

Dancing On Air

The background of the album cover is a watercolor illustration. On the right side, there is a portrait of a man with short brown hair, wearing a brown suit jacket, a white shirt, and a brown bow tie. He is smiling and looking slightly to his left. The background behind him and the rest of the cover is a sketchy, watercolor-style illustration of a city street scene. There are buildings, a street with a red carpet, and some figures in the distance. The colors are warm, with a lot of yellow, orange, and brown tones.

Gregg Nestor,
guitar

Masterworks for guitar
based on ethnic
folksong and dance

Album Notes by
Graham Wade

A scenic landscape featuring a calm river in the foreground, reflecting the surrounding greenery. The middle ground is filled with lush green fields, scattered trees, and a small stone building in the distance. The background shows rolling hills under a clear sky.

Album Produced by Gregg Nestor

**Recorded at Penguin Recording, Eagle Rock, CA
Between July and September, 1991**

Engineer: John Strother

**Digitally Mastered by
Jonathan Marcus, Orpharion Recordings**

Album Art Direction: Mark Banning

Mr. Nestor's Guitar by José Ramirez, 1984

Front cover drawing by Gary Friedman

Page six drawing by Mária Auerová-Griesová

**Dedicated to my grandmothers Clara and Frieda,
who instilled in me a lifelong love of music and homemade sweet rolls.**

The guitar has long been associated with folk music and composers over the centuries have been indebted to folk songs. One only has to think of Schubert, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Bartók, Dvorák, Vaughan Williams, Rodrigo, etc., to realise the extent of this umbilical relationship between so called “art” music and the folkloric. On this recording the two cultural streams, that of folk and the other of the concert hall, are juxtaposed, some of the pieces being straightforwardly “folk”, the rest examples of how contemporary composers have enthusiastically used the resources of their national heritage.

Gregg Nestor’s arrangements of Hebrew folksongs are a rich reminder of the generations of anonymous musicians whose creativity endures in a wealth of traditional works. *The Hebraic Suite* (1983) comprises songs that were rooted in everyday living, centered around the Rabbi, the hearth, parents, and the dance, etc., music and daily routines being inextricably intertwined. Here the emphasis is on community life and family relationships, though dance rhythms and religious cadences are never far away.



Alexandre Tansman (1897-1986), one of the twentieth century’s leading Polish composers, resided in Paris from 1920 onwards until moving to the United States for the war years. His works include symphonies, concertos, string quartets and a quantity of piano and film music.

Tansman and Andrés Segovia first met in 1925 at a musical soirée given in Paris by Henri Prunières. On hearing Segovia play, Tansman was converted to a lifelong love of the guitar and thereafter wrote a number of works for it.

Concerning *In Modo Polonico (In Polish Mode)* (1962), Tansman wrote: “I have been fascinated by Andrés Segovia’s musical personality since the first contact I had with his art, and I am proud to have been among the first young composers to have composed a work for him. This suite is inspired by the ancient court dances of Poland. Some of them, the Gaillarde, the Branle, have counterparts elsewhere in Europe. Others are typically Polish (the Polonaise, the Mazurka). The subject has been treated in a language which seems to me most suited for a work based on national or traditional forms – that is I have avoided any voluntary stylization or modernization which, if adapted to the pure melodic lines, the popular harmonic style, and rhythmic meters, would result in something artificial and hybrid.”

Among these dances the *Kujawiak* is a form of *Mazurka* originating in the Kujawy district near Warsaw, while the *Oberek*, is a type of faster *Mazurka*, a dance in three-four time characterised by a strong accent in the middle of the measure. The *Kolysanka* is a lullaby, a recurrent theme in folk music of all countries. The *Polonaise*, like the *Mazurka*, for ever made famous by the genius of Chopin, began as a folk dance, in triple metre, played at weddings and festivals, and was later transformed into a more sophisticated dance appropriate for the court and the ballroom.

The traditional English folk song



Greensleeves is a tune twice mentioned by Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The first official reference to the piece was in the Register of the Stationers Company in 1580 where it was called “A New Northern Dittie of the Lady Greene Sleeves.” It is sometimes alleged that Henry VIII wrote *Greensleeves* but scholarly opinion is against this.

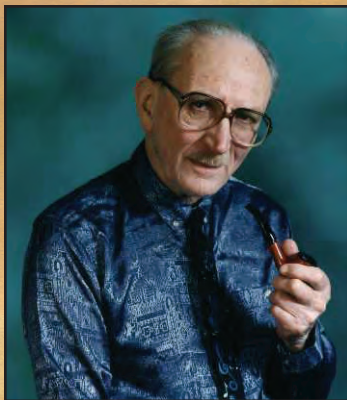
GREENSLEEVES

*Alas, my love, you do me wrong,
To cast me off discourteously.
For I have loved you well and long,
Delighting in your company.*

[Chorus]

*Greensleeves was all my joy
Greensleeves was my delight,
Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
And who but my lady Greensleeves.*

John W. Duarte (1919-2004), a prolific composer for guitar, was also a writer, critic and teacher, determined to elevate the standards of the instrument to which he had dedicated his life. He was particularly interested in folksongs, often incorporating them into his compositions but by no means



confining himself merely to those from his own country. His *English Suite, Op. 31*, undoubtedly his most performed work, written 1963/1965, was dedicated to Andrés Segovia and his wife on the occasion of their

marriage. Originally the opening movement was part of a group of “fairy tale” pieces as represented in piano works under that title by Medtner. Segovia suggested that this concept should be expanded into a suite based on folk music but ultimately Duarte decided to integrate his own material and folk themes. Thus the *Prelude* begins with a “fairy tale” section before leading into the Sussex song, *Low down* in the Broom and returning to the original melody. The second movement, *Folk Song*, opens with *The Cuckoo* from Somerset, while in *Round Dance* the central section is the song, *The Ballad of Robin Hood*.

