

present...

## *The Robert and Ruth Dell Guitar Series*

# **MENG SU | Guitar**

**Saturday, October 18, 2025 | 7:30pm**

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

### **J.S. BACH**

#### **Suite No. 3 in C Major for Cello, BWV 1009 (arr. Koonce)**

*Prélude  
Allemande  
Courante  
Sarabande  
Bourrée I & II  
Gigue*

### **BARRIOS**

#### **La Catedral**

*Preludio saudade  
Andante religioso  
Allegro solemne*

### **TÁRREGA**

#### **Variazioni sul carnevale di Venezia**

**INTERMISSION**

**VIET CUONG**

**Where the Echo Sings (*World Premiere*)**

*Commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition*

**TÁRREGA**

**Capricho árabe**

**Recuerdos de la Alhambra**

**ASSAD**

**Aquarelle**

*Divertimento*

*Valseana*

*Preludio e toccatina*

**This series is made possible in part by the generous support of  
Robert and Ruth Dell.**

**Meng Su** is represented by Tonar Music Management  
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## ARTIST PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Meng Su in solo recital for the second time. She made her solo debut in October 2016 and returned in March 2017 with flutist Marina Piccinini. The Beijing Guitar Duo—Meng Su and Yameng Wang—were SF Performances Guitarists-in-Residence from 2012–2015. The Duo debuted with Manuel Barrueco in April 2010, and over the years have performed four times on the mainstage Guitar series in addition to being a regular part of the Family Matinee Series.



Multifaceted guitarist **Meng Su** is captivating audiences around the world with her stunning virtuosity and refined artistry. *New York Concert Review* called her performance “seemingly effortless and stunningly polished...Add to that a beautiful—and fashionable!—stage presence, and she is poised to be in high demand” while *Classical Guitar Magazine* wrote that “she has already reached the status of a seasoned artist.”

In addition to her busy solo career, Meng Su is an avid chamber musician who tours regularly in the Beijing Guitar Duo and as a soloist with orchestras. Ms. Su has performed in over 30 different countries around the world in halls such as the Concertgebouw, Palau de Musica, Tchaikovsky Hall, and the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing. In 2023, she created and debuted the guitar show “Spanish Fantasia” in Shanghai. It is the first-ever multimedia guitar theatre

show of its kind, paving the way for the future of classical music performances.

Meng Su’s performances and recordings have impressed the public with “an ability and artistry that exceeds her years.” (*Baltimore Sun*) Her debut duo CD *Maracaípe* received a Latin Grammy® nomination for the titled piece, which was dedicated to the Duo by renowned guitarist/composer Sergio Assad. Their second CD, *Bach to Tan Dun*, a “must-listen” according to composer Tan Dun, has been widely noted for the world-premiere recording of his “Eight Memories in Watercolor.” A recording in trio, *China West*, with Maestro Barrueco and the Beijing Guitar Duo was released in May 2014 to critical acclaim. Meng Su’s debut solo recording *Meng*, released in 2016 was called “awe-inspiring” and “this year’s finest debut by far” by *Classical Guitar Magazine*.

Born in Qingdao, China, Meng Su began studying the guitar at the age of five and showed her talents from an early age under the guidance of Prof. Chen Zhi at the Central Conservatory in Beijing. Meng Su has won first-prize in numerous international competitions around the world, the last one being in the prestigious Parkening International Guitar competition in 2015. She graduated with an Artist Diploma, a Master’s Degree and Graduate Diploma in Chamber Music with Maestro Manuel Barrueco at the Peabody Conservatory of the Johns Hopkins University.

Meng Su teaches at The San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and she is the Artist-in-residence for the Baltimore Classical Guitar Society.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Suite No. 3 in C Major for Cello, BWV 1009 (arr. Koonce)

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH**  
(1685–1750)

Bach’s six suites for solo cello each consist of a group of Baroque dances transformed into a personal and profound spiritual statement. In these works Bach creates the illusion of a full harmonic and contrapuntal texture by means of single melodic lines which suggest an interplay of independent voices—a technique originally developed by lute composers and perfectly suited to the guitar.

The Suite BWV 1009 is the third of this set. The grand *Prélude* begins with a scale

followed by a broken chord running down two octaves. Bach plays with the shifting patterns that emerge from a steady stream of sixteenth notes, arriving at an extended passage of harmonies gliding over a repeated open string. It closes with a rich cadenza full of four-note chords, combining maximum reverberation and rhetorical impact. The sound of open strings and double stops, plus the rhythmic play of cross-accented patterns continue in the ensuing dances. The *Allemande* is playful and wide-ranging, and the *Courante* is an exercise in athletic elegance. As with all of the Cello Suites, the *Sarabande* is the heart of the matter, a luxurious palace of sound with the second half expressively expanded to twice the length of the first. The rustic *Bourrées* stamp heartily, and the leaping *Gigue* ends the suite with comic acrobatics.

