

*The  
Well  
Tempered  
Koschkin*



# Nikita Koshkin

**I**t was in the early 1980s that the music of Nikita Koshkin reached the astonished ears of the West through Vladimir Mikulka's performances of his suite, ***The Prince's Toys***. He had written it when he was 18 but it took a few more years for him to decide on a satisfactory ending before publishing it. Both he and his music are now familiar worldwide. This work alone told us much about its creator. He was clearly an admirer of the post-Stravinsky school, particularly Shostakovich and Prokofiev; one who, like many Russian composers, liked to work within a leisurely time-frame, responded to fairy tales, images and story lines, and had a mischievous sense of humor. On a technical level he had an intimate knowledge of the guitar and had creatively extended its range of idiomatic effects. It came as no surprise to learn, later, that he is also an accomplished guitarist who can play everything he has written. This fact became most evident in 1997 with the release of his first CD, ***The Prince's Toys - Koshkin Plays Koshkin*** (Soundset Recordings, SR1011). The works on this second recording highlight other aspects of his music - his penchant for impish humor, paraphrase and parody, implicit in the cover picture of a bewigged Koshkin playfully imitating the famous Haussmann portrait of Bach. Lurking beneath the Russian surface there lies a skillful eclectic!

***The Elves*** depicts those mischief-making denizens of the fairy-tale world that reside in a corner of Koshkin's psyche. There is no story line as there is in *The Prince's Toys*; these are simply impressions of their imagined character. Koshkin explains: "The five movements reflect different states of those mystical creatures who can be lovely and angry, friendly and frightening, funny and ugly. A merrily stumbling *Gavotta* begins the cycle, followed by an easy flying *Valse* [No extended work by Koshkin is without a waltz.] and an extremely lyrical *Melody*. The final *Galop*, with its dark, grotesque and relentless

rhythmic pulse, is as I imagine an elves' party to be." Might it be that we blame the anarchic influence of elves for the fact that we human beings share all their own traits?

Who is taking part in the **Parade** and where it is happening remains undisclosed. New Orleans is famous for such things - even funerals are celebrated with 'jazzy' music, but its music has the flavor of George Gershwin so maybe the venue is New York. Wherever it may be, Koshkin presents it as a good-natured parody - but isn't there an element of parody in many parades anyway? Maybe there is a hidden pun - parade - parody - 'parady'! Listen, too, for his skillful 'orchestration', clearly mimicking the instruments in the marching band.

The title of **Three Stations on One Road** has come full-circle. Doubts were initially expressed that it might be seen as having disrespectful 'religious' overtones, which it did not and does not, so the 'stations' became 'bus stops' and just 'stops' (under which title it was published, but here it sensibly returns to its starting point. As the composer comments: "I have always felt that the guitar could express itself in many various styles while still remaining a classic instrument. That's why I enjoy turning from one style to another, achieving diversity within my own approach to the instrument. *Three Stations on One Road* expresses my interest in playing jazz music on the classic guitar. It is ballad-like, with a fast middle section, octave passages that recall Wes Montgomery, widely distributed chords, typical mainstream-jazz harmonies, and strong percussive rhythms played on damped strings."

Regarding **The Ballads**, Koshkin writes: "In recent years I have collected impressions from folk and popular music. *The Ballads* are a reflection of all those impressions, supported by the experiences of my youth when I was a rock guitarist. Notwithstanding the popular style in which it is written, I consider this work to be one of my very best."

**Three Pieces for Two Guitars** are miniatures, organized on and united by the principle of contrast. To quote the composer: "*Marionette* is full of dotted rhythms and sharp harmonies, the clumsy gracefulness of the wooden puppet, with a little softer middle section. It is a grotesque mixture of a march and a minuet with a shadow of waltz at its center. The *Elegy* is the lyrical climax of the triptych, and the final piece, *They Are Approaching*, is a typical 'Koshkinesque humoresque', with my favorite device of counterpoint in the reprise, and the intermittent 'slashed' ending."

The provenance of **Romance** is sufficient to explain its character - a parody. The composer writes: "A friend from the guitar class at the Russian Academy of Music once told me that the music I wrote for the guitar was fine - but it could not compete with the famous *Spanish Romance in E minor*. I said it would not be difficult to compose a piece like that, but he said I could never manage it. So we made a bet and he gave me one week - and of course I finished the piece at the last moment. When we re-met and I played it for him, he looked very serious and asked me to repeat it several times. So I did. He conceded defeat! Nevertheless, the *Spanish Romance* is still very famous and my piece is completely unknown." (Not now! J.D.).

