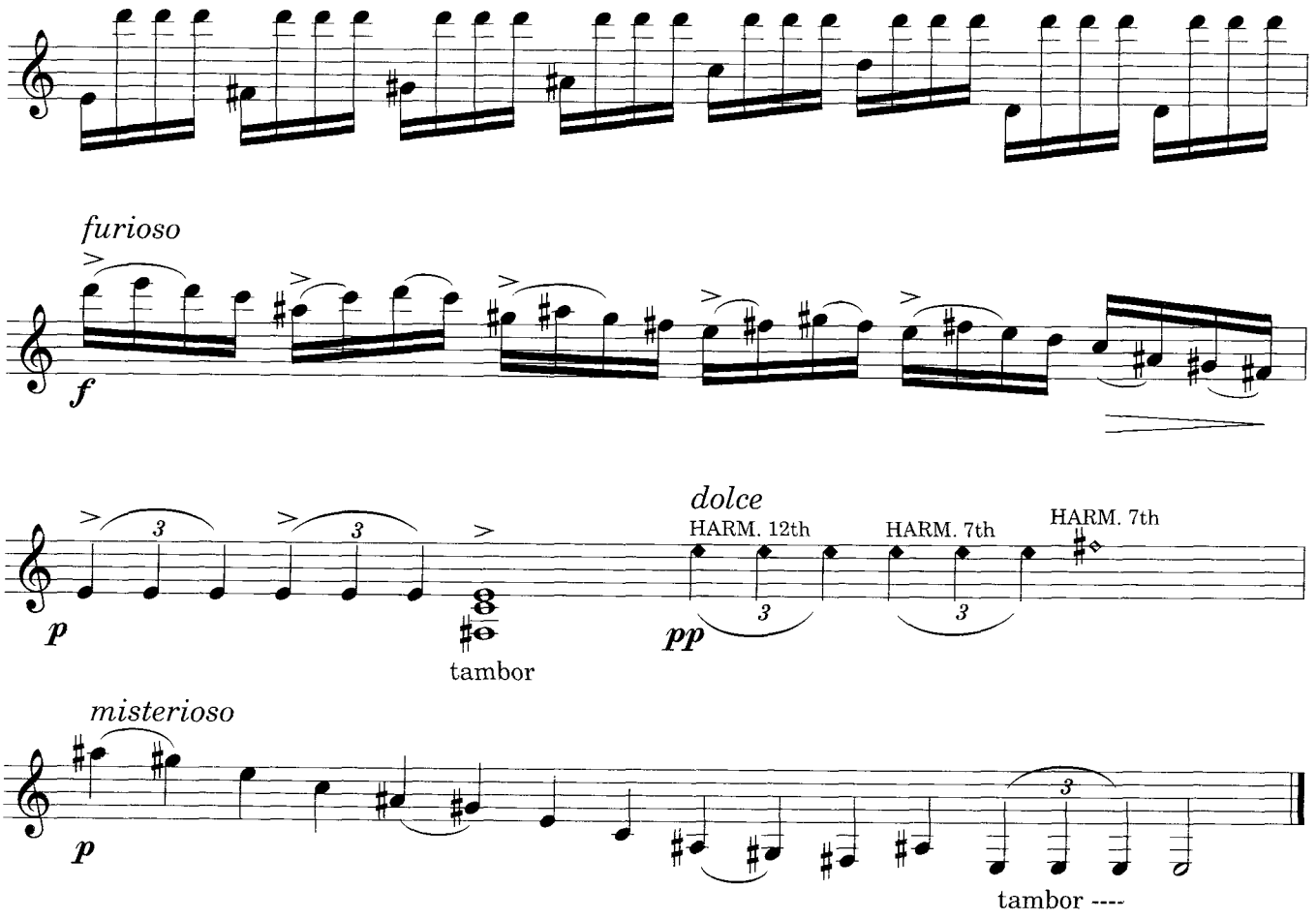