## La Catedral

**AGUSTÍN BARRIOS MANGORÉ**  
(1885–1944)

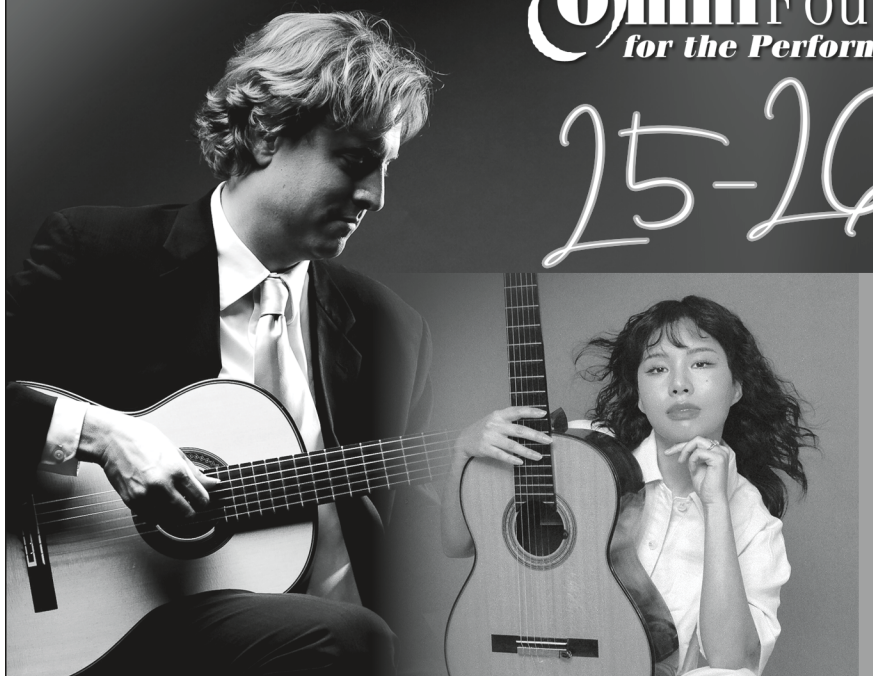
The Paraguayan guitar virtuoso Agustín Barrios was a romantic composer who strove to capture the pure essence of emotion in his music. Everyday life seemed dull, repressed and over rational to the romantics who felt it could be transcended only through heightened emotional expression. They idealized romantic love, wore odd clothes and led irregular lives that were frowned upon in their time as Bohemian. Barrios saw himself as a brother of the medieval troubadours; undergoing an artistic journey through life, suffering a romantic madness, but inspired by destiny.

*I am dancing in a mad whirlwind  
to the four corners of the planet!  
I carry in my blood a restless life,  
and in my pilgrimage,  
uncertain and wandering,  
Art lights up my path  
as if it were a fantastic comet!*

Barrios wrote music that was rich in romantic charm and rhythmic complexity derived from the indigenous culture of South America, but he was also influenced by J.S.Bach, whose music he heard in the Montevideo Cathedral—probably the site of the original inspiration for *La Catedral*. It is a three-movement work consisting of an ethereal *Preludio* depicting Barrios at prayer, an *Andante Religioso* evoking the

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**TICKETS &**  
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grandeur of Bach's organ music heard in the magnificent cathedral, and an *Allegro Solemne* which perhaps depicts Barrios "dancing in a mad whirlwind" as he leaves the church on his wandering pilgrimage.

## Variazioni sul carnevale di Venezia

**FRANCISCO TÁRREGA**  
(1852–1909)

Francisco Tárrega, a contemporary of Granados and Albéniz, was the first modern guitarist to gain recognition as an artist of the highest caliber. His compositions and arrangements are romantic vignettes featuring a Chopinesque cantabile melody clothed in elegant harmony as they exploit the rich sonorous potential of the modern guitar developed by Antonio Torres through the use of fingerings chosen for coloristic effects. *Carnival of Venice* is based on a set of variations by violinist and composer Niccolò Paganini who in turn based his composition on a popular Italian tune. Tárrega's *Variazioni sul carnevale di Venezia* begins with strong octaves and sweeping downward arpeggios before a short Andantino section in Mendelssohnian mood prepares us for the main theme, the imminent entry of which is announced by a cadenza of descending chromatic scales. The principal melody is a tuneful waltz and the following variations deploy almost every technical device known to the guitar. Rapid ligados, arpeggios, tremolo, glissandi, harmonics, and cantabile variations create a lighthearted and witty demonstration of

virtuosity in an utterly delightful collaboration between artist and audience.

## Where the Echo Sings

**VIET CUONG**  
(B. 1990)

Vietnamese-American composer Viet Cuong has been commissioned and performed on six continents by musicians and ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Eighth Blackbird, Kronos Quartet, Sandbox Percussion, Alarm Will Sound, Sō Percussion, and has been praised by *The New York Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. *Obsession*, his previous composition for guitar won the Boston GuitarFest Composition Competition. *Where the Echo Sings*, which receives its world premiere tonight, was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition and written for Meng Su.

## Capriccio árabe Recuerdos de la Alhambra

**FRANCISCO TÁRREGA**

*Capricho árabe* is a lyrical evocation of Spain's Moorish past. Opening with mysterious open fifths and followed by a sinuous descending flourish of distinctly Moorish flavor, Tárrega establishes the mood at once, before the tender and fluid main theme emerges over steady chords. As the music turns from minor to major,

a rich new contrasting theme emerges, but a return to the minor brings the work to a wistful conclusion. *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* (Memories of the Alhambra), with its exquisite melodic line elaborated by a continuous series of shimmering repeated notes, is an evocation of the serene beauty found at the garden fountains of an exquisite Moorish palace in Granada.

## Aquarelle

**SÉRGIO ASSAD**  
(B. 1952)

Sérgio Assad first became known as a member of the internationally renowned Assad Duo and has subsequently become one of the guitar world's most admired and performed composers. *Aquarelle*, written in 1986, was his first composition for solo guitar and is dedicated to David Russell. It is in three movements which seamlessly blend traditional Brazilian music with sophisticated artistic ambition. The first movement, *Divertimento*, marked *Très calme*, is based on a three-note motif introduced at the beginning and thoroughly explored in increasingly virtuosic episodes as the movement develops. *Valse-ana*, marked *Andante*, presents a languidly romantic melody. The final part, *Preludio e toccatina*, begins in a different kind of meditative mood, *Lent et très expressif*, and is quite soon succeeded by a vigorously climactic demonstration of toccata style.

—Program notes by Scott Cmiel