



# *Thanos Mitsalas*

## Concert / Recording Artist



“...Thanos ranks today among the top performers in the whole world! He has total control and understanding of my idiomatic music!...” (Sergio Assad, multiple Grammy Award Winner Guitarist & Composer)

“Mitsalas marries all of the elements of great classical guitar playing: enormous and evocative tonal range, world-class command of the instrument, and a unique and defining musical voice” (minor 7<sup>th</sup>, October 2014)

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## Curriculum vitae

Born in Naoussa (Greece). Thanos is steadily achieving recognition to be one of the leading virtuosos of his generation. His rich musicianship and perfectionism have already credited him with the highest praise from audiences and critics. It is his intense musical intuition, flawless technique and personal style in his interpretations that easily captivate the audience. Through his extended devotion to the study and performance of the idiomatic music of Sergio Assad, Thanos achieved to be regarded by the great Brazilian master as a top interpreter of his works. Sergio Assad, between other comments, writes for Thanos: "...An incredible musician and guitarist!...", "...Thanos has total control

and understanding of my music!...". Classical Guitar Magazine (Blair Jackson-Nov 2017) refers to him: "...a formidable guitarist!...". American Record Guide (Kenneth Keaton-May 2012) mentioned: "Mitsalakis's playing is excellent...His technical command and sense of invention and expression are impressive!" Sharon Isbin (Head of the guitar department at The Juilliard School) said for him: "Thanos has a brilliant virtuoso technique and an excellent musicianship – truly an extraordinary talent! His playing is of the highest professional caliber..." Reviewer Glyn Pursglove from MusicWeb International Magazine wrote for Thanos's solo Assad cd release: "Everywhere one senses a vitality of personal commitment and disciplined freedom in his interpretations. Thanos is an impressive soloist!..." Timothy Smith (Oct 2014) at minor7th mentions: "Mitsalakis marries all of the elements of great classical guitar playing: enormous and evocative tonal range, world-class command of the instrument, and a unique and defining musical voice....Mitsalakis' newest offering, entitled "Contemplation", is quite simply one of the finest recordings I've encountered in my decade of writing reviews."

Thanos started music lessons at The New Conservatory of Thessaloniki where he graduated with the highest honours in 1989, supervised by the eminent guitar soloist and professor Costas Cotsiolis. He attended post-graduate studies in Hochschule fur Music Cologne/Aachen with professor Thomas Muller Pering (graduated in 1994 with the highest honors) and finally at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York with professor Sharon Isbin, where he was honored to get a full scholarship from the institute, evaluated as one of its most brilliant talents.

During his graduate studies he also attended several master-classes with important masters like Leo Brouwer, Pepe Romero, David Russel, Roberto Aussel and others.

He recorded a complete solo recital (with repertory of the highest difficulty) for the Greek National Radio Television Network at the age of 14, and made his debut as an orchestral soloist at the same age, as well. His international debut came two years later in Poland,



where he achieved to be the youngest prize winner ever (16yo) at the Silesian Guitar Autumn Contest (2<sup>nd</sup> prize and special prize as the youngest finalist). At that time he performed Rodrigo's Concerto de Aranjuez with such brilliancy, that critics and specialists praised him as an exceptional world –class upcoming guitarists. The same step toward international recognition was followed again two years later in 1990, where he was again the youngest winner ever (18yo) at the Carrefour Mondial de la Guitare in Martinique (France). Thanos won several other prizes and distinctions at important international contests like Stotsenberg (Parkening) International Guitar Competition (USA), Volos International Guitar Competition (Greece) and Sinaia International Guitar Competition (Romania) among others. He was also awarded the prize 'musician of the year' (1988) from the New Conservatory of Thessaloniki and received "Dimitris Sgouros" scholarship during his studies. Also won the prestigious Greek Scholarship Foundation's fellowship, as well as Robert Nelson's Scholarship (USA) while attending his post-graduate studies.

Important contemporary composers (S.Assad , G.Drozdz , S.Iannarelli - to name a few) have dedicated works to Thanos. He has performed several International and National 'premieres' of guitar compositions (works by S.Assad, L.Brouwer, J.Clerch, C.Domeniconi, G.Drozdz, S.Iannarelli among others) and repeatedly recorded for Greek and foreign International Radio and TV networks. In 1990, after he'd won the International Guitar Competition in Martinique he earned the privilege to perform the 'premiere' of the French composer Luc Nieto's guitar work 'Le yeux de Num' in three countries : Greece – Volos International Guitar Festival (1991), Cuba – Havana International Guitar Festival (1992) and Martinique – Carrefour Mondial de la Guitar (1992). Thanos has also performed as a soloist with several European Symphony Orchestras and ensembles (Silesian Chamber Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra of the Music Academy 'Franz Liszt'-Budapest, Symphony Orchestra of Zabrze, Sofia String Quartet, State Symphony Orchestra of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki Symphony Orchestra, etc), conducted by such important musicians like Leo Brouwer, Theodoros Antoniou, Josif Conta, Emir Saul, Jan Wincenty Hawel, Christof Esher, Alkis Baltas, Carolos Trikolidis, Slawomir Chrzanowski, Dimitris Agraftotis and others.

