

- 
- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>1</b> <i>Etude in A minor</i> (1:45)  | Aleksandr Nemerovsky      |
| <b>2</b> <i>Etude in D major</i> (3:08)<br>(guitar solo)   | Marek Sokolovsky          |
| <b>3</b> <i>Souvenir de Russie</i> (12:10)<br>(guitar duo)   | Fernando Sor              |
| <i>Trio</i> (11:10)<br>(violin, viola, guitar)   | Sándor Jemnitz            |
| <b>4</b> <i>Allegretto</i> (3:09)  |                           |
| <b>5</b> <i>Lento</i> (4:44)   |                           |
| <b>6</b> <i>Molto vivo</i> (3:11)  |                           |
| <i>Hungarian Children's Songs</i> (6:52)<br>(guitar solo)  | Rezső Sugár               |
| <b>7</b> <i>Hip Hop</i> (:22) <b>8</b> <i>Bring the Fire</i> (:43)                                     |                           |
| <b>9</b> <i>Burn Candle, Burn</i> (:30) <b>10</b> <i>Duck, Duck</i> (1:07)                             |                           |
| <b>11</b> <i>If you light it, the candle will burn</i> (:39)   |                           |
| <b>12</b> <i>Hey Grinder</i> (:36) <b>13</b> <i>Peel, Peel!</i> (:27)                                  |                           |
| <b>14</b> <i>Sound, Whistle, Sound!</i> (:40) <b>15</b> <i>How he waits</i> (1:33)                     |                           |
| <i>A Kis Csáva (The Little Predicament)</i> (6:33)<br>(piccolo, guitar, trombone)                      | György Kurtág             |
| <b>16</b> <i>Fanfare in the Manner of Mussorgsky</i><br><i>Hymn in the Manner of Stravinsky</i> (2:37) |                           |
| <b>17</b> <i>Scherzo</i> (1:07)  |                           |
| <b>18</b> <i>Nachtstück</i> (2:43)   |                           |
| <b>19</b> <i>I am Sitting on a Rock</i> (1:28)   | Aleksandr Ivanov-Kramskoi |
| <b>20</b> <i>Lullaby</i> (2:37)<br>(guitar solo)   | Aleksandr Ivanov-Kramskoi |

*David Starobin, guitar*  
*with Oren Fader, guitar (Sor); Benjamin Hudson, violin;*  
*Kim Kashkashian, viola; Susan Palma, piccolo; David Taylor, trombone*

---

## NOTES

### By Allan Kozinn

For reasons that are both obvious and natural, when we think of the guitar in geographical terms, we think first of Spain—the instrument's birthplace and the source of what has traditionally been its most popular literature. Considering the instrument's connections a moment longer, its historical ties with Italy, France, Austria and Latin America come to mind, and over the last few decades, guitarists and musicologists have turned up a vast quantity of music composed by guitarists who worked in these countries. In terms of the 20th century literature, meanwhile, the guitar seems to know no boundaries.

Yet, the more we discover about the guitar and the music composed for it, the more we realize how vast the instrument's reach has truly been—and how much remains to be examined, heard and learned. On this recording, David Starobin calls our attention to a part of the guitar's domain that has been referred to in passing by many a guitar historian, but which has not yet been fully explored on disc—the music of Eastern Europe; specifically, that of 19th and early 20th century Russia, and 20th century Hungary. To most listeners, the names of the composers represented here will be new (the obvious exception being Fernando Sor, represented here by his musical memoir of a sojourn in Russia). Their works, however, cover a broad range of styles and

techniques, and taken together, they leave the clear impression that this corner of the literature has much more to yield.

One thing that must be borne in mind, of course, is that confronting the Eastern European literature either as a performer or as a researcher in quest of interesting music, is no easy task, for it inevitably means dealing with a number of linguistic, political and philosophical obstacles—as well as one purely guitaristic one, which is that through the 19th century, two kinds of guitars (a standard six-string model and an expanded seven-string instrument) were common in Russia, as were several variant tunings. The three Russian guitarist-composers represented here—Aleksandr Nemerovsky, Marek Sokolovsky and Aleksandr Ivanov-Kramskoi—were all players of the six-string guitar.

