




## Q: What's Better Than a Guitar? A: Six of Them

July 17, 2013

 **United States** *Guitar Duo Extravaganza: Newman & Oltman* (Guitar Duo), Joanne Castellani & Michael Andriaccio (Duo Guitarists), Carlos Barbosa-Lima and Larry Del Casale (Duo Guitarists). Mannes Concert Hall, Mannes College of Music. 10.7.2013 (KC)

**Dusan Bogdanovic:** *No Feathers on This Frog*

**J.K. Mertz:** *Vespergang, Mazurka, Barcarole, Tarantella*

**Manuel M. Ponce:** *Scherzino Mayam, Scherzino Mexicano, Scherzino Newman & Oltman Guitar Duo (Laura Oltman and Michael Newman)*  
*Anima del Sur (Soul of the South)*

**Adrien Politi:** *Tango Duo (Mate Amargo, La Petisa) (NY Premiere)*

**Marcelo Coronel:** *Milongarrugada, Yerbita Companera (NY Premiere)*

**Alfonso Montes:** *Milonga (Homage to Piazzolla)*

**Co Pfister:** Variations on an Argentinian Folk Tune

*Joanne Castellani & Michael Andriaccio, Duo Guitarists*

**Antonio Carlos Jobim:** *Chovendo na Roseira, Eu nao existo sem voce, A Felicidade*

**George Gershwin:** Prelude No. 3

**Leo Brouwer:** *Micropiezas 4, 2, 3*

**Zequinha de Abreu:** *Tico Tico*

*Carlos Barbosa-Lima and Larry Del Casale, guitarists*

**Joao Pernambuco:** *Sons de Carriloes*

**Heitor Villa-Lobos:** *Veleiro (from Floresta do Amazonas)*

**Stepan Rak:** *Rumba*

*All Duos Combined*

The Newman & Oltman Guitar Duo, hosts of *Guitar Duo Extravaganza*, opened the concert with a diverse menu—clearly from a seasoned ensemble performing on their home turf—starting with *No Feathers on This Frog* by contemporary composer and guitarist Dusan Bogdanovic. Influenced by the folk music of the former Yugoslavia, *No Feathers* features intricate rhythmic work (such as 5/8 time signature), ornaments and string bending, expertly executed by Laura Oltman.

Many consider nineteenth-century composer J.K. Mertz “the Schubert of the guitar.” *Vespergang*, *Mazurka*, *Barcarole*, *Tarantella* were written for guitar and terz guitar, with the latter approximated by Michael Newman with a *capo* on his third fret. Newman’s skills with flowing melodies were amply on display—and it is also worth noting that Newman’s comedic gifts onstage are *always* amply on display.

The duo closed with three expertly played scherzinos by the enchanting Mexican composer Manuel Ponce, which they dedicated to the festival’s many Mexican participants. Guitarists are fortunate, indeed, that Ponce was so attentive to the instrument.

Joanne Castellani and Michael Andriaccio played an extensive set of newly composed *tangos* and *milongas* (all from their latest recording, *Anima del Sur*), showing how they keep warm during those frigid winters in Buffalo, New York. Using a wonderfully warm sound throughout their set—and with many interesting new contributions to the repertoire—the duo performed with a solidity that only confirmed their decades as a professional ensemble. They closed with Andriaccio’s own arrangement of the professed “grand-daddy of all tangos,” *La Cumparsita* by Gerardo Matos Rodriguez, played with great expertise.

Carlos Barbosa-Lima and Larry Del Casale differed somewhat from the previous groups. Primarily known as a soloist and arranger, Barbarosa-Lima does perform with a backing band on many occasions, but here virtuoso guitarist Del Casale fills that role, and does so with panache and verve. The two-guitar format really lets Barbosa-Lima stretch out as an orchestrator. Rounding out their program were four of Leo Brouwer’s *Micropiezas*, written when the composer was a teenager, in a very mature and swinging reading.

To conclude the evening all three duos combined forces—quite a sight to see all onstage simultaneously. They played two trio arrangements (each part doubled): the great chestnut of the guitar repertoire, *Sons de Carriloes* (*Sounds of Bells*) and yet another gorgeous melodic masterpiece from the immortal Heitor Villa-Lobos, *Veliero* (from *Floresta do Amazonas*). Both pieces were arranged for the occasion by Barbosa-Lima, with the latter featuring an extremely rare improvised cadenza. (I mention this since Barbosa-Lima usually goes to great pains to note that he is not an improviser.) The sextet closed with light delicacies from the incredible Czech composer and guitarist Stepan Rak and the popular Brazilian (now Canadian) Celse Machado.


Frederic Chopin once famously said that the only thing finer than the sound of the guitar was the sound of two. He would certainly have enjoyed this evening featuring three of the finest guitar duos of the concert stage.

