



Dimitris
Kotronakis

ΕΤΟΡΥΑΝΣΕ



Dimitris Kotronakis

TORYANSE



ATANAS OURKOUZOUNOV

01. Toryanse Tales [08:00]

ŠTĚPÁN RAK

02. Kaygorod [03:42]

03. Balalaika [09:04]

CARLO DOMENICONI

04. A Step to Paradise [03:46]

05. Toccata in Blue [06:32]

THANASSIS MORAITIS

06. Sketch No. 9 [04:08]

07. Sketch No. 1 [04:17]

GERARD DROZD

08. Adagio, op. 44 [07:53]

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA

Suite Troileana:

09. Bandoneón [05:01]

10. Zita [04:24]

SERGIO ASSAD

11. Fantasia Carioca [09:48]

Total time: [67:00]



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Dimitris Kotronakis is a classical guitarist and musicologist based in Athens, Greece. He was born in Heraklion, Creta (Greece) in 1973.

At age seven, he began studying the classical guitar, and he graduated from the International Athens Conservatory with a guitar diploma in 1992 under the guidance of Vassilis Kanaras. Following this, he did post-graduate studies with Costas Cotsiolis at the Athens Conservatory, graduating again in 1996.

He also undertook advanced theoretical and musicological studies that led to his diploma in Fugue, under Giorgos Sioras, and a degree in Musicology from the University of Athens in 1996. Additionally, he holds a doctorate from the same university (2014), under the supervision of Markos Tsetsos, in which he focused his studies on the guitar in Greece.

Dimitris has won prizes in many guitar competitions in Greece, Spain, and Romania. He also won the major honorary mention award at the 12th Web Concert Hall Competition (USA, March 2011), among 39 competitors representing all classical instruments.

In addition to the present recording, he has recorded six albums of solo and concerto repertoire, most for EMI Classics and Clear Note Records, receiving many rave notices from the critics, especially for his best selling CD, *Echomythia*.

Dimitris teaches guitar in three music institutions in Athens, the Music School of Alimos, the International Athens Conservatory, and the Panarmonio Conservatory.

This CD is dedicated to my partner in life, Chrysanthi, for being my unfailing source of inspiration and creativity.

www.kotronakis.com



The Japanese word "toryanse," the title of this album, can be translated in a free version as "may I pass?" or "please let me pass." It is borrowed from the opening track, *Toryanse Tales* (2003) by *Atanas Ourkouzounov* (b. 1970), which was inspired by Japanese legends and music. Toryanse is a children's song that can be heard at pedestrian crossings under traffic lights in Japan. The song is associated with a series of legends, most of which have to do with the completion of a child's first seven years of age, and the resulting celebration that takes place in a shrine located on the grounds of a castle. Despite the differences between these myths, all of them somehow converge with the portrayal of an exchange between a civilian and a guard manning a checkpoint at the castle.

Ourkouzounov submits his own contribution to the relevant tradition with a piece that has a plain structure consisting of eight short movements and a simple texture. The Bulgarian composer uses an Asian music palette, emphasizing the idiomatic articulation of certain notes together with "eccentric" guitar effects that nevertheless perfectly serve their goal.

Next are two pieces with a strong Russian character, *Kaygorod* (1997) and *Balalaika* (1989), written by Czech composer and guitarist *Štěpán Rak* (b. 1945). The first belongs to a set of pieces entitled *Three Russian Waltzes* (together with "Voronezh" and "Sankt Petersburg," which are not included on this album). *Kaygorod* refers to a sparsely populated and remote region of Siberia where a large meteor fell in 1908, devastating the landscape. Alongside the musical style of waltz, as it had been developed in the Russian tradition, the howls of wolves in the endless scenery, and the dynamic crash of the meteor in the Siberian terrain are woven together and transformed into sound.

The second work by Rak, *Balalaika*, is a tribute to the three-string, folk music instrument of Russia with the characteristic triangular body. The music is based on a traditional Russian theme in which balalaika technique is mixed with that of the standard classical guitar. The simple structure of the piece is enriched with various musical garments that clothe the repeated melodic line. It could be argued that some of these original virtuosic balalaika techniques, such as using the right-hand little finger in a rasgueado type of tremolo, go beyond the upper levels of classical guitar mastery. Rak is the only known composer in guitar history who has dared to adopt these techniques and build on them, making a very demanding piece that is rarely performed on stage or on recordings.

A combination of two opposing forces follows: the slow, emotionally charged *A Step to Paradise* (1996) next to the highly dynamic and fast *Toccata in Blue* (1997), by the Italian composer *Carlo Domeniconi* (b. 1947). Diffused materials of jazz music provide common ground for both pieces. The character of the first is actually a kind of jazz ballad

mixed with old English Renaissance elements, while the second (with an obvious alteration of "Rhapsody in Blue") exploits the blues scale as a tribute to George Gershwin. Despite having a free structure, it is a classic example of the Toccata form, fast-moving with advanced virtuosic requirements.

The two "Sketches" by Greek composer **Thanassis Moraitis** (b. 1956) were written for Dimitris Kotronakis in 2010. At many levels of their texture, as in the tropical structure of the melodies, the frequent use of pedal points, and the composite rhythms, we can distinguish materials stemming from the Greek musical tradition. Additionally, the composer incorporates techniques that are rarely found in the repertoire of the classical guitar, such as using the right-hand thumb and index finger as plectrums. Both pieces have polyphonic textures and consist of two parts. The first part operates as an introduction to the second, which is a waltz for **Sketch No. 9** and a Zeibekiko dance (solo, strictly masculine dance, with the rhythmic pattern of 9/4) for **Sketch No. 1**.

Adagio, Op. 44 (1994) by Polish composer **Gerard Drozd** (b. 1955), was written in homage to the great J.S. Bach. It is constructed using a finely embellished melody over a slow, walking bass line. The harmony periodically converges or diverges completely from Bach's style, without trying to imitate it, thus producing an innovative and distinctive outcome.

Regarding **Astor Piazzolla** (1921 - 1992), little need be said. Although he didn't compose for the guitar, except for his monumental "Cinco Piezas," several of his orchestral works have been adapted for the instrument. One typical example is his **Suite Troileana** (1975), transcribed by Italian guitarist Dario Bisso. The suite takes its name from Piazzolla's famous musical partner, the bandoneonist from Buenos Aires, Anibal Troilo (1914 - 1975), and it was composed in his memory immediately after his death. The four movements of the suite refer to the four great loves of Troilo: **Bandoneón** (the emblematic instrument of the tango), **Zita** (Troilo's wife), "Whisky" (... whisky), and "Escolaso" (gambling for money). Only the first two are included here.

The closing composition is the only work on this recording that belongs to the mainstream repertoire of the guitar. In fact, the **Fantasia Carioca** (1994) by Brazilian composer and guitar soloist **Sergio Assad** (b. 1952) is a landmark of twentieth-century guitar literature. Written in free form and based on the development of a very small motif, it is inspired by the city of Rio de Janeiro. The word "Carioca" refers to something or someone from Rio de Janeiro. The piece is steeped in the Brazilian music tradition, while at the same time virtuosic and with a dense polyphonic texture that challenges the technical limits of the guitar.

Dimitris Kotronakis

TORYAN3

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