

If there is one principal characteristic of my love affair with the guitar, it is that of inconstancy. Over the last fifty years we have come together and parted many times, and perhaps it is necessary to discover some reason for such a capricious relationship.

Perhaps it was partly through those <sup>n</sup>chances of fate which have given my life an ever-changing pattern. I have done many different things, often without knowing where the future would lead me. I began my career as an architect when I was fifteen, without any possible inkling that I would end as head of a university department specialising in the fusion of music, electronics and physics. But these two careers were not the only ones. When I was an architect, the office life bored me so much that I developed almost a full-time career as a professional saxophonist, but then my ideals swung strongly towards becoming a cathedral organist, and all my efforts were concentrated on that objective alone.

But the 1939 war put an end to that, and for seven years (mostly in Africa and Italy) I sank more and more into a soldier's life, so much so that finally, when I was thrust back into civilian existence, it seemed such a morass of uncertainties that I tried to get back to the security of the army again. Fortunately my efforts failed, but again fate intervened. I had to return back to Italy for ten years, with a varied and highly precarious existence, until finally I got into the safe haven of a British university lecturership in 1957. This gave me the time I had always wanted to compose and to write books about my special interest - the techniques and history of contemporary music, especially the avant-garde since 1945.

My associations with the guitar are therefore set against the jigsaw of a personal existence of almost haphazard change, but it is hard to find any direct relationships.

I first became aware of the guitar in my early jazz days, about

1930, when my elder brother bought a 'hawaiian' guitar. He soon lost interest in it, but I found it could easily be converted into the jazz guitar which was just beginning to replace the banjo in the big bands of radio broadcasts. My early efforts with the guitar were limited, for at that time there were no teachers, there was no music and no 'methods'. Inevitably, I imitated what I heard on the radio, mostly chord 'accompaniments'. My main written information came from Harmsworth's Self Educator, a wonderful set of volumes which taught everything under the sun in a 'nutshell'. To the guitar were dedicated two pages, with one music example - a short Saraband by Purcell (who probably never saw a guitar)! This was the only guitar music I was to see for at least ten years.<sup>1</sup>

In reality, my chief jazz instrument was the saxophone, though my natural curiosity led me to learn every instrument in the band except the drums. The guitar was just a part of this general instrumentalism, but I must have played it fairly well. I won the guitar prize in one of the 'Melody Maker' band contests during the 'thirties. How I did this was a mystery, because in those days, without amplification, the instrument was almost completely inaudible, even to the player! It was only at the end of my jazz career, about 1937, that I got a record of Django Reinhardt playing Moonglow with the Hot Club de France. That wonderful improvisatory style struck me very forcefully, and possibly left an echo in my later guitar music. But by then my first guitar period was ended.

In fact, my jazz period ended almost overnight, for on a visit to Chester Cathedral in that summer of 1937 I had a revelation. I discovered what a mighty and wonderful sound-world is created by the organ, and from that moment all my efforts were concentrated only on conquering that most exigent of instruments, one that demands not only mental and manual skill, but footwork as well. In the two years before the War I was to

<sup>1</sup> I have one 'German' story to tell. In 1933, I went on a walking tour with other teenagers along the Rhine from Cologne to Wiesbaden. Every night we stopped at youth hostels, and there was always a guitar to be found, so we would sing together, with my guitar accompaniment. Very soon we began to exchange songs with the young Germans, and every evening became a kind of competition in choral proficiency. But as we became so well practised and developed such a big repertoire, our competitors usually had to admit defeat!

go far on the organ road, but it was all in vain. After war was declared in 1939, I was to see little of the keyboard for seven years, and I was never to play so well again.

During the first years of my army service, my association with music was almost nil. In the years I spent in the 'Western Desert' - Egypt and Cyrenaica - I probably heard no music at all, which was a severe deprivation. Nevertheless, I did study music to some extent. In the desert, the only way to get books was to join Correspondence courses run by the Army Educational Corps. For a few shillings one could join any course and get all the books free. I did courses in harmony, strict counterpoint, astronomy and agriculture. I soon found it useless to do the written work, as this was sent to Cambridge and only returned six months later, by which time I had finished that course and switched to something different.

