



*A Salon Opera*

FLAUGUISSIMO DUO



## A Salon Opera

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### Flauguissimo Duo

Yu-Wei Hu *flute*

Johan Löfving *guitar*

*Original French Tribout guitar, 1850, anonymous, restored by James Westbrook  
Eight-keyed flute by Martin Wenner, 2011, after August Grenser, c. 1790*

About Flauguissimo Duo:

*'Flautist Yu-Wei Hu was sublime and her handling of Gluck and Paganini,  
accompanied sensitively by guitarist Johan Löfving, was my personal highlight'*

Early Music Today

*'[...] Young artists Flauguissimo Duo shine [...] They  
gave a fine performance that held our attention throughout'*

Classical Guitar Magazine

Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840)

1. **Cantabile in D major**, MS 109, Op. 17 [3:26]

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

2. **Frühlingstraum**, D.911, Op. 89 No. 11 [3:00]

from *Die Winterreise*, arr. Flauguissimo Duo

3. **An die Nachtigall**, D.497, Op. 98 No. 1 [1:54]

arr. Flauguissimo Duo

4. **Heidenröslein**, D.257, Op. 3 No. 3 [1:44]

arr. Flauguissimo Duo

Francesco Molino (1768/75–1847)

**Notturmo II**, Op. 38

for flute or violin and guitar

5. **Andante cantabile** [2:36]

6. **Rondo: Allegro** [2:59]

Fernando Sor (1778–1839)

7. **Introduction and Variations on a**

**Theme of Mozart**, Op. 9 [8:40]

Introduction: Andante Largo – Theme: Andante Moderato

– Variation I – Variation II – Variation III – Variation IV

– Più mosso – Variation V – Più mosso – Coda

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787)

8. **Dance of the Blessed Spirits** [5:30]

from *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Wq. 30

arr. Flauguissimo Duo

Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856) [4:11]

9. **Tarantelle**, Op. 13 No. 6

Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829)

**Grande Serenade**, Op. 82

10. **Theme & Variations** [4:22]

11. **Menuetto & Trio** [3:18]

12. **Marcia** [4:19]

13. **Allegro brillante** [4:57]

Total playing time [51:03]



Yu-Wei Hu



Johan Löfving

### A Salon Opera

The inspiration for this album stemmed from the prevailing culture of salons where new ideas of politics, science, music and literature flourished during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ladies and gentlemen brought popular tunes from the opera house into their own drawing rooms rearranging the music for their own entertainment.

The intimate combination of flute and guitar was at the very heart of this domestic music-making. Transverse flutes had been established orchestral and chamber music instruments since the eighteenth century when many virtuosos travelled all over the European continent. The newly developed six-stringed guitar, on the other hand, had received an unexpected renaissance and its popularity can easily be compared to that of the lute three centuries earlier. However, while its noble ancestor was foremost an instrument of the courts, the guitar was an instrument of the people. Compared to the highly ornate harpsichords and fortepianos, many guitars were cheap, easy to transport and could be used for a variety of musical entertainments. In fact, during the Napoleonic wars a significant amount of guitar composers

had their real career in the army.

Interestingly, many composers associated with other instruments at the time were also competent guitarists, such as the diabolical violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840). He composed a huge amount of solo and chamber music for guitar with other instruments and **Cantabile in D major**, Op. 17 is certainly one of the most beloved. The gorgeous, sweeping melody was set to a simple accompaniment; there could hardly be a more suitable overture to a salon opera!

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) was one of the greatest musical minds of his time and a pivotal figure of the ‘lieder’ repertoire. Franz spent his relatively short life in his native Vienna and performed mostly in small intimate gatherings known as ‘Schubertiades’. These evenings were an oasis of freedom amongst friends where music, poetry and thoughts could be exchanged in a safe and frivolous environment.

For this disc we have selected and arranged three short songs from different parts of his life and it is extraordinary how directly the music speaks even without the poetry. As a proficient guitarist himself, it is said that Franz always had a guitar hanging

above his bed. It is highly plausible that many of the songs were composed with a guitar in hand, which also explains why they are so suitable for the instrument.

Although Biedermeier Vienna might have had its own classicism, the real capital of the guitar music was Paris. As guitars were in vogue among the newly emancipated middle classes, plenty of opportunities emerged for travelling virtuosos from the south to settle in the French capital.

Francesco Molino (1768–1847) was one of them and the Op. 38 **Nocturne II** recorded here represents salon music at its best: charming, sweet and innocent. The second movement is an unmistakable reference to ‘opera buffa’, with its jaunty rondo-motif and soaring melodies.

