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Friday, June 24th, 2016

## Xavier Díaz-Latorre, Theorbo and Baroque Guitar Music for Kings and Commoners

- Suite for Theorbo in A minor *La Royale* Robert de Visée (ca. 1655 – 1732/1733)  
*Prelude*  
*Allemande*  
*Courante*  
*Sarabande*  
*Masquerade*  
*Chaconne*
- Suite for the Theorbo in C Minor *Le Plainte* Robert de Visée  
*Prélude*  
*Allemande pour la mort de Mds. de Visée*
- Suite for the Theorbo in G Major Robert de Visée  
*Musette*  
*Chaconne*
- From *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687)  
*Suite de dances*

DIAZ-LATORRE // JUNE 24

### Intermission

- Instrucción de música para la guitarra española (1697) Gaspar Sanz (1640-1710)  
*Pavana al ayre español*  
*Xácara*  
*Paseos por el cuarto tono*  
*Tarantella* (improvisation)
- Poema harmónico (1694) Francisco Guerau (1659-1722)  
*Marionas*
- Instrucción de música para la guitarra española Gaspar Sanz  
*Xácara*  
*Paradetas* (improvisation)



**Xavier Díaz-Latorre** was born in Barcelona, Spain, in 1968. He studied in Basel with Oscar Ghiglia at the Musikakademie and with Hopkinson Smith at the Schola Cantorum.

He has given concerts in major venues around the world, including Carnegie Hall (New York), Covent Garden (London), the Palau de la Música Catalana (Barcelona), the Teatro Real (Madrid), the Teatro Colón (Buenos Aires), the Wiener Philharmoniker (Vienna), and the Konzerthaus (Berlin).

Díaz-Latorre performs regularly with such world-renowned ensembles as Hesperion XXI, La Capella Reial de Catalunya, and Le Concert des Nations. He has also performed with Al Ayre Español, the Orquesta Nacional de España, Concerto Vocale, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, and Concerto Köln. Laberintos Ingeniosos is his own vocal-instrumental ensemble, which he has taken to a number of different countries throughout the world.

Díaz-Latorre has made more than thirty recordings for international CD labels. He teaches early plucked instruments, chamber music, and basso continuo at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya, and he has been invited to teach in the United States, Korea, Japan, and several European countries.

Díaz-Latorre plays a five-course guitar by Julio Castaños (2010) and a thirteen-course theorbo by Jaume Bossert (2000).

## Program Notes

During the seventeenth century, the French court of Louis XIV was one of the most important cultural centers in Europe. Talented artists from all over the continent gathered there, and thus Louis's court became a magnet for artistic and creative innovation. In addition, Louis XIV, who was a very skilled dancer himself, placed such importance on dance in his court that it became a measure of social status among the French nobility, and it was not long before this practice was emulated by the rest of the European aristocracy.

Robert de Visée entered the service of Louis XIV around 1680, when he was twenty-five, and he became Guitar Master of Louis XV in 1719. We can attribute to him a large body of music for guitar, theorbo, and lute. Among his compositions were suites for theorbo and guitar, and some of his works were “dédié au Roi” (dedicated to the King). Visée's style was elegant and innovative, and his music was consistent with the styles of his time. His works for theorbo are the most important of all other French composers who wrote music for this instrument.

It was a common practice of the period to adapt orchestral pieces for instruments. De Visée himself transcribed pieces by Lully and Couperin for the theorbo. Here, Lully's suite *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* is my free adaptation of some of the dances from the suite for the guitar.

At the same time, in Spain the composers were creating music in a very different way. While in France musicians were developing a clear court style, Spanish composers were turning to folk music as a source for their compositions. This makes it difficult sometimes to draw a clear distinction between what is art music and what is popular music.

Sanz, Murcia, and Guerau were the most important composers for guitar in seventeenth-century Spain. In his *Instrucción de música para la guitarra española*, Sanz instructs us on matters of improvisation and composition, and he invites us to create our own variations.

Guerau's music was perhaps the most complex and profound of the three guitarist-composers. Even though his music is not well known today, it is arguably the most sophisticated music for guitar of all time. Like the other composers mentioned he sets familiar Spanish dances like *Marionas* or *Españoleta*, but his knowledge of counterpoint and refined techniques gives his music a sense of sublime inspiration, making him one of the finest composers of baroque Spain.

—Xavier Díaz-Latorre

### **Theorbo** (from the *Groves Dictionary*)

An instrument of the Western lute family with stopped courses considerably longer than those of a lute and with a separate nut and pegbox for a set of longer, unstopped bass strings (diapasons). The Italian names Chitarrone and tiorba were used synonymously for the same instrument, depending on personal or regional preferences. During the 17th century and part of the 18th the theorbo was popular as an accompanying instrument, and in the 17th century a certain amount of solo music in tablature was published for it.

The pegbox for the stopped strings of a theorbo is nearly aligned with the neck, not bent back sharply as on a lute. Beyond the upper end of this pegbox the neck extends to an additional pegbox for the additional bass strings. The extension is of the same piece of wood as the first pegbox, and the bass strings are kept from crossing the stopped courses by setting the extensions at a slight angle off centre.

The stopped courses of the theorbo are much longer than those of the ordinary tenor lute – too long for the highest strings to withstand the tension necessary to tune them as they would be tuned on the lute. Consequently the first course, and usually the second, was tuned down an octave. The third course was thus the highest in pitch and in solo music became the melody course. (Mace advocated in 1676, however, that if

the second course could withstand the higher tuning only the first course should be tuned down.) The octave displacement of the upper course or courses is an important factor distinguishing the theorbo (Chitarrone) from the lute-sized Liuto attiorbato (see also Archlute), which retained the normal lute tuning for its fretted courses. The 17th- and early 18th-century English term 'theorbo lute' probably referred to a theorbo.

**Baroque Guitar** (from *A Guide to Playing the Baroque Guitar*, by James Tyler)

In the late sixteenth through the early eighteenth century the guitar was known as the Spanish guitar (Italian: chitarra spagnola). Throughout the period it had five courses (pairs) of gut strings. As a study of its music and the various contemporary references to its tuning and stringing reveal, the baroque instrument, unlike a lute or classical guitar, was not designed to have a true bass range. Its true range was tenor to low treble.

Structurally, the guitar's fingerboard was flush with the soundboard and its bridge a single bar of woodglued onto the soundboard like the bridge of a lute. Unlike the modern classical guitar, its frets were made of gut, not metal or ivory, and were tied around the neck rather than permanently inlaid. Movable frets were preferred to inlaid ones probably because they could be adjusted for fine-tuning. The number of frets varied from seven to ten on the neck, and museum instruments that have survived in their original state show that they never had more than two additional frets glued to their soundboards. One or two tablature sources call for notes up to the sixteenth fret, but these notes were probably played on the soundboard.

There was no standard string length; lengths varied from a long 74 cm to a short 58 cm, and body sizes varied accordingly. Guitars with a vaulted (or rounded) back were found just as frequently as the flat-backed models. Vaulted backs tended to be characteristic of Italian-made guitars and the Italian-style guitars built by the German makers. The body shape, unlike that of a classical guitar, tended to be narrow with shallow sides.