The harmony course was quite thorough, but I didn't seem to learn much. It was all material I already knew by instinct. Instead, the strict counterpoint gave me some trouble, as it is based on abstruse renaissance theories on the movement of voices. It is more like chess than music, and though it stimulates intellectual activity, it filled me with inhibitions which took years to obliterate.

However, to do harmony and counterpoint studies without being able to hear the notes is not a positive experience, so this is where I rediscovered the guitar - the only complete and portable instrument capable of producing the main elements of music (melody, harmony and counterpoint). What is more, one can even carry it across one's back and fire a revolver or machine gun without too much inconvenience. So I had to get a guitar. Italian prisoners were a great source of all merchandise, and for a mere tin of cigarettes, I got a steel-string guitar, made in Catania, with a beautiful scroll head and a body made of matchwood. This instrument was my inseparable companion, it went with me everywhere until I finally sold it in Bologna.

But as guitar music was not to be found at any price, my efforts

must have been poor. I had no idea of guitar techniques, and though I wrote a few pieces for my own use, they must have been poor efforts. This all changed after the invasion of Sicily in 1943. Wherever I went in Italy, there was always a guitarist who had music, and by copying manuscripts, I acquired quite a library of pieces, even masterpieces like Ponce's Variations on Folia de Espagna.

But it was only in 1945, towards the end of the war, that I had a meeting which radically changed my future. In a music shop near Florence cathedral, I saw volumes of renaissance lute music by Simone Molinaro 'transcribed into modern notation by Giuseppe Gullino'. I asked about this Gullino and finding that he lived nearby, within five minutes I was already talking to him about his lute publications. As far as I know, Gullino was at that time the only musicologist transcribing lute music since Chilesotti. His enthusiasm was enormous, and as I too was captivated by the purity and nobility of this music, our meetings would last long into the night. But as well as lute music, he had a big library of guitar music, and he played me some Segovia records which seemed a revelation. Then he introduced me to the use of gut strings, playing with the fingernails, duet playing, and all kinds of novel techniques. His Mozzani guitars seemed so wonderful after my old Catanian box. But I had to leave Florence soon. Yet in those two or three weeks, I had discovered a whole new world. We were to meet many times again, but unfortunately he became more and more ill, and died around 1952.

From Florence, we went to Bologna, where we lived all the summer of 1945. Wherever I went I searched out guitarists and visited the many 'liutai' in the Cremona - Modena - Bologna area (strangely enough, the term liutaio or 'lute maker' is still the Italian term for a maker of string instruments of any sort). Eventually I met Raffaele Suzzi in Bologna, a guitarist of some ability, who lived in the house of the late Riccardo Vaccari, an active publisher of guitar music, books and periodicals. This is where a lot of my compositions began, as I had all the

records and music I needed to guide me on my way.

It was at Bologna that I copied the Weiss recordings I will mention later on when I write of Segovia. Suzzi had the records of a Suite in A by L.S.Weiss, recorded by Segovia, and he was very anxious to have a copy of the music. I arranged to copy the music from the records, but I had only an old mechanical gramophone, and no new needles at all. So as not to spoil the records, I used wooden toothpicks instead of needles, and as I could slow down the speed considerably, this helped me to define the indistinct fast passages, though the loss of exact pitch was troublesome. I think the Suite probably had five movements, which I copied down on Saturday afternoons only, in about a month - so I must have been a fast worker or highly inaccurate! I left a copy of the music with Suzzi, and then had to leave Bologna. Imagine my feelings <sup>when</sup> the Suite was soon published by Berben. Obviously, this seemed to be my own work, but thirty years later I have compared the published copy with my own, and they are by no means similar. However, the coincidence seems more than exceptional. But one thing is certain, copying down that music was a great education, and it taught me a lot I never knew before about fingerboard techniques, so it was at least a beneficial labour.

In the winter of 1945-46 I was up in the Alps, and learned by chance that there was to be an army 'Festival of the Arts' in Rome. There was a composition competition for an orchestral work, but manuscripts had to be submitted within two weeks! I took my Fantasia Passacaglia for guitar and rewrote it for orchestra - not very successfully, because the texture was hardly suitable. Nevertheless, I won first prize and was invited to Rome to hear the work performed (with considerable labour by a scratch orchestra of Italian musicians).