Thanos has performed in many prestigious music halls like Alice Tully Hall – Lincoln Center of NY, Merkin Hall – NY, Pall Hall–Lincoln Center of NY, Hancock Auditorium (Los Angeles), Queen's Grand Theatre of Zhengzhou (China), Teatro Comico Principal de Cordoba, Athens Concert Hall (Megaron of Music), Thessaloniki Concert Hall (Megaron of Music), etc. He has a wide experience in directing courses and serves as a jury member in several international guitar competitions, as well as frequently performs in important guitar festivals and musical events like Aspen Music Festival (USA), Carrefour Mondial de la Guitar (Martinique), Volos-Naxos Intern. Guitar Festival (Greece), Festival Internacional de Guitarra de Monterrey (Mexico), Silesian Guitar Autumn Festival -Tychy (Poland), Festival de Cordoba (Spain), Movimento Violao SP (Brazil), Festival Internacional de Volcan – Colima (Mexico), Shenyang Intern. Guitar Festival (China), Guitar Art Festival- Belgrade (Serbia), Larnaca Intern. Music Festival (Cyprus), Gliwice Intern. Guitar Festival (Poland), Yellow River Intern. Guitar (Zhengzhou-China), Zory Intern. Guitar Festival (Poland),

Aachen Int. Guitar Festival (Germany), Athens Megaron of Music ‘Music Matinees’ (Greece), Thessaloniki Megaron of Music International Guitar Festival (Greece), International Guitar Festival "Sarajevo East" (Bosnia & Hercegovina), ArtFest of AUBG (Bulgaria), Focsani Intern. Music Festival-"Classic for Teens" (Romania), EGTA - Cyprus Guitar Festival (Cyprus), Festival Internazionale "Propatria" - Rome (Italy), Sinaia Intern. Guitar Festival (Romania), Athens Intern. Guitar Festival (Greece), Santorini’s Intern. Chamber Music Festival (Greece), “Rhodes Intern. Music Festival” (Greece), Goche Delchef Intern. Guitar Festival (Bulgaria), “Doumbia” Intern. Music Seminars (Greece), Veria Guitar Festival (Greece), Helexpo Intern. Music Days (Greece), “Dimitria” Intern. Festival of Thessaloniki (Greece), Thessaloniki Intern. Guitar Festival, and others.

Beside his performing activities Thanos teaches at the State Conservatory of Thessaloniki, and as a guest professor at many international music festivals, summer music academies, Conservatories/Universities (i.e, The Juilliard School, University of Arizona (Tucson), ESMD Monterrey, Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln/Aachen, Zhengzhou University, and others). For ten academic seasons he was in charge of the artistic direction of the Municipal Conservatory of Naoussa (Greece). Many of his students have received international recognition and follow successful careers as performers or pedagogists of the guitar. For his artistic achievements and promotion of the cultural ideal in his country he received special award both from the Municipality of the Heroic City of Naousa, as well as the historical Volos International Guitar Festival. Thanos is also a founding member and vice president of the the European Guitar Teachers Association in Greece.

Since 2008 he has intensively devoted himself to the music of the legendary guitarist – composer Sergio Assad. Thanos was honored to participate – as an acclaimed ambassador of S.Assad's music- in several tribute concerts around the globe (Greece, Brazil, USA, Germany, etc). He had the great chance to perform at special Gala concerts together with the legendary Assad Brothers and Assad Family representing Sergio’s music (Athens IGF & Volos IGF). He was also hosted by the composer in the Brazilian TV (SESC TV & Movimento Virolao) for a recording and broadcast tribute to his solo guitar compositions. It is worth to mention that he was also the special guest artist to participate at the tribute concert organized for the composer by the Arizona State University (Tucson) and “Planet Brazil” Festival dedicated to S.Assad in Germany (Aachen-Spegtra IGF).

Additively, Thanos was the protagonist of a special recording project released in 2025 by DaVinci Classics: a collaboration with Thessaloniki State Symphony Orchestra (Conduct.: Miltos Logiadis) for the premiere recordings of S.Assad’s “Naousa Concerto” (2021) and “Concerto popular do Rio” (2015). It is worth to mention that he also premiered “Naousa Concerto “ for Guitar & Symphony Orchestra (which is dedicated to him) at a very special Concert Gala (April 2022) attended by the President of Greek Democracy, highest officials of the Greek State and Sergio Assad as the honored composer. Mitsalakis' recordings include solo guitar music, as well as chamber music works and concertos by the Grammy awarded

Brazilian master. Among other pieces, he has presented world premieres (either CD recording or/and live performances) of such important and enchanting compositions like “Naousa Concerto” & “Concerto popular do Rio” for guitar & Symphony Orchestra, Concerto Fantasia “Mikis” for Guitar and Strings, “Eli's portrait”, “Sandy's portrait”, “Seikilos Epitaph's Fantasy”, “Sun Wukong's Toccata” and “Barbad's Fables”.



Thanos has got outstanding reviews by great personalities of the music world and the press for his recordings (8 CDs) which have been published by Davinci Classics (Osaka-JAPAN) and ClearNote (Ohio- USA). His Cds include works by S.Assad, J.S.Bach, A.Barrios,N.D'angelo, C.Domeniconi, G.Droz, E.Gismonti, S.Iannarelli, L.Legnani, M.Llobet, R.Miranda,

A.Piazzolla, A.Tansman, F.Tarrega, M.C.Tedesco, J.Rodrigo, G.Regondi and A.York. It is worth to mention that Thanos's interpretation of Sergio Assad's *Fantasia Carioca* (from Cd “Thanos Mitsalis Plays Music By Sergio Assad” - Clearnote 2009) is recommended in Enrique Robichaud's book “Guitar's Top 100”.

