

NOTES ON  
THE CONCERT



# expressions

A contemporary classical guitar recital  
*7 November, 7pm | Gyaan Adab*

GYĀN  
ADAB  
CELEBRATING LITERATURE

Jayant S: Guitar  
Anoop Kumar: Narration

---

Featuring works by **Leo Brouwer** and **Nikita Koshkin**, both among the best-regarded modern composers for the guitar. Narratives by Sohan Akolkar, Jaya Parhawk, Bhairavi Vaidya, Ashutosh and Anoop Kumar.

## **An introduction by the guitarist**

“Expressions” came out of an opportunity to present modern classical guitar music before a discerning audience in Pune with the support of the Pune Guitar Society and Gyan Adaab. While I had been thinking about performing material by Leo Brouwer and Nikita Koshkin, prominent guitar composers, for some time, I had remained apprehensive about the actual accessibility of this music, given its subtlety, abstraction and tonal freedom.

It occurred to us that there was already a strong sense of embedded metaphor and near-episodic flow in much of this music. Would it work if we invited a few interested writers to prepare narratives rooted in their own, unguided responses to the music, and then delivered these in performance, interspersed with the pieces themselves?

It was highly engrossing to communicate through the process with the writers over several weeks, with exchanges about the musical features of the pieces, discovering their diverse reactions and resultant expressive output, and putting it all together with Anoop’s spoken delivery. For me as the guitar player, a new perspective was added while developing the musical interpretation of each composition, and the ways in which the writers heard and wrote from the music was very inspiring, if occasionally confounding.

NOTES



Anoop brought up the insight that there is also a curious visual link between this music and the work of the great 17th century Spanish artist Diego Velazquez, as well as the celebrated re-imaginings of some of his paintings by Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali and Francis Bacon. Perhaps, this is because of the occasionally-discernible Spanish musical roots of this music, or maybe the notion of long-term artistic influences finds analogous threads here.

## NOTES



### *Las Meninas*

*Diego Velazquez (1665)*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las\\_Meninas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las_Meninas)





## NOTES

***Portrait of Pope Innocent X***  
*Diego Velázquez (1650)*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait\\_of\\_Innocent\\_X](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Innocent_X)

These, then, are the compiled narratives for each piece in the program, preceded by my own comments.

- Jayant S



## I. El Decameron Negro – Leo Brouwer (1983)

*Leo Brouwer, originally from Cuba, is the single most preeminent composer for the guitar from the second half of the twentieth century. With a prolific output ranging from atonal avant-garde works to orchestral compositions and film soundtracks, he remains as active as ever. This three-part set was inspired by a collection of African folk tales by the German anthropologist Leo Frobenius, though the stories implied by the music do not actually exist in the collection. Nevertheless, Anoop chose to reconstruct the stories from the music, using the sonnet form to complement the lyrical tonal character.*

Reference Recording:

Elena Papandreu: Brouwer Guitar Music, Vol 2 – Naxos Catalogue No 8.554553

El Decameron  
Negro



1. **El Arpa del Guerrero**  
(The Harp of the Warrior)

He returned. unslept eyes, sunburnt skin;  
laid his weapons at the chief's feet  
“Exiled I maybe, but your son I still am  
and wish to fight and die beside my kin.  
After the battle if I still stand  
I will merge again into the wilderness  
and if I die, let the vultures have my flesh.”  
The great chief rose and held out his ageing hand.  
For weeks the battle raged  
and he fought and bled besides us  
laying a blow for a blow  
making music not with the gut of a harp  
or the sound of his voice,  
but with the singing string of a bloody bow.

- *Anoop Kumar*

El Decameron  
Negro



2. **La Huida de los Amantes por el Valle de los Ecos**  
(The Flight of the Lovers through the Valley of Echoes)

Fear gave us wings, as we took flight  
me and my own true love who  
of her own volition, deserted,  
the warm hearth of her family, that chilly night  
to be with me now, cold and uncertain of the way  
lost in a maze, knitted out of  
the thicket of twisting trails  
kneeling occasionally on the golden ground to pray  
To the spirits who spat  
our words back at us  
and led us in circles, tired and slow  
At twilight I sang for her  
a blues to a rhythm  
plucked on the string of my bleeding bow