From then on, my army career changed. I was invited to go to a special Arts course in Florence, where a chosen few could cultivate their creative abilities. I wrote music all day and every day, life was wonderful. I played the guitar in two concerts, went

out every evening with my girlfriend, ~~life was so wonderful~~ and was happier than I had been for ~~years~~ many years.

Unfortunately, all good things come to an end. I was ordered back to the U.K. for demobilisation, and I had to go. So leaving the army was not the happy event I had looked forward to for so many years, nor were the prospects good. My architect's position had gone with the war, and wherever I turned there was nothing. And so, at the age of almost thirty I decided to live as I had always wanted - by being a musician. This was folly indeed, my chances of success were slight, yet I have never regretted the decision.

It would be laborious to follow the changes of my career over the next ten years. These were spent mostly in Italy, and in a few words, I did every possible musical and journalistic trade to make a living. I have never worked so hard for so little! Fortunately, I concentrated on reinforcing success, which is the secret of creating a future. It is no use killing ourselves to conquer an unbeatable enemy, or to overcome the impossible. For example, after the war, I tried for years to recover the keyboard facility I had in 1939. But the army had stiffened my fingers and I had lost that vital coordination between the fingers and the mind which are essential for good performance. I tried hard, but in the end, the organ had to go. (Ironically enough, I could have had all the organists' work in Florence that I could want - there was nobody else available.)

The same with the guitar. For some time I laboured under the illusion that I could become a good guitarist, but one day I had to admit that I had no real finger dexterity, and it would be better to put the instrument aside. Instead, I discovered a great facility for writing words and music, and after pinpointing where the best markets lay, I went from one success to another. I was in demand wherever the English language was printed, indeed I had no competitor.

To go back to 1946, when I returned to the U.K. I joined the Philharmonic Society of the Guitar in London, where I was put in contact with Julian Bream. I met him first when he was only 12 or 13, a boy in short trousers with a freckled face. It was to him I dedicated the Nocturne I was writing at that time, and I heard him play it in a Society's concert, and he included it in his first public recital at Cheltenham soon afterwards. The Nocturne eventually became my first published composition. It ~~was~~<sup>was</sup> the first of a group of pieces taken by Schott over the next few years, and though it is melodically less intense than I

would now prefer, it is a surprisingly mature work, which has been played worldwide and issued on several gramophone records.

In 1947 I married the Florentine girl I had met a year previously, but on taking her to the U.K. she became critically ill. With the food rationing and the bitter climate of the winter of 1948 she contracted tuberculosis, and the doctors told me to wait for the end. However, as Italian medical advice was much more optimistic, we went back to Florence, and after a few years she <sup>e</sup>ventually recovered completely.

Very soon after our return to Florence, I met a keen young guitarist, Alvaro Company, who was to become a famous player and teacher specialising in modern music. Though he was much younger than I, we became firm friends, and we had much to teach each other. I had already been to the first post-war summer courses at the Siena Accademia Chigiana for composition and conducting, and when in 1950 it was announced that Segovia would hold masterclasses, Alvaro decided to go, and suggested that I should go too. It seemed incredible that I was going to meet a man of such fame! I expected him to be <sup>a</sup>distant, difficult personality, but not in the least. When we arrived, on the first evening we went out with him and sat at a table in the main piazza. It was a magical evening, and it was wonderful to talk to the greatest guitarist in the world, and find that he was so warm-hearted and responsive. I have no recollection of our conversations, nor of the many other chats we had. As Segovia stayed at the same small hotel as Alvaro and myself, we always walked ~~to~~ with him to the Accademia and back, stopping every five paces in the interests of better conversation, so that our walks and talks were interminable. We were certainly highly unpunctual. At a certain point I felt I must confess to him that I had copied the Weiss Suite from his gramophone records, and that possibly through this it had been published ( indeed I felt guilty of a breach of copyright). At first, he was very adamant that it was quite impossible to copy from his record, indeed he seemed annoyed about this rather than the question of 'stealing' the music. But all of a sudden he changed, he was quite genial and laughed it all off, saying the Suite was not by Weiss at all, but by Ponce. He regarded it all as a joke and to my relief, ignored any question of infringement of copyright.

