



present...

BEIJING GUITAR DUO

Meng Su

Yameng Wang

Saturday, December 2, 2023 | 7:30pm

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

FRANCK

(arr. Ophee)

Prélude, Fugue et Variation Opus 18

Prélude (Andantino)

Lento

Fugue (Allegretto ma non troppo)

Variation (Andantino)

DEBUSSY

(arr. Meng Su)

Petite Suite

En bateau

Cortège

Menuet

Ballet

FAURÉ

(arr. Meng Su)

Dolly Suite, Opus 56

Berceuse

Mi-a-ou

Le Jardin de Dolly

Kitty-valse

Tendresse

Le pas espagnol

INTERMISSION

GRANADOS

(arr. Duo Gruber & Maklar)

Valses Poéticos

Vivace molto

Melodico

Tempo de vals noble

Tempo de vals lento

Allegro humoristico

Allegretto (elegante)

Quasi ad libitum (sentimental)

Vivo

Presto - Andante - Tempo del primer vals

ALBÉNIZ

(arr. M. Llobet)

Bajo la Palmera Castilla

PIAZZOLLA

Tango Suite

Allegro

Andante

Allegro vivace



ARTISTS' PROFILE

San Francisco Performances presents Beijing Guitar Duo for the sixth time. They first appeared in April 2010. The duo served as SF Performances' Guitarists-in-Residence from 2011 to 2015.

Praised by the distinguished *Classical Guitar Magazine* as "having the star potential to serve as inspiration for new generations of guitarists to come," **Beijing Guitar Duo** made their New York debut in Carnegie Hall in 2010 and launched their international concert career.

Guitarists Meng Su and Yameng Wang, as Beijing Guitar Duo have performed around the world in halls such as the Concertgebouw, Palau de Musica, Tchaikovsky Hall and the National Theatre in Beijing. The duo regularly collaborates with orchestras, in ensemble with flutist Marina Piccinini, guitarists Grigoryan Brothers, and with legendary guitarist Manuel Barrueco touring in Europe, Australia, Asia and the U.S.

The Beijing Guitar Duo's performances and recordings have impressed the public with "an ability and artistry that exceeds their years." Their debut CD *Maracaípe*, received a Latin-Grammy® nomination for the titled piece, which was dedicated to them by renowned guitarist/composer Sergio Assad. Their second CD, *Bach to Tan Dun*, has been widely noted for the world premiere recording of Tan Dun's *Eight Memories in Watercolor*, specially arranged for the duo by Manuel Barrueco. A recording in trio, *China West*, with Maestro Barrueco was released in May 2014. Their fourth CD, *Clair de Lune* is due to release in late 2023.

Meng Su and Yameng Wang were born

in the coastal city of Qingdao, China. They came to the partnership with exceptional credentials, including a string of competition awards. Ms. Su's honors include victories at the Vienna Youth Guitar Competition and the Parkening International Guitar Competition, while Ms. Wang was the youngest guitarist to win the Tokyo International Guitar Competition at the age of 12 and was invited by Radio France to perform at the prestigious Paris International Guitar Art Week at age 14. Both artists had given solo recitals in China and abroad and had made recordings before they formed the duo.

In addition to concertizing, the duo shares a love for teaching which brings them to major conservatories worldwide for master classes and to judge competitions. Aside from Meng Su being a guitar professor at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the duo regularly serves as Artists-in-Residence which brings them to community outreaches, performances, and master classes in public schools.

PROGRAM NOTES

Prélude, Fugue et Variation Opus 18

CÉSAR FRANCK
(1822–1890)

César Franck was a French Romantic composer, much admired teacher, and an organist widely known for his wonderful improvisations. *Prélude, Fugue et Variation, Opus 18*, the third of his *Six Pièces pour Grand Orgue* (1860–62), is dedicated to Camille

Saint-Saëns. The haunting *Prelude* begins with three repetitions of an asymmetrical five-bar phrase. A short improvisatory passage introduces the second movement, a fugue on a subject, vocal in character. Assisted by strettos, a muted climax is reached, and the music proceeds without a break to the *Variation*, which repeats the material of the prelude with more active accompaniment and a conclusion in the parallel major.

Petite Suite

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862–1918)

Claude Debussy was one of the most influential composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Petite Suite* is an early work which evokes the fanciful world of eighteenth-century aristocrats depicted in the paintings of Watteau. In *En bateau* (Sailing), revelers in a boat have their minds on romantic trysts as they sail at dusk on a dark lake. Debussy's music captures perfectly a mood of water-borne serenity and languor. In the second movement, *Cortège* (Retinue), Debussy conveys the spirit of coy playfulness as a lady and her escorts retire upstairs. The third and fourth movements, *Menuet and Ballet*, have no extramusical connotations but maintain the 18th century elegance of the opening of the suite.