The **Cambridge Suite for Two Guitars** was written for Chris Kilvington and Lorraine Eastwood after Koshkin's first visit to England almost ten years ago - already equipped with an impressive command of the language. It reflects both specific established traditions and the modern life-style he saw there - as he saw them - but it is no less an impression of the English character. And where would the English summer be without Wimbledon? The elves might decide to blight it with less rain! The melodic 'ball' is bounced back and forth between the two players. Listen, elsewhere, for his serious stylistic recreation in *Ragtime* with its quotation from *The Entertainer* - but ending with a playful major-seventh chord, a thing that Scott Joplin never did. It is interesting to "see ourselves as others see us," as the Scottish bard Robert Burns put it. The humor and counterpoint in the music are intended "to



individualize the parts and make the music more vivid."

***Let's Play Together: Trio for Three Guitars*** is a title of double significance. I cannot do better than quote Frank Koonce, who plays the work with Koshkin and French guitarist Judicaël Perroy. "It is a tongue-in-cheek miniature with a nice concluding message. Part of the humor is that, contrary to its title, it starts with each guitarist in turn, playing his own part. Then after the first one returns to repeat his part, the second and third join him in succession to create a brief, intricate and dense ensemble that leads to an abrupt and comical ending." In this age of immediate communication of all kinds, the world has become a global village and, as Koonce adds: "The recorded performance involved three friends from three different parts of the world who managed to come together to play music. Music knows no borders." Nikita Koshkin, who has come to us from behind long-protected borders, devoutly wishes that the world were not divided either by social, political or any other frontiers. Don't we all? Talent such as his should not be locked in any kind of cage.

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### **MUSIC PUBLISHERS**

The Elves: Suite for Guitar: Editions Orphée, Inc.

Parade: Edition Margaux

Three Stations on One Road: Chorus Productions

The Ballads: Suite for Guitar: Cambridge Music Works

Three Pieces for Two Guitars: Warner Chappell Music

Romance: Cambridge Music Works

Cambridge Suite: Edition Margaux

Let's Play Together: Editions Henry Lemoine

# Frank Koonce



Frank Koonce has achieved international acclaim as a performer, teacher, and writer. He holds degrees from the North Carolina School of the Arts and from Southern Methodist University, studying first with Jesús Silva and then with Robert Guthrie. In 1974-75, he was a Fulbright Scholar and performer in Italy where he also studied with Sergio Notaro and Alirio Díaz.

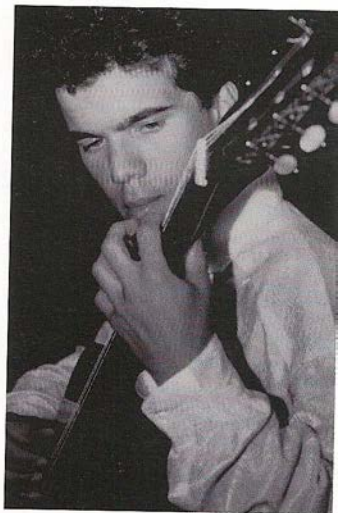
Koonce's creative output includes an authoritative guitar edition of Johann Sebastian Bach's complete solo lute works and the world-premiere recording in English of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Platero and I* with narrator Don Doyle (Summit Records, DCD 1002).

He also recorded an album entitled *A Southwest Christmas* with the Phoenix Bach Choir (Soundset Recordings, SR1005). As a founding partner of Soundset Recordings he has helped produce other classical compact discs, including a premiere recording of works by Alan Hovhaness with the Korean Broadcasting System Symphony Orchestra.

A Professor of Music, Frank Koonce has directed the guitar program at Arizona State University since 1978. He was Director of 'Guitar Festival 1987', an international event jointly sponsored by the Guitar Foundation of America and the American String Teachers Association, and has since served as Chair of the GFA Advisory Board. He is an active performer, with recitals to his credit in England, Austria, Macedonia, Korea, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Mexico, Spain, and throughout the United States.

