



Ahmed Dickinson Cárdenas

PORTRAITS FOR GUITAR

Caribbean & British Music

by Flores Chaviano, Walfrido Domínguez
Dominique Le Gendre *and* Stephen Goss

CONVIVIUM
RECORDS

PORTRAITS FOR GUITAR

Programme Note

Sonatina Stephen Goss (b. 1964)

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- | | | | |
|---|-----|------------------|------|
| 1 | i | Circle Line | 7.17 |
| 2 | ii | Marylebone Elegy | 7.01 |
| 3 | iii | Canary Wharf | 5.39 |

Sonata, Evocación y Boceto

Flores Chaviano (b. 1946)

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- | | | | |
|---|-----|-----------|------|
| 4 | i | Sonata | 2.54 |
| 5 | ii | Evocación | 2.30 |
| 6 | iii | Boceto | 1.22 |

7 Variaciones sobre el Yenyere . 5.05

Flores Chaviano (b. 1946)

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Tongoy Triptych For Two Guitars

Dominique Le Gendre (b. 1960)

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- | | | | |
|----|-----|--------------|------|
| 8 | i | Tongoy Sea | 3.21 |
| 9 | ii | Tololo Sky | 2.08 |
| 10 | iii | Elqui, Earth | 3.11 |

Cuaderno de Viaje No.5

Walfrido Domínguez (b. 1954)

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- | | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------------|------|
| 11 | | La brisa y el terral | 1.08 |
| 12 | | Bayomo | 1.18 |
| 13 | | Remolino cuatro vientos | 2.32 |
| 14 | | Aire con aire que el sol abrasa | 1.51 |
| 15 | | Rehilete | 1.40 |
| 16 | | Aire de agua | 2.34 |

Six Sketches For Solo Guitar

Dominique Le Gendre (b. 1960)

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- | | | | |
|----|-----|--|------|
| 17 | i | | 2.10 |
| 18 | ii | | 3.22 |
| 19 | iii | | 2.59 |
| 20 | iv | | 2.34 |
| 21 | v | | 1.44 |
| 22 | vi | | 3.36 |

Total running time **67.58**

Stephen Goss (b. 1964) is one of the most widely performed and recorded composers of his generation. His music appears on more than one hundred albums across labels including Decca, EMI, Virgin Classics, Naxos, Deutsche Grammophon, and Deux-Elles. It has been heard in major venues worldwide, such as Wigmore Hall and the Royal Festival Hall in London, Carnegie Hall in New York, and the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow. Goss's output spans orchestral and choral works, concertos, chamber music, and solo pieces.

A defining feature of Goss's music is his fascination with time, place, and the musical styles that evoke them. His compositions frequently juxtapose contrasting idioms and textures, reflecting a creative voice informed by his parallel career as a guitarist, performer, arranger, and collaborator. This dual perspective allows him to blur the boundaries between interpretation and composition, producing music that is both immediate and imaginative.

Sonatina

Stephen Goss

Sonatina is a solo guitar reworking of Goss's *Guitar Concerto*, translating orchestral textures into an intimate solo idiom. Each of the three movements is inspired by a different area of London. *Circle Line* cycles three contrasting musical ideas "bold and bright," "lyrical and tender," and "sparkling", evoking the dynamic rhythm of the city's underground network. *Marylebone Elegy* pays homage to Elgar and commemorates the guitarist Richard Hand, whose life was centered in Marylebone. *Canary Wharf* refracts the hemiola patterns of the canarios through the lens of twentieth-century Latin American music while capturing the energy and layered rhythms of London's financial district.

Through the *Sonatina*, Goss combines his understanding of the guitar with vivid impressions of place, translating London's urban landscapes into a rich, nuanced musical journey. Its inclusion

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alongside Chaviano's Cuban works highlights a shared fascination with rhythm, memory, and cultural identity, interpreted through the expressive possibilities of the guitar.

