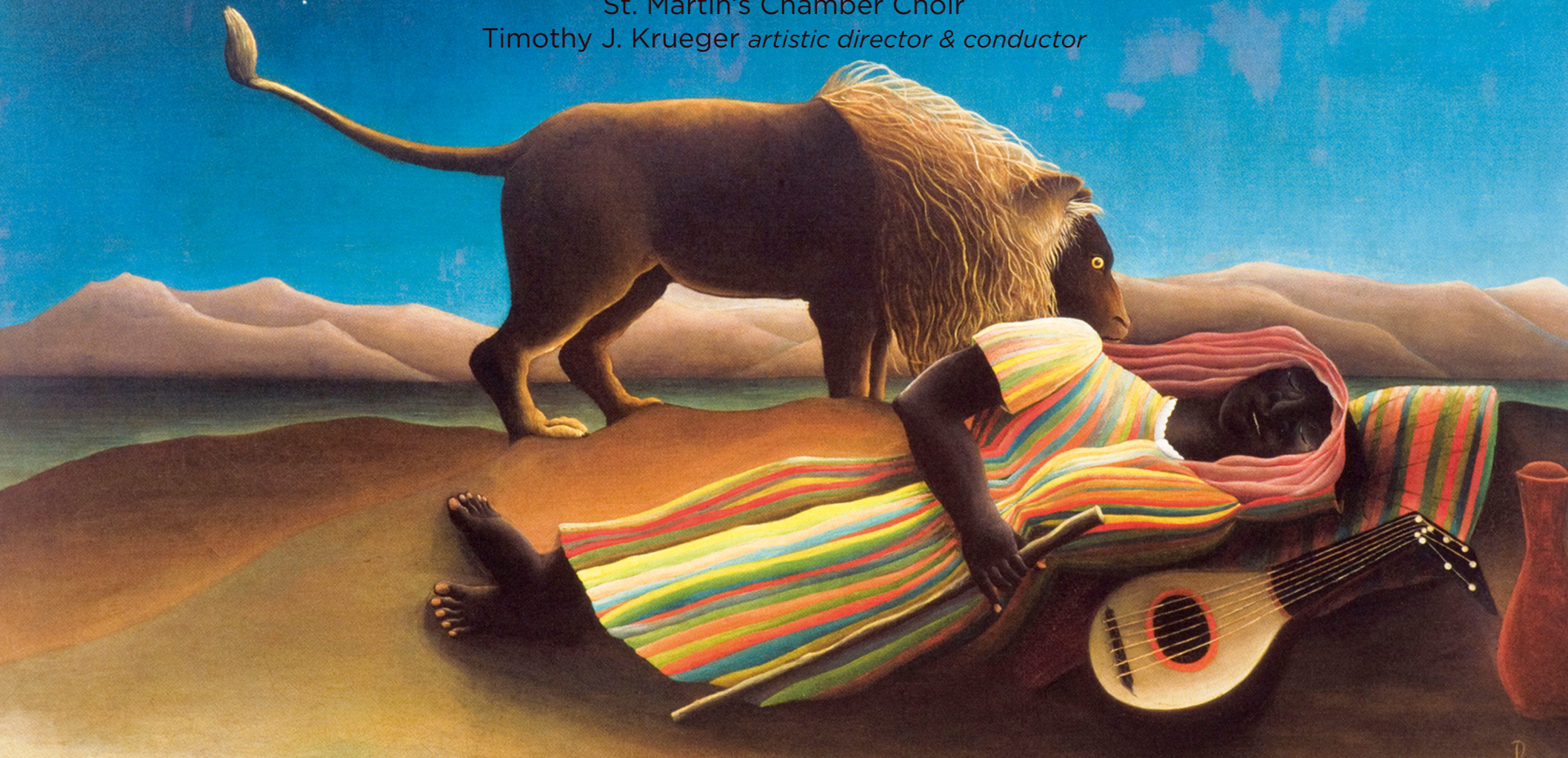


# MUSIC FOR GUITAR & CHOIR

BY CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO,  
CAMPOGRANDE & JAPPELLI

Nicolò Spera *guitar*  
St. Martin's Chamber Choir  
Timothy J. Krueger *artistic director & conductor*