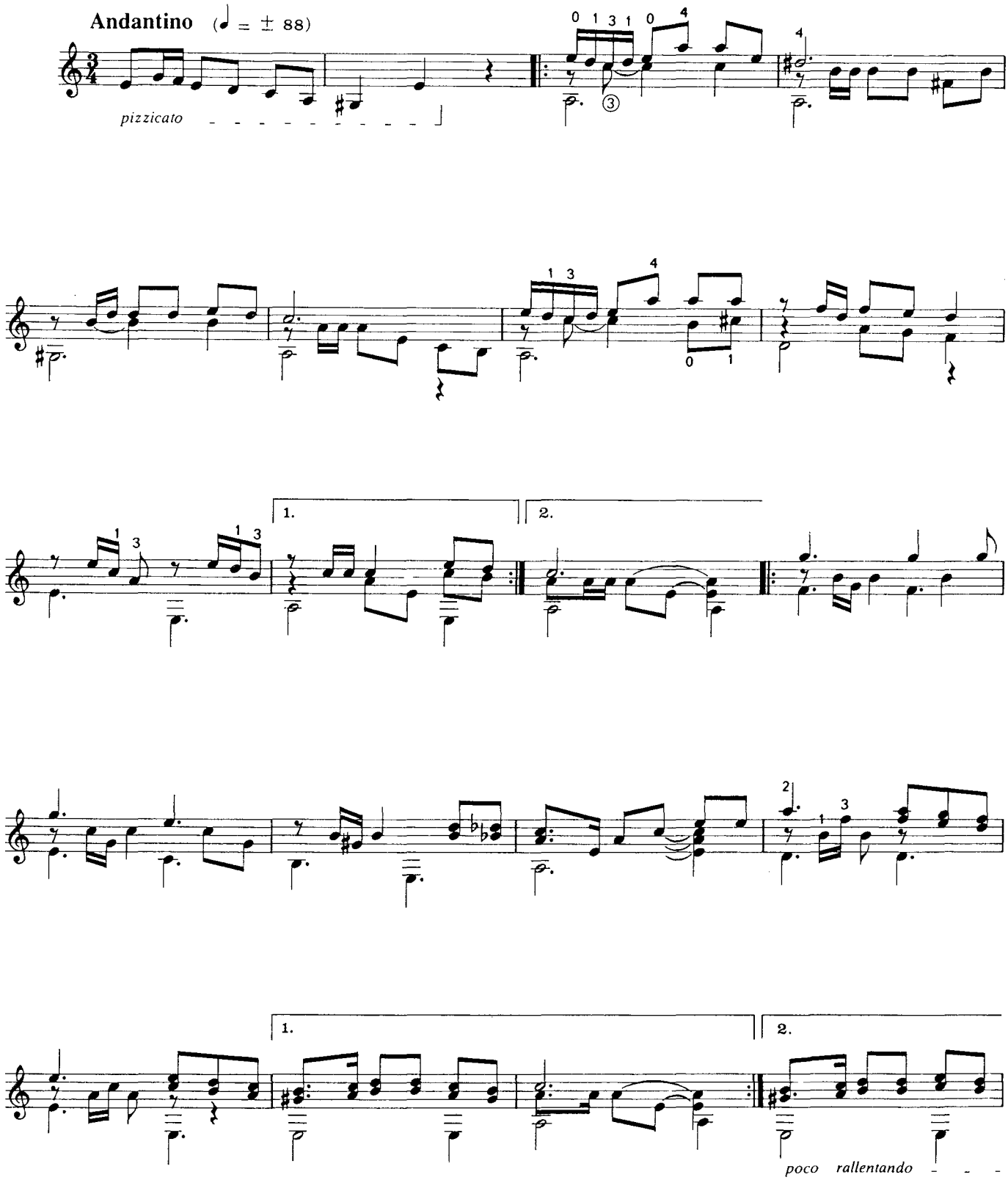