- *Anoop Kumar*

El Decameron  
Negro



3. **La Ballada de la Doncella Enamorada**  
(The Ballad of the Lovesick Maiden)

Was there a breeze? I felt it not on my skin  
I heard not the gossip of the birds  
nor saw the sky blush with the sunset.  
All that I could taste was the anguish within  
As night descended, like a curtain over a stage  
I rifled through the emotional registers  
one at a time, few hours for each  
Denial and depression, bargain and rage  
I thought of the man who always hoped  
that when his battle was done  
and it was finally time to go  
he would have in his hands  
the empathy of the gut stringed harp:  
not the fatal coil of a bloodied bow

- *Anoop Kumar*

El Decameron  
Negro



## II. Preludios Epigramaticos – Leo Brouwer (1981-83)

*This enigmatic and introspective set of six short preludes by Leo Brouwer was based on haikus by the Spanish poet Miguel Hernandez (1910-1942). The music claims a wide textural compass, but then so do the haikus. Anoop compiled the transliterations here from online sources, with some editing for coherence with the music.*

Reference Recording:

Elena Papandreou: Brouwer Guitar Music, Vol 2 – Naxos  
Catalogue No 8.554553

Preludios  
Epigramaticos



1. **Moderato:** The dawn wishes to be itself, just as you are wholly woman.
2. **Tranquillo:** Sad men, if they don't die of love
3. **Lento:** Enveloped in your skin, I tie and untie my own
4. **Allegretto** Laugh, everything laughs, all is mother of levity  
**Moderato:**
5. **Pesante:** You caught my heart mid-flight and today hurled it down
6. **Poetique:** I endure with three wounds: that of love, that of death, that of life

Preludios  
Epigramaticos



### III. Sonata – Leo Brouwer (1990)

*Leo Brouwer's Sonata was written at a time when the composer had begun to fuse his then-recent tonal style with elements of his earlier avant-garde dissonant approach, resulting in a new and highly diverse compositional language. A complex and highly textured work with tongue-in-cheek allusions to older composers, the Sonata provided an interesting and lively stimulus for three different writers to come up with ideas. They worked individually on their narratives, without looking over each other's shoulders!*

Reference Recording:

Graham Anthony Devine: Brouwer Guitar Music, Vol 3 –  
Naxos Catalogue No 8.554195

Sonata



## 1. Fandangos y Boleros

Stillness...

a note

then a ripple of sound that throbs  
through quiescent limbs  
as they catch the plangent rhythm  
of the troubadour's tune.

Feet flexed,

the body sways

head uplifted, arms out-flung

a gentle glissande accelerates

Sometimes a swinging cadence takes  
beguiling hold.

Then changing to quick, twirling  
pirouettes

a whirling shadow jetes before  
a kaleidoscope of sound.

Rainbow hues of once-heard music  
tantalize

as they eddy and break... again...

once again

then slow and fade away into

Stillness.

- *Jaya Parhawk*



*The Pearl (After Infanta Margarita)*  
Salvador Dalí (1981)

<https://www.salvador-dali.org/recerca/arxiu-online/download-documents/2/whats-new-velazquez-salvador-dali-and-velazquez>

Sonata



## 2. Sarabanda de Scriabin

From old patterns emerge new insights.

The telling details,  
the hidden turmoil.

For the vanity of the wise,  
is grander than its reflection.

To see purple,  
in the red.

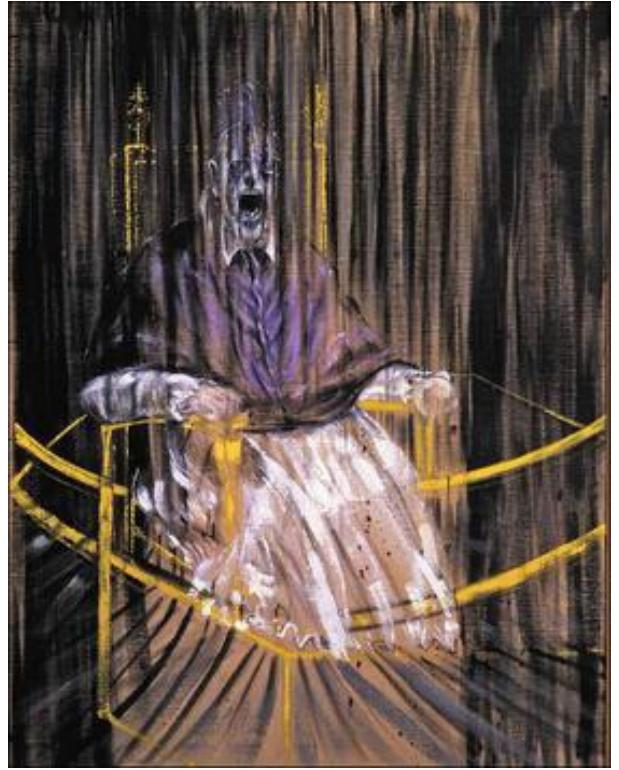
The screaming and the decayed.