## Music for Guitar & Choir

Nicola Jappelli b.1975

**Nulla Sors Longa Est \***

*Text: Lucius Annaeus Seneca*

(c. 4 BCE–CE 65)

- |         |       |
|---------|-------|
| 1. I.   | 10'16 |
| 2. II.  | 6'10  |
| 3. III. | 8'45  |

Nicola Campogrande b.1969

**Materna \***

*Text: Marco Vacchetti (1960)*

- |  |      |
|--|------|
| 4. I. Piero della Francesca, Madonna del parto                       | 3'44 |
| 5. II. Caravaggio, Natività con i Santi Lorenzo e Francesco d'Assisi | 4'09 |
| 6. III. Bernardo Luini, The Virgin holding the sleeping Child        | 3'22 |
| 7. IV. Andrea Solari, Madonna del cuscino verde                      | 1'43 |

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco 1895-1968

**Romancero Gitano Op.152 (1959)**

*Text: Federico García Lorca*

(1898–1936)

- |                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| 8. I. Baladilla de los tres rios | 4'44 |
| 9. II. La guitarra               | 4'23 |
| 10. III. Puñal                   | 1'31 |
| 11. IV. Procesión                | 6'51 |
| 12. V. Memento                   | 1'53 |
| 13. VI. Baile                    | 2'06 |
| 14. VII. Crótalo                 | 1'37 |

Nicolò Spera *guitar*

**St. Martin's Chamber Choir**

Timothy J. Krueger *artistic director & conductor*

**Soloists**

**Nulla Sors Longa Est** Mvts. 1 & 3:

Laura Tribby *soprano solo*

**Materna** Mvt. 3:

Elise Bahr *soprano solo*

**Romancero Gitano** Mvt. 1:

*solo quartet*: Laura Tribby *soprano* · Kate La Cava *alto*

Westin Sorrel *tenor* · Sean Fox *baritone*

Mvt. 4:

Matt La Cava *baritone solo*

Mvt. 6:

Tony Domenick *baritone solo* · Patrick Knaubert *tenor solo*

\* World premiere recording

Recording: 3-4 June 2019, King Center Concert Hall, Denver, CO, USA

Producers: Timothy Krueger, Martin Skavish, Nicolò Spera

Recording, editing, mixing, and mastering: Martin Skavish

Cover image: Henri Rousseau, *The Sleeping Gypsy* (1897)

Guitar by Luigi Locatto, Pino Torinese, Italy (2002)

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Resolved to realize an ambitious project of performing Italian compositions for guitar and choir, the Milanese guitarist Nicolò Spera, who teaches at the University of Colorado Boulder, offers music that captures major aspects of his artistry and biography. He does so in the most obvious and natural way: by juxtaposing pieces that are strongly tied—culturally and emotionally, in both their musical content and their extra-musical inspiration—to his poetic universe. Listeners are invited to discover for themselves the commonalities among these pieces.

The challenging acoustical rivalry between a choir singing at full volume and a guitar, renowned for its gentle sound, must have long discouraged composers from pairing these instruments. The Viennese pianist and choir conductor Ferdinand Rebay was the first, in 1945, to experiment with large-scale works for guitar and choir: in particular, his two cantatas *Jesu Versuchung* and *Die Hochzeit zu Kana*, for mixed choir and soloists accompanied by organ and guitar; and *Spanische Serenade* for tenor, male choir and guitar, based on texts by the Sevillian poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. But the first (and only) work to have left a mark on the history of 20th-century music for guitar and choir is *Romancero Gitano*, Op.152 (1951) by the Florentine composer **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco**.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco writes: “*After having experimented with combining guitar and string quartet, I wanted to try its union with two other four-part ensembles: a quartet of voices, and a quartet of woodwinds. I have yet to compose this latter one, but the first led me to ‘Romancero Gitano’ (the most beautiful, perhaps, among my guitar works of these latest years).*” At the peak of his maturity and in a burst of creativity, he set to music seven poems of the Andalusian poet Federico García Lorca. Oddly, the texts chosen by Castelnuovo-Tedesco do not belong to the poetic collection entitled *Romancero Gitano*, but are taken instead from *Poema del Cante Jondo*, written in 1921 and published ten years later. Perhaps Castelnuovo-Tedesco chose the title because *Romancero Gitano* is García Lorca’s most famous work. Or perhaps, as

Angelo Gilardino has acutely observed, the composer “did not realize that in the volume [he had], the *Romancero* had been published together with the *Poema*.”

