



presents

In association with Omni Foundation for the Performing Arts

# Pavel Steidl, guitar

Friday, January 29, 2010, 8pm

Herbst Theatre

## PROGRAM

FERNANDO SOR	Selected Minuets from Opus 11
NAPOLÉON COSTE	Deuxieme Polonaise, Opus 14
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH	Chaconne, from Partita No. 2 for Unaccompanied Violin, BWV 1004
MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO	Sonata "Ommagio a Boccherini," Opus 77 <i>Allegro con spirito</i> <i>Andantino, quasi canzona</i> <i>Tempo di Minuetto</i> <i>Vivo energico</i>
HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS	Two Préludes and Two Études
CARLO DOMENICONI	Hommage à Jimi Hendrix

*Program subject to change.*

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## ARTIST PROFILE

Pavel Steidl makes his San Francisco Performances debut on this recital. He has appeared with Omni Foundation for the Performing Arts three times previously.

### Pavel Steidl



Pavel Steidl was born in Rakovnik (Czech Republic). During studies at the Conservatory and Academy of Music in Prague, Steidl won first prize at the Radio France International Competition in Paris (1982). Since this time he has become one of the most widely celebrated soloists of his generation.

Due to the political situation in the former Czechoslovakia, he was obliged to leave his native country and in 1988 received political asylum, then in 1992 also citizenship, in the Netherlands. In 2004, after the changes in Europe, he decided to return to the Czech Republic, where he now lives.

Steidl regularly tours internationally, appearing at prestigious halls in such cities as London, Tokyo, Vienna, Sydney, Toronto, Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, Bogota and Rome. Overall, he has played in more than 40 countries, including Canada, Cuba, Spain, Poland, Austria, Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala, Australia, Japan, England, Scotland and many others.

His highly expressive performances of rare 19th-century guitar literature on authentic instruments adds a wonderful dimension to his performances. The Italian guitar magazine *GuitArt* named his one of the most important guitarists of 2003, and in 2005 he received the magazine's Classic Guitar Award.

Pavel Steidl also composes and plays his own works in concert. For more information, please visit [www.pavelsteidl.com](http://www.pavelsteidl.com).

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

### Selected Minuets from Opus 11

FERNANDO SOR

Born February 14, 1778, Barcelona

Died July 10, 1839, Paris

Fernando Sor's posthumous star shines feebly through the glare of Beethoven's contemporaneous supernova. Nonetheless, Sor's position as a founding father of the classical guitar world remains unshakeable, even if his once-popular ballet *Cendrillon*—it inaugurated Moscow's Bolshoi Theater in 1823—has faded from the repertory. Catalan by birth, but pan-European by choice, he enjoyed a flourishing career in Barcelona, Madrid, London, Moscow, and finally in Paris, where he settled in 1826 and remained until his death in 1839. Although his guitar compositions alone have remained in circulation, his rich output included operas, symphonies, a violin concerto, chamber music, lieder and numerous ballet scores. His musical style, largely influenced by Haydn and Mozart, ensures that the classical guitar repertory retains a significant body of high-quality Viennese Classical compositions.

Sor's *Opus 11*, written sometime around 1810, consists of 12 minuets bookended by short theme-with-variation movements. The minuets bear the unmistakable stamp of Joseph Haydn, in their foursquare melodic openings so reminiscent of robust peasant dances, in their tightly economical structure, and in their frequent forays into surprisingly remote harmonies.

### Deuxieme Polonaise, Opus 14

NAPOLÉON COSTE

Born June 28, 1805, Amondans, France

Died February 17, 1883, Paris

The Romantic era was a lean time for guitarists. Even though Sor and Giuliani had given the instrument a solid footing in the 18th-century Classical style, public interest waned as attention focused on the new virtuosi—mostly pianists—who trundled industriously throughout Europe and found fortune in the public concert halls that were springing up everywhere. But the guitar was far from moribund, with Frenchman Na-

poléon Coste amongst the vanguard of Romantic composer-performers who made it their specialty. Due to the low demand for all things guitar, Coste was obliged to make his living for many years as a civil servant, although he composed prodigiously in addition to teaching and performing.

Coste's *Deuxième Polonaise* (the "first" has gone missing) probably dates from the late 1830s or thereabouts. Written for Coste's preferred seven-string guitar, one manuscript copy is dedicated to "his student and friend, Monsieur Martin." The work is in two parts: A lyrical *Introduction*, interwoven with cadenza-like passages, is followed by the fluid and virtuosic *Polonaise*—more Weber-ish than Chopin-esque. As befits the work's presumably pedagogical intent, the manuscript is sprinkled liberally not only with fingerings but also with technical instructions.

### Chaconne, from Partita No. 2 for Unaccompanied Violin, BWV 1004

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 21, 1685, Eisenach

Died July 28, 1750, Leipzig

"On one stave, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings." Thus Johannes Brahms in a letter to Clara Schumann, as he contemplated the majesty of the work he was transcribing for piano left hand. Settings of the solo-violin *Chaconne* are many and varied, including lavish orchestrations by Joachim Raff, Leopold Stokowski and Ottorino Respighi, but it remains a topic of debate as to whether playing the work on the guitar qualifies as a transcription at all, since Bach's original manuscript requires little or no alteration for successful guitar performance.

