

Los Angeles Guitar Quartet

John Dearman ~ Matthew Greif ~ William Kanengiser ~ Scott Tennant

April 5, 2022 at 7:30PM

American Guitar Masters

Overture to 'The Barber of Seville' (1816)

Giacomo Rossini (1792-1868)
(arr. J. Dearman)

Opals (1993, rev 2014)

Black Opal

Water Opal

White Opal

Phillip Houghton (1954-2017)

"Moonlight" Sonata (Sonata No. 14, 1st mvt)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
(arr. W. Kanengiser)

Three Guitar Heroes:

Aerial Boundaries (1984)

The Wind Cries Mary (1967)

Peaches en Regalia (1969)

Michael Hedges (1953-1997) (arr. M. Greif)

Jimi Hendrix (1942-1970) (arr. M. Greif)

Frank Zappa (1940-1993) (arr. W. Kanengiser)

-INTERMISSION-

Road to the Sun*, Parts 1 & 2 (2016)

Pat Metheny (b. 1954)

Chorale (2012, rev. 2017)

Frederic Hand (b. 1947)

From El Amor Bujo (1914-1915)

Pantomima

Cancion del fuego fatuo

Danza ritual del fuego

Manuel de Falla (1876–1946)

(arr. W. Kanengiser)

(arr. S. Tennant)

(arr. I. Krouse)

*Pat Metheny: *Road to the Sun* (2016) was commissioned through the International Arts Foundation, Inc. for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet by the lead commissioners: Newman Center for the Performing Arts/University of Denver and Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, College of Fine + Applied Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Additional support provided by co-commissioners: Lobero Theater Foundation, Hopkins

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Program subject to change.

PROGRAM NOTES

Celebrating four decades playing together, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet has established itself as America's most innovative classical guitar ensemble. As a tribute to the music and artists who inspired them along the way, LAGQ has crafted this program entitled "American Guitar Masters".

The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet begins tonight's program with **Giacomo Rossini's Overture to "Il Barbiere di Siviglia"**, one of the most popular of his uniformly brilliant opera overtures, and one which has taken on a life of its own apart from the opera it introduces. The work has become a staple of the symphonic repertoire, as well as a frequent sound-track to cartoons, most notably in the classic Bugs Bunny adaptation. John Dearman's realization is an excellent example of the rather "democratic" philosophy of arrangement that LAGQ frequently employs. The four members of the quartet are treated as equal voices, and nearly all prominent melodies are distributed antiphonally within the ensemble.

Phillip Houghton is one of the most recorded and influential Australian guitar composers. His work expresses a distinctly Australian aesthetic, reflecting the country's vast landscapes and mystical "dreamtime" Aboriginal legends. He was famously a synesthete, wherein he saw very specific colors when hearing musical tones and timbres. "Opals" (1993, revised 2014) is a three-movement work for guitar quartet, and it attempts to capture the myriad glints and sparkles emanated by Australia's opalescent national gemstone. In the score, there are detailed notes describing the particular colors and sheens that the music attempts to evoke. The composer provided the following notes for each movement:

"Rather than being pitch-black, the Black Opal is a stone of fantastic colour. Electric reds, purples, blues and greens of every shade predominate and refract and collide, in a fiery rainbow of splinters of brilliant light against a dark matrix. One could say that the opal is "made" from water, and, in the "Water Opal" movement, I imagined a kaleidoscope of colour in and against a transparent "water matrix"...colours floating, bleeding into each other. Against a white matrix the lighter colours of the White Opal are brilliant and translucent. Evident in this stone is what is called "pinfire" (glittering points of red and green) and the "rolling flash" (which describes the effect of layers of colour which, ripple abruptly and sparkle through the stone when the stone is moved)."

Certainly, **Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata"** (the first movement of Sonata #14 in C# minor, Op, 27 #2, "Sonata Quasi una fantasia") needs no introduction. It stands as one of Beethoven's most recognizable works for solo piano, eclipsed perhaps only by *Für Elise* in popularity. Stunningly modern in its day (composed in 1801) it became one of Beethoven's most-requested pieces after his premiere of the work in 1802 (apparently, he played so forcefully in the 3rd movement *Presto agitato* that a number of piano strings snapped!). The evocative *Adagio sostenuto* movement features undulating arpeggios murmuring under a melody that Berlioz described as "a lamentation". With the instructions that "the entire piece should be played with the greatest delicacy and without dampers", it explores the full resonance of the lower tessitura of the piano in its most delicate dynamic range. The baritone voicing of the work lends itself well to the guitar, which already sounds an octave lower than written (although a number of the lowest bass notes traverse even the extended range of John Dearman's 7-string guitar). The challenge in William Kanengiser's

arrangement was to attempt to mimic the resonant sustain of the piano, and the subtle pedaling effects that create its haunting atmosphere. Although every arrangement carries its own set of compromises, it is hoped that this one will shed new light on a much-loved Beethoven classic.