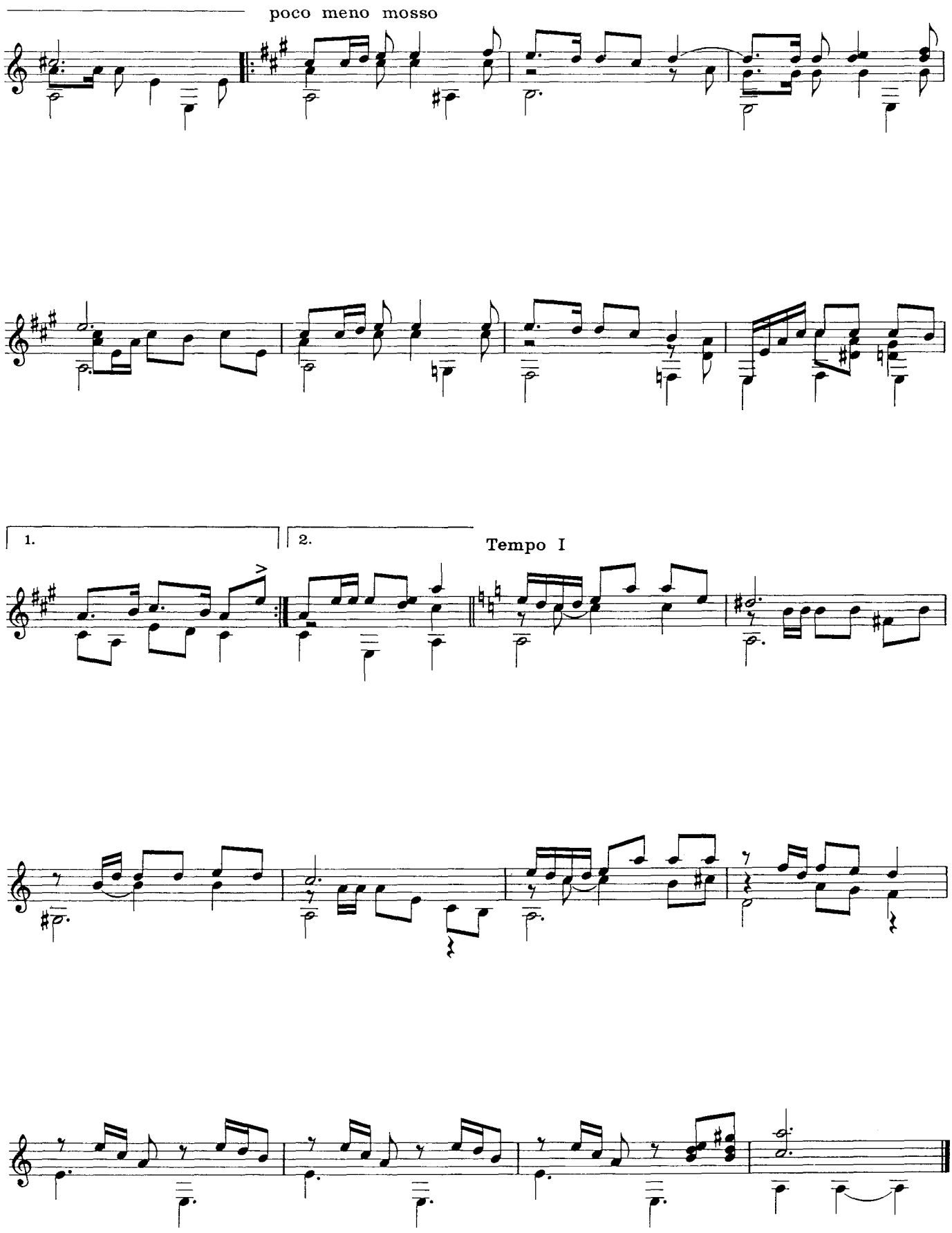