***Keith Calmes***



# Guitar Masters With an Occasional Oud

July 17, 2013

 **United States Classical Guitar in the Americas:** Zaira Meneses (guitar), Carlos Barbosa-Lima (guitar), Francisco Roldan (guitar), Carlo Valte (oud), Rex Benincasa (percussion). Americas Society, New York City. 9.7.2013 (KC)

*Zaira Meneses, Guitar*

**Manuel Maria Ponce:** *Prelude, Balleto, Gigue*

**Leo Brouwer:** Sonata (“Fandangos y Boleros,” “Sarabanda de Scriabin,” “La Toccata de Pasquini”)

*Carlos Barbosa-Lima, Guitar*

**Alberto Dominguez Borrás** (arr. by Barbosa-Lima): *Perfidia*

**Ruben Fuentes:** *La Bikina*

**Enric Madriguera** (arr. by Barbosa-Lima): *Adios*

**George Gershwin** (arr. by Barbosa-Lima): *Promenade*

**Pixinguinha** (arr. by Barbosa-Lima): *Cochichando*

**Antonio Carlos Jobim** (arr. by Barbosa-Lima): *One Note Samba*

*Francisco Roldan (guitar), Carlo Valte (oud) and Rex Benincasa (percussion)*

**Marcel Khalife:** Dances Nos. 1, 5 and 3

**Rafael Landestoy:** *Fantasia and Pueblerino*

This evening was both the closing event of the Americas Society 2012-2013 concert series, and the opening concert of the New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes. Perhaps because of this duality, all seats were occupied and many audience members were forced to stand.

Zaira Meneses, a native of Mexico who has lived in the United States since 2001, began with Manuel Maria Ponce’s *Prelude, Balleto, and Gigue*, and her interpretations of her compatriot’s music showed distinct sensitivity to his harmonic and contrapuntal language. Listening to this artist, one is reminded that the spirit of the great Andrés Segovia (1893-1987) thrives on. Meneses closed the official portion of her program with the popular Sonata of Cuban Leo Brouwer, the greatest living composer for this instrument. Written in 1990 for Julian Bream, the masterful composition contains much common thematic material throughout. The performance of the closing movement was particularly clean and commanding, and offered not only a full timbral palette but a particularly enchanting ending—unfortunately seriously marred by multiple

rings of an audience member's cell phone. The guitarist closed with an encore, both singing and playing the popular Mexican song, *La Llarona*.

Brazilian guitarist Carlos Barbosa-Lima is one of the greatest orchestrators the instrument has ever known (in the tradition of Fernando Sor and Miguel Llobet) and also a virtuoso of the highest order, despite an occasional slight error on the fret board. This audience seemed enraptured by every note that came from Barbosa-Lima's fine Prenkert guitar. *Adios* by Madriguera is a perfect example of this artist's gifts: Barbosa-Lima was playing three-voice counterpoint, each voice with its own distinct timbre, and the Brazilian samba style was flowing in abundance. This musical marriage of the best of popular and classical elements, executed with the highest artistic brilliance, is what makes Barbosa-Lima one of the greatest artists the guitar has ever known.

Although Barbosa-Lima is a tough act to follow, the trio of Roldan (guitar), Valte (oud) and Benincasa (percussion) was incredibly special. Guitarists have a natural affinity for the oud, as it is the true forefather of the instrument. Hearing this ancient instrument next to a modern classical guitar was an unusual treat. It felt as if the audience were watching an ancestor from the 14th century standing side by side with someone from the 21<sup>st</sup>, and yet, the instruments blended perfectly. The dances of Marcel Khalife are of great rhythmic interest, and will undoubtedly receive great attention as the popularity of world music inevitably increases. Oud player Valte switched to percussion for the second dance, which returned the audience to the American theme of the concert. This last set of pieces featured the solid and warm-toned Colombian guitarist Francisco Roldan on compositions by Dominican Rafael Landestoy, who was in attendance.

***Keith Calmes***

**The New York Times**

## Events

\* **New York Guitar Seminar at Mannes**

***New York Times Critics' Pick***

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Mannes College the New School for Music

June 22 and 23, 2012 at 7:30 p.m.

\$25

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This annual guitar festival — a week of concerts and master classes by some of the guitar world's stars — ends its 12th season with a pair of inviting recitals. First, Jason Vieaux's concert on June 22 begins with favorites by Giuliani, Bach and Albéniz, takes a jazzy detour by way of Pat Metheny, and veers back toward modern classicism in works by Dan Visconti and Leo Brouwer. The June 23 program by the Amadeus Guitar Duo — Dale Kavanagh and Thomas Kirchhoff — includes music by Handel, Telemann, Jolivet, Mario Gangi and Ms. Kavanagh.

— *ALLAN KOZINN*

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