Three Guitar Heroes

On their 2004 Grammy Award-winning release “LAGQ's Guitar Heroes”, the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet paid tribute to some of the legendary guitarists who inspired them in their youth. This set expands on that concept and the LAGQ presents newly created arrangements, or “covers”, of signature tunes by heroes Michael Hedges, Jimi Hendrix and Frank Zappa. To start is a piece by the hugely influential **Michael Hedges**, who created a revolution in steel-string guitar playing with his innovative tapping and open-tuning creations. Revered for his virtuosity and sonic brilliance, he was also a composer of great depth and sophistication. He took the world by storm with his groundbreaking 1984 recording **Aerial Boundaries**, and Mathew Greif's arrangement of the title track presents it faithfully, providing a brief excursion before returning to Hedge's original. It's followed by a soulful ballad by **Jimi Hendrix**, America's first “Guitar God”, in Matt Greif's delicate setting of **The Wind Cries Mary**. Beginning in a quasi-minimalist style, the tune gradually reveals itself until the rocking groove locks in and we hear some of Hendrix's patented guitar riffs. The final piece is by one of rock's most iconoclastic and irreverently inscrutable figures, **Frank Zappa**. Since his satirical lyrics don't translate very well to guitars, William Kanengiser chose one of Zappa's most popular instrumental pieces, the funk-rock, tongue-in-cheek anthem **Peaches en Regalia**. Featuring a fanfare-like opening melody, the piece takes a number of musical zigs and zags, venturing into quasi-disco, jazz and faux-classical

Jazz guitar legend and inexhaustibly creative composer **Pat Metheny** has established himself as one of America's true Guitar Masters. In 2017 he wrote the following comments on his piece **Road to the Sun**:

“A few years back, I was flattered to have one of my compositions included in the LAGQ's Grammy winning CD Guitar Heroes. The idea of writing a large-scale guitar quartet inspired by the talents of the LAGQ has been simmering somewhere in the back of my mind ever since. The thought of addressing the instrument in a more formal way under the auspices of what this quartet has come to embody was something I really wanted to do; it was just a matter of finding the time. After a particularly active touring schedule, I finally saw a window opening up in late 2015. With the approval of the guys and a few really useful tips from all of them, I jumped in, hoping to write a concert piece of 7 to 9 minutes.

Two weeks later, I found myself with a nearly 25-minute, 6-movement treatise on the potentials of a multi-guitar format, blazingly inspired by the thought of hearing these four incredible guitarists play these notes. The piece just literally poured out. In particular, I decided to really embrace the instrument and “get under the hood” of a bunch of things that I do with the guitar that are somewhat identified with my particular style. As much as those components provided an aspirational environment to work from, I was also reaching for the narrative element of storytelling that is always the imperative and primary function for me as a musician.

With the piece now complete, it feels like an emotional journey to me, almost a road trip in scale and scope. Somehow, through the challenge of writing for this unique platform and aiming it towards the hands of these especially talented players, I was able to get to a very personal area of what music itself is to me. As I was writing, my mind would sometimes flash to the stunning views of the trip up to Glacier National Park on the famous “Going-to-the-Sun Road”, right after hearing LAGQ play live for the first time at a festival in Montana. I am very excited to hear what William, Scott, John and Matt will do on their journey with this work.”

Frederic Hand is a Grammy-nominated composer and sought-after guitarist, currently on the faculty of the Mannes College of Music in Manhattan. His compositional style freely mixes Baroque, Americana and jazz styles into a lyrical and harmonically rich palette, and his intimate knowledge of the guitar draws a full sonority from the instrument. In his **Chorale**, Hand turns the guitar quartet into a plucked version of a vocal *a capella* group; the seeming simplicity of the piece belies the difficulty of four guitars moving with the freedom and spaciousness of a chorus. Hand writes of his piece: "Chorale was originally commissioned by the New York City Classical Guitar Society for the New York City Guitar Orchestra in 2012. It was re-imagined for guitar quartet in this new version for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. Based on a simple theme of three notes ascending in whole steps, Chorale is inspired by the Renaissance and Baroque choral music that I listened to in my youth. Although I've integrated some of my favorite jazz harmonies and rhythms into the fabric of the music, I feel that, at its core, it very much has an "early music" sensibility.

From El Amor Brujo

In his gypsy ballet **El Amor Brujo**, Manuel de Falla captured the essence of flamenco's mystery and passion. Although written for symphony orchestra and mezzo-soprano, it evokes the essential character of the Spanish guitar, and thus finds a natural home in these settings for guitar quartet. This set of three excerpts begins with a rousing fanfare that gives way to a lyrical Tango, set in 7/8 time. It is followed by the *Canción del Fuego Fátuo*, whose lyrics note that Love, like the Will o'the-Wisp, "flees if you chase it, and yet pursues you if you run away". The famous *Danza Rituál del Fuego* ("Ritual Fire Dance") ends the set. Vividly portraying a furious dance of exorcism, it ends with insistent chords representing gypsies trying to stamp the spirit of a ghost out in the fire.

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