



BRILLIANT
CLASSICS



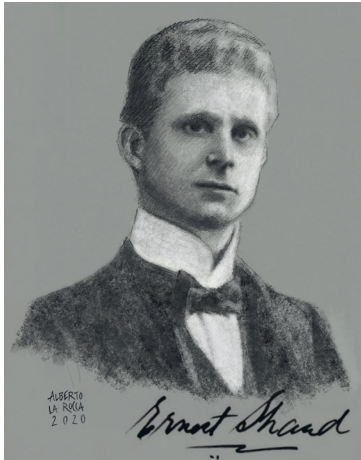
ERNEST SHAND
GUITAR MUSIC

ALBERTO LA ROCCA

Ernest Shand 1868-1924
Guitar Music

1. Tsigane (Gipsy Dance) Op.66	3'28	21. Morceau lyrique No.1 Op.97	2'56	41. Impromptu Op.108	4'42	51. March Op.91	1'08
2. Songe d'Amour (Introduction et Romance) Op.57	3'43	22. Morceau lyrique No.2 Op.104	2'50	42. A Forgotten Strain Op.116	3'19	52. Divertimento Op.6	2'52
3. Prélude et Impromptu (from "Six Pièces" No.4)	2'58	23. Morceau lyrique No.3 Op.111	5'07	43. A Fragment (Prelude – from Improved Method Op.100)	2'31	53. Mazurka Op.36	2'40
4. Légende Op.201	2'52	24. Hungarian Dance Op.96	2'25	44. Introduction et Chanson Op.220	3'08	54. Autumn Leaves Op.129	2'07
5. Il pensieroso (from "Six Pièces" No.6)	2'40	25. Au coin de feu Op.202	3'48	45. Mazurka Russe Op.21	2'37	55. Dance Capriccio Op.28	3'25
6. Andante espressivo (Air for the Guitar) Op.60	2'34	26. Fantaisie Irlandaise Op.59	7'21	46. Cradle Song Op.99	3'36	56. Andante Op.86	1'52
7. The Gnomes (Pièce caractéristique) Op.77	1'47	27. March of the Pixies Op.16	2'50	47. Valse légère (from "Six Pièces" No.2)	2'13	57. Marche triomphale Op.109	2'49
8. Chanson (from "Six Pièces" No.1)	1'41	3 Pièces Faciles Op.56		48. Souvenir Op.53	3'08	58. Chant du soir (from "Six Pièces" No.5)	3'57
9. Vain Regret (Mélodie) Op.112	3'38	28. Inquiétude	1'47	59. Graceful Dance (Morceau de salon) Op.29 No.2		60. Forever (without opus number)	2'27
10. Andante Caprice Op.65	3'29	29. Espérance	1'58	Gavotte et Méditation Op.69			
11. Varsovie Mazurka Op.204	2'41	30. Joie	1'23	49. I. Gavotte	2'13		
12. Andante religioso Op.87	2'25	31. An Evening Rêverie Op.54	3'22	50. II. Méditation	1'36		
13. Phyllis-Gavotte Op.200	2'28	32. Study for the R. H. (from Op.41)	0'47				
14. Songes d'été Op.95	3'17	33. Study (from Op.2)	1'05				
15. Funeral March Op.89	4'06	34. Study (from Op.19)	1'06				
16. Scène de Ballet Op.72	2'52	35. Study on Repeated Notes (from Op.43)	1'02				
Calme du soir et Berceuse Op.58		36. Mélodie (Nocturne) Op.51	3'13				
17. I. Calme du soir	1'51	37. Dance Antique Op.88	2'22				
18. II. Berceuse	2'46	38. Sorrow and Song Op.70	3'14				
		39. A Nymph's Dance (Petit Morceau) Op.205	3'17				
19. Gavotte Rococo (from "Six Pièces" No.3)	1'51	40. Farewell Op.10	2'55				
20. Auf Wiedersehn Op.117	2'42						

Alberto La Rocca *10-string-guitar*



Forgotten Strains
The Guitar Works of Ernest Shand
(1868-1924)

The history of the guitar repertoire is curiously subject to mutation, on account of the continual rediscovery of bygone composers whose works were lost or relegated to oblivion. Such has also been the fate of important composers now considered to be among the foremost exponents of the guitar repertoire. To this day several excellent composers are still practically unknown to most people.