Of his lessons at the Accademia I have not a great recollection. There was only a small class, no more than seven or eight, and Segovia's teaching was very casual and unplanned. In fact, it is possible that he had never taken a masterclass before. I remember he was horrified

when I produced my 9-string Mozzani (which was so good for lute music), an instrument I used to love, but I quickly had to hide it away.

My own technical shortcomings were revealed only too quickly, especially as I played without nails, and with gut strings which were too unravelled. Of course nobody had ever seen nylon strings, so Segovia triumphantly opened a bag, and distributed a complete set of six nylon strings to each of us - straight from the workshop of Augustine in New York. (I still have these strings on one of my instruments - possibly the oldest nylon strings in Europe!)

I remember Segovia impressed on us strongly the need to practise scales a great deal and to do certain exercises, but what I learned most was what guitar sound is really like, at a distance of only a metre or so from the great maestro. He would take his instrument very quietly, and without any comment on the music, play to us for an hour on end. Indeed comment was hardly necessary. We learned by watching and listening, and then we went away to try to do the same. Strangely enough, Segovia's influence made my tone even worse. I tried to copy his right-hand position, the hand drooping downwards and plucking the strings at a 90° angle, the fingers being kept curled as if ready to pluck the strings upwards. It was only when at last, through some change in metabolism, I was able to grow strong nails, that I found such a position (at least for me) was a guarantee of thin tone, and that my 'pre-Segovian' position gave better results. By now, I have discovered my own ideal position, but it is already so many decades too late!

At this time, I studied lute music in Florence with Gullino, and we worked on several books of tablatures together. We formed a team in which he did the mechanical work of transcribing tablature numbers into notes, while I changed this bare skeleton into a musicianly score. We had many plans for our future work, but unfortunately he became too ill to work, until he died a cruel death from cancer. I felt I owed him a big debt and that it was my duty to continue his work. So I completed and published a volume of Joan Maria da Crema and later finished the Casteliono Lute Book. There are still big volumes of Vincenzo Galilei and Terzi to complete, but by now the work is tiresome to me, and as this is now the province of hordes of musicologists I leave the work to them.

As my main interest was composition I fell in with other Florentine composers who like myself, were keen on studying the latest developments in serialism. We formed the 'Florentine School of Dodecaphony' and for almost a decade had some influence on the musical life of the city.



While Dallapiccola was our nominal leader, I think the main personal ties were between myself and Bruno Bartolozzi, who became my greatest friend as long as he lived.

Inevitably, we were extremists, looking down on anything which was not avant-garde, intellectual and considerably evolved. I found it difficult to reconcile the guitar with this kind of music, so from 1951 onward my guitar production declined sharply. Not only did I write less, but I began to regard my earlier pieces as naive and too facile in musical language. In those years there was merely one guitar Study in serialism (1952), a Saraband (1953) and El Polifemo de Oro (1956). As this latter piece was refused publication by Schott's, I ceased writing solo pieces altogether till 1970.

Strangely enough, just as I had finished El Polifemo Julian Bream arrived for a short stay. I played him the piece, he said he liked it, and asked if I would do a piece for him and his girlfriend, the cellist Amarillis Fleming. I completed this piece (Ten String Music) together with 5 Sketches for violin and guitar in 1957, and these pieces probably represent the best of my guitar serialism. And so ended another period of my guitar romance.

There was another reason for the decline of my interest in the guitar - my complete disillusionment with the musicality of guitarists at that time. I had always been aware of their limitations, and in my compositions tended to limit my work to what was easily playable and easy to understand. But my ~~xxxx~~ experience of using guitarists in film music was one of increasing irritation and frustration. On one occasion, the guitarist who was reputed to be the best in Rome, could not keep time with the orchestra, and had no idea how to count the silent bars. He caused an orchestral revolution, the other players were so disgusted. So in the end, I decided to avoid the guitar at all costs in any combination with other instruments.

