



presents

In association with Omni Foundation for the Performing Arts

# Xuefei Yang, guitar

Friday, November 13, 2009, 8pm

Herbst Theatre

## PROGRAM

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH	<b>Lute Suite, BWV 1006a</b>
GIULIO REGONDI	<b>Reverie (Nocturne), Opus 19</b>
STEPHEN GOSS	<b>The Chinese Garden</b> <i>Jasmine Flower (Mo Li Hua)</i> <i>Red Flowers Blooming all over the Mountain</i> <i>Blue Orchid (Lan Hua Hua)</i> <i>Waterfall Music</i>

## INTERMISSION

ISAAC ALBÉNIZ	<b>España, Seis hojas de album, Opus 165</b> <i>Preludio</i> <i>Tango</i> <i>Malaguena</i> <i>Serenata</i> <i>Capricho Catalan</i> <i>Zortico</i>
LEO BROUWER	<b>Sonata</b> <i>Fandangos y Boleros</i> <i>Sarabanda de Scriabin</i> <i>Toccata de Pasquini</i>
FRANCISCO TARRÉGA	<b>Carnival of Venice</b>

Xuefei Yang is represented by Askonas Holt Ltd, Lincoln House, 300 High Holborn, London; 020.7400.1700, info@askonasholt.co.uk

## ARTIST PROFILE

This is Xuefei Yang's third concert with San Francisco Performances; she previously appeared in February of 2008 and 2004.

### Xuefei Yang



The Beijing born, London based, internationally acclaimed guitarist Xuefei Yang was the first ever guitarist in China to enter a music school, and the first to launch an international career as a professional musician.

She began playing the guitar at age seven, taking formal education at ten. Soon after, she made her first public appearance at the First China International Guitar Festival, immediately gaining such acclaim that the Spanish Ambassador in China presented her with a concert guitar. She went on to play extensively in China, Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, Australia and Europe. In 1995 when John Williams came to Beijing, he was so impressed with Yang's playing that he gave two of his own Smallman guitars to her Conservatory for her and other advanced students to play.

Yang came to England on an international scholarship in 2000 for postgraduate study at the Royal Academy of Music with Michael Lewin. In 2005 her achievements as a musician were recognized by the Royal Academy, which granted her the title of "Associate."

She now enjoys an international career and performs regularly throughout the UK, Europe, Asia and North America in such prestigious venues as Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, also the Philharmonie Berlin, Musikhalle Hamburg, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Konzerthaus Vienna, Auditorio Nacional de Espana and Lincoln Center New York. In Asia she has appeared at the National Concert Hall Taipei, Hong Kong City Hall, Hong Kong Cultural Center, Esplanade Singapore, Seoul Arts Centre and the Beijing Concert Hall.

During the 2009-10 season, Yang will perform concertos with leading orchestras including the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Zurich Chamber Orchestra and Northern Sinfonia. She gives recitals in Lisbon, Macau, Brussels, Beijing, Seattle, San Francisco and throughout the UK. She continues her relationship with cellist Natalie Clein in a tour of the UK and Ireland.

Yang has an exclusive international recording contract with EMI Classics. Her EMI debut album *Romance de Amor* reached gold disc status in Hong Kong. Her second album, *40 Degrees North*, featuring music from Spain and China, was released in April 2008 and was chosen as Best Instrumental CD of 2008 by China's Canton Radio.

Xuefei Yang plays D'Addario guitar strings on a Smallman guitar. For more information, please visit [www.xuefeiyang.com](http://www.xuefeiyang.com) or <http://yang40degreesnorth.com/>.

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

### Lute Suite, BWV 1006a

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

Died July 28, 1750, Leipzig

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany, the youngest child of a family that had been musically active for seven generations (of which his was the fifth). His father taught him violin and harpsichord, and his uncle Johann Christoph Bach (1645-1693), who was particularly famous, introduced him to the organ. Johann Sebastian's mother died when he was 10 years old, and he went to live with his oldest brother, the organist Johann Christoph Bach (1671-1721), where he learned to play the clavichord.

In 1707 Bach married his first cousin, Maria Barbara. They had seven children, four of whom survived to adulthood, and two who went on to become important composers. By 1720, when his wife died unexpectedly, Bach had already held posts in various locations throughout Germany as musical director or musician to various princes and dukes. In 1721 Bach married his second wife, Anna Magdalena Wülcken, a gifted soprano, and accepted a post in Leipzig where he directed the musical activity of the local church and associated school. The couple had a further 13 children, six of whom survived into adulthood, and all of whom became significant musicians.