The Londonderry Air, the most evocative and best loved of all Irish folk songs, was first found in print in a collection edited by George Petrie, *The Ancient Music of Ireland*, (1855). It was given to Petrie by Miss Jane Ross of Limavady, who took down tunes from the peasants who came to town on market days. The song was described as an anonymous air and attributed incorrectly to Jane Ross of Londonderry, which led to the title *Londonderry Air* being associated with the piece.

A number of lyrics have been set to this melody but the most popular is *Oh Danny Boy*, written in 1910 by Frederick Edward Weatherly, an English lawyer. This has been universally adopted as a poignant anthem sung with passion wherever Irish people are gathered:

OH DANNY BOY

*Oh Danny boy, the pipes,
the pipes are calling
From glen to glen,
and down the mountain side
The summer's gone,
and all the flowers are dying
'Tis you, 'tis you must go and I must bide.
But come ye back when
summer's in the meadow
Or when the valley's hushed
and white with snow
'Tis I'll be here in sunshine or in shadow
Oh Danny boy, oh Danny boy,
I love you so.*

*And if you come,
when all the flowers are dying
And I am dead, as dead I well may be
You'll come and find the place
where I am lying
And kneel and say an “Ave” there for me.
And I shall hear,
though soft you tread above me
And all my dreams will warm
and sweeter be
If you'll not fail to tell me
that you love me
I'll simply sleep in peace
until you come to me.*

Suite Piemontese, Op. 46 (1970) by John W. Duarte was described by the composer as “written for composer/guitarist Angelo Gilardino and based on folk-tunes from

Piemonte, the region of his birth”. The first movement, *Pastorale*, celebrates *Il pastor fedele*, the faithful shepherd, “the sounds of whose pipes or of nearby birds are heard”. The second movement, *Canzona*, is based on a tune which Gilardino remembered from his youth, the counter-melody to its second statement developing into the theme of the central section. Finally *La Danza* provides an episode poking mild fun at a typical village band which plays out of tune.



Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza (1903-1982), brother of the guitarist Regino Sáinz de la Maza for whom Rodrigo's famous *Concierto de Aranjuez* was composed, first studied the guitar in Madrid with Daniel Fortea (1878-1953), and later with Miguel Llobet (1878-1938),

both former pupils of the great Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909). Though less internationally famous than Regino, Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza emerged as a much loved composer whose warmly poetic guitar works evoke many moods of Spanish life. *Habañera* is a characteristically lyrical tribute to Cuba, a country rich in folk music that is both rhythmic and melodic.

Finally Duarte's *Variations on a Catalan Folk Song, Op. 25* (1956), was written for and on the suggestion of guitarist John Williams. The theme is from Miguel Llobet's superb arrangement of *Cançó de lladre* (The Robber's Song), one of the great collection of traditional folk pieces from Catalonia characterised by beautifully poetic verses.

Duarte described these variations as “virtuosic”, exploiting “a variety of textures and moods”.

The tonics of the keys of the variations, D-E-F#-F-E-A-D follow the sequence of the bass line in Llobet’s setting of the melody.

GRAHAM WADE
March, 2009



Graham Wade, a graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge, and formerly Head of Strings at Leeds College of Music, is acknowledged as one of the foremost international writers on classical guitar. His

publications include highly acclaimed studies of Segovia, Rodrigo, and Bream, as well as books on guitar history. He has written liner notes for record companies such as Deutsche Grammophon, EMI, Naxos, and RCA, and conducted guitar seminars at conservatoires and festivals in the USA, Canada, Spain, Austria, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Hungary, Greece, Czech Republic, New Zealand, etc. In 2002 he was awarded the Schott Gold Medal for his contribution to Rodrigo studies. Graham Wade is an Advisory Editor for British and American editions of the New Grove Dictionary of Music and for many years wrote programme notes for Segovia and Bream.



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Masterworks for guitar based on ethnic folksong and dance

HEBRAIC SUITE arranged by Gregg Nestor

- 01. The Rabbi Wants Us to be Merry 1:50
- 02. A Flame Is Burning 2:49
- 03. A Letter to Mother 1:55
- 04. Hassidic Dance 1:45
- 05. My Yiddische Momma 1:56
- 06. Inconsolable 2:31
- 07. Chave! 1:39

SUITE IN MODO POLONICO

Alexandre Tansman

- 08. Branle (Entrée) 2:51
- 09. Gaillarde 1:05
- 10. Kujawiak (Mazurka Lente) 2:35
- 11. Tempo de Polonaise 1:40
- 12. Kolysanka No. 1 3:32
- 13. Mazurka 3:16
- 14. Reverie 2:36
- 15. Alla Polacca 2:19
- 16. Kolysanka No. 2 2:11
- 17. Oberek (Mazurka Vive) 2:37

18. GREENSLEEVES

arranged by John Duarte 2:00

ENGLISH SUITE, Op. 31 John Duarte

- 19. Prelude 2:31
- 20. Folk Song 3:37
- 21. Round Dance 1:56

22. IRISH TUNE-THE LONDONDERRY AIR

arranged by Gregg Nestor 2:26

SUITE PIEMONTESE, Op. 46 John Duarte

- 23. Pastorale 3:29
- 24. Canzona 3:55
- 25. La Danza 2:31

26. HABAÑERA Eduardo Sáinz de la Maza 3:08

27. VARIATIONS ON A CATALAN SONG, Op. 25 John Duarte 10:31

Theme - Resoluto - Molto lirico -
Vivo e con forza - Alla Sarabanda -
Con bravura - Con delicatezza - Finale

TT= 75:20



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