Flores Chaviano (b. 1946)

The works presented on this album offer a concentrated portrait of Flores Chaviano's early creative world, rooted in Cuban musical tradition and shaped by a forward-looking artistic vision. Born in Cuba and later established in Europe, Chaviano has developed a distinguished international career as guitarist, composer, conductor, and pedagogue. His music consistently explores the intersection between Afro-Cuban heritage, popular idioms, and contemporary classical language, transforming traditional forms through the expressive and structural possibilities of the guitar.

All four works recorded here were composed during the 1970s, a formative decade in Chaviano's artistic life.

Their later publication dates reflect dissemination rather than chronology, and they belong to a single, coherent creative period grounded in his Cuban years. This album brings together these pieces as a unified musical statement, highlighting their shared aesthetic and historical context.

Sonata, Evocación y Boceto

Flores Chaviano

Sonata, Evocación y Boceto were the final three pieces Chaviano wrote before leaving Cuba, marking a decisive moment of personal and artistic transition. Each movement is anchored in a distinct Cuban musical form. The *Sonata* is based on the *guajira*, its rhythmic flow and melodic contours reimagined within a classical formal framework. *Evocación* draws on the habanera, whose characteristic pulse supports a reflective, ritual-like atmosphere. The concluding *Boceto* is driven by Afro-Cuban clave patterns, distilled into compact rhythmic

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cells and percussive gestures that bring the triptych to an intense and focused close. Together, the three movements form both a summation of Chaviano's Cuban roots and a prelude to the stylistic openness that would define his later work.

Variaciones sobre el Yenyere

Flores Chaviano

Variaciones sobre el Yenyere belongs to the same creative period, though published later. Based on the traditional Afro-Cuban song *Yenyere Guma*, whose origins lie in Central African ritual practice and the Kikongo expression *kekere ngoma*, the work is shaped through a process of variation informed by contemporary compositional tendencies. Rhythmic, harmonic, and textural transformations expand the original material while preserving its ritual intensity, allowing the guitar to move fluidly between percussive vitality and lyrical reflection.

By bringing these works together, this recording proposes a listening journey that traces the closing chapter of Chaviano's life in Cuba and the emergence of a compositional voice poised between memory and departure. The interpretative approach emphasises rhythmic clarity, colour, and narrative flow, inviting the listener to hear these pieces not as isolated works, but as interconnected expressions of identity, movement, and transformation.

Dominique Le Gendre (b. 1960)

Born and brought up in Trinidad and Tobago, Dominique trained as a classical guitarist in Paris, France with Ramon de Herrera. A Londoner since 1987, she has composed music for theatre, opera, musicals, chamber ensembles, art installations, dance, film, television and radio drama for BBC Radio 3 and 4. Her music is published by Schott Music.

A former Associate Artist of the Royal Opera House and Manning Camerata

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who commissioned her operas *Bird Of Night* (ROH) and *The Burial at Thebes* (MC), Dominique's music has been commissioned and performed by BBC Proms, Nick of Time Productions and Birmingham Rep, Southbank Sinfonia, ORA Singers, Nevis Ensemble, Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Tête à Tête opera, Calabash Foundation for the Arts (Trinidad) and 2024 Hasselblad Laureate Ingrid Pollard among others.

Recent works include, *Concerto for Orchestra*, for BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Ana Maria Helsing, and a *Missa Brevis*, inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* commissioned and premiered by Canterbury Cathedral choir led by musical director Dr David Newsholme.

Tongoy Triptych For Two Guitars

Dominique Le Gendre

Composed for two guitars, this suite in three movements was inspired by a trip

to northern Chile with two close friends whose lives have been dedicated to Human Rights activism, and to whom the suite is dedicated.

Each of the three movements evokes the spirit of the place where the music locates itself. The first movement, *Tongoy Sea* captures the sleepy seaside town of Tongoy on the Pacific coast with its long stretch of beach onto which spills the village, the fishing boats and the fish market, while families gather in the local fish restaurants that line the beach looking out to sea.