Each of the movements in the *Romancero* opens with a prelude by the guitar, which is also given a short postlude that functions as a link to the next movement. The instrumental part is dense, complex, and rich with imaginative sparks. The vocal writing is limpid and always comprehensible despite the frequent employment of contrapuntal procedures. The music adheres naturally to the twists of the text, fully capturing its colors and contrasts, whether it is representing the placid flow of three rivers (*Baladilla de los Tres Rios*) with an incessant stream of semiquavers, or depicting Carmen’s dance through the streets of Seville with an elegant and slightly grotesque “Tempo di Seguidilla” (*Baile*).

Everywhere, what shines through—to quote again from the composer—is “*that sense of the Spanish lands: the parched Castile, the pale olive groves, the scent of the orange orchards in Andalusia and, along the coast, the sea which breaks at the shore with vibrations, almost, of a guitar.*”

Composed by **Nicola Campogrande**, *Materna* was commissioned by Nicolò Spera to celebrate the birth of his daughter, Julia Diaz Spera, in 2017. It is a musical polyptych about maternity based on original Latin texts written by Marco Vacchetti and organized in four panels, which themselves were inspired by masterpieces of Italian art between the Renaissance and early Baroque periods.

Spera chose the paintings for emotional and personal reasons. *Madonna del Parto* by Piero della Francesca, depicts pregnancy through an image of the Virgin as a young woman of radiant beauty, with her hand upon her belly. Three great painters from Lombardy, Spera’s region, portray moments in the wondrous story of the Christ child: birth, through Caravaggio’s *Natività con i Santi Lorenzo e Francesco d’Assisi* (a painting smuggled from Palermo in 1969 and never recovered), rest, through Bernardino Luini’s *Madonna con il Bambino Addormentato* (in the Louvre), and nursing, through Andrea Solari’s *Madonna del Cuscino Verde* (also in the Louvre).

These pictorial representations of the experience of maternity and infancy, as seen through their gestures and rituals, become music without ever losing narrative strength. Campogrande is well acquainted with the guitar, an instrument that has already served his creative palette, and here he uses it commandingly and efficaciously. The blend of sound between guitar and choir changes from one movement to another, just as lighting and brush strokes change with the different painters.

For *Nulla Sors Longa Est*, Nicola Jappelli turns to the world of the classics, using three fragments from Seneca: the treatise *De Vita Beata*, in which the moralist writer faces the issue of wealth as a means to obtain happiness, and the Greek tragedies *Thyestes* and *Phaedra*. The work is conceived essentially in an antiphonal form. The first movement opens with pairs of voices engaged in a dialogue that immediately makes room for the guitar. The guitar's first statement introduces a constant in the piece: the alternation between vocal episodes, as sparse and incisive as the *brevitas* that was dear to Seneca, and the quite prolonged instrumental solos. In the second movement, a furious ascending gesture of the guitar, followed by a long sequence of chords with an ever-changing meter, precedes an *Allegro deciso* characterized by fiery dynamic contrasts. Jappelli's writing is often chordal-homophonic, but it is not short of canons and other contrapuntal devices. In the last movement, the guitar plays a nearly uninterrupted thread of quavers, as if to symbolize the constant, inescapable alternation of *dolor* and *voluptas*. Suddenly, the instrument falls silent; and in the conclusive *Largo*, the voices, left alone, sing a bitter reflection on human frailty.

Universal and eternal subjects, including the philosophic reflection on happiness, the experience of maternity, both sacred and profane, and poetry as an instrument to affirm individual and collective identity, appear in all the works collected here. While listening, one is overcome with a reassuring feeling of familiarity: there is balance, a sense of form, awareness, and respect for a past that is renewed while it nourishes the present. Everything is pervaded with a spirit that could be defined as *humanistic*,

the secret ingredient, in the final analysis, that ultimately gives a sense of completion to the otherwise empty ritual of "classical" music. Humanism provides cultural background for the performer. It also determines the attitude of the composers, who firmly reconnect in their choice of vocabulary with traditional models, whether they are responding to a commission (like Campogrande), or embodying *a posteriori* an aesthetic vision (like Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Jappelli).

