



# Vidamorphosis

musical masterpieces reimagined

VIDA Guitar Quartet

**DEUX-ELLES:** Tell us about the album and how it evolved.

**CHRIS:** When Mark Eden suggested we look at Schubert's Fantasia in F Minor, it was a departure from our usual approach to arranging. A great deal of our repertoire is taken from scores originally written for orchestra or chamber groups, so that we can really exploit the texture and colour possibilities. We always think carefully about the music we arrange, and we decided that this piece, although written for piano four-hands, is symphonic in its structure and stretches the guitars to their limits. When rehearsals began, it became clear that this was a revelation and had to be central to our next recording project.

**MARK A:** I think because we've always been used to orchestral arrangements, Mark finding the Schubert for four hands was at first difficult to imagine. After starting work on the piece, we realised that this was a serious project - there was so much in the writing involving everyone at every conceivable moment.

**AMANDA:** We had also always wanted to have a project that could incorporate Chris's

arrangement of the Brahms Hungarian dances, so when Mark first talked about the Schubert, it was clear that those two would sit very comfortably on a recording together. That was when the project really started to take shape.

**MARK E:** The Schubert idea I got from having played some of his Lieder with singers, and I just thought, it's a shame that Schubert never wrote anything for the guitar. Perhaps this is the sort of piece he might have written if he had known the possibilities a guitar quartet can offer.

**D-E:** The Schubert sounds like it was actually written for four guitars. Tell us about the process. Where do you start with something like that?

**MARK E:** After studying the score, I didn't want one player to be stuck on one particular part - I wanted to really mix it up. Chris sometimes gets more bass notes purely because he's got a seventh string, but he does also go above the fifth fret. Don't you, Chris?

**CHRIS:** I certainly do, although I get vertigo that high up! Seriously though, it's brilliantly arranged and I have some really wonderful melodic opportunities. It has been one of the most successful pieces we've done, and we haven't changed the arrangement much at all.

**MARK E:** If we didn't have the seventh string, I don't think we would be able to do a lot of these expansive works. I find that when you're looking at a piece like the Schubert, which is in F minor, not a very good key for the guitar, having the four of us with the extra string is a crucial ingredient.

**MARK A:** Chris is absolutely right, it was more about balancing the parts. When we do orchestral arrangements, we think a lot about colour, using the impression of an orchestra and what's happening colour-wise and timbre-wise. With this, we were thinking in a different way.

**D-E:** What about Mozart? Was it a similar story?

**MARK E:** The Mozart came off the back of doing the Schubert because it's a piano duo - two

pianos this time, as opposed to piano four-hands. Mozart's original version, for one piano, is called "Sonata Facile" and on the piano is in fact a relatively easy piece, and yet on the four guitars it's actually really difficult. It's very hard to keep a straight face when you're playing it, as in places it is incredibly demanding.

**AMANDA:** As a quartet, we are always reimagining orchestral pieces, by aiming to conjure up musical colours on the guitar. But with this, Grieg had already re-imagined Mozart's existing work. In a way it takes Vida to a new level, as we are bringing both composers' styles to the four guitars. I think each of the four pieces offers something very different but they all have their own purpose.

**D-E:** I just love the way you approach it and that you are adding something to the guitar quartet repertoire.

**CHRIS:** I think music is about looking at things in different ways. And that's where the title "Vidamorphosis" came from. Everything is moving forward and changing all the time. Nothing is static. ▶

**MARK A:** The title also applies to the way we workshop our arrangements. They go through a transformation during our rehearsals as we try to discover the very best way to approach them on the four guitars. We did that quite a bit in the Holberg Suite, revoicing and moving parts about to create the effects that we wanted.

**MARK E:** The Holberg is an interesting one. The arrangement is based on the string version that Grieg did, so there is a more natural orchestral spread of parts.

**D-E:** I think composers reimagine, rejig and reshuffle their own music for different instrumentations and it's something that has happened throughout history. We tend to get so wedded to the score, and yet a score is just one iteration of a work, and it can become many things.

**CHRIS:** I completely agree, the classical guitar has evolved since the time of Schubert - the techniques, the instruments, and its ever increasing role in chamber music. It's this evolution and reinterpreting

that keeps the music and the instrument relevant and fresh.

**AMANDA:** It is also testament to these great works. It really is crucial to choose the right sort of repertoire that allows the guitars to bring something new to the music.

**MARK A:** It's also an absolute joy to be able to play these pieces. You wouldn't be able to play them on solo guitar, duo or trio!

**D-E:** What about the Holberg? That has been arranged before for four guitars, hasn't it? Mark, is this a new arrangement?

**MARK E:** Yes, this is a new arrangement. As a quartet, we always prefer to play our own versions of these pieces, as it brings a greater understanding and investment in the music.

Of course, we don't have the sustain of a string orchestra, but this piece works so nicely because of its neoclassical style. Even though there are some incredibly drawn-out melodies in the aria and the sarabande, there's still enough forward motion

through the music, and the accompanying parts really do work very nicely. In fact, with some of those slower movements, you'd think they would struggle, when actually they don't. They make the guitar sing.