The second movement, *Tololo Sky*, recalls the long car drive up the winding mountain towards the Inter-American observatory, Cerro Tololo. Driving up the mountain, I was struck by the starkness of our car winding its way on a single desert mountain road surrounded by a vast sky of an intense and translucent blue.

The final movement, *Elqui Earth*, evokes the gentle slow pace of the

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town of Vicuña, birthplace of the poet Gabriela Mistral in the Elqui Valley. This fertile stretch of green with its abundant vineyards and fruit orchards stands out against the dry mountains that encircle it below a limpid sky.

Six Sketches For Solo Guitar

Dominique Le Gendre

This suite was composed in 2025 for Cuban guitarist Ahmed Dickinson Cárdenas and is dedicated to the Hollick Family Foundation which generously supported the commission.

The six pieces in the suite explore aspects of the guitar's resonance and the dynamic sound qualities that are particular to the instrument. While I trained as a classical guitarist, this suite – my first work for solo guitar in 45 years – seeks to unite the instrument's idiomatic language with a musical voice that prioritises expression over reflex. Each sketch invites the musician into a self-contained atmosphere where the

rhythms, harmonies and melodies along with the recommended fingering, create a sound world that is unique to each, sometimes juxtaposing contemplative moods with percussive responses. *Six Sketches For Solo Guitar* represents a personal journey of rediscovery of the richly expressive qualities of the guitar and seeks to contribute to the repertoire that broadens the possibilities of the instrument.

Walfredo Domínguez (b. 1954)

Walfredo Domínguez is a Cuban guitarist, composer, and arranger whose work bridges classical technique and the rich traditions of Cuban popular music. A graduate of the Higher Institute of Art in Havana, where he studied under Isaac Nicola, he has developed a distinctive voice rooted in son, danzón, and Afro-Cuban musical forms, enriched with elements of jazz and contemporary composition.

His music is noted for its inventive

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translation of Cuban folkloric sounds – such as batá drums, congas, and tres – onto the guitar, combining polyrhythmic complexity with lyrical expressiveness. Domínguez has received multiple awards in Cuban composition competitions and has written extensively for solo guitar, chamber ensembles, theatre, and film.

Highlights of his career include the premiere of his guitar concerto *Moforibale a Ochún* at the Auditori de Barcelona and collaborations with theatre director Alina Narciso. Based in Barcelona since 2016, he teaches at the Gràcia Music School and directs the Obdara Trio, with which he performs internationally.

Cuaderno de Viaje No. 5

Walfrido Domínguez (b. 1954)

Cuaderno de Viaje No. 5 forms part of a larger collection of studies and character pieces through which Domínguez invites performer and listener alike on a journey across the musical landscapes of Cuba.

Conceived with pedagogical purpose, these pieces transcend the notion of étude, unfolding instead as evocative miniatures rich in rhythm, colour, and expressive intent.

Rooted in Cuban popular music, Domínguez's language draws on *son*, *guajira*, Afro-Cuban rhythmic patterns, and the subtle interplay of European and African traditions that define the island's sound world. Classical compositional techniques are fused with elements of jazz and contemporary music, enabling the guitar to emulate the sonorities of Cuban folk instruments – batá drums, congas, tres, and trumpets – while preserving the immediacy and vitality of popular expression.

The titles of the individual movements evoke natural forces and motion – breezes, whirlwinds, spinning toys, and changing currents – suggesting music in constant transformation. Syncopated bass lines, shifting accents, irregular metres, and rhythmic ostinati propel the

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listener through contrasting atmospheres, from moments of gentle lyricism to passages of kinetic energy. Wind and air recur as metaphors for travel itself: invisible forces that shape direction, carry memory, and blur the boundary between stillness and movement. In *Cuaderno de Viaje No. 5*, the guitar becomes both vehicle and narrator, tracing a personal and collective journey through Cuban musical identity. What begins as a technical exploration ultimately unfolds as a poetic voyage, inviting the listener to traverse not only the island, but also the layered histories and rhythms that animate its music.