Castelnuovo-Tedesco narrates Spain with the verses of García Lorca, Campogrande narrates maternity through Italian painting, Jappelli narrates the great Stoic inquiries quoting Seneca's words. The three composers narrate themselves by reflecting themselves in the words and images of other artists, in an evocative game of mirrors: a great fresco, rich with details, which travels across the centuries and the infinite paths of human creativity.

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Translation: Nicolò Spera



Italian guitarist Nicolò Spera brings to his teaching and performing a unique synthesis of European and American traditions.

Nicolò is one of the few guitarists in the world to perform on both six-string and ten-string guitars, as well as on theorbo. His wide-ranging repertoire includes the extraordinary music of the Franco-Andalusian composer Maurice Ohana. His album of Ohana's complete works for solo guitar (Soundset Recordings), presenting the world première recording of *Estelas*, was awarded the 5-stars "Disco del mese" review by *Seicorde*. With Soundset Recordings, Nicolò has also published his own transcriptions of Bach's Cello Suites 4, 5, and 6, for the ten-string guitar. In 2017, the Anglo-Spanish label Contrastes Records presented Nicolò's recording of his transcriptions for the ten-string

guitar of works by Catalan composers Federico Mompou and Enrique Granados.

In 2019, Nicolò has performed in the US and in Italy the three major works for guitar and choir presented in this recording. He commissioned Nicola Campogrande's piece as a gift to his wife and their daughter Julia, who was born in 2017.

His most influential teachers are Oscar Ghiglia, Jonathan Leathwood, and Lorenzo Micheli. Nicolò holds degrees from the Claudio Monteverdi Conservatory in Bolzano and the prestigious Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, an Artist Diploma in Guitar Performance at the University of Denver and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Colorado Boulder.

In 2011, Nicolò was appointed to the faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he is professor of Classical Guitar.



**Timothy J. Krueger** studied musicology at the Wheaton Conservatory of Music, the University of Colorado, Boulder, the Universität Hamburg, Germany, and the University of London's Royal Holloway College, where his doctoral dissertation was on the sacred music of Charles Villiers Stanford. He has studied conducting with Dr. Paul Wiens, and privately with Dennis Keene of the Voices of Ascension. He has sung professionally with the Santa Fe Opera, the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, Chicago A Cappella, the Vox Early Music Ensemble, the Ars Nova Singers, as well as several Episcopal cathedral choirs. In addition to being the founding Artistic Director of St. Martin's Chamber Choir, Krueger has served as Chorus Director for the Boulder Bach Festival, the Colorado Music Festival, and the Boulder Philharmonic. He is an Affiliate Faculty member in the Music

Department of Metropolitan State University of Denver. He is Choirmaster of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, overseeing one of Denver's finest classical church music programs.

Founded in 1994 as Colorado's only year-round, fully professional choir, **St. Martin's Chamber Choir** has delighted Colorado audiences for more than twenty-five years with its exhilarating sound, its exquisite blend, and its fascinating repertoire, drawn from 1000 years of choral music. The choir's history includes hundreds of concerts, more than a dozen recordings, increasingly frequent collaborations with other distinguished local organizations, and a growing number of broadcasts, both locally and nationally. The group takes its name from the site of its first concerts, St. Martin's Chapel at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral in Denver, Colorado.

<b>Soprano</b>	Elise Bahr, Rosie Downs, Danielle Kimbell, MB Krueger, Julia Stacer, Laura Tribby
<b>Alto</b>	Micaëla Larsen Brown, Leila Heil, Ingrid Johnson, Kate La Cava, Jessica Sweet, Donna Wickham
<b>Tenor</b>	Matthew Bentley, Brock Erickson, Patrick Knaubert, Blake Nawa'a, Westin Sorrel, Brian Stone, Rick Wheeler
<b>Bass</b>	Tony Domenick, Kenny Donahue, Sean Fox, Matthew La Cava, Alan Polacek, Tom Vanden Bosch

*This recording is dedicated to Julia Clara Diaz Spera:  
sei la mia definizione di felicità.  
(you are my definition of happiness)*

—Daddy