ROSS EDWARDS
(b. Sydney, Australia, 1943 – )

Melbourne Arioso* (world premiere)
Interval: 20-minutes

Chinese Traditional (arr. Xuefei Yang)
Fisherman at Eventide

ENRIQUE GRANADOS
(b. Lleida, Spain, 1867 – d. English Channel, 1916)

Valses poéticos (arr. Xuefei Yang)
Preludio: Vivace molto
Melodioso
Tempo de Valse noble
Tempo de Valse lente
Allegro umoristico

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(b. Eisenach, Germany, 1685 – d. Leipzig, Germany, 1750)

Lute Suite in E, BWV1006a
Preludio
Loure
Gavotte en Rondeau
Menuets (I and II)
Bourrée
Gigue

PROGRAM

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HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS
(b. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1887 – d. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1959)

Suite populaire brésilienne
(1948 version) – selections
Mazurka-Chôro
Valsa-Chôro
Schottisch-Chôro

DILERMANDO REIS
(b. Guaratinguetá, Brazil, 1916 – d. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1977)

Uma Valsa e Dois Amores
Eterna Saudade
Xodó de Baina

ANTÔNIO CARLOS JOBIM
(b. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1927 – d. New York City, United States, 1994)

Modinha e Luiza
A Felicidade
(arr. Raphael Rabello)
(arr. Roland Dyense)

LUÍZ BONFÁ
(b. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1922 – d. Santa Cruz, Brazil, 2001)

Manhã de Carnival (arr. Baden Powell & Brian Hodel)

GAROTO (ANÍBAL AUGUSTO SARDINHA)
(b. São Paulo, Brazil, 1915 – d. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1955)

Lamentos do Morro (arr. Raphael Rabello)

* Commissioned by Melbourne Recital Centre with support of Maria Sola for Xuefei Yang.
Over the past century the solo guitar recital has delighted audiences worldwide and in tonight’s program Xuefei Yang offers many of its quintessential elements. During the 1800s the guitar had been seen primarily as a popular or salon instrument, and it took some of the great guitarists at the turn of the 20th century, especially Andrés Segovia, to redefine it as a classical instrument suited to the concert hall. In the process a concert repertory was established, and programs began to embrace music from Johann Sebastian Bach to folk-based compositions that often had a Spanish or South American accent. In an attempt to expand the instrument’s horizons performers also set in motion the practice of commissioning contemporary composers to write for the guitar. Tonight’s program reflects this grand tradition, with a personal inflection.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) may not have composed for the guitar itself, but thanks to Andrés Segovia’s championing of transcriptions from his suites and partitas for solo instruments, Bach’s music is now at the heart of modern guitar repertoire. Segovia regularly included movements from Bach’s violin, cello and lute suites in his programs during the 1920s, which culminated in his 1930s arrangement of the Chaconne from the D minor Partita for violin, parts of which are based on the Romantic virtuoso Ferruccio Busoni’s iconic transcription for piano. However, Segovia’s Bach transcriptions were also influenced in no small part by the great revival of interest in the Baroque composer sparked by the Neoclassical movement based in Paris between the two World Wars, a movement that bestowed on the guitar a sense of authenticity, in that the instrument came to be viewed as the modern descendant of the lute.

Bach himself had often turned to transcription in putting together his music for solo instruments, including several of his own surviving works for the Baroque lute. Tonight’s Lute suite BWV1006a is based on Bach’s own lute arrangement
of the Partita No.3 in E for solo violin BWV1006. It consists of a series of stylised Baroque dances, each with its individual character, and is introduced by an expansive and energetic Prelude, which presents a number of musical ideas that are explored in the subsequent dances. The slower, dignified Loure leads into a sprightly, elegant Gavotte en Rondeau, with its recurring opening section. The two Minuets are respectively rhythmic in style, and musette-like with a drone, while the running figuration of the Bourée provides an energetic momentum leading into the lively Gigue that closes the suite.

Enrique Granados (1867–1916) was a key figure in the new Spanish school of composition that was emerging at the turn of the 20th century. Although he was a pianist, like Isaac Albéniz before him Granados took inspiration from Spanish guitar music in writing his character pieces for piano, evoking the strumming and chordal effects that characterised the plucked instrument in its traditional folk settings or in the accompaniment of flamenco song and dance. During the composer’s lifetime a new generation of Spanish classical guitarists, such as Francisco Tárrega and Miguel Llobet, began to transcribe his piano works, performing their arrangements for the composer himself, and gaining his approval.
However, not all of Granados’s early keyboard works are dominated by a strong Spanish flavour. Many of his popular collections echoed European styles prevalent in salon music and dance forms that were part of the fabric of Spanish urban culture. Walter Clark has described the *Valses poéticos* as ‘unaffected works … poetic utterances’ that grew from Granados’s ‘love affair with the waltz’. Probably written in the early 1890s, they are intimate works with whimsical titles that refer back to nearly 100 years of European engagement with this dance form, originally considered shocking, by then venerable and beloved. In particular Granados drew on the stylisations of the waltz in the piano music of Franz Schubert and Frédéric Chopin. Not limited by the dance’s characteristic and lilting triple time (which he ignores in the first movement of the set), Granados plays with the idea of the waltz, taking the listener through a gamut of style and emotion, from deep sentiment to comic good humour.