**AMANDA:** This arrangement particularly sums up the whole idea behind the recording, because Grieg arranged his Holberg suite from the original piano score to string orchestra, which Mark then used as his own starting point for this arrangement. It's like another step in the development of the piece, a morphosis from one version to another.

**MARK E:** If a composer has done a piano version, as well as an orchestral version, you've got an insight into the way they think about re-imagining it. You've also then got choices. For instance, if something written for an oboe doesn't work on the guitar because it is a long sustained line, you can look at the piano score, where that same line is re-embellished by the composer.

**MARK A:** When we arrange, we are very much thinking of which member of the quartet we are

giving the parts to. For me, the choices are quite selfish because I'm not thinking about other quartets who may in the future want to play the pieces. It's purely about the mix, characters and nuances of our quartet. I also think about how it's perceived from an audience's perspective. As Mark said, it's not guitar one and guitar two as it may be in a traditional string quartet. The only consideration is that Chris has a lower 7th string, adding extra depth and sonority to the arrangements.

**D-E:** Yes, you could imagine a guitar quartet being like a string quartet, but what you've just described is not like that at all.

**CHRIS:** It really doesn't work in the same way. Apart from the extra bass, it's much more about pairings and bringing people to the fore at different times. It is still very much chamber music, but the mix is completely different. ■

## THE VIDA GUITAR QUARTET

The **VIDA Guitar Quartet** brings together four guitarists of exceptional artistry and “unerring musical instinct” (Gramophone) VIDA’s ability to “conjure up an orchestral palette of colour and effects” (Classic FM) combined with their “exquisite tonal and dynamic control” has firmly established them as a passionate and masterful ensemble who sparkle with “vitality and spontaneity” (Acoustic). VIDA’s seemingly effortless sense of ensemble and their broad range of timbres and dynamics evokes “listening to an entire orchestra and not merely to four guitars. There’s only one word for it: magic” (Gramophone).

Since forming in 2007, VIDA has performed to critical acclaim in major UK venues including King’s Place (London), London’s Southbank Centre, The Sage (Gateshead), and St George’s (Bristol). They are sought-after festival artists throughout the UK, Europe, North America, and China.

Since making their U.S. debut in 2011 in Los Angeles and NYC, the VIDA Guitar Quartet has appeared on some of North America’s most prestigious stages for classical guitar including the Long Island Guitar

Festival, the Allegro Guitar Series in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Las Vegas, and were selected by LIVE on Stage for tours in 2015-16. They have been chosen as the keynote performers for the 2015 Guitar Foundation of America in Oklahoma and in 2017 performed at the Kaufmann Concert Hall at the 92Y in NYC as part of their ‘Art of the Guitar’ Series.

2017 marked the Quartet’s debut in China as part of the Changsha International Guitar Festival where they were invited to perform at the closing night’s concert. 2019 marked VIDA’s busiest year to date with three visits to the USA and a three week tour of China. In 2024 VIDA performed their debut concert in the Babajanyan concert hall Yerevan in Armenia as part of the Play2 festival of which they are now artists in residence.

The VIDA GQ have recorded 4 CDs on the BGS label: **Love, the Magician BGS118**, a Spanish fare of Manuel de Falla, Joaquin Turina, and George Bizet’s Carmen Suite. **Rhapsody BGS121** featuring works by George Gershwin (Rhapsody in blue), Malcolm Arnold and Adam Gorb. **The Leaves be Green**

**BGS126** is an all English music program of Ralph Vaughn-Williams, Edward Elgar, Benjamin Britten, Stephen Dodgson, Timothy Bowers, and Warlock and **Bachianas BGS130**, a homage to Johann Sebastian Bach with works by Howard Skempton, Laura Snowdon, Felix Mendelssohn, and Heitor Villa-Lobos, all of whom have been influenced by

the great composer, whilst also featuring Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No.3 as a centralising theme.

VIDA continue to perform in the UK, Europe, Armenia and North America and are represented by Lisa Sapinkopf Artists. VIDA are D'Addario String classical artists. ■

## CD SUPPORTERS

Matthew House  
Katherine & Alan Clark  
Paul Ghirardani  
Teresa Henley  
Barry Boxall  
Stuart Christie  
Jonathan Leathwood  
Robin Arnold  
James Munro  
Donald Needham  
Patrick Goodness  
John Plunckett

## PATRONS

Liz & Bob Stell



DXL1219

**EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)**

*Holberg Suite, Op. 40 (arr. Mark Eden)*

1	Praeludium .....	2:54
2	Sarabande .....	3:25
3	Gavotte - Musette - Gavotte .....	3:15
4	Air .....	4:56
5	Rigaudon .....	3:52

**FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)**

6	Fantasie in F Minor, D. 940 (arr. Mark Eden) .....	18:42
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**MOZART (1756-1791) | GRIEG (1843-1907)**

*Piano Sonata No. 16 in C Major, K. 545*

*"Sonata facile" (arr. Mark Eden)*

7	Allegro .....	3:34
8	Andante .....	5:40
9	Rondo. Allegretto .....	1:57

**JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)**

*21 Hungarian Dances, WoO (arr. Chris Stell)*

10	No. 1 in G Minor. Allegro molto .....	3:15
11	No. 3 in F Major. Allegretto .....	2:14
12	No. 5 in F# Minor. Allegro.....	2:28

Total playing time: 56:10