BAILECITO

(1985)

Pieter van der Staak




poco meno mosso
1.
2.
Tempo I
poco a poco crescendo e accel.
ritardando

THE SOLO GUITAR MUSIC OF JOAQUIN RODRIGO

By GRAHAM WADE

Part II Zarabanda lejana and En los Trigales

JOAQUIN RODRIGO's first composition for guitar was *Zarabanda lejana*. This was written in 1926 and later scored for orchestra, along with a *Villancico* to form a dyptich. Rodrigo's own account links his first meeting with Emilio Pujol to the published guitar edition:

It was the year 1926 when I had the good fortune of meeting Emilio Pujol. I had just written my first work for guitar Zarabande Lejana, *which some time later Pujol would publish in his collection of the Max Eschig Editions, and he made some warm and enthusiastic remarks which had a considerable influence on the music which I later wrote for the instrument.*

Joaquín Rodrigo, Preface, *Emilio Pujol*, by Juan Riera, publ. Instituto de Estudios Ilerdenses, Lerida, 1974.

In *De la Mano de Joaquín Rodrigo*, a biographical study by Victoria Kamhi (Madrid, 1986) it tells how Rodrigo arrived in Paris to study with Paul Dukas. In his suitcase was *Zarabanda lejana* along with other early works including *Suite para piano, Cinco piezas infantiles*, and *Preludio al gallo manañero*. In 1927 Manuel de Falla visited Paris to receive the award of Legion of Honour. To celebrate the occasion a concert was arranged and though intended mainly for Falla's own music, works from other Spanish composers such as Turina and Halffter were included. Seizing his opportunity Rodrigo performed *Preludio al gallo manañero* and *Zarabande lejana* on pianoforte to an audience made up, as Kamhi described it, of the 'cream of the French intelligentsia'. Such was the success of Rodrigo's music that various publishers offered contracts to the young man and thus Rodrigo's composing career was officially launched.

Zarabanda lejana was eventually published by Editions Max Eschig (edited by Pujol), in 1934 (though a piano version was published in 1930), and bears the dedication *A la vihuela de Luis Milan*. Rodrigo's biographer, Vicente Vaya Pla, tells of the close friendship between Rodrigo and Pujol and how, 'Years later, in 1936, in the Institute of Spanish studies at the University of Paris, Emilio Pujol would illustrate with his vihuela, a lecture on the vihuelistas given by Rodrigo.' (Joaquin Rodrigo, *Su Vida y Su Obra*, Madrid, 1977).

Zarabanda lejana is certainly a fascinating work. Marked *andante quasi adagio*, it begins with three bars of a single note, A, played on the fourth string, before weighty chords of D major, characterised by an *acciaccatura* on the top string from B to A. The apparent simplicity of the material is not entirely matched by the technical difficulty of achieving a smooth and even *legato* as the chords progress through some ingenious changes while articulating a slow melodic line. The discrepancy between the simplicity and economy of the composition (with its heavy chords evoking the dances of the past and supporting an elegant melodic line), and the difficulty of its realisation on the guitar, could perhaps be resolved by the suggestion that this work has essentially a pianistic concept, transferred to the guitar but not necessarily entirely at home there. On the keyboard these weighty chords and small note changes from chord to chord, as well as ornamentation in the upper voices, can be straightforwardly accomplished. On the guitar such concepts can become quite unwieldly despite the apparent structural and intellectual simplicity of the notes on the page.

A useful contribution towards understanding *Zarabanda lejana* is contained in *90 Aniversario: Joaquín Rodrigo* published by the Ministerio de Cultura, Madrid, (the English version edited by Raymond Calcraft). In an essay entitled *The Ambiguity of the Old and the New in the Music of Joaquín Rodrigo*, Joaquín Arnau Amo, makes the following comments on the abiding fascination of this piece:

Rodrigo sets the pace at the start of the piece and immediately introduces his music for the dance in a recognisable tonality, with repeated 'catches' which it seems the guitar particularly needs.

Suddenly, however, a modulation occurs which is not at all unusual in the tonal structure of the piece . . . It is a modulation from D to G . . . and there is nothing unusual in it. Even more – of all the possible modulations . . . that of the subdominant is the most natural . . .

Melodically, therefore the 'change' that Rodrigo slips into his Zarabanda is quite normal. Harmonically, however, we are perplexed by it. The chord with which the composer 'qualifies' the change challenges every authority.

