

MUSICAL PRAYER

MARK HILLIARD WILSON

*St. James Cathedral Guitarist*

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“HOPE”

*Oración por todos*  
*(A prayer for all)*

Agustín Barrios Mangoré  
1885–1944

from *Studio per la Chitarra*, Op. 1, Part 4  
Maestoso  
Allegretto grazioso  
Andantino mosso  
Allegretto

Mauro Giuliani  
1781–1829

Prelude No. 1 from 6 preludi, Op. 46

Emilia Giuliani-Guglielmi  
1813–1850

*Oda a la esperanza*  
*(Ode to hope)*

Hilary Field  
b. 1960

“Vespers” from *A Soldier’s Sonata*, Op. 2 (2007)

Thomas Flippin  
b. 1983

from *Studio per la Chitarra*, Op. 1, Part 4  
Sostenuto

Mauro Giuliani

Ricercare 25  
Ricercare 65  
Ricercare 38

Francesco da Milano  
1497–1543

*Esperanza*  
*(Hope)*

William Foden  
1860–1947

*If*

Ralph Towner  
b. 1940

## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

*Mark Hilliard Wilson*

It is a privilege having the opportunity to reflect on what Hope is and how to express this in a musical meditation for the month of July in the year 2020. How does hope manifest itself in these extraordinary times of a worldwide pandemic, racial injustice, and economic uncertainties?

I have no answers, but I do have a program that I hope will offer respite, and inspire.

The first selection, *Oración por todos* (A Prayer for All) is by one of the preeminent guitarists and composers for the guitar of the early 20th century: **Agustin Barrios Mangoré**. He achieved notability in his day (press releases described him in terms ranging from “from the jungles of Paraguay” to “Paganini of the guitar”), but his name was almost lost to history were it not for the advocacy of the classical guitarist John Williams in the 1970’s. The opening section speaks for itself, and I felt it was a nice place to start.

The second group of pieces, by Italian composer **Mauro Giuliani**, expresses a lovely range of optimism, grace, and excitement in miniature. I have added to the end of the little set a prelude by his daughter **Emilia Giuliani**. It is an extraordinary prelude that starts in a remote area from the given key signature and offers some fascinating melodic explorations under a set of flowing arpeggios. It may be a bit of a departure from the rest of the set, but I include it for its flash of originality and my hope to celebrate a woman composer who really should be more well known. Ms. Giuliani’s piece also fits into a scheme of tonality around E minor and major in a surprising way that I hope will be a pleasant turn as the program unfolds.

Emilia Giuliani’s prelude is followed by music from one of Seattle’s notable guitarists and a very fine composer, **Hilary Field**. Her piece is based on Pablo Neruda’s poem “**Oda a la Esperanza**” (Ode to Hope.)

**Thomas Flippin**’s “**Vespers**” is the second movement from his work *A Soldier’s Sonata* and features a subtitle, “Deus, in adiutorium meum intende. Domine, ad adiuvandam me festina.” (O God, reach out to help me. O Lord, hasten to assist me.) The intense chords featured in the outer sections contrast with a hopeful central section, with the lightness of a flowing arpeggio and glistening dissonances of open strings against notes placed high up on the fretboard.

The **sostenuto** that follows, by **Mauro Giuliani**, has a lovely dotted rhythm on a repeated open E string that is reminiscent of the sun coming out after a storm.

This brief glimpse of light from the 19th century is followed by a short set of highly atmospheric pieces from the 16th-century lutenist **Francesco da Milano**. Hailed throughout Europe for his taste in music and style on the instrument, he was called “il Divino” and worked almost all of his career in the Papal Court. He composed many fantasies and ricercari, forms that feature themes that are repeated in lower and higher registers and explore certain modes. The Italian word “ricercare” means “to search.”

We leave the ethereal atmosphere of the renaissance for the clear-cut cadences of the late 19th century with our penultimate piece, *Esperanza* (*Hope*), by the 19th-century American guitarist **William Foden**.

We conclude with one of the most hopeful pieces I can think of—the American guitarist **Ralph Towner**’s *If*. Despite its constant shifting of odd time signatures, 5/4, 3/4, 5/8, 2/3, 5/4, etc., it has a natural flow that inspires joy and, I think, Hope.

**MARK HILLIARD WILSON** brings joy and technical finesse to the listener while integrating music from diverse backgrounds and different ages with a compelling story and a wry sense of humor. Performing regularly at festivals and concert series, Wilson has distinguished himself as a unique voice with programs that feature his own transcriptions of both the well known and the obscure. Wilson's compositions for the guitar have been appearing on stages throughout the Northwest US and Canada for over 15 years. He works in is the relatively unexplored genre of an ensemble of multiple guitars as the conductor, composer, arranger, and music director to the Guitar Orchestra of Seattle. Wilson has taught at Whatcom Community College and Bellevue College.

Wilson's CD *El Sueno del Camino* is the product of a series of concerts he played along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain. Wilson has been busy promoting his latest CD, a Guitar Orchestra recording that features compositions for 10 guitars, inspired by the pilgrimage to Spain as well as pilgrimages closer to home: Chuckanut Drive and the Edmund Pettis Bridge. Since the start of 2019 he has produced concerts for the Guitar Orchestra of Seattle in fun and unusual venues for the classical guitar, such as the restored bar The Rendezvous in The Jewelbox Theater (built in 1932 as a movie theater); the experimental cafe theater Cafe Nordo; and the former Elliot Bay Book Company location in Pioneer Square. Solo engagements have taken him to numerous living rooms and gardens across Seattle through the organization Groupmuse. The summer of 2019, Wilson was engaged in 10 concerts over an 8-week spread, where he played solo concerts, a concerto written for him and the Octava orchestra, and a series of concerts in Portland with the soprano Jessica Israels and baritone Erik Hundtoft. Shortly after this, Wilson was the guest guitarist with the Sun Valley Symphony.

Wilson's work on a CD of Argentinian music featuring solo work and duo work with Stuart Zobel has been affected by the Covid-19 quarantine, and the same can be said of his work to release a CD of Good Friday music written by Nathan Jensen for the Guitar Orchestra of Seattle. The quarantine has not brought any of his work to a stop, but reoriented it: progress is still occurring and new skills are being acquired along the way! Please look for CDs this coming fall.