Inevitably, my low estimation of guitarists as musicians made me realise that the composition of guitar music in the evolved style I had reached through the influence of the Florentine School would be a lost cause from the outset. No guitarist would be able to play my music unless I modified and simplified it, and this I was not prepared to do. So from 1956 on, writing for guitar was never thought of. In fact, I put my instruments away in disgust, and never touched them again for <sup>v</sup>fou<sup>^</sup>teen years.

This was also the time of a big change in my family life. In 1957 I was offered a position as lecturer in the University of Wales, and though this tore me from my wife and children in Florence, it offered the possibility of a more secure future. So for the next three years

I commuted between Wales and Florence, and then at last in 1960, we all moved to Wales to set up home together.

The lecturership left me enough time for my own work, and so began a fruitful period both in writing music and publishing books. Two of the books - Serial Composition and The New Music - set out the principles of composition I worked with, and these were applied in a succession of large orchestral works and an opera. The methods of composition progressed through increasingly evolved systems - integral serialism, indeterminacy, aleatory music, proportionalisms, graph scores - until by 1970, when I wrote Apocalypse, my orchestral writing was like a sound representation of the cosmic dust clouds which fill the universe. There was no melody, no harmony, nothing defined except dense sound masses, which to me were immensely beautiful, but to others were quite incomprehensible. In reality, I had gone as far as I could go with conventional instrumentalism, and for a time saw the future only in electronic music.

An added impulse towards electronics was my move in 1970 to the University of Surrey to lead a new 'Tonmeister' course in recording techniques, combining studies of music and technology. This 'technological' period would have been quite empty of guitar music if it had not been for three unexpected happenings. Within a brief period in 1970, I had a commission to write a big piece for solo guitar, and requests for pieces for guitar trio and orchestra. In my post-Apocalypse state of mind, I was quite unprepared for such works and preferred to avoid them. But as each case posed a special problem I was tempted into action against my will.

After fourteen years away from the guitar, a solo piece was almost beyond my conception. I even assumed Segovia was already dead and that guitar ~~playing~~ musicianship was still rudimentary. But as the solo work was to be played by John Williams at the Swansea Arts Festival, I hoped for a certain ability. But what to write and how? I knew anything like Apocalypse was impossible, such sound complexity was beyond any guitar. In the end I solved the enigma with a solution I had never tried before. Like Stravinsky, I would take some old music and use it to make something of my own. I took two melodic cells of Bach (a fugue from the '48 and the letters BACH) and using them in semi-serial form, wrote Variants on Two Themes of Bach. This was not only very different to my Apocalyptic idiom, it was like nothing I had ever written before! The Variants are really quite skilled, substantial, and have some adventurous ideas for the fingerboard.

The trio Music for Three Guitars was written soon afterwards. That summer in Florence, Alvaro Company told me that three of his pupils had formed the 'Trio Chitarristico Italiano' but there was very little music for them to play. Would I write for them? I said I was far too busy, but he insisted I must at least hear them. I was surprised at their skill and unity of style, and so agreed to do my best. So when I returned to England, as I had an empty fortnight before we could enter our new home at Guildford, I wrote the trio in a caravan, with no instrumental help. I fell back on a highly intellectual serial language, full of contrapuntal bravura, with occasional aleatoric interludes. This is probably my most intellectual work for guitars, enigmatic, yet having some emotive appeal. In the end, it has been played in four continents.

The third request came from a guitarist in London, Gilbert Biberian. He said he had an ensemble of ten guitars, could I please write something? I could hardly imagine why anyone should form such an ensemble, or what it would sound like, so I tried to put Biberian off. However, he insisted that I should hear recordings of his ensemble. Eventually, I was quite fascinated by the beauty of a large group of guitars, and in spite of university commitments, quickly completed Concerto ~~for~~ Breve Omnis Terra for eight guitars and two percussionists. Again, I had an idiom problem, and in the Concerto I wrote in a dynamic rhythmic style such as I had avoided for decades. The result is one of the most scintillating pieces I have ever written, full of vitality and rhythmic drive.