The disc opens with a pair of fascinatingly contrasting *Etudes* by Nemerovsky and Sokolovsky. Little is known about the former, other than that he flourished in the late 19th century, and that at some time between the turn of the century and the Russian Revolution, he published a series of guitar works under the collective title, *Original Compositionen für 6 saitige Gitarre*. Drawn from the third volume of this collection, the *Etude in A minor* will startle the listener at first, for despite its origins, it sounds remarkably like

some of the better-known guitar music composed (some three or four decades later, and half a world away) by the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. The opening motif, for instance, is a repetitive chordal figure, with the lower voices remaining constant as the top line shifts up a step (or half a step) and back, thereby creating a shifting tonality with very little effort. Nemerovsky's harmonic language anticipates Villa-Lobos's as well; yet, if you strip away the harmony and listen only to the contour of the work's melody, you can hear the modality characteristic of so much Slavic and Russian music.

That quality is less disguised in the *Etude in D major* by Sokolovsky, although this work, too, boasts a harmonically cosmopolitan spirit. Sokolovsky was born in Poland in 1818, but spent most of his life either in Russia or, after 1847, on concert tours that took him to most of Europe's musical capitals. It is thought that none of his original guitar music was published during his lifetime; but in 1907, some 23 years after Sokolovsky's death, several of his studies were published in a Russian guitar journal. This work begins with a brief *Moderato* section in which a simple bass melody is set against a lightly chromatic chordal response, leading to a brighter and more contrapuntal section marked *con moto*. The piece is a gentle, innocent one that grows increasingly complex towards the end, as harmonics and quicker figuration are introduced.

And there's a charming touch at the close: a series of descending harmonics outling a D major chord, capped by a *pianissimo* rendering of the full chord in first inversion—not a radical voicing, but an oddly nebulous one for the closing of a fairly conservative *Etude*.

Fernando Sor, who was born in Barcelona, Spain, in 1778, and died in Paris, in 1839, is one of the best-known of the 19th century virtuoso guitar composers, and the duet included here, *Souvenir de Russie*, is one of his finest and most ambitious guitar works. Although it has not yet been established that it was definitely the last of his compositions, it does bear the highest opus number of the works published during his lifetime. The only reason the question of the work's provenance is raised, in fact, is that the work's very "Russian-ness" is out of sync with Sor's biography. Composers who write musical souvenirs of their travels tend to do so either while they're in the countries in question (so that the local elements in the music can be used to charm the audiences that are best able to recognize them), or soon after their return home, when the exotic taste of foreign music is fresh in their minds. The first we hear of Sor's *Souvenir*, however, is in 1838, when he reportedly performed the work in concert with its dedicatee, Napoleon Coste—that is, a dozen years after Sor left Russia.

Of course, it may be that Sor, back in Paris and in poor health, wrote the work as a remi-

niscence of a happier time. He had gone to Russia in 1823, by way of Paris, Berlin and Warsaw, just after a visit to London, where several of his ballets were performed with great success. The lady in Sor's life at this time was the dancer Felicite Hullin; and it was apparently because she was invited to become the *prima ballerina* of the Moscow Ballet that Sor went to Russia. There, he repeated the success he had in England. In fact, his ballet *Cendrillon*—an extraordinarily popular and frequently performed work in its day—was the work given at the grand opening of the Bolshoi Petrovsky Theater, in January 1825; and his *Hercule et Omphale* was performed at the coronation ceremonies for Tsar Nicholas, the following year.

During his three year stay in Russia, Sor naturally performed as a concert guitarist, and it seems likely that he met a number of Russia's most famous guitarists. In fact, it was believed, until recently, that this *Souvenir* was based on the theme of a work by M. T. Vysotski, a prominent Russian seven-string guitarist. Recent research, however, has shown that the piece is actually built on a pair of Russian folk melodies, "What Have I Done to Upset You?" and "Along the Gravel Street." This energetic and demanding work begins with a slow introduction in E minor, followed by a statement of the theme ("What have I done to upset you?") and nine exquisite variations. As a finale, Sor adds a bright *Allegretto*,

in E major, based on the second of the folk tunes.

Brace yourself, after the Sor, for a change of pace, for the work that follows—the *Trio for Violin, Viola and Guitar*, composed in 1932 by the Hungarian composer Sándor Jemnitz—will seem at first to occupy a startlingly different realm. In terms of its harmonic and melodic language, that can't be denied: Jemnitz (1890-1963) was a student of Max Reger and Arnold Schoenberg, and although he was more strongly influenced by Schoenberg's expressionistic works than his serial ones, his music has an unmistakably modernist rigor and thrust. Yet, once you are acclimated to the composer's unequivocally 20th-century dialect, its more comforting aspects become increasingly clear. One is that harmonic usage aside, Jemnitz's structural models are distinctly Classical. Another is that there is a good deal of passion in his writing, a quality particularly evident in the central slow movement. And finally, the ornaments that adorn Jemnitz's scoring—particularly the numerous slides and grace notes—bring to mind aspects of Hungarian gypsy music.