All Bach's most monumental achievements, such as the *The Passion According to*

*St. Matthew*, date from his time at Leipzig. Yet as smooth as the course of his life seems to have been until his death in 1750, he had his share of difficulties too. Bach often ruffled the town counselors of Leipzig, who were shocked by the "unecclesiastical style" of his compositions and by his independent bearing. For the head of so large a family his post was more dignified than lucrative, and a few surviving documents tell a prouder tale of his uncomplaining thrift.

In his later years, Bach's eyesight failed and he spent his final months in total darkness. Two eye operations performed in early 1750 by English oculist John Taylor were unsuccessful (coincidentally, Taylor performed a similar unsuccessful operation on Handel some years later.) Bach died in his sleep of a stroke on the evening of July 28, 1750 and is buried in St. John's churchyard in Leipzig. An obituary of the time read, "Our Bach was the greatest organ and clavier player that ever lived."

The original *Lute Suite, BWV 1006a* is an arrangement (by Bach) of his E major violin partita for lute harpsichord, or lute (it is hard to tell which). Transcriptions of the suite for guitar are part of the standard repertoire for the instrument. The suite opens with a prelude and is followed by a series of French dances.

### Reverie (Nocturne), Opus 19

GIULIO REGONDI

Born 1822, Geneva, Genoa or Lyon

Died May 6, 1872, London

Giulio Regondi was an Italian guitarist, concertinist and composer. Confusion surrounds his birthplace and parentage. He was born in Geneva, Genoa or Lyon in 1822, to a German mother (who may have died during childbirth) and raised by an Italian man who assumed the role of father figure. Regondi learned to play guitar from this man, who was himself a talented guitarist, composer and baritone. Biographers claim that this man was not related to Regondi, and capitalized on the talents of the child for his own gain for Regondi was a child prodigy, known as "The Infant Paganini." From the age of five, he performed on stage (often in duo with his so-called father) and by the age of nine had played at all the major courts in Europe.

In 1831 the Regondis arrived in London and achieved critical and financial success, touring throughout the British Isles. Around 1835, his "father" gave the boy a five-pound note, and absconded with the rest of the money (thought to be several thousand pounds),

leaving the child dependent on the good will of strangers. Regondi survived this trauma, and with the help of friends and foster parents became a UK resident and continued to earn a living as a performer. He also took up the newly invented concertina, quickly developed a phenomenal technique and wrote several virtuoso pieces for the instrument, including a concerto.

Regondi toured continental Europe with cellist Joseph Lidel, performing both guitar and concertina, and in 1841 he performed in duo with Clara Schumann in Leipzig. There were other concert tours too, but he spent most of the rest of his life in London, performing around the UK.

He was reportedly of a kind and gentle nature. Later in his life, there is an account of him being contacted by the father-figure who had deserted him years before. He readily agreed to take in the destitute old man and care for him in his old age. Three decades later, Regondi bore his own final illness, cancer, for some 20 months before succumbing to the illness in 1872, at a small house near Hyde Park in London. He is buried in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Kensal.

Regondi's poetic, and challenging, compositions are written in the Romantic style of his era. Sadly, much of his work was lost to posterity. Soon after his death, his published scores became dormant—being regarded as too difficult—and fell into obscurity for decades. Beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present day, his scores are being rediscovered and republished.

The *Nocturne* dates from 1864, and creates a dreamlike image, full of the hues of romanticism. In a quote from the *Musical Times* in October 1871, it was referred to as "one of the most melodious, charming, and ingenious effusions ever written for the guitar." On a technical point, it is possibly the first work for guitar to utilize the tremolo technique (fast, multiple repetition of the same note on a single string to give the effect of a sustained note).

### The Chinese Garden

STEPHEN GOSS

Born 1964, Carmarthenshire, Wales

Completed in September 2007, *The Chinese Garden*—a collection of four compositions based on traditional Chinese folk themes—is the result of a collaboration between Xuefei Yang and Welsh-born composer Stephen Goss, whose work is performed and recorded worldwide.

Goss's opening piece, *Jasmine Flower*, is based on a folk tune from Jiangsu province in the South. The second piece is Goss's arrangement of *Red Flowers, Blooming all over the Mountain*—a folk song that hails from the Northwestern Shanbei province. The third piece is *Blue Orchid (Lan Hua Hua)*, also from Shanbei province, which tells the story of a beautiful girl who is betrothed to a rich landowner and, unable to be with her true love, commits suicide. The closing piece, entitled *Waterfall Music*, brings *The Chinese Garden* to an impressive climax. It uses flavors of Uyghur music from JinXiang, and includes a quotation of the *Jasmine Flower* theme.