Thanos is a Knobloch Artist/Ambassador. He uses Sterling Silver Bass Strings (SS 34.5 - high tension) , CX Carbon 2nd - 3rd Strings (34.5 - high tension) and BIO Nylon 1st String (0.73 - high tension). He performs on his Thomas Humphrey (1999 - Millennium Model/ Spruce-top) , Constantine Dumitriu (2021) and Vasilis Sigletos (2016 - Cedar Top) guitars. He is represented from the prestigious CLM Artists Management Office (Chicago,IL).

## REVIEWS FROM INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED CRITICS, MAGAZINES AND PERSONALITIES OF THE MUSIC WORLD

“... Thanos ranks today among the top performers in the whole world! He has total control and understanding of my idiomatic music!.....”

**Sergio Assad** *(multiple Grammy Award Winner Guitarist & Composer)*

“... Thanos has a brilliant virtuoso technique and excellent musicianship - truly an extraordinary talent. His playing is of the highest professional caliber ...”

**Sharon Isbin** *(Director of the guitar department at The Juilliard School)*

“... A rich musical talent! His clear virtuoso, musically inventive and impressive performance easily gains the highest appreciation of the listener! ...”

**Tadashi Sasaki** *(Director of the guitar department in Hochschule fur music Koln/Aachen)*

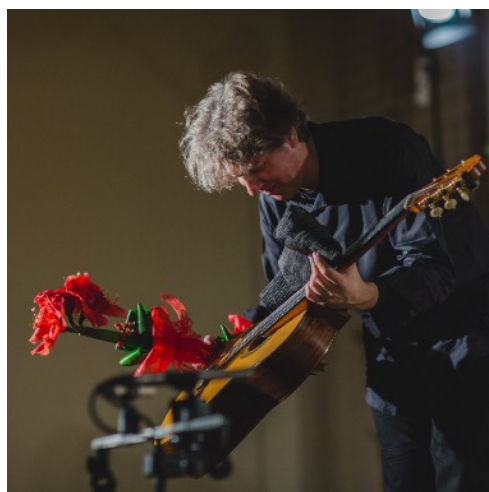


La chitarra nelle mani di Thanos era come una teoria nel ment di un genio: da un semplice concetto, quello di suonare, diventava la chiave che svelava i misteri dell'universo. Ha rivelato nuovi significati attraverso un gioco favoloso, mostrando una vera affinità con i compositori spagnoli. Cantando, Thanos Mitsalas ha costruito un nuovo mondo tumultuoso che vibrava con passione. Toccando le corde della chitarra, l'artista toccava anche quelle dell'anima del pubblico, creando echi sensibili. Verso il tramonto della sua performance, Thanos ha cantato di un cielo sopraffatto da

un sole arrossato e da lucciole appese. La calma e la pace della sua canzone rispecchiava l'immagine congelata della serata e la certezza di un domani altrettanto euforico nel mondo della musica. L'esperienza è stata emozionante e travolgente, e il sogno non è stato consumato, ma rimarrà permanentemente nei nostri ricordi. Grazie di cuore, Thanos Mitsalas !

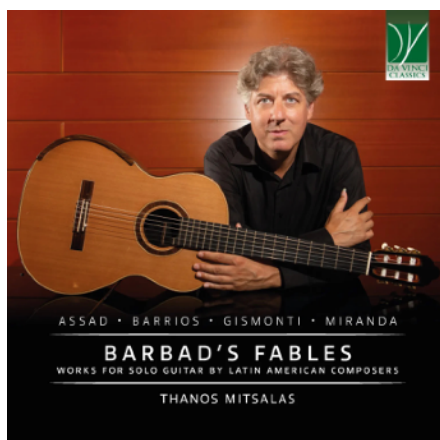
(The guitar in the hands of Thanos was like a theory in the mind of a genius: from a simple concept, that of playing, it became the key that unlocked the mysteries of the universe. He revealed new meanings through a fabulous game, showing a true affinity with Spanish composers. By singing, Thanos Mitsalas built a new tumultuous world that vibrated with passion. By touching the strings of the guitar, the artist also touched those of the soul of the audience, creating sensitive echoes. Towards the sunset of his performance, Thanos sang of a sky overwhelmed by a red sun and hanging fireflies. The calm and peace of his song mirrored the frozen image of the evening and the certainty of an equally euphoric tomorrow in the world of music. The experience was exciting and overwhelming, and the dream was not consumed, but will remain permanently in our memories. Thank you so much, Thanos Mitsalas!)

***Mioara Moraru-Cristea (ROMA Propatria Festival -Dec 2021)***



.....on stage was the Greek guitar virtuoso, Thanos Mitsalas, who with lightness and finesse extracted from the guitar, pastel sounds, sometimes even ethereal. He played the entire recital program with perfect mastery and was very warmly welcomed by the audience of the concert, which resulted in two encores.

***Gerard Drozd (Gliwice International Guitar Festival-  
Nov 2018)***



## REVIEWS FOR THANOS'S SOLO CD PROJECT

### "BARBAD'S FABLES" (DaVinci Classics 2024)

This is a terrific CD. For one thing, Mitsalas is very much a world-class player, at the state of the art both in technique and musical skill. For another thing-and this alone should be dispositive in your acquisition of this album-there are world premieres of two fabulous new works by Sérgio Assad. Let me deal with these first.