Writing the Trio and the Concerto made me realise how one can have more satisfaction as a composer in writing for ensembles rather than for soloists. A composer who thinks in terms of instrumentalism or choral music has to create music ~~in~~ of several layers, the total music is made up of one musical plane laid on another. He therefore thinks of music in which ~~several~~ <sup>different</sup> things happen at the same time, but add up to a total musical effect. This is difficult to do with the solo guitar except in short periods, so one has to reduce one's musical thinking to a more meagre level than usual. Instead, the ensemble (2 or more guitars) allows the composer to <sup>expand</sup> into his normal multi-layer manner of thought. This is perhaps why, since 1970, I have written a large proportion of works for guitar groups, culminating in the big work for guitar orchestra, Le Chant du Monde of 1984.

Returning to the period of the early 'seventies, my university work kept me too occupied to think of the guitar again. The technological work was absorbing, and I did some electronic music composition, but creatively this was a barren period. I would probably have put away the guitar ~~forever~~ for ever if the hand of providence had not struck again, in a malign way indeed. In the summer of 1973, I had a heart attack

while in Florence, and it was many months before I was sure I had survived. When I returned to the university, the work was a great trial to me, and for a long time it seemed I had no future. The one problem was how to survive.

Then I had a request for a guitar piece from Angelo Gilardino for his Berben publications. In my state of health, any stress had to be avoided, so I could hardly attempt a new composition. However, I recalled the little Saraband I had written in 1953, which used the serial idiom, but was too concentrated. I took this small piece and through my matured ability, ~~xxxx~~ expanded and transformed it so that poetry was created over a bigger area, and instead of being a mechanical study, it flowed with musicality. I added an extra movement of an introductory nature, ~~as~~ <sup>and</sup> so Memento was born, in a newly poetic form.

It was perhaps from this point that I began to take the guitar seriously once again, realizing that it could from then on fulfil my musical ideals. At the university, I was already disillusioned with technology, my creative instincts were so suffocated. Physically, I no longer had the strength to write big symphonic works, so suddenly the guitar came into focus again as the one instrument which could be an orchestra and express my most intimate feelings. Other composers may have turned to the piano at such a point, but it never crossed my mind. The guitar is so much better.

So from 1974 on, the guitar became my refuge in the philistine world of a technological university. It also served to aid my own reaction against the complexities of avant-gardism which had forced me into the crisis of Apocalypse. The guitar demands clarity and economy of conception, and this fitted well with my search for an ideal new simplicity. So my guitar music of this later period searches for emotive strength ~~xxxxx~~ expressed through the most simple and direct means. None of it is difficult to play or to understand. The difficulty lies in the interpretation, because musical notation in itself cannot reveal emotive feeling. The factor of simplicity was perhaps overstressed, because several commissions I had required works to be of limited difficulty. There are too many of these 'easy' works, which may seem to represent my aesthetics, ~~but do not~~ whereas they do not.

I was greatly encouraged while I still had heart trouble by a visit from the London agents of Schott, who not only asked for more guitar music, but asked if there was anything special I would like to do. I suggested publishing volumes which while leading students towards an appreciation of 20th Century music, would also cover a graduated area of styles and techniques. They were <sup>n</sup>enthusiastic about the project, and so the idea for the three volumes of Guitarcosmos was born. So I had

enough work for at least a year, and felt more confident about the future. The great variety of material I produced in Guitarcosmos <sup>led</sup> me to explore ~~the~~ guitar and lute ~~repertory~~ <sup>techniques</sup> considerably, but of course there is only music of my own real idiom in the more advanced Volume 3, in which interpretation and performance problems are more evident. In all, there are over 140 pages of music, so 1976 was no idle year!

The Guitar Concerto which followed posed me many problems.

Firstly, the guitar and orchestra are so excessively different in dynamic levels that they are not compatible with each other. To rectify this, I had to keep the orchestral sonority to a minimum. The second problem was even more acute. I had to find an idiom which was contemporary enough to satisfy me, yet was also within the emotive and intellectual grasp of the normal public. This was an almost impossible task, but possibly I came near enough to success. Though the Concerto is written in a serial idiom, it has its lyrical moments, is also dynamic and vigorous, and keeps to an economical amount of well-defined thematic material. Nevertheless, the aesthetic abyss between my work and Rodrigo is ~~perhaps~~ perhaps too big for today's listeners to span.

