



Julian Bream Guitar Concerto

Malcolm Arnold Guitar Concerto

Mauro Giuliani Guitar Concerto

Britten The Courtly Dances
from "Gloriana"

Vivadi Concerto for Lute
and Strings

introduction, the orchestra pauses and the solo guitar proceeds with the first theme. The first theme performed by the guitar is enhanced by chords, large intervallic leaps, scales, and challenging configuration. The second theme ends with a brilliant cadenza. The listener is enticed by the parallel A Minor section, in which the soloist performs octaves with a sequence of demanding intervallic leaps. The movement returns to A Major and ends triumphantly with chords in the violins.

The second movement is entitled Andante Siciliano and the opening theme is unmistakably based on a sentimental Italian folksong. This movement is overwhelming in its beauty and gracefulness. The third movement is a spirited Polonaise and concludes the concerto with energy, verve, and bravado. The guitarist who performs this concerto brilliantly is truly the definition of a virtuoso, as is the definition of our soloist Julian Bream.

Concerto for Lute in D Major, RV 93 ANTONIO VIVALDI

Vivaldi spent nearly forty years (1704-1740) as music director of the Ospedale della Pietà, a home for illegitimate, abandoned, or orphaned girls in Venice. In that era (perhaps more progressive than our own), the Ospedale believed that teaching these girls to play an instrument would give them a useful skill, rescue them from a life of poverty, and keep them from becoming lifelong burdens on the state. At the Ospedale, Vivaldi's responsibilities were to teach the violin and to write music for the girls to play, and it was for the use of these girls that he wrote most of his 450 concertos. The vast majority of them are for the composer's own instrument, the violin, and he also wrote for other stringed instruments and for winds. But apparently some of the girls in the Ospedale played unusual instruments, and Vivaldi wrote for them too: among these works is the Concerto for Lute in D Major heard on this program.

Though it was conceived for an unusual instrument, this has become one of Vivaldi's most popular concertos, and it exists in several forms—it is probably best known in its arrangement for guitar, but it has also been played on the mandolin and even the violin. This popularity is no surprise at all. Its pleasing melodies, rhythmic vitality, and infectious spirits have made this concerto a favorite with both audiences and performers.

Perhaps because he was writing for an instrument that is not very powerful, Vivaldi scored this concerto for the unusual orchestra of only two violin parts and a basso continuo line. Much of this music's effectiveness comes from the deft interplay of soloist and orchestra, for the ritornello themes are full of snap and energy, and they contrast nicely with the delicate but agile sound of the lute. This concerto requires little description, and many listeners will discover they already know this pleasing music. Vivaldi launches the concerto with a firm Allegro giusto built on the orchestra's rhythmic opening ritornello, and the soloist plays off the orchestra's strong statements. This music feels constantly alive, from the snapped 32nd-notes of the ritornello through the busy runs that are exchanged by soloist and orchestra. An expressive Largo is followed by a concluding Allegro that gallops happily along its 12/8 meter.

Sixty years ago, the classical guitar was little more than a musical curiosity in Britain, despite the work of Segovia in Europe – a small-voiced, exotic instrument that wasn't to be taken seriously. But then a determined Londoner changed everything. Julian Bream's single-handed mission was not only to get the guitar accepted as a mainstream classical instrument, but also to resurrect the legacy of the Renaissance and Baroque lute. Bream's first lessons, in jazz guitar, came from his father Henry, a successful commercial artist and talented amateur musician. After receiving his first classical guitar at 11, he made his official recital debut at 13. Accepted into the Royal Academy of Music to study piano and cello, he was to a great extent self-taught as a guitarist. But success came quickly: he made a name for himself in broadcasting while still in his teens, playing both lute and guitar. Lutes were difficult to come by in post-war London. He remembers his first. 'My father brought home a lute one day which he said he'd bought off a sailor on the Charing Cross Road for two quid. I'm sure it fell off the back of a lorry.'

Bream (b. 1933) retired in 2002. 'I felt I had done enough – I'd been on stage for 55 years – and also that my work wasn't as consistent as I would have liked it to be,' he explains. 'Sometimes I would play well, and that would give me pleasure. But I could also do a concert which was rather uninspired or could be technically not as good as it should be. I couldn't live with that at all. So that's when I stopped. But I still have a daily routine – scales and arpeggios, a couple of Villa-Lobos studies and one or two of passages from the *Concierto de Aranjuez* or Britten's *Nocturnal* – the ones that I never could play,' he says disarmingly. 'It keeps everything oiled, because I still like to do the occasional short concert within a 10-mile radius of here.'

Many composers have worked with Bream, and among those who dedicated pieces to him are Malcolm Arnold, Richard Rodney Bennett, Benjamin Britten, Leo Brouwer, Peter Racine Fricker, Hans Werner Henze, Humphrey Searle, Tōru Takemitsu, Michael Tippett and William Walton. Britten's *Nocturnal* is one of the most famous pieces in the classical guitar repertoire and was written with Bream specifically in mind. It is an unusual set of variations on John Dowland's *Come Heavy Sleep* (which is played in its original form at the close of the piece).