It is fair to say that Fernando Sor (1778–1839) is one of the most important guitar figures not only of the early-Romantic era but of all time. His great oeuvre of concert pieces and didactic works places him at the heart of the guitar repertoire but he was also a composer with wider interests. Ballet, opera and symphonic works by his hand have survived to this day and certainly earned him the name ‘Beethoven of

the guitar’ for a reason. His **Variations on a theme by Mozart**, Op. 9, is one of the most frequently played pieces in the guitar repertoire. The music combines dramatic operatic effects with virtuosic brilliancy and this interpretation is tailored for an original nineteenth-century guitar in order to bring out both the rustic and noble elements of this piece.

No salon opera would be complete without an actual opera extract and **Dance of the Blessed Spirits** from Christoph Willibald Gluck’s (1714–1787) *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Wq. 30 is one of the most beautiful operatic flute solos. Intriguingly this famous piece did not exist in the first edition for the Viennese premiere in 1762; it was only added for the performances at the Paris Opera in 1774 (along with a new French libretto, high tenor parts and more ballet scenes) conforming to the prevailing tastes in Paris at the time. This opera tells a beautiful story of love, life and death in which a mere mortal is determined to confront the immortal gods in order to bring back his beloved wife from the underworld. The wonderful music, on the other hand, is a great testimony to a composer who dedicated his life to reform the opera scene to a place of real drama and emotion.

From one dance to another, the **Tarantelle**, Op. 13 No. 6 by Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856) provides a sharp contrast. Although the Austro-Hungarian composer had never set foot on Spanish soil during his lifetime, this fiery piece brings our imagination to southern Europe where guitar playing is rooted in folk traditions. Surprisingly, Mertz was one of the few guitarists of his time inspired by the piano literature; many of his other compositions clearly bear traces of Schumann and Mendelssohn. In this context, the *Tarantelle* remains unique among his other works.

Finally we return to Italy, the country associated with opera more than any other. Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829) left his Italian homeland at an early age in order to make a career in the wealthy culture capital of Vienna, eventually becoming its leading guitar virtuoso. Although the operatic qualities of Italian ‘bel canto’ remained a major influence throughout his life, Giuliani was also strongly affected by the Viennese classicism. This is particularly apparent in the second movement of his **Grande Serenade**, Op. 82 where a simple minuet is followed by a trio full of lively scherzo character. This musical style was directly inspired by the Viennese ballrooms

where noble court dances were often swiftly succeeded by rowdier vignettes, just as Don Giovanni himself would have had it! The ‘Marcia’ alludes to the outdoor qualities of guitars mentioned earlier while the final ‘Brillante’ is a full-blown opera buffa ending with all the joy and excitement more than enough to fill an opera house let alone a salon!

### On Interpretation

The wonderful treasure of early-nineteenth-century guitar repertoire of both solo and chamber music has long been a source of inspiration for us. Fresh, light and joyous pieces full of gorgeous tunes and shimmering virtuosity, they remain at the very heart of most guitarists’ repertoire.

These hidden gems are mostly operatic pieces or folk-inspired dances which might have to be approached from a slightly different angle to large-scale symphonic works. This is rhetorical music, based on communication and shared affects between performers and listeners. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the musical world was very different to ours; singers were at the centre of all musical attractions and even the most established composers had to accommodate

their demands. Obviously not all composers were pleased with this state of affairs.

One story goes that when famous soprano Adelina Patti (1843–1919) sang one of Rossini's own arias to him, he politely asked her who the composer was! Though we don't know what kind of extreme liberties she might have taken herself, it nevertheless shows a natural outcome of this musical climate. As instrumentalists, we were deeply inspired by the power of rhetoric and hoped to bring operatic drama, humor and conversation into chamber music making in the intimate setting of a salon.

With 'tempo rubato' (rhythmic flexibility), ornamentation and the sound of period instruments, we wished to explore the subtle colours in the very nature of these instruments and their performance practice. Intriguingly, playing on an original instrument always seems to bring out more characters and variety instead of mere homogeneity. Above all, it is this constant 'diversity of subtleties' that keeps the music alive and listeners engaged.

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### Flauguissimo Duo

Flauguissimo Duo was founded by flautist Yu-Wei Hu and guitarist Johan Löfving in 2008. Their wide repertoire, spanning from early music on period instruments to collaborations with new composers, has led to a particularly diverse performing career. They have performed many concerts in prestigious venues including Kings Place and Cadogan Hall in London as well as St George's Bristol and Sage Gateshead in Newcastle. They were also invited to perform in the Stratford-on-Avon Festival, Honiton Festival, Bath Guitar Festival and Kings Lynn Festival; abroad they have performed in Utrecht Early Music Festival Fringe, Swedish Guitar and Lute Festival and the Bach Hall in Taiwan. Flauguissimo is keen on outreach projects, especially those bringing live music to new audiences. They have given workshops at Bristol University and a number of schools across the UK. Additionally, they were selected for several schemes aimed at young musicians such as Brighton Early Music Festival Live!, International Guitar Foundation Young Artist Platform, Concordia Foundation Young Artists and Live Music Now. Flauguissimo also performs regularly as a larger ensemble in various constellations, with a repertoire spanning from Baroque trio sonatas to classical orchestral works.