An exemplary case in point is the English composer and guitarist Ernest Shand. Although he can be considered one of the greatest composers for the guitar of all time,

he is still largely and inexplicably forgotten.

I trust that this recording will reveal the absolute quality of his works and contribute to a timely rediscovery of a truly great composer.

Born into a musical family in Hull on 31 January 1868, **Ernest Shand** (born Ernest William Watson) initially studied the violin and piano, but then moved on to the guitar, taking lessons from his father. He studied harmony at Holy Trinity Church and won a scholarship to attend Hull Grammar School and Derby College. In 1888 he became a pupil of Madame Sidney Pratten, the guitar virtuoso, composer and teacher who had performed as a child with Regondi and later with Gounod and Tárrega. Madame Pratten provided him with scores and played a fundamental

role in his musical education, soon declaring that his pieces were superior to hers and that she had nothing more to teach him. During his lifetime Shand was indeed unanimously recognized as being the greatest English classical guitarist and composer, yet the fact that guitar music still only appealed to relatively small niche audiences meant that he could not afford to live from his income as a composer and concert performer. To make ends meet he combined these activities with acting and music hall entertainments, which were more lucrative. It was here that he began to adopt the name Ernest Shand.

In 1895 he performed Mauro Giuliani's *Concerto Op.36* in Glasgow and in 1896 his own lovely "*Premier Concerto pour Guitare et Quatuor Op.48*" to such huge acclaim that he felt the time had come for devoting his energies exclusively to the guitar. The income from his concerts and compositions was not sufficient to support himself and his family, however, so in 1896 he returned to acting and set off for Australia, where he also gave guitar recitals. A review published in the Sydney Herald gave an enthusiastic account of the beauty of his sound and the extraordinary expressive impact of his cantabile passages.

On returning to England in 1897 he continued to alternate acting with guitar recitals and composing, performing in London's foremost theatres. A few years later he experienced a traumatic event in Nottingham, when he was attacked by a Russian apparently aggrieved by a patriotic song he had sung. The injuries he sustained affected him for the rest of his life, and the shock made him retire once and for all from public performance. Thereafter he concentrated on composition, dying of a heart attack in Birmingham on 28 November 1924.

Shand's oeuvre comprises over two hundred pieces for solo guitar, the above-mentioned concerto for guitar and string quartet, music for mandolin and piano, for solo piano and numerous songs.

While a few original recordings of his music hall songs have also survived, unfortunately there are no extant recordings of his performance as a guitarist.

That so remarkable a musician should be largely neglected by today's guitarists is a terrible pity. The supreme quality of his works establishes him not only among the foremost composers for the guitar of his time (on a par with the leading composers of the romantic and late-romantic period), but of all time.

With the exception of the *Concerto Op.48*, he generally favoured shorter compositions ranging from dances to marches, from lyrical sketches to rhapsodic fantasies.

The quality of Shand's compositions is unfailingly high, with appealing and imaginative handling of melody underpinned by refined harmonies and a taste for modulation that reveals his deep familiarity with the foremost composers of the period. These traits are also evident in his lighter, more informal pieces.

While his overall style is substantially romantic, on occasion Shand adopts more modern musical solutions in a manner typical of the 20th century: certain bold modulations, for instance, or the use of the Doric and Phrygian modes. Sometimes the mood includes hints of impressionism, with prophetic compositional devices such as the parallel shift of a chord, sustained by an empty string, that were to become features of the brilliant revolution in guitar music brought about thirty years later by Villa-Lobos.