The term *chaconne* (*ciaccona* in Italian) originally referred to a type of instrumental dance based on an *ostinato* (a persistently repeated bass line), but over the years the word became decoupled from the dance while retaining the *ostinato*. Thus a *chaconne* is a set of variations over an unchanging bass line, of which notable examples include such beloved masterworks as *Dido's Lament* from Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" or Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. In the D minor *Chaconne*, Bach stretched the violin's polyphonic capabilities to (or beyond) the breaking point, thus rendering the work endlessly attractive to instrumentalists and arrangers. The first guitar transcription came from Argentine composer-

performer Antonio Sinopoli, but it was Andrés Segovia's setting that has elevated it to permanent status as a repertory icon.

### Sonata "Ommagio a Boccherini," Opus 77

MARIO CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO

Born April 3, 1895, Florence

Died March 16, 1968, Beverly Hills

Andrés Segovia's influence over the modern classical guitar world extends both widely and deeply. Among the composers he inspired to write extensively for the guitar, perhaps none made a more lasting contribution than Florence-born Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Guitarist and composer met in 1932 in Venice at the International Society of Contemporary Music, with the superb neo-classical *Guitar Concerto No. 1* being the first fruit of that relationship. It was followed by a stream of compositions—nearly one hundred in all—that have cemented Castelnuovo-Tedesco's posthumous reputation as one of the 20th century's most distinguished composers for guitar, rivaling (or surpassing) his impressive status as a potent influence on Hollywood film composers, including his pupils Jerry Goldsmith and John Williams.

Written in 1934, the *Sonata* continues the neo-classical trend of the *Concerto* not only in its dedication to Italian master Luigi Boccherini—an early advocate of the guitar—but also in its bravura repurposing of earlier musical idioms, a notion very much in the air during the 1920s and 1930s, as witnessed by Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* and *Octet*, or Manuel de Falla's scintillating *Harpichord Concerto*. Structured in the standard four-movement layout of the Classical sonata, the work moves from a brisk *Allegro con spirito* in sonata form, through an aria-like second movement, to a delectably flavored *Minuet*, concluding with a perky romp worthy of its celebrated namesake's buoyant finales.

### Two Préludes and Two Études

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS

Born March 5, 1887, Rio de Janeiro

Died November 17, 1959, Rio de Janeiro

One will not find a more naturally fluent composer than Rio de Janeiro's native son, Heitor Villa-Lobos. Music flowed from him, seemingly without effort or difficulty, in an opulent personal language that mixed Brazilian

folk tunes and street music with the harmonic idioms of the early 20th century. His enormous output includes operas, ballets, film scores, symphonies (12 in all), concertos, chamber works, piano solos and perhaps best-known of all, those multifarious sonic kaleidoscopes, the *Bachianas brasileiras* and the *Chôros*.

Villa-Lobos's solo guitar music may make up a relatively modest corner of his output, but it looms nonetheless large in 20<sup>th</sup>-century guitar repertory. Both the 12 *Études* from 1929 and the *Préludes* of 1940 bear eloquent witness to Villa-Lobos's indebtedness to his French colleague Claude Debussy, whose piano *Études* and *Préludes* are landmarks of modern keyboard composition.

## Hommage à Jimi Hendrix

CARLO DOMENICONI

Born February 20, 1947, Cesena, Italy

"Too much, too much, too much, too extreme" was Pavel Steidl's description of Jimi Hendrix, as told to the Edmonton, Alberta *Vue Weekly*. "But a few years ago, I was traveling to Australia, and on the plane, between the movies, there was a live concert of Jimi Hendrix. So I started to listen, and I said, 'Oh, God. He's incredible.' It's incredible what this man was doing."

Italian-born composer Carlo Domeniconi is no stranger to either guitarist, Steidl or Hendrix, thus rendering this dazzling *tour de force*

for solo guitar singularly apropos. Domeniconi's voluminous and wide-ranging output—almost all of it for guitar—includes works inspired by literature, both classic (*Don Quixote*) and modern (*Le Petit Prince*) and neo-classical Ravelian explorations such as the 1985 "Suite in modo antico." A fascination with Turkish music led to the popular 1985 *Koyunbaba*, among numerous Turkish-inspired pieces. For Pavel Steidl, Domeniconi has written *Steidleriana*, "to suit his style. Technical craziness, overtone singing and numerous effects are the stuff of this piece."

In *Hommage à Jimi Hendrix*, Domeniconi sets Steidl the intriguing task of recreating on an acoustic instrument the sounds and techniques of Hendrix's electric guitar, even including a whiff of distortion. The work abounds in subtle quotations from Hendrix's guitar passages, threaded throughout a texture characterized by quasi-improvisatory riffs and contemplative pauses. Written in 1991, the *Hommage* has been in Steidl's concert repertory since 2006.

—Program notes by Scott Foglesong © 2009