. . . The fact is – and this strange chord has a great deal to do with it – that Rodrigo's Zarabande lejana *has nothing in common with the hundreds or thousands of sarabandes written during the Baroque and later periods, and its 'distance' is not limited to the past . . . the past has come to have a sense of future about it.*

. . . Modernity, which can be demonstrated in the Zarabanda, *nevertheless remains hidden, in part because of the limited sounds of the guitar . . . It is more obvious, on the other hand, in the piano version, where the density of the sound reveals the frictions much more. The orchestra finally dilutes it . . .*

Thus Amo sees the *Zarabanda lejana* as more than it seems, a piece which is 'evocative, without doubt: but we are not certain if what it evokes has passed or simply might come to pass'.

Furthermore, though the work is dedicated *to the vihuela of Luis Milan*, it might be pointed out that Milan wrote no sarabandes, that this composition has closer affinities to Ravel's re-creation of the spirit of the antique dance in *Pavane pour une Infante Défunte* (composed 1899, premiered by Ricardo Viñes in Paris, 1902), than to any actual sarabande.

This was, of course, Rodrigo's first composition for guitar, written at a time when he had not yet fully

turned his attention and creative energies to that instrument. Though this is often claimed as a piece conceived from the outset for guitar, it might be preferable to regard this piece as an arrangement from keyboard by a Spanish composer who wished to offer a guitar piece to his friend, Emilio Pujol. Like so many composers, Rodrigo wrote with the ideal guitar sound in his head. But *Zarabanda lejana* may appear to some more congenial arranged for string orchestra or pianoforte than it is for the guitar, which lacks the essential *sostenuto* necessary for this concept. Yet it works on guitar to the extent that it has attracted several players to record it. Unfortunately it is very rarely, if ever, played in the concert hall.

Zarabanda lejana was first recorded by Andrés Segovia in the 1950s on Brunswick AXTL 1069, in company with Segovia's premiere recording of Bach's *Chaconne*. Complete with the famous Segovia sonorities, the piece proceeds in stately dignity, taking four minutes forty five seconds. Rey de la Torre (b. 1917), the Cuban guitarist, recorded the work in 1966. At four minutes seventeen seconds he achieved the accolade for fastest version of this piece but gives the appearance of being slightly rushed. In his notes for Nonesuch 2590 001, *Spanish Music for the Classical Guitar*, Rey de la Torre writes:

Rodrigo's Zarabanda lejana, *one of the outstanding modern contributions to the guitar repertoire, evokes a sense of distance in time and space in which even the* fortes *sound* piano. *It illustrates better than any composition I know, Stravinsky's characterisation of the instrument: 'The guitar does not sound little: it sounds from afar'.*

Eric Hill, devoting half a side of an LP to the music of Rodrigo in 1982, achieved a most leisurely five minutes forty-nine seconds in his interpretation on Saga 5482 (now available on compact disc). Narciso Yepes, performing on his ten-string Ramirez, in a recording entirely given over to Rodrigo, achieved an authoritative and sonorous performance on DG 419 620-2, his interpretation just a few seconds longer than Segovia's.

Other recordings by players such as Bitetti, Ghiglia, José Luis Rodrigo and Mikulka, indicate a reasonable level of interest in this piece over the years. *Zarabande lejana*, being the first of the published solo guitar works, will continue to be of value a full understanding of Rodrigo's output, particularly when viewed as the beginning of the creation of his characteristic guitar style.

After *Zarabanda lejana* there was a twelve year gap before Rodrigo returned to composing for the guitar. In the years between 1926 and 1938 Rodrigo wrote a considerable quantity of music and furthered his reputation as a composer. In 1928 he met Victoria Kamhi, a pianist, fell in love, and married her in 1933. In the same year the couple returned to Spain following Rodrigo's valuable education at the École Normale de Musique in Paris studying with Paul Dukas.

In 1934 Rodrigo was awarded the first prize from the Circulo de Bellas Artes in Valencia for his symphonic poem *Per la flor del lliri blau* and returned on a scholarship for further study to Paris. In 1935, on the death of Paul Dukas, Rodrigo composed *Sonada de Adios (Homenaje a Paul Dukas)* for pianoforte. The following year saw the outbreak of the catastrophic Spanish Civil War. These events unfortunately entailed cancellation of the Conde de Cartagena scholarship, causing Rodrigo considerable financial anxiety. Between 1936 and 1938, however, Rodrigo was able to take up residence out of Spain, in Paris, Salzburg and Freiburg.