Commissioning new works has been crucial in the ongoing quest to expand and renew the repertory for the guitar as a concert instrument. This has often raised composers’ awareness of the instrument, inspiring many who had not written for the guitar before to compose repeatedly for the instrument. Ross Edwards (b. 1943) is one of Australia’s leading composers, and tonight’s premiere is the latest in a series of works for guitar that includes his guitar concerto *Arafura Dances* (1995), *Blackwattle Caprices* (1998) commissioned by the guitarist Timothy Kain for solo guitar, and *Djanaba* for guitar and marimba (2002). *Melbourne Arioso* was commissioned by Melbourne Recital Centre with the generous support of Maria Sola,
and the composer gratefully acknowledges the technical advice of his friend Timothy Kain in composing the new work. Edwards writes: ‘Composed especially for Xuefei Yang, *Melbourne Arioso* is a nocturne which pays homage to the Melbourne artist Clarice Beckett (1887–1935), whose mysterious, gently epiphanic visions of suburban dusk, night and fog reveal the extraordinary within the ordinary.’

Beckett painted within the style of Australian Tonalism, and due to her domestic circumstances much of her mature work was created in brief outdoor sessions at dawn and dusk. Her atmospheric paintings captured varied impressions of the misty state of coastal and urban Melbourne, and Edwards evokes the ambience of her paintings in music that explores the guitar’s capacity for delicate sounds. Composed in an arch form (ABCCBA), *Melbourne Arioso*’s spacious opening—punctuated by harmonics—gives way to a serene B-section that hints at the full range of the instrument, while a jaunty *poco scherzando* is repeated at the heart of the work before the return through serenity to final notes that almost fade into the silence.

Plucked string instruments exist in many of the world’s cultures, and their affinities with the guitar have facilitated its incorporation into many folk music styles across the 400 years of its history. The guitar’s ability to articulate melody, harmony and rhythm gives it the versatility to accompany song and dance and adapt to music originally conceived for different instruments.
Following on from the Spanish traditions established by Tárrega, Llobet and Segovia, many renowned classical guitarists of the past century have drawn on the folk music of their own cultures to create idiomatic solo works for their instrument. *Fisherman at Eventide* is a traditional piece popular in Northern China and is usually played on the *guzheng*, a 13-string plucked zither. It depicts a fisherman returning home at sunset, imitating the songs of the local community and the sound of the waves. In her arrangement for the guitar, Xuefei engaged with the challenge of adapting a piece written for a 13-stringed instrument to her six-stringed guitar, coming up with a set of variations that range from the simple and direct opening statement of the haunting theme to cascading figuration that ushers in the ethereal final phrases. This evocative music embodies Xuefei’s nuanced integration of Eastern music styles with the Western techniques of the classical guitar.

The early history of the guitar coincided with the colonisation of the Americas, and by the 17th century there were already reports of the widespread dissemination of the instrument in Brazil, often accompanying bawdy songs and lively dances that incorporated indigenous and African-Brazilian rhythms. Since that time the guitar has been central to the folk traditions of Brazil and has exerted significant influence on its art music. Compositions from this nation have also played a significant role in expanding the instrument’s classical concert repertory. Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959), the pre-eminent Brazilian composer of the 20th century, embodied in his music the crossover between home-grown Brazilian styles and European musical traditions.
As a young man he played guitar in *choro* ensembles, groups that practised a popular urban style that had originated in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1800s. Despite being considered street music, *choros* were initially composed in the styles of European dances such as polkas, waltzes, mazurkas and schottisches (as is evident from their titles), which had dominated Brazilian salon music at this time. As the new century dawned, they were integrating the syncopated rhythms that were present in Brazilian and contemporary popular music from forms like ragtime, tango and the *maxixe*. These *choros* were then used as the basis for further improvisation by talented performers like the guitarist João Pernambuco. A key figure in the development of the popular guitar in early 20th-century Brazil, Pernambuco was well-known to Villa-Lobos; his style of playing influenced the composer’s early guitar works, especially the *Suite populaire brésilienne*, and Villa-Lobos wrote *Distribuição de flores* for Pernambuco in 1937.

The *Suite populaire brésilienne* was compiled in the 1920s from some of the earliest compositions of Villa-Lobos, which he had probably written between 1908 and 1912 during a period when the young musician travelled widely in Brazil. The pieces that form the suite exemplify the hybrid forms typical of the choro in their transformation of the kind of European dances that had inspired Granados in the late 19th century. Villa-Lobos spent time in Paris during the 1920s, where he composed another series of *Choros*, works that combine some of the characteristics of the form with the techniques of European art music and are scored for a variety of instrumental forces, the first of which was written for guitar solo.
He also met the young Segovia and they went on to collaborate in the development of cornerstones of the modern guitar repertory, the 12 Etudes and five Preludes. Inspired by the reigning aesthetic of Neoclassicism in Paris, by the end of the decade Villa-Lobos began composing a series of *Bachianas Brasileiras*, which unite his love of Bach with Brazilian guitar traditions (and echo the musical journey of this program).