Dolly Suite, Opus 56

GABRIEL FAURÉ
(1845–1924)

Gabriel Fauré was one of the foremost French composers of his generation, and his musical style influenced many 20th-century composers. *The Dolly Suite, Opus 56*, is a collection of six short pieces written or revised between 1893 and 1896, to mark the birthdays and other events in the life of the daughter of the composer's mistress, Emma Bardac. *La Chanson dans le jardin* was composed in 1864 for the daughter of a family friend but 1893 Fauré made some small alterations and changed its title to *Berceuse*—that is, cradle song. *Mi-ou* was written for Dolly's second birthday. The title imitates Dolly's attempts to pronounce the name of her elder brother, referred to by the family as Monsieur Raoul. A lively melody with constantly shifting accents describes the restless energy of the 13-year-old boy. *Le jardin de Dolly* was composed as a present for New Year's Day 1895 and contains a quotation from Fauré's *First*

Violin Sonata, composed 20 years earlier. It evokes the calm of the beautiful garden as a very young girl might imagine it. *Kitty-valse* is not a portrait of a cat, as many listeners assume, but rather of the family dog named Kitty whose tail-wagging ramblings through the house are gently parodied as a canine waltz. *Tendresse* is a lyrical work but uses more a modern harmonic language than the rest of the suite. *Le Pas espagnol* is one more exuberant French homage to the music of Spain.

Valses Poéticos

ENRIQUE GRANADOS
(1867–1916)

Early nineteenth-century Spanish musical taste was under the influence of foreign composers and conservative in style. The principal public musical entertainment was Italian opera and instrumental recitals featured the works of Chopin and Schumann. The musical nationalism that swept across Europe in the last decades of the 19th century led to the creation of a characteristically Spanish opera and to an interest in the historical and folk roots of Spanish music.

Enrique Granados was one of the great figures of this renaissance of indigenous music. He was also inspired by the grace, elegance and sense of proportion of Spanish courtly life in eighteenth century as depicted by Francisco Goya and the *Valses Poéticos* features an introduction reminiscent of a vibrant Scarlatti Sonata. Julian Bream has pointed out “the following Valses reflect the veiled hues of other times—some grave, some gay—with gentle whispers of Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* and Ravel’s *Valses Nobles et Sentimentales*.”

Bajo la Palmera Castilla

ISAAC ALBÉNIZ
(1860–1909)

Isaac Albéniz was one of the most significant figures in Spanish cultural circles at the close of the nineteenth century. A remarkable child prodigy and raconteur, he claimed that he ran away from home at age 12, sailed to Argentina as a stowaway and subsequently traveled to America, where he paid his way by playing the piano in honky tonks and spending some time playing at San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf. On his return to Europe he became

a serious student of composition. He fell under the spell of Spain’s indigenous music and was influenced to a high degree by both flamenco and the guitar.

The legendary Francisco Tárrega made transcriptions of Albéniz’s piano music, and an appealing though undocumented tale says that Albéniz, on hearing Tárrega’s performance of his transcriptions, declared the music had found its rightful home. Tárrega’s practice of performing Albéniz’s music has been enthusiastically followed by guitarists to this day. *Bajo la Palmera* (Beneath the Palm Tree) has the spontaneity of an improvisation featuring a strong rhythmic dance figure and a beguiling melody that contain the essence of the Spanish popular music. Albéniz uses the most popular type of Castilian dance form, Seguidilla, to portray the Spanish region of *Castilla*. A dance in triple time in a major key, arranged in symmetrical periods governed by a simple alternation of tonic and dominant harmonies, it is full of rhythms natural to the guitar,

Tango Suite


ASTOR PIAZZOLLA
(1921–1992)

By nationality Astor Piazzolla was Argentine. All four of his grandparents were Italian immigrants and he was something of an uprooted migrant himself. Raised in New York he also lived at various times in Argentina, Rome and Paris. He studied composition in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and he made his career as a composer and performer inspired by the traditional

Argentine tango. Like flamenco and the blues, tango developed as the voice of a disadvantaged social group. A product of the musical tango culture of Buenos Aires, Piazzolla used the influences of nineteenth century opera, jazz and twentieth century classical composers to create a more urgent, passionate extension of the genre, his own contemporary chamber music. He liked to quote Tolstoy who said, “tell the story of your village and you tell the story of the world.”

Piazzolla remained true to his roots, but he told his story so skillfully that musicians and audiences throughout the world have discovered him. His primary medium was a quintet of bandoneon, violin, guitar, piano, and bass but he wrote *Tango Suite* for the two guitars of his close friends, Sergio and Odair Assad. The opening movement begins with a lively accompaniment figure accompanied by an elaborate percussive part on the second instrument. By hitting the instrument in differently places and with the hand turned in different ways, the guitarist can produce the suggestion of different pitches and percussive timbres as Piazzolla’s score specifically demands. This striking and elaborate music begins a three-part form with a gentle central section. The second tango begins sweetly, with widely ranging melodic shapes punctuated by brusque chordal figures. The finale is the most agitated of the three movements, full of bright, rapid chords, speedy single lines and a touch of chromaticism. Even the gentle middle section retains a feeling of energy and zest.

—Program notes by Scott Cmiel



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Program to be announced

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