On first listening to Sun Wukong's Toccata, I thought it must be a duet, or that Mr. Mitsalas has appendages other than the standard human. But upon close viewing of his performance on YouTube, that turned out to be wrong: Assad is clever enough as a composer, and Mitsalas is fine enough as a player to perform the piece with just the usual appendages. (Although a tuning fork plays a note at the end.) It is a brilliant work uniting exceptional virtuosity with passages of great delicacy.

The same can be said of the second Assad premiere, Barbad's Tale. Barbad was a Persian minstrel and poet from the late 6th/early 7th century C.E. He played (just to add a bit of confusion) the barbat, an early lute ancestor. Assad's work, like the earlier (c. 2006) duet Tahhiyya li Ossoulina, reflects the composer's Middle Eastern ancestry, exhibiting many characteristics of music from that

region, including but not limited to frequent use of linear elements incorporating augmented-second intervals. It is a wonderful piece, though one with daunting technical challenges. Mitsalas's performance is astonishing.

As if the Assad pieces were not enough to demand acquisition of this disc, Mitsalas gives a wonderful rendition of Ronaldo Miranda's Apassionata and other works by Gismonti and Barrios. The last work on the album is the Paraguayan master's Las Abejas in which the bees in question seem very caffeinated. Splendid. Beautifully recorded quality and fine liner notes.

*Al Kunze - Soundboard, March 2025*

Opening with a premiere CD recording of Brazilian Sergio Assad's 'Sun Wukong's Toccata', inspired by a Chinese mythological character, Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalas handles the 8 contrasting sections with virtuosic deftness as he navigates the composer's very creative exploration of unusual guitar sounds, drawn from a deep well of lifelong experience with



the instrument at the highest levels of music-making. This is dramatic music using contemporary language that is approachable and, in Mitsalas's capable hands, can be absorbed, understood, and enjoyed on first hearing.

Mitsalas plays Brazilian composer Ronaldo Miranda's 'Apassionata' with an intensity that befits the title, and with a fervency that can only be delivered by a performer with exceptional technique. Contrasted with two lyrical pieces by Egberto Gismonti, and a smoothly rippling tremolo in Augustin Barrios Mangore's well known 'Una Limosna por el Amor de Dios', one understands that this performer is capable of a very wide range of expression. All of the above pieces prepare the listener for the central, most stunning work on the program-and the title track-Sergio Assad's Barbad's Fables. This piece is a technical powerhouse, brilliantly performed while calling to mind the Near-Eastern elements of some compositions of Carlo Domeniconi.

Recording quality is excellent, and liner notes by Dimitris Kotronakis are helpful. More spacing between tracks would be appropriate, especially when listeners need to catch their breath from hearing such virtuoso playing! The standard 3 seconds is just not enough, especially between major works; much more time than that is taken at concerts.

The program concludes with a set of 3 contrasting romantic works by Barrios. Mitsalas flies through 'Las Abejas' (The Bees) faster than anyone I have heard.

***Mc Cutcheon - American Record Guide (March/April 2025)***





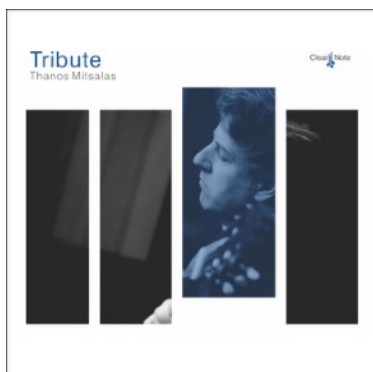
## REVIEWS FOR THANOS'S SOLO CD PROJECT

### "SEIKILOS EPITAPH'S FANTASY" (DaVinci Classics 2021)

A fabulous album from Thanos Mitsalás. Go buy it. And here's why... The Greek guitarist begins his program with the hyper-virtuoso Toccata by Rodrigo. It is thought to be just the second piece he ever wrote for the guitar and represents a mind-boggling ramp-up in virtuosity from the lovely Zarabanda lejana. It languished unplayed in the papers of Regino Sainz de la Maza from its completion, ca. 1933, until its first performance by Marcin Dylla in 2006. And even among Rodrigo's difficult pieces, it is very formidable. Luckily Thanos Mitsalás has fully taken its measure (no pun intended), and delivers a stellar performance. It is almost non-stop very rapid notes, though with moments of profound reflection. From the standard repertoire Mitsalás gives us a state-of-the-art performance of Barrios' Un Sueño en la Floresta. But of particular interest are four works receiving world premiere recordings. Gerard Drozd wrote Two Songs for the guitarist, a somewhat jazzy "In a Mood" and "Song". Though a bit redundant, it is a song, and a very nice one. The two Kaleidoscopic Waltzes are charming and a bit abstract. But wait! There are world premieres of major works by Simone Ianarelli and Sergio Assad. Ianarelli's Fantasia begins rather like a baroque lute fantasia, though much more difficult and harmonically contemporary. This free form section gives way to a contrapuntal section followed by an

ornamented chordal texture. The ending brings back the brilliant passagework of the opening, alternating with more-chordal textures. Seikilos Epitaph's Fantasy is one of the finest works of Assad's lauded career. I think it will become a rival to his much earlier Aquarelle in the hearts of guitarists and listeners. It begins with the melody of the Skolion of Sekilos, the earliest known piece of music in full (if mystifying) notation. Its presentation in harmonics gives the piece a sense of other-worldly mystery. The work continues with the ancient melody harmonized and varied, but at almost all times, the melody and rhythm of the original informs the work's development. Exciting, varied, and highly virtuosic, it is a major addition to the repertoire. Mitsalás' performance could hardly be bettered. This is a must-have recording with excellent sound and informative (though sometimes a bit ungainly) liner notes.