My activity in guitar composition continued until my eyesight began to fail in 1980. I gradually became aware that I had difficulty in reading music, and found this was due to cataracts in both eyes. Eventually I had to have three eye operations, so I ~~produced~~ produced nothing after the duo Las Doces Cuerdas (commissioned for the Toronto Festival in 1980) until I recovered my sight in 1984. It was after the 1981 Toronto Festival, when driving through the U.S.A, that <sup>I realised</sup> it would be best to give up driving as I couldn't see the traffic lights, and especially after I entered a motorway up the ~~xxx~~ exit lane! I then had two miserable years when it was dangerous to leave the house alone, and reading was almost impossible. I have never been so miserable.

But even bad eyesight can have beneficial side-effects. Works such as The Pillars of Karnak (for 4 guitars) and the duo Las Doces Cuedas were not written down until they were complete. I improvised using a tape recorder, and then, using a magnifying glass, copied the music in its final form. The 4-guitar version of The Pillars of Karnak was improvised one part at a time (the first took only 20 minutes) until I had recorded all four parts and they could be written out. I discovered this gave my music a spontaneous quality which was particularly successful in Las Doces Cuerdas, where all the music is expanded from one melodic phrase, growing into a big movement through improvised variations. The

advantage of recording is that one can invent and change the music at will without anything getting lost. Then, after finding the ideal, one can move on to the next section thus gradually building up a complete work. Of course there is the danger that when improvising, our fingers automatically reproduce certain patterns, so that every piece could have similarities. So improvisation must be used judiciously alongside intellectual judgements.

By 1983 I had recovered my sight to a considerable extent. While I was at the Sablé Guitar Festival as a jury member, the organizer, Betho Davezac, took me to Angers to see not only the medieval tapestries of the Apocalypse, but also those of Jean Lurcat which though called Le Chant du Monde, are equally apocalyptic. They begin with the destruction of life on earth by the atomic bomb, and then, after the end of everything, life is born anew with a fresh innocence and poetry. I found Lurcat's work beautiful and moving, and felt a spiritual affinity with his art. Davezac asked me if I could imagine music to accompany some kind of exhibition of the tapestries, and immediately I saw possibilities, which could include guitar orchestra. Eventually I was commissioned to write music for Le Chant du Monde for performance at the Sablé 1984 Festival.

Of course, to represent such a cataclysmic subject, one really needs a symphony orchestra, if only for volume. However, I regarded the commission as a challenge to achieve the same aesthetic result with the very limited sonority of guitars. At first I thought of achieving power through adding electronic music, but eventually chose to use an electronic keyboard (for the sustaining power guitars lack) and percussion, for dynamic accentuation. In the end I found that an orchestra of 24 guitars, keyboard, and percussion, gave me a dynamism which was equal to the 'atomic' situation, making up through vitality what was lacking in volume, while there was an ample palette of colour and expression for such a lengthy work. Le Chant du Monde became an entire evening's entertainment and comprised ten principal movements, with interludes as background for narration to introduce each tapestry. These latter were shown by slide projections on various screens above the orchestra, so that there was a unity of vision, narration and music in one continuous work.

Le Chant du Monde was such a major effort that I have written very little since. People ask me what I am going to write next, but though I have a project, I hesitate to begin, for it belongs to a distant

future.

My view is that guitar technique is still only in a developing stage, and has a long way to go. (Certainly guitar composition is in this developing stage.) The guitar is really in a technical position equivalent to the violin before Paganini. Playing techniques need expanding enormously beyond the rudimentary material of our concert ~~repertoire~~ repertoire. So eventually new virtuosistic music will be needed to fulfil the fully developed techniques of players later in the 21st century.

I feel an impulse to write music of advanced techniques and idioms 'for the future'. But I have no illusions. Will I ever find players for such music in my own time, or publishers willing to wait for the future? I doubt it very much, and for this I may never put pen to paper again.

Looking back, I feel envy for those who can spend an entire lifetime perfecting a single great artistic skill. My life has been too disrupted to allow me the luxury of doing any one thing well. However, I think the eternal pursuit of perfection in a single goal must be a very boring experience, so perhaps I should after all be grateful for those changes which destiny has forced upon me.

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