Domínguez received his classical musical training at Havana's National School of Art and the Higher Institute of Art, studying under Isaac Nicola and graduating as a guitarist in 1982. From the start, his career as performer, arranger, and composer focused on Cuban popular music, of which he is a profound connoisseur. His compositions and arrangements

are inspired by traditional music, enriched with classical, jazz, and contemporary techniques, consistently exploiting the expressive possibilities of the guitar. His repertoire embraces peasant folklore, sones and guarachas, *danzones*, and Afro-Cuban songs.

Domínguez has received multiple awards for composition in Cuba and has written for solo guitar, ensembles, and theatre. Notable premieres include *Volver* and *Cuento de Aguas* in Naples (2006–2007), *Moforibale a Ochún* for guitar and string orchestra at the Auditori de Barcelona (2007), and the *Trilogy of Cuban Songs* for soprano and guitar at the Barcelona Festival of Song. He also composed for film (*Baila con me*, 2010) and theatre (*Strip-tease*, Havana International Theatre Festival, 2011).

Biographies

Ahmed Dickinson Cárdenas is a Cuban-born guitarist whose artistry moves fluidly between the musical cultures of Havana and the UK. Trained in Cuba's rigorous conservatoire system, he studied at the Guillermo Tomás and Amadeo Roldán Conservatoires before completing his degree at the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana, where he studied with Jesús Ortega and Alejandro González and developed a musical outlook shaped by the close relationship between composer and performer.

Since relocating to London, Dickinson has built an international career shaped equally by British and European concert life. He pursued postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music with Carlos Bonell and Chris Stell, and at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with Robert Brightmore, refining an approach that blends the rhythmic vitality and lyricism of Cuban guitar music with the precision and clarity of the classical tradition.

A defining aspect of his work is his close

collaboration with composers. In Cuba and internationally, he has worked extensively with figures such as Flores Chaviano, Walfrido Domínguez and Eduardo Martín, as well as with the late Níco Rojas, transcribing, premiering and recording new works that have significantly expanded the modern Cuban guitar repertoire. These collaborations have earned international recognition, including multiple awards at the Cubadisco Awards.

He has appeared at leading venues including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, the Royal Albert Hall and the Barbican, and has performed as soloist with ensembles such as the Bath Festival Orchestra and the Kyan Quartet. Deeply connected to both Havana and London, Ahmed Dickinson Cárdenas continues to build bridges between traditions, cultures and generations, a dual perspective that lies at the heart of *Portraits For Guitar*.

Ahmed performs with a guitar by Dieter Hopf / Manuel Adalid (Artist Membrane 2014) and strings by Knobloch.



Biographies

Helen Sanderson's diversity as a performer, educator, composer, and creative entrepreneur is reflected in her roles at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where she is Head of Guitar Performance and of Chamber Music.

Her international performing career has centred on chamber music with highlight performances including the Southbank Centre, Kings Place and the Guitar Foundation of America and CD recordings with the Vida Guitar Quartet, James Bowman and Mark Wilde.

Alongside, Helen founded the music charity, Guitar Circus, home of the

National Youth Guitar Ensemble and became a Winston Churchill Fellow for her guitar education research. Her compositions feature in ABRSM and Trinity College exams and she is frequently invited to competition juries including BBC Young Musician of the Year and most memorably, the Sky Arts series *Guitar Star*.

Helen is a Director for The F-List UK which actively supports female and gender minority musicians. Helen plays with a guitar by Christopher Dean with D'Addario strings.



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 **Women
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Credits

Ahmed Dickinson Cárdenas

PORTRAITS FOR GUITAR

Guitarists

Ahmed Dickinson Cárdenas and Helen Sanderson

Recorded

Holy Trinity, Hitchin, United Kingdom, 8 to 10 December 2025

Engineer

Adaq Khan

Producer/Editor

James Unwin



Artwork

Mike Cooter

Executive Producer

Adrian Green

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Nacho Lopez

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