The work begins with an *Allegretto*, angular and rhythmically insistent in a way that at times recalls the spirit of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat*. The *Lento*, which opens with a solo section for guitar that returns near the end, is a movement full of steamy contrapuntal interplay between the three instruments,

and the finale, marked *Molto vivo*, is a quick peasant "stamping dance," as rhythmically sharp-edged as the first movement and even more drivingly energetic and pointedly virtuosic.

Jemnitz's *Trio* is so powerful and interestingly individual a work that one has to wonder why more of the composer's music is not regularly heard. He was after all, a well-travelled composer. Having had his early training at the Budapest Academy of Music, he also studied in Leipzig. Before World War I, he worked at several smaller opera houses in Germany, Holland and Czechoslovakia; and in 1913, he settled in Berlin, where he remained for three years before returning to Hungary. Back in his homeland, he worked as a music critic, and later joined the faculty of the Budapest Conservatory, all the while composing an array of orchestral works, vocal scores, keyboard music and chamber pieces. Alas, while several of his early works won international prizes, his music became increasingly difficult to come by in the West after World War II. The recording of this unpublished *Trio* owes its existence to the violinist Louis Krasner, who received a copy in Vienna in 1938, and brought it to the United States.

Rezső Sugár, born in Budapest in 1919, was a student of Zoltán Kodály—one of the great Hungarian nationalist composers who, with Béla Bartók, spent several years travelling through Hungary and what is now Roumania,

collecting and preserving the region's folk songs. It was Bartók's and Kodály's hope that Hungarian composers would draw on this rich treasury of native melody, and that is exactly what Sugár has done in his *Hungarian Children's Songs*. The tunes Sugár uses are based on those Bartók and Kodály collected in the first volume of their *Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae*; but one needn't have had a Hungarian childhood to find connections with them.

The very first selection, for instance, is based on what must be an international "taunting" motif. The others offer melodies that are simple, direct, and slightly exotic. Sugár's settings, though, are rather like those Kodály and Bartók prepared for Hungarian children's choirs: the melodies are presented plainly and without interference, but the harmonizations are contrapuntal and mildly dissonant. The guitar versions of these works were arranged by the Hungarian guitarist Istvan Adrovicz.

György Kurtág's music has only recently begun to make inroads on Western concert programs, but one need only hear a couple of his supremely inventive works to recognize the distinctiveness and individuality of his compositional voice. Kurtág was born in Roumania, in 1926, and settled in Hungary when he was 20, completing his musical studies there and in Paris and Berlin, and eventually joining the faculty of the Budapest

Academy of Music. This work, *A Kis Csáva* (*The Little Predicament*), Op.15b, was composed in 1979 for the opening of a Hungarian art exhibition, and is scored for the rather novel combination of guitar, piccolo and trombone. Its first movement refers to the work's genesis as a *pièce d'occasion*: entitled "Fanfare in the Manner of Mussorgsky," it is a brief trombone solo that refers, glancingly, to the "Promenade" theme of the Russian composer's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

A slow movement entitled "Hymn in the Manner of Stravinsky" follows. Here, the piccolo and trombone are melded into a single texture, often playing rhythmically (but not melodically) parallel lines, while the guitar provides a contrasting and somewhat more varied voice. The references to Stravinsky can be heard in the pointed and almost sardonic wit that emerges as the movement unfolds. The third movement is a bright, humorous *Scherzo*, a stream of quick musical bursts; but the finale, entitled *Nachtstück*, shatters that atmosphere and replaces it with a mysterious, alluring and rather anxious aura that is explained in the movement's subtitle, "Underground with Dostoevsky"—a reference to the spirit of that author's *Notes from the Underground*.

To conclude this recital of Eastern European guitar music, David Starobin returns to the Russian school for a pair of lovely, neo-Romantic miniatures by Aleksandr Mikhailo-

vich Ivanov-Kramskoi (1912-1973). Little known in the West, Ivanov-Kramskoi emerged as the Soviet Union's leading guitarist after World War II, after having studied with Segovia's Russian student, Piotr Spiridonovich Agafoshin. His works may well bear further exploration: they include two guitar concertos, and a large number of solo pieces. Included here are *I Am Sitting on a Rock*—an arrangement of a Russian folk tune—and a sweet, gentle *Lullaby* that was first published in 1947.