# Judicaël Perroy

At the age of seven, Judicaël Perroy began guitar studies at the Paris Academy of Music. He then studied with Delia Estrada and Raymond Gratien from 1983 to 1988 at the National School Academy of Aulnay-sous-Bois. An acknowledged prodigy by the age of eleven, he played two Vivaldi concertos conducted by the famous French musician André Girard at the Theatre of Le Mans in 1984. His studies continued under the tutelage of Roberto Aussel and Daniel Lavalie, capped by a unanimous First Prize and the "Prix du Publique" at the René Bartoli International Competition. In 1994, Perroy earned his diploma at the Ecole Normale of Paris in the class of Alberto Ponce, and in 1996 he graduated from the Paris National Conservatory of Music, earning the highest placement in his class.



Since the age of fourteen, Perroy has been the recipient of many awards and honors. Most recently, in 1997, he won First Prize in the Guitar Foundation of America International Competition, after which he toured the Americas and performed over fifty concerts and master classes. He has recorded for the French label Quantum, **Judicaël Perroy - Guitare** (dQM 7001), and has made a concert video, filmed live for the Mel Bay Company. He now teaches at the National Academy of Blanc-Mesnil, near Paris, and frequently performs in Europe and the Americas.

	The Elves: Suite for Guitar	11:49
1	<i>Gavotta</i>	01:19
2	<i>Valse</i>	03:27
3	<i>March</i>	02:08
4	<i>Melody</i>	02:40
5	<i>Galop</i>	02:15

6	Parade	02:18
7	Three Stations on One Road	05:23

	The Ballads: Suite for Guitar	13:13
8	1. <i>Allegretto</i>	02:04
9	2. <i>Moderato</i>	02:35
10	3. <i>Con Moto</i>	03:10
11	4. <i>Adagio Molto</i>	02:33
12	5. <i>Moderato</i>	02:51

	Three Pieces for Two Guitars	06:45
	(Guitar 1: Koshkin Guitar 2: Koonce)	
13	<i>Marionette</i>	02:24
14	<i>Elegy</i>	02:22
15	<i>They Are Approaching</i>	01:59
16	Romance	03:40

	Cambridge Suite for Two Guitars	10:54
	(Guitar 1: Koonce Guitar 2: Koshkin)	
17	<i>Lullaby</i>	01:45
18	<i>Tennis Waltz</i>	02:00
19	<i>Ragtime</i>	02:41
20	<i>Ballad</i>	02:11
21	<i>Humoresque</i>	02:17

22	Let's Play Together	01:34
	(Guitar 1: Koonce Guitar 2: Perroy Guitar 3: Koshkin)	

# *Producers:*

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*Recording, digital editing  
 & mastering:* Todd Hallawell

*Program Notes:* John W. Duarte

*Program booklet design:*  
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*Technical support:* Lee Furr

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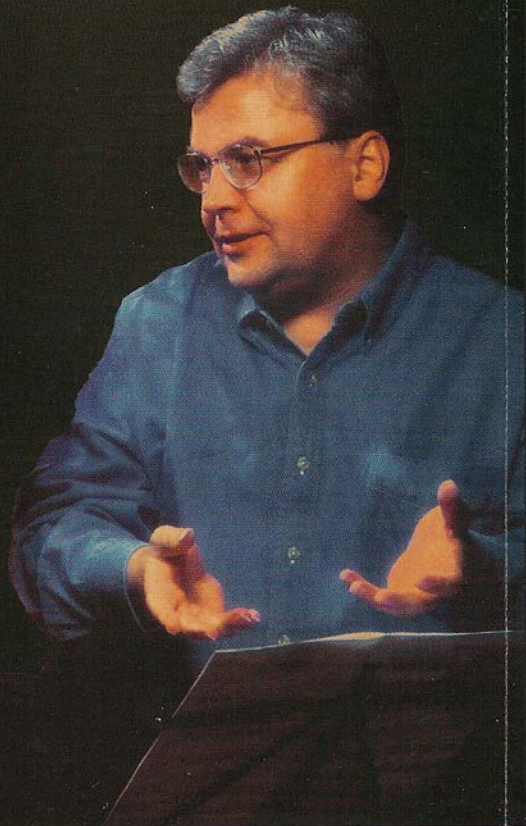
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**TOTAL TIME: 56:50**







SR1015

The Well Tempered Koshkin Composer-Guitarist Nikita Koshkin



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The Elves Suite

Parade

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