The celebrated Brazilian guitarist and composer Dilermando Reis (1916–1977) was beloved for the sentiment of his playing style, which evoked the older traditions of *choro*, and for the idiomatic qualities of his prolific output for solo guitar. Through his popular radio programs from the 1940s through to the 1960s Reis did much to disseminate the traditions of guitarists such as Pernambuco and keep this music alive in the rapidly changing musical landscape of Brazil. One could imagine hearing Reis’s gentle waltz *Uma Valsa e Dois Amores* in a fin-de-siècle salon of Rio de Janeiro, while the nostalgic strains of *Eterna Saudade* and the lively and rhythmic *Xodó da Baiana* show us other aspects of Reis’s compositional personality.

In the late 1950s a new musical style emerged from the samba traditions of Brazil: the bossa nova. This ‘new wave’ in Brazilian music was seen as essentially modern and incorporated aspects of jazz into the samba. Characterised by complex harmonies over a syncopated accompaniment, the ethereal vocals of bossa nova singers gave the new music a sense of sophisticated simplicity that touches on a mood of sweet melancholy. Led by composers (and guitarists) like Antônio Carlos
Jobim (1927–1994) and Luiz Bonfá (1922–2001), bossa nova found international recognition when its music was part of the soundtrack for the 1959 film *Black Orpheus*. The film transports the Greek legend of Orpheus and Eurydice to a Rio de Janeiro favela during Carnaval, and provides the setting for the simmering energy of Jobim’s *A Felicidade* and Bonfá’s plaintively lyrical *Manhã de Carnival*, two numbers which have gone on to enjoy worldwide success in their own right. Tonight’s final work returns us to the roots of this style with the classic samba *Lamentos do Morro* by guitar virtuoso and famed exponent of samba and *choro* Aníbal Augusto Sardinha (1915–55), better known as Garoto (the Kid). We hear this work, and Jobim’s *Modinha e Luiza*, in the accomplished arrangements of Raphael Rabello (1962–1995), a member of the younger generation who continued the traditions of a long line of Brazilian guitar composer-performers.

Michael Christoforidis & Elizabeth Kertesz © 2016

Michael Christoforidis is an Associate Professor and Elizabeth Kertesz an Honorary Research Fellow in musicology at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, the University of Melbourne. They have written extensively on Hispanic music and have just completed a book, *Carmen and the Staging of Spain*, for Oxford University Press.
'With Yang showing a sense of total ownership of this piece, this was one of those performances that was simply revelatory, full of fresh and unexpected turns.'

*The Irish Times*
Xuefei Yang

Xuefei Yang is hailed as a musical pioneer. Born in Beijing and now based in the U.K., she was the first-ever guitarist in China to enter a music school (Beijing’s Central Conservatory of Music), the first guitarist to give a recital in Beijing National Center of Performing Arts, and the first Chinese guitarist to launch an international professional career.

Xuefei Yang’s first public performance was at the age of 10, and it received such acclaim that the Spanish Ambassador to China immediately presented her with a concert guitar. Her debut in Madrid at the age of 14 was attended by the composer Joaquín Rodrigo; when John Williams heard her play, he gave two of his own instruments to Beijing’s Central Conservatory especially for her and other advanced students. Xuefei then became the first Chinese student to be awarded a full postgraduate scholarship to study at London’s Royal Academy of Music. In recognition of her distinguished career, she was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Music in June 2012.
Xuefei Yang enjoys an international career. Her recent engagements included performances with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Pacific Symphony Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, Musikkollegium Winterthur and the Luzern Quartet. Following on from the critical praise Xuefei received for her contribution to Ian Bostridge’s album *Britten Songs* which also featured Sir Antonio Pappano, she partnered with Bostridge in a recital at the Philharmonie Cologne. Xuefei Yang’s commitment as a recitalist sees her appear across the world including engagements in San Francisco, Dallas, Austin, Houston, Baltimore, Miami, New York, Vermont, Seoul, Taiwan, Brussels, London’s Wigmore Hall, and Bath.

Xuefei Yang records exclusively for EMI Classics. Her debut album, *Romance de Amor*, won a gold disc in Hong Kong, and her second, *40 Degrees North*, was selected as ‘Editor’s Choice’ by *Gramophone* magazine. Her latest solo disc *Sojourn* is a compilation which features the music of J.S. Bach amongst others. Since she premiered *Equipoise* by Timothy Salter, commissioned for her by the Park Lane Group, Xuefei has committed herself to expanding the guitar repertoire, with a particular interest in adding Chinese music to the repertoire.
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