In these works, as in the *Etudes* that open this program, the composers' scoring is simple and unadorned; and on the printed page, the pieces look rather square and uneventful. If played exactly as written, they'll sound that way too. Yet, when addressed sensitively, with a personalized *rubato* and a well-considered manipulation of dynamics and tempo (musicality in a word), these little pieces turn out to be quite evocative.

Here's hoping that the exploration of the Eastern European guitar literature continues, and that further gems—in both the folk-inspired style and in the more sophisticated, cosmopolitan genre—emerge and become part of the international literature. They put the guitar's voice in a new perspective, they fill out our ever-changing view of the instrument and its history, and not least, they give the lie to the assertion, still too frequently heard, that the guitar's literature is a limited one.

\*\*\*\*\*

The annotator is indebted to the musicologist and publisher Matanya Ophee for information about Nemerovsky, Sokolovsky and Ivanov-Kramskoi, published as are the scores themselves) in his *The Russian Collection, Volume I* (Editions Orphée); and for kindly providing information on the folk music used in Sor's *Souvenir de Russie*.

*David Starobin* was born in New York City in 1951. He is the grandson of four Russian Jews who emigrated to America during the early years of this century. Mr. Starobin currently devotes his energies to concertising on the guitar (and occasionally as conductor), teaching, record producing for a wide range of artists on his own Bridge label, and with his wife Becky, raising a son and daughter. Mr. Starobin is perhaps best known for the large body of contemporary compositions that have been written for him.

*Oren Fader* is making his recorded debut on this disc, at the age of 19. Oren has studied guitar with David Starobin for the past six years, and is currently finishing a degree at the State University of New York at Purchase.

*Kim Kashkashian*, born in Detroit of Armenian descent, has pursued a busy international career. During the past few seasons, she has soloed with orchestras in New York, Berlin, Vienna, London, and Munich. Ms. Kashkashian has recently toured in a quartet with violinists Gidon Kremer and Daniel Phillips and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. She has been featured in recordings on CBS Masterworks, Philips, Deutsche Grammophon, and Orfeo.

---

*Benjamin Hudson* is one of the most sought after violinists on New York City's busy music scene. He is violin soloist for Speculum Musicae and the Group for Contemporary Music, and is the concertmaster for several New York-based orchestras. Mr. Hudson is a leading exponent of early music performance on original instruments, and is a member of the Bach Chamber Soloists. His upcoming recording for Bridge Records is with pianist Garrick Ohlsson, and features the violin and piano music of Charles Wuorinen.

*Susan Palma* is soloist and principal flutist with a number of ensembles, including the Orpheus Ensemble, Speculum Musicae, The Bach Chamber Soloists, and the American Composers Orchestra. She has recorded for many labels, including recordings with David Starobin on Bridge BDG 2004 and BDG 2006.

*David Taylor's* musicianship spans the gamut of classical, jazz, and popular idioms. Among many others, he has performed with Steve Reich, Duke Ellington, Frank Sinatra, the Group for Contemporary Music, and the Rolling Stones.

---

#### Instruments

Guitars: Thomas Humphrey: Two 1986 spruce-top Millenium models (Sor); Cedar-top 1985 Millenium (all other works)

Viola: Antonius Hieronymus Fr. Amati, 1617, Cremona

Violin: Sergio Peressone, 1985, Haddonfield, N.J.

Piccolo: William S. Haynes (silver) 1968

Trombone: F. Holton bass trombone, G. LeBlanc Co., TR183

*Russian Guitar Solos* published by Editions Orphée (recorded November 4, 1986)

*Souvenir de Russie* published by Shattinger Int. Music Corp. (recorded November 4, 1986)

*Jemnitz's Trio* is in manuscript. (recorded November 3, 1986)

*Hungarian Children's Songs* published by Boosey and Hawkes (recorded November 4, 1986)

*A Kís Csáva* published by Editio Musica Budapest (recorded November 5, 1986)

---

A number of colleagues have assisted me in the search for the repertoire on this album. I am indebted to Matanya Ophee and Margarita Mazo for showing me the Russian solos, and to Bill Anderson and Louis Krasner for providing the Jemnitz manuscript. Bálint András Varga has helped with the music of Sugár, Jemnitz, and Kurtág, and Lillian Injeian has translated the titles of the *Hungarian Children's Songs*.

This album is dedicated to my good friend, Rose Augustine. —D.S.

---

DAVID STAROBIN:  
*A Song from the East*

with:

Oren Fader, guitar

Benjamin Hudson, violin

Kim Kashkashian, viola

Susan Palma, piccolo

David Taylor, bass-trombone



*David Starobin*