A guitarist and Head of Composition at the University of Surrey, UK, Goss has remained faithful to the original folk melodies while reinterpreting them in a Western, tonal idiom.

## España, Seis hojas de album, Opus 165

ISAAC ALBÉNIZ

Born May 29, 1860, Camprodón, Catalonia  
Died May 18, 1909, Cambo-les-Bains, Pyrénées

Isaac Albéniz was a Spanish composer and pianist. He was born in the Catalonia region of Spain, and was a crucial figure in the creation of a distinctly Spanish classical music idiom. He was a child prodigy on the piano, performing internationally by the age of 15. After completing his piano studies in Belgium, he returned to Spain in 1879 to establish himself as an accomplished virtuoso and also began to compose and conduct. In 1883, Albéniz settled in Barcelona and studied composition with Felipe Pedrell, who inspired him to use Spanish folk songs and dances as a basis of his compositions. Because the sound of guitar often seems to appear in his piano works, many of them were adapted to, and became popular repertoire for, the guitar.

*España, Opus 165* was written for piano in London in 1890. The little-known suite consists of six short pieces, each sketching a scene of Spanish life. The prelude paints a sound-picture of Moorish Spain, with its sections of unaccompanied melody evoking the plaintive voice of Gypsy *cante*. The second piece is a tango in D major and is one of Albéniz's best known works, suggestive of the high-society salon life of 19th-century Seville, rather than the nightlife of Buenos Aires. The tango is followed by a *malaguena*, the lower line of which again evokes a flamenco singer improvising lines of *cante jondo* (deep song). The fourth piece is a *serenata* in which the opening motif returns repeatedly throughout the piece. Albé-

niz supplied no information about the scene in which this serenata unfolds. The penultimate piece, *Capricho Catalan*, paints a gentle image of Catalonia. The suite closes with a lively *Zortico*, based on a traditional Basque dance, characterized by a jaunty rhythm in quintuple meter. Xuefei Yang will be performing her own arrangements of this suite.

## Sonata

LEO BROUWER

Born March 1, 1939, Havana, Cuba

Leo Brouwer is a Cuban composer, classical guitarist and conductor, one of his country's most respected musicians. He first learned music from his father, Juan (a doctor and amateur guitarist), and his aunt. His great uncle was the well-known composer and pianist Ernesto Lecuona. Brouwer began playing the guitar himself at age 13 and at 17 made his professional debut. For academic training, he came to the US, studying at Juilliard and the Hartt School of Music, where he majored in composition.

After completing his music education, Brouwer returned to Cuba and has held a number of official posts, including the directorship of the Cinema Institute of Cuba's music department. Among his works are a large number of guitar solos, several guitar concertos, and over 40 film scores. Brouwer's compositions reflect classical, Afro-Cuban, jazz and avant-garde influences. His early music was influenced by Cuban folk music, while his work of the 1960s and 1970s shows his interest in modernist composition. More recently his work has moved in the direction of tonality and modality: the *Sonata* is from this more recent period.

The *Sonata* was originally written in 1990 for English guitarist Julian Bream, who premiered the piece the following year. The first movement, entitled *Fandangos y Boleros*, features a Danza section in which Brouwer

merges the rhythms of the Spanish baroque Fandango with those of the Cuban Bolero. The composer describes this first movement as a sort of puzzle in which the musical colors are recomposed and redistributed, much the same way as in Paul Klee's *Magic Squares*. There is a quotation from Beethoven towards the end of the movement — Brouwer has likened the fragmented form of *Fandangos y Boleros* to the fragmented sonata form found in the first movement of Beethoven's famous Pastoral Symphony.

The second movement, *Sarabanda de Scriabin*, recreates the dark, mysterious sound world of Scriabin. The final movement is called *Toccata de Pasquini*, which contains a quotation from the most famous work by Bernardo Pasquini (a 17th-century Italian composer and keyboard player), the *Scherzo del Cucco* (Cuckoo Scherzo).

## Carnival of Venice

FRANCISCO TÁRREGA

Born November 21, 1852, Villarreal, Castellón, Spain  
Died December 15, 1909, Barcelona

Francisco Tárrega, the so-called father of the modern guitar, expanded the technical and musical potential of the instrument. Tárrega and his pupils—especially Emilio Pujol and Miguel Llobet—were important standard-bearers in bringing the instrument out of the 19th and into the 20th century. His contention that performance should be confined to small, intimate salons meant he wrote many charming and beautifully constructed miniatures. One of his few larger works, *Carnival of Venice* is a set of variations on a theme much beloved by cornet players, and deploys the range of special effects of which the guitar is capable.

— Program notes by Neil Muir,  
courtesy of Askonas Holt Ltd.

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