The layers begin to peel,  
with the passage of time.

Almost confessing,  
The riot within.

To see the other,  
is to see the self

- Bhairavi Vaidya



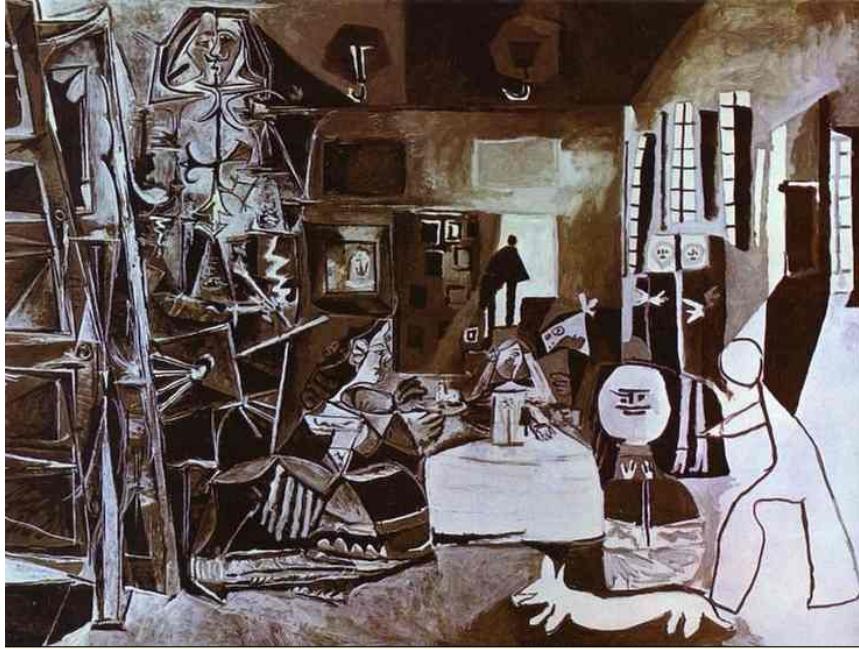
*Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*  
Francis Bacon (1953)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Study\\_after\\_Vel%C3%A1zquez%27s\\_Portrait\\_of\\_Pope\\_Innocent\\_X](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Study_after_Vel%C3%A1zquez%27s_Portrait_of_Pope_Innocent_X)

Sonata



### 3. Toccata de Pasquini



abcgallery.com - Internet's biggest art collection

***Las Meninas***  
*Pablo Picasso (1957)*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las\\_Meninas\\_\(Picasso\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Las_Meninas_(Picasso))

Remember how as a child you squinted into Pleiades to conjure up more stars ?

Remember ?

This is exactly the same.

Sonata



We are all here -  
The proud parents in the mirror,  
the blond-fident princesses,  
the self-conscious servant girls,  
the Zorro caped figure in the shadows at the back,  
even the moon- faced midget  
and the painter himself - all the way to the left.

Picasso spent a few years learning to paint  
like Velasquez and the other masters  
and then a lifetime to paint like a child.

It is time for you to learn to see,  
for in seeing, just as in listening  
and in painting;  
the 'how' is as important as the 'what'.