Shand's masterpieces largely consist of lyrical, expressive pieces in which his compositional depth and skill are interwoven with inspiration, making his themes irresistible and unforgettable. Likewise appealing is his handling of rhythm, as in the various dance steps. Some other pieces reveal a charming touch of humour, a trait that probably comes from his experience as a music hall performer. However, there is one aspect of his compositions that is particularly striking: the enchanting beauty of many of his finales, where he weaves together echoes of his themes and poignant memories in a manner reminiscent of symphonic music at its best.

Many of Shand's works are dedicated to family members, friends and other people who played an important role in his life. The "Funeral March", for example, was composed in memory of Madame Sidney Pratten. In the finale of "Auf Wiedersehen"

there is a vague citation of the "Rêverie Op.19" by Giulio Regondi, which suggests that it may be a "farewell", or indeed a funeral valediction for the great Italian-born guitar composer and virtuoso who became a British citizen and who died in 1872.

Fortunately for the guitarist, Shand's scores are rich in expression markings, with clear indications of tempo, dynamic and timbre. Likewise invaluable are the technical and interpretative considerations provided in his *Improved Method for the Guitar*, where he paid meticulous attention to melodious performance and the use of vibrato and glissando, as marked in his scores. The photos illustrating his Method show that he used his fingertips to pluck the strings, instead of his nails. He also favoured playing the chords with a slight arpeggio, insisting that the simultaneous sounding of the notes in a chord should be a rare event. As for sound quality, he underlined the importance of having an excellent guitar.

All Shand's works were composed for a six-string guitar. In my arrangement for ten-string guitar I have transposed some bass notes to the lower octave.

I dearly hope that this recording will make wider audiences aware of the beauty of these lovely compositions, thereby contributing to the rediscovery of a great composer, to the considerable enrichment of the history of guitar music, which owes an important chapter to Ernest Shand.

N.B.

Eight of these pieces were included in the album "*Fogli d'album*" released by GuitArt in 2014.

Alberto La Rocca



Alberto La Rocca was born in Thiene in 1967. He graduated in guitar from the “Dall’Abaco” Conservatoire in Verona under Giancarlo Rado. He attended courses held by Angelo Gilardino, Stefano Grondona, Ruggero Chiesa and Leo Brouwer.

In 1994 he graduated in Art, Music and Performing Arts (D.A.M.S.) at the University of Bologna with a degree dissertation on creative guitar teaching.

He has developed a ten-string guitar with particular tuning, thereby extending the pitch range of the instrument on the bass notes as well as on the high notes.

In addition to performing the repertoire of famous composers for the guitar, he is also very interested in discovering and performing little-known composers.

He has recorded the *Brilliant Classics* (“Segovia - Guitar Music”, 2016), *GuitArt* and *Velut Luna* labels.

He has composed music for theatre and dance performances, plus two operas for young musicians: “*Marco Polo - Il libro delle meraviglie*” and “*Anguane*”. In 2021 he has published a transcription for 3 guitars of the “Fuga No.1” by Leo Brouwer for Ediciones Espiral Eterna, recalled “Fuga Cubana No.1”.

He has also composed several pieces for guitar teaching, including the method “*Con la chitarra*” (ed. Ut Orpheus) and “*L'altra chitarra*” (Ed. Santabarbara). He has worked with the Italian Musical Education Society (S.I.E.M.) and has published articles on music teaching in the magazines “*Il Fronimo*” e “*Musica Domani*”.

He has taught guitar in various Music Schools, the “Tartini” Conservatoire in Trieste and the “Palestrina” Conservatoire in Cagliari. He is currently professor at the “Buzzolla” Conservatoire in Adria.

He also works as a painter.

*Ai miei genitori
To my parents*

*My thanks go to:
Giancarlo Dipierro, Rui Namora, John Nash, Stanley Yates,
Filippo Eduardo Araniti, Marco Riboni, Vincenzo Poggi,
Raffaele Cacciola, Gianvito Pulzone, Giulio Tampalini,
Giuseppe Laudanna and Giuseppe Dal Bianco*