*Al Kunze – (Soundboard Magazine 2022 / Volume 48, #1)*



## REVIEWS FOR THANOS'S SOLO CD PROJECT

### “TRIBUTE” (ClearNote 2017)

According to the notes Tribute invites ‘spiritual regeneration through music’ and if that sounds a bit wishy-washy, then I suggest listening in a more actively engaged way – the rewards are many.

Thanos Mitsalás has constructed an attractive programme that reaches back as far as Llobet, includes two pieces by Rodrigo and some fine contemporary pieces that showcases the art of the guitar today. Llobet’s Variations on the Theme of Folias de Espana is something of a recital favourite, taking Sor’s Op 15 variations as its source material for the first two variations, adding eight further variations and an intermezzo. Full of fanciful wit and elegant roulades, with a positively charmingly played intermezzo, Mitsalás scores highly

by virtue of his stylistic aplomb and deft articulation. He’s equally persuasive in Rodrigo – full of reflective and expressive refinement in Tiento Antiguo, a kind of impressionist tone poem, with its vihuela evocations prominent. Rodrigo explored Sevillian landscape in his much later Un tiempo fue Italica famosa, full of flair and flamenco exuberance as well as more lofty vistas, rich in poetic esprit. Tansman’s Variations on a theme of Scriabin dates from 1972 and alternates wistfulness and a more animated sense of drama, including meditative and fugato sections.

Mitsalás has selected two movements from Piazzolla’s Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas and he brings out their evocative and lyric beauties with assurance. The Italian composer Simone Iannarelli has been living in Mexico for a number of years and his Tribute to Keith Jarrett is intended to show how the pianist has influenced Iannarelli’s music; consequently it doesn’t sound either like a reflection or pastiche of Jarrett’s music but something altogether more organic and stylistically tangential. Sergio Assad is widely admired as performer and composer and his generously appointed three-movement Sandy’s Portrait has a dancing Prelude – with a small admixture of contrastive tristesse – a rather lovely Passacaglia, and a terpsichorean and very engaging Toccata finale. To conclude there’s a piece introduced as a bonus, Andrew York’s By Candlelight, a most attractive and sensitive envoi. It brings to an end a splendidly played recital.

*Jonathan Woolf – Sept 2018 (MusicWeb International)*

Thanos Mitsalás' latest disc, *Tribute*, is a beautifully constructed program, played extraordinary well. Mitsalás has abundant technique – a necessity given some of the repertoire chosen! – and a dramatic musical imagination.

The underplayed *Tiento Antiguo* by Rodrigo begins the program with an evocative and deeply felt performance. It leads very well into Llobet's take on the "Folias" theme, executed with perfect fluency. The exquisite Tansman Scriabin variations lead to one of Rodrigo's most formidable works, *Un tiempo fue itálica famosa*. (Only the insane *Elogio de la Guitarra* probably exceeds it in difficulty among the composer's solo works.) Mitsalás meets its demands handily. Two of Piazzolla's seasons are presented in Sergio Assad's arrangements. Assad is also represented in the premiere recording of his "Sandy's Portrait." The liner notes give perhaps too much detail on how Assad derives the melodic material of his portraits from the honoree's names, but the agreeable melodic nature of the three movements justifies his compositional process. Also included are brief works by Simone Iannarelli, a Keith Jarrett tribute, and as an "encore," Andrew York's *By Candlelight*.

The beautiful recorded sound allows Mitsalás' Thomas Humphrey Millennium model guitar to shine. Presentation and notes are exemplary.

***Al Kunze – March 2018 (Soundboard Magazine)***

Mr Mitsalás continues to impress me—I have reviewed his work often (M/J 2012, S/O 2012, S/O 2016), always warmly. Here he presents a set of works inspired by something outside the composer and pure form, programmed with beautiful balance and exquisite playing. It's hard to pick a favorite, but it was the Llobet that gave me most pleasure. It's an odd work, which starts with the theme and first two variations from Sor's Folias variations (I believe it was first published as Variations on a Theme by Sor). Once he gets into the work, he explores some of the most virtuosic passages Llobet ever wrote for guitar, including a variation for left hand alone. Indeed, it has been beyond the technical command of most of the performances I've heard, until Mitsalás. He has no fears from any of the passages, and his performance sparkles.

Then there are the two rarely heard Rodrigo works, each performed as well as one can imagine. Tansman's Scriabin Variations holds together better than in most performance. I also took great delight in Sergio Assad's Sandy's Portrait, a tribute to Dr Sanford Bolton, a strong supporter of the guitar at the University of Arizona, Tuscon. The thematic material was based on pitches assigned to the letters of the alphabet—a technique that usually fails, but not here. Indeed, this is one of the prettiest passacaglias I've ever heard (the other two movements are a prelude and toccata). The designated encore is a lovely Andrew York piece, 'By Candlelight'.