- *Anoop Kumar*

Sonata



## IV. Expressions – Anoop Kumar & Jayant S (2015)

*Not a “composition” in the classical sense of the term, this was a collaborative attempt at providing musical support to a narrative. Some motifs are predetermined, but most of the music and texture is essentially improvised, following the spoken delivery.*

### 1. The sad tale of Popeye the Labrador

Crow black, arthritic  
and deafened by the years  
he would limp behind us  
into the practice place,  
lie down between the air conditioner  
and the drummer,  
put his head on his paw  
and sleep, as the band  
raged through covers of  
Nirvana and Pearl Jam,  
rising up occasionally  
between songs to let out a bark,  
protesting the silence

Expressions



## 2. **A shout out to Billy the tiger**

Children watched him wide-eyed, mouth agape,  
hands, clutching food, frozen mid-air  
as he leaped across their TV screens.

Now his joints creak with the years.  
His eyes are filled with buttermilk.  
His teeth, memories littered across the forest.

In a large fence, erected to save him  
from Oedipal attacks and treacherous falls  
he chews on the dead meat, they bring, for hours.

Every once in a while he still stands up  
and against the setting sun stretches himself  
to his full height, raises his head, open his mouth.

and whimpers.

Expressions



### 3. **Biji's last smile**

Last time I saw her smile  
was when the doctor fitted her  
with a hearing aid, and  
the glacier cracked for a while  
under the tickle of sounds,  
heard for the first time in months.

(not words, just electronic squalls,  
but sounds nevertheless).

- *Anoop Kumar*

Expressions



## V. The Ballads: Suite for Guitar – Nikita Koshkin (1998)

*The prolific Russian composer Nikita Koshkin has written a substantial body of work for the interpreter of the modern classical guitar. The Ballads Suite is rather more accessible than Koshkin's usual approach, being based closely on the folk, blues and rock influences that he grew up with. Each movement was assigned to a different writer for independent literary interpretation, and the results display surprising diversity.*

Reference Recording:

Elena Papandreou: Polka Papandreou/Ballads/Prelude and Waltz  
– Naxos Catalogue No BIS-CD-1236

The Ballads



## 1. **Allegretto**

Let these words not tell you what to feel.  
Let them not be a precedent.

What you are about to hear is a ballad.  
A ballad is a verse set to music; this ballad  
sets music to a verse.  
What's the verse?

Let this ballad not tell you to  
dance with abandon,  
to smile in quiet anticipation,  
of what's to come and nothing in particular.

If you listen, you'll hear your own verse.

- *Sohan Akolkar*

The Ballads



## 2. **Moderato**

In the new Naishapur★, the Cup is leaking  
red drop by drop, word by the word  
In the new Naishapur, a heresy is sneaking  
by falling leaves - this tale is heard

He factors in- scorching days of longing  
He then factors out the intrigue of stars  
He multiplies the Moon-shadows prolonging  
and divides and divides and divides - the vagaries of Mars

In the old Naishapur, the daggers are gleaming  
fangs are bare, eyes blood-shot  
In the old Naishapur, the Faithful are scheming  
How they shall leave the Faithless to rot.

He corrects his calendar, steals from Time  
in midnight lamps filled with soot  
he seeks the Magicks of abstract symbols  
they haven't so far yielded the root

The Ballads



In some Naishapur, the roots are real  
In some Naishapur, its only the leaves  
In some Naishapur, it doesn't matter how what you do  
you always end up taking a root  
of minus one

In some Naishapur it is complex.

- *Ashutosh*

The Ballads

*Naishapur is the birthplace of Omar Khayyam*



### 3. **Con Moto**

Full bends and half turns  
The maze and the tunnel  
Pain, love, joy and sorrow  
All that we understand  
And everything beyond

- *Bhairavi Vaidya*

The Ballads



#### 4. **Adagio Molto**

Like the songs we used to sing in uncomplicated, hopeful times...  
Like a peaceful interlude ..... Waiting ..... behind a long-unopened door,  
Moments come back, with their own savour and fragrance  
And we are present.... in times past.  
Singing the simple songs of hopeful times  
In a peaceful interlude we are living once again.

- *Jaya Parhawk*

The Ballads



## 5. **Moderato**

In her dark and dank shawl she gathered  
all of us frightened little boys  
turned a few into fighting men  
and rendered the rest as broken toys

dragged us through the endless desert  
for weeks on end and then  
left us, a buffet for the vultures  
all the toys and all the men

The heat logged us into a trance  
The wind was music, so we dance

- *Anoop Kumar*

The Ballads