Bream has also taken part in many collaborations, including work with Peter Pears on Elizabethan music for lute and voice, and three records of guitar duets with John Williams.

Gloriana was written by Benjamin Britten to celebrate the young Queen Elizabeth II's coronation but has barely been performed since. *Gloriana* was given its world premiere on 8 June 1953 at the Royal Opera House, before an invited audience of diplomats and dignitaries from all over the world. Acclaimed in the UK and internationally for Peter Grimes (1945), and with *Billy Budd* (1951) also a huge success, Britten wrote his next and ninth opera in honour of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. It caused quite a stir, but not the kind of stir that a composer necessarily wants. Britten had collaborated with librettist William Plomer on the story of Queen Elizabeth I and the Earl of Essex (based on Lytton Strachey's 1928 book *Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History*). Their opera depicts Queen Elizabeth I as an all-too-human woman torn between her sense of duty as the monarch and her illicit love for the headstrong Essex, who ultimately betrayed her trust, leading her to condemn him to death.

Arnold: *Concerto for Guitar* (1959)

If there were anybody who still holds the belief that to write well for the guitar a Spanish surname is the *sine qua non*, they would probably consider Malcolm Arnold's *Concerto* to be an anomaly. As it is, the *Concerto* is a triumphant demonstration of the versatility of the guitar, and it is not surprising that many guitarists (including myself) consider it to be one of the finest concertos in the repertoire. Very few composers, if any, have exploited the guitar's chameleon-like characteristics and facility for allusion with such skill – its ability to go from lyricism to drama, from light-hearted joke to serious comment, the fluid personality that allows it to assume innumerable masks. Instead of drawing from the usual Spanish well (and fishing out the usual trite clichés) Arnold chooses to take jazz as a source (at the very least, an equally valid idiom for the instrument). In fact the second movement could well be titled 'Blue Scherzo in memoriam Django Reinhardt': seldom has the guitar been given such a wealth of emotion as in the slow sections, and the way in which it is made to hold its own against the brass instruments is a minor prodigy of orchestral mastery. The swift break into an impish and wildly virtuosic scherzo is nothing short of breath-taking. The slow movement looms largest in the memory, as it does in length – taking up about half of the entire work – but there is also much to be found in the other two movements. Arnold uses Greek models as the basis for his harmony and melody; in the first movement, a sonata form, the two main themes are each in a different mode. The mode chosen for the second theme (probably the catchiest tune in a work full of them) is the familiar major scale; rhythmic verve and lyricism here strike a perfect balance. The third movement, a rondo, begins with the main theme presented by the solo guitar; the canonic writing for the instrument is bold indeed. The guitar retains a leading role throughout all the episodes, bringing the concerto to a close with an astonishing glissando.

Concerto for Guitar, Strings, and Timpani in A Major, Op. 30

Giuliani was one of the most distinguished guitarists of the first third of the 19th century. During this period the public was in love with opera and showed disinterest towards guitar repertoire. Although Giuliani had this obstacle to battle, he was regarded as the first guitar virtuoso in Italy; however, Giuliani was also surrounded by the great guitar virtuosi Agliati, Carulli, Graghami, and Nava. Following his successful concert tour in 1800 at the age of 20, Giuliani decided to move north to Vienna in 1806. His decision to relocate to Vienna resulted in Giuliani being held in esteem by the musically informed Viennese. His compositions for guitar now were highly praised. As a result of the encouragement, in 1808 Giuliani wrote his *Concerto in A, Op. 30 for Guitar, Strings, and Timpani* for which he received rave reviews from the critics. He wrote prolifically for the guitar, composing nearly 150 works with the *Opus number 7* alone. His works totaled over 300 compositions, plus method books for guitar students. While living in Vienna, Giuliani associated with the most prominent musicians in the city such as Hummel, Moscheles, Diabelli, Mayseder, and Haydn. Giuliani's talent also attracted the attention of Beethoven, Schubert, and Spohr.

The *Concerto in A, Op. 30 for Guitar, Strings, and Timpani* requires astonishing and flawless solo guitar technique and it also demands from the performer a highly sensitive approach to the music. The first movement begins with a *Maestoso* introduction with two contrasting themes. The first theme is heard as a martial dotted rhythm and the contrasting theme is lyrical and operatic played by the first violins. After a rather lengthy

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- 1) Allegro Maestoso
- 2) Lento
- 3) Con Brio

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- 4) Allegro Maestoso
- 5) Andantino Siciliano
- 6) Alla Polacca

Britten The Courtly Dances from "Gloriana"

- 7) March - Corante - Pavan - Morris Dance - Galliard - La Volta - March (Finale)

Vivaldi Concerto for Lute and Strings

- 8) Allegro - Largo - Allegro

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