In 1938, as well as beginning work on *Concierto de Aranjuez*, Rodrigo completed *En los Trigales* (In the Wheatfields), which was dedicated some years later to Narciso Yepes (b. 1927). In this work Rodrigo uses the guitar totally idiomatically, showing a considerable advance on his guitar writing in *Zarabanda lejana*.

The work begins with an introduction recalling the scale passages of the flamenco guitar but balancing the light single notes against finely resonant three-part chords. After this sixteen-bar introduction, a catchy two-part section reveals the sophistication and vibrancy which Rodrigo could now create in his guitar compositions.

A lyrical section, *Allegro alla marcia*, gives a sudden contrast in tempo and mood. A slow melodic line on the lower strings is exquisitely contrasted against chords and harmonics, and a repeated B flat in the bass evokes the sense of a drum or handclaps. It has been said that Rodrigo intended this section to refer to singing round the campfire at night. After a little phrase in harmonics, the original themes return, dancing and agitated, the quintessence of the Spanish guitar.

Julian Bream recorded this piece on *The Art of Julian Bream*, RCA Records, RB-16239, issued in 1960, following the publication of the piece by Ediciones Musicales Madrid in 1958. *En los Trigales* and *Entre Olivares* formed part of a cycle entitled *Por los campos de España* (In the Countryside of Spain). A further piece, *Bajando de la Meseta* (Descending from the Meseta), is also included in this cycle.

Narciso Yepes issued a recording of *En los Trigales* in 1961 on a ten-inch LP, (Decca BR 3083) which provided some solos (*Two Pavanas* by Milan, Tárrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* and *Alborada*) and his earlier recording of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, conducted by Ataulfo Argenta (recorded only a short time before the conductor's death in January, 1958). The liner notes commented:

This is an imaginative and evocative impression of wheatfields on a summer's day, with a light breeze rippling the golden ears into gentle and intermittent animation.

Between 1960 and the present many have recorded this delightful miniature including Almeida, Anido, Aussel, Bitetti, Byzantine, Diaz, Eric Hill, Horst Klee, Navascues, Alberto Ponce, José Luis Rodrigo, Pepe Romero, Santos, Tapajos, Renata Tarragó, and Yepes (again). Thus a piece which is one of Rodrigo's finest lyric evocations has found many advocates. The most recent recording of *En los Trigales* is by John Williams on Sony SK 48480, issued in August 1992.

(To be continued)...

THE MONK AND THE PANTHER

By RICARDO IZNAOLA

Towards the end of the 1992 Garcia-Biberian Summer School, Ricardo Iznaola, distinguished teacher, virtuoso guitarist and prizewinning composer, produced a little parable applicable to the teacher-pupil relationship. He dedicated it to 'The wonderful people of the 12th GBISS, Evendine Court College, 21 August 1992', and was kind enough to give us permission to print it.

THERE was once a Monk who lived a life of meditative contemplation, in seclusion, peace and silence.
He lived in the jungle. He was a very wise, old man.
He found a young Panther and, as he was not afraid, the Panther was not afraid and did not attack him.
The Monk took the Panther with him and began to befriend it and train it.
And the Panther was beautiful in its fearlessness, power and agility; perfect in execution; radiant in its innocence.
Being so wise, the Monk trained the Panther without taming it, and the Panther came to obey him without fear, pain or guilt.
The Monk, then, commanded the Panther: 'Eat me'.
And, for the first time, the Panther felt afraid, and would not eat him.
And the Monk insisted: 'Eat me'.
And the Panther retreated in fright, and lost its power and its radiance.
And the Monk insisted yet again: 'Eat me'.
And the Panther fell ill and collapsed to the ground and would not roar nor hunt.
And this continued for a long time and the Monk waited patiently, for he knew the way.
And one day, while the Monk was still asleep, the Panther arose from its lifeless slumber and, again fearless, ate the Monk.
And the Monk and the Panther became as one.
And they grew wings and flew off, free and unimpeded, unto Infinity.

PHOTO: ROBERT CHINN, HONOLULU

Ricardo Iznaola