### Yu-Wei Hu (flute)

As both a recitalist and orchestral musician, Yu-Wei has performed baroque and classical flutes throughout the UK and Europe, including concerts at MuTh – Konzertsaal der Wiener Sängerknaben, Palace of Versailles, Royal Festival Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Royal Opera House, Kings Place, St Martin-in-the-Fields, St John's Smith Square, St Paul's Cathedral, Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. She also performed in Radio France Festival Montpellier, BBC Proms, Bachwoche Festival Vienna, Carinthischer Sommer Festival, Opera Barga Festival Italy and London Festival of Baroque Music. Her performances have been broadcast on BBC Radio 3, Radio France and Austrian Radio Ö1. Yu-Wei appeared on the album *The Oriental Miscellany* with prominent British harpsichordist Jane Chapman released under Signum Classics in 2015.

Yu-Wei has performed with many renowned period chamber ensembles and orchestras, including Florilegium, St James' Baroque, Oxford Baroque Soloists, The Hanover Band and London Handel Orchestra. Yu-Wei took part in the OAE Experience Scheme for Young Players in 2011 and Jeune Orchestre Atlantique in France 2011–12. Besides Flauguissimo, her

Baroque group Ensemble de Trianon won the Richard III Prize in RCM Early Music Competition 2010 and was finalist in the Fenton House Competition 2012. Les Nation Réunis, the other baroque ensemble she co-founded in 2010, is winner of the International Early Music Competition in Middelburg, The Netherlands in 2011.

Yu-Wei was awarded a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the National Taiwan Normal University in 2004 and 2006. In the UK, Yu-Wei completed the Master in Performance programme with distinction at the RCM in 2010, after studying Baroque flute with Lisa Beznosiuk and Rachel Brown, and modern flute with Susan Thomas and Daniel Pailthorpe. During this time, she was supported by the Kit and John Gander Award 2008-9, and the Taiwan Government Scholarship for Studying Abroad 2008-10. Generously supported by a Parnassus Award, Yu-Wei continued her study at the RCM and was awarded an Artist Diploma degree in 2013.

[www.yuweihu.com](http://www.yuweihu.com)

## Johan Löfving

Since being a prize winner in the prestigious London International Guitar Competition, Johan Löfving has established himself as a truly exciting musician of a new generation with a particular passion for the music of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. His performances have taken him to some of the finest concert halls such as Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, The Sage Gateshead, Wiener Saal Salzburg and MuTh- Konzertsaal der Wiener Sängerknaben in Vienna.

Additionally, he has appeared in major festivals including Spitalfields, King's Lynn, Stratford-on-Avon, Brighton Early Music Festival, Cambridge Summer Music Festival, Bath Guitar Festival, Saxå Chamber Music Festival, Styriarte Festival Graz and Carinthischer Sommer in Villach, Austria.

In 2011 Johan was awarded the First Prize in the Young Talent Concert at the Uppsala Guitar Festival in Sweden and the performance was recorded and broadcast later by the Swedish Radio P2. The following year he was awarded the Jörgen Rörby Prize and the audience prize from the Swedish Guitar and Lute Society.

Apart from his long term work with Flauguissimo Duo and Improviso, he has worked with some of the finest musicians, such as Barokksolistene, baritone Thomas Guthrie, tenor Rob Murray as well as pianist David Owen Norris, who invited him to take part in the 'Playlist Series' on BBC Radio 4. His passion for new music has resulted in several world premieres of both solo and chamber works, notably by the highly acclaimed British composer and guitarist Sam Cave.

Johan graduated with First Class Honours from the Royal College of Music in London, where he studied guitar with Gary Ryan, theorbo with Jakob Lindberg and conducting with Natalia Luis-Bassa. At RCM he was awarded both the Guitar Prize and the Hilda Anderson Dean Prize. Subsequently, he completed his studies at the Mozarteum in Salzburg with Professors Robert Wolff and Hans Brüderl and was awarded a scholarship from the Swedish Royal Academy of Music.

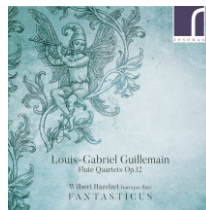
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