Mitsalás's playing is flawless—and, more than that, unfailingly tasteful and deeply expressive. Virtuosic passages sparkle, contemplative passages draw the listener into profound beauty. He is one of our finest artists.

***Ken Keaton – March/April 2018 (American Record Guide)***



Two different albums by Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalás have crossed my desk this year (the other was *Sérgio Assad: Chamber Works for Guitar and Strings*), and both showcase a formidable guitarist with excellent taste in 20th and 21st century repertoire. A mellifluous and meticulous player, Mitsalás excels here on a pair of pieces by Rodrigo (including his exciting, highly nationalistic late work *Un tiempo fue itálica famosa*, written in 1980 and dedicated to Ángel Romero); two movements of Piazzolla's suddenly ubiquitous *Estaciones Porteñas* (extra points for choosing the gorgeous, less-played *Invierno Porteño*!); "Variations" on Scriabin and the traditional *Folia de España* by Tansman and Llobet, respectively; Simone Iannicelli's *Tribute to Keith Jarrett*, which somehow manages to sound like one of the American jazz pianist's improvisations; and, perhaps not surprisingly, a recent work from Sérgio Assad, the brilliant three-movement *Sandy's Portrait* (2013), with its transcendently gorgeous "Prelude," Bach-inspired "Passacaglia," and closing "Toccata" which, Assad writes in the album notes, "is a free concept of the toccata form, with a slow middle section inserted, rather unusually, into the very energetic and fast outer sections." Wonderful!

The album closes with what is labelled as an "Encore piece" (which begs the question: why?): a poignant version of Andrew York's popular *By Candlelight*; a nice choice to top off a consistently outstanding program.

**Blair Jackson – January 2018 (Classical Guitar Magazine)**

Outstanding guitar artistry in a presentation of several *first-rate* contemporary works—Assad, York, Piazzolla—as well as a stupendous Alexandre Tansman "Scriabin Variations." (Thanos Mitsalás; guitar)

In the liner notes to this 2017 release by the Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalás, we are told that the artist is "steadily achieving recognition as one of the leading virtuosos of his generation." The first half of the CD at hand, *Tribute*, earnestly substantiates those claims, emphasizing finger-wiggling velocity on a technically daunting polyphonic piece by Alexandre Tansman called *3 Variations on a theme of Scriabin*. This is a impressive piece, and at 10:16, the longest on the record. The enigmatic Scriabin theme leads the guitar far away from the typical guitaristic ambience, into the realm of heady Modernism that is nicely fit to the demands of the guitar.

The first track *Tiento Antiguo*, an inward looking lyrical piece with a minor mode brooding but few Iberian gestures, is by Rodrigo. The same composer is featured on track four, *Un Tiempo Fue Itálica Famoso*, a dark piece that alternates between Iberian castanet-accented strumming with florid passages of excessive virtuosic self-consciousness. The sound engineer has achieved a big close-up sound; the instrument (made by Thomas Humphrey) is vivid, with much timbral nuance between strings and registers.



The second track features Llobet's variations on a theme of *folias de Espana*. The first subject is a stately utterance and, on this instrument, sounds ravishing in its presentation. However, the descending bass line, immediately recognized as the 'Folias' chord progression promises that there will be 77 reiterations of this harmonic pattern. The hectic divisions (as they are called in pre-Baroque practice) are a catalog of guitar cliches, but the progression itself feels like the oppressive straight-jacket the guitar has been trying to escape for centuries. A nearly eight minutes, it is a mix of technical display and aural flogging.

Two of Astor Piazzolla's season *Portenos* come next, *Primavera* and *Invierno*. The first contains puckish harmony with some fancy counterpoint. Technically beyond reach of all but the most skilled hands, the piece is carried off with dazzle by the Greek guitar virtuoso. Both pieces have sweet passages which are played with rapt concentration. *Invierno* wafts lyrical with intricate sonic effects and harmonic detail but little discernable design. If it is aiming for an evocation of snow, it arrives merely at fog.

The title track *Tribute* is dedicated to Keith Jarrett and continues the trend towards moody sweetness. I don't know how many of Keith Jarrett's musical personae could be conjured up from this ambitious piece, but it is very effective. It begins with some of the relentless, trance-induced drive of that *sui generis* improviser and sweeps along breathlessly with gushing lyricism. The composer, Simone Iannerelli, has achieved a great success with this recording and must be thrilled at the mastery displayed by Mr. Mitsalás.



Sergio Assad's *Sandy's Portrait* follows. One is reminded that the legendary guitarist is a substantial composer, for it is a piece of depth and refinement. The Prelude has so much unexpected harmony supporting an exquisite lyric, while the Passacaglia has a more agreeable use of a chord cycle and ends on an unadorned major chord. The Toccata again demonstrates the guitarist's superb articulation on both a bustling and thoughtful couple of themes.

The recital ends with the heartfelt *By Candlelight*, affecting but simple theme with a repeated plangent melodic notion over simple minor chords. Andrew York has one foot in New Age music, but is a

capable composer of pastoral sensibility. It is a curious choice to end the recital so modestly rather than with one of the big pieces.

Perhaps it can be taken as a show of confidence by this outstanding guitarist, who has much more than just virtuosic prowess on demonstration in this outstanding release. Altogether an impressive concert by a first-rate musician.

***Fritz Balwin - November 2017 (Audiophile Audition)***



## **REVIEWS FOR THE 2016 CD RELEASE : SERGIO ASSAD - “MIKIS” CONCERTO FANTASIA (Works for Guitar & Strings – ClearNote 2016)**

### **SERGIO ASSAD’S NOTES ABOUT THE RECORDING PROJECT:**

In today’s world, where CDs are so easy to produce, very few recordings stand out above the vast sea of CD’s released every year. It is my great pleasure to introduce one of these very special recordings featuring chamber works for guitar and strings. This extremely well produced CD was recorded and engineered in Thessaloniki, Greece. The artists involved are of the highest caliber with a profound knowledge and understanding of chamber music. The exquisite classical guitarist from Greece Thanos Mitsalakis surrounded himself with top Greek string players and recorded this full album dedicated to some of the chamber music that I wrote over the years.

You will find here the first recording of the *Concerto Fantasia* for guitar and strings based on the music of our beloved Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis. Written in 1999, it was commissioned by Costas Cotsiolis and premiered by this great guitarist in Athens with the Athenian String Orchestra. The concerto is written after a collection of pieces that Theodorakis composed under the title *Lorca*. To create *Lorca*, a set of songs for guitar, contralto, choir and orchestra, he used a collection of poems written by Federico Garcia Lorca called *Romancero Gitano*. This work became one his most known pieces and was popularized by the recording of John Williams and Maria Farantouri.



The *Concerto Fantasia* presented in this CD uses Theodorakis’ themes and gives a special role to the guitar part treated in a stylistic concertante way. Formally, the piece is presented as a traditional concerto in three movements each movement using a pair of Theodorakis songs in a total of six. Making an echo to Theodorakis title, *Lorca*, the concerto fantasia was named *Mikis*, after the composer’s first name, in a pure and humble homage to his music.

The *5 World Dances* were commissioned by the Bath International Music Festival in 2001 and were my first pieces for guitar and string quartet. It comprises a set of 5 pieces each one featuring an idiomatic style of music from a different part of the globe. The subtitles reflect those regions: 1) *Middle Eastern*, 2) *Celtic*, 3) *African*, 4) *Balkan* and 5) *Latin American*.

It is a true honor to have my music so well presented here in this excellent recording!!

***Sergio Assad (2016)***

Sergio Assad's reputation as one of the contemporary world's most generous composers for guitar, his own instrument, is pretty much unchallenged. He lends his equally generous written imprimatur to this recording in which he praises Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalás and his string colleagues for the recording of two of his chamber works.

*Mikis*, the *Concerto Fantasia* for guitar and strings was composed in 1999 and based on music by Mikis Theodorakis called *Lorca*, a setting for guitar, contralto voice, choir and orchestra. It's the guitar's concertante role that Assad has especially turned to, employing pairings of Theodorakis' songs in each of the three movements. The music has a wealth of beguiling charm and, given the downward sonic extension of the double-bass added to the string quartet; it's vested with a bigger-than-expected sonority. There are rich Iberian rhythms, expressive breadth and plenty of alluring refinement. The longest movement is the central Andante, its wistful nostalgic lyricism balanced by faster contrastive runs, the product of elastic long-breathed writing rich in romance. Occasional fiesta-like moments of happiness and the occasional mordant incident widen the music's expressive compass. The finale is not pressed too hard but unfolds with a natural sense of buoyancy. A cadenza is deftly played by the splendid soloist.

The *Five World Dances* for guitar and string quartet was Assad's first work for this combination in 2002. The movements cover Middle-Eastern, Celtic, African, Balkan and Latin American. Each is sharply characterised, from the swaying aura of the opener, through the wistful lyric romance of the Celtic twilight, to the resonant drama of the Balkans. Still, perhaps it's the succulent tristesse of the Latin-American panel that most engages the listener, the music's tempi full of giddy and heady excitement. Once again Mitsalás and his excellent string colleagues prove equal to the music's demands, vesting it with rich sonority and technical address.

This isn't a new disc; it was recorded back in 2010. It's presented in card gatefold style with some colour photographs of the performers and composer and booklet recollections of a clearly very happy and satisfying recording. It certainly sounds like it from this delightful disc.

***Jonathan Woolf – September 2018 (MusicWeb International)***

Composer Assad gets top billing on this 52-minute program, which contains two long chamber works for guitar and four or five strings (two violins, viola, cello, double-bass). First up is "*Mikis*": *Concerto Fantasia for Guitar & Strings*, a world premiere recording of a piece Assad wrote in 1999 in tribute to and based on the music of the great Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis, specifically on a collection of pieces Theodorakis wrote inspired by some poems by Federico García Lorca. It's a sumptuous work, filled with great, sweeping melodies, a few angular modern touches, and a number of lovely guitar passages, all of which are handled deftly by the superb Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalás. The integration of the guitar and the strings is masterful. The second piece, a collection of five "world dances," delivers what the subtitled sections promise and much



more: “Middle Eastern” is appropriately charged and hypnotic, “Celtic” starts with a lilting Irish ballad feel and then jumps into a complex jig, etc. But leave it an imaginative composer like Assad to never fall into the clichés of the various genres, but instead use the rudiments of those musical languages as jumping-off points for his own extrapolations. Again, Mitsalás works well in every style and he and his bowed-strings compatriots are always right in the groove together. A truly wonderful album!

***Blair Jackson – September 2017 (Classical Guitar Magazine)***

I have reviewed Mr Mitsalás before, in a recording of Assad’s solos (M/J 2012) and in a collection called *The Italian Tradition* (S/O2012). A third collection, *Contemplation*, was also well received. I was very impressed with each release, and I am strongly impressed with this. First of all, the music is really wonderful. Mikis has a subtitle, ‘Concerto Fantasia for Guitar and Strings’, and was intended to be performed with a string orchestra. Here we hear one to a part, a string quartet with a double bass. It is based on the music of Mikis Theodorakis, specifically his *Lorca*, a work for guitar, contralto, chorus, and orchestra based on his cycle *Romancero Gitano*. I’ve never heard that work, though I assume the text is the same as Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s setting for guitar and chorus. I do know the music is lyrically beautiful, even in the most exciting, virtuosic passages. *5 World Dances* is for guitar and string quartet. Unlike Mikis, this is a fully integrated chamber work—the guitar is not dominant, though he has plenty to play. Each movement reflects a specific tradition: Middle Eastern, Celtic, African, Balkan and Latin American. The Celtic could be a traditional Scotch folk song, and the Balkan is in what Bartók called Bulgarian rhythms, 9/8, grouped 2+2+2+3.



Assad’s early music was strongly in the Latin American tradition—reflecting his Brazilian roots—but his mature work has transcended those roots. His music is no longer Latin—unless he intends it to be—and has become increasingly sophisticated. He is certainly among the finest composers the guitar world has in an increasingly crowded field. Mitsalás performs with the same high level of musicianship and virtuosity he has always delivered: gorgeous tone, absolutely fluent playing no matter how technically demanding the music becomes, and he always gets to the heart of whatever he’s playing. The strings, all fellow Greeks, play with perfect ensemble, intonation, and expression. A treasurable recording.

***Ken Keaton -American Record Guide - Sep/Oct 2016 )***



Anyone conversant in the classical guitar world knows the name of Sergio Assad, one half of the dynamic duo with his brother Odair. The Assads have long thrilled and inspired audiences the world over for their artistry, near perfect playing, and creative pushing of the repertoire for the classical guitar. In recent years, Sergio has composed for the guitar and ensembles (listen to his work with his

brother and the brilliant Paquito D'Riveira), and this CD, *Chamber Works for Guitar and Strings*, is one such project, leaving the guitar playing duties in the capable hands of Thanos Mitsalas. The disc is really six works. The opening piece is "Concerto Fantasia," based on the music of Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis. Many themes of his music weave in and out of this three movement work. The Allegro carries us forward in bright, pulsing rhythms, while the Andante is often a gentle whisper, punctuated by restless passages with minor key tensions. The Vivace caps the piece, strings rushing at us, only to be supplanted by Mitsalas' driving, yet lyrical, guitar playing. Assad says in the liner notes that the 5 World Dances are his first pieces for guitar and string quartet. Each dance highlights the musical legacy of different cultures – Middle Eastern, Celtic, African, Balkan, and Latin American. They are wonderful studies in melody and harmony. "Celtic" actually brings to mind in some passages the music of Appalachia in America, which makes sense, since that area was a melting pot of Old World musical traditions gaining their own voice in the New World. "Balkan" throbs with the whirling rhythms of Eastern Europe. The Quartet works seamlessly with Mitsalas in creating just the right aural textures and color. This is a brilliant disc of new paths in guitar and ensemble music, and one hopes Mr. Assad will continue to gift us with more efforts like this.

***Kirk Albrecht- (Minor 7th /July-August 2016)***

## REVIEWS FOR THANOS'S SOLO CD

### “Contemplation (ClearNote 2014)

Seeing a title like Contemplation might make one concerned about having one of those regrettable discs of faux-soulful, directionless, pieces suitable perhaps for your favorite stoner but no one else. Not to worry! Mitsalas' disc does include a number of quite and reflective pieces, but beautiful ones, superbly played. And as the program evolves it



adds more intense and very virtuosic works to balance the lighter ones. The opening is Simone Iannarelli's love Per Sofia, and the program concludes with a powerful traversal of the Bach Chaconne, making the most of its beauty and drama. In between are a number of beautiful works, including four of the Seis Brevaduras by Sergio Assad and the premiere recording of the same composer's marvelous tribute, Eli's Portrait, for Toronto's Eli Kassner. Mitsalas also makes the most of Nuccio D'Angelo's Due Canzoni Lidie.

Recorded sound is good, although the guitar sounds about ten feet wide. This is most likely a function of microphone placement and really does not inhibit enjoyment of the disc at all; just don't overdo the volume. Excellent notes are provided in a well-designed, tri-fold sleeve. -

***Al Kunze - (Soundboard Magazine / Spring 2015)***

Five years ago I had the great pleasure of reviewing Thanos Mitsalas' debut CD, which I found to be movingly personal and expressive, while also being remarkably clean and articulate. And today, Mitsalas' newest offering, entitled "Contemplation", is quite simply one of the finest recordings I've encountered in my decade of writing reviews. Like before, his playing is stunningly accurate, crisp, and full of life. From beginning to end Mitsalas marries all of the elements of great classical guitar playing: enormous and evocative tonal range, world-class command of the instrument, and a unique and defining musical voice. The repertoire he selected is interpretively and technically challenging, oftentimes peppered with temperamental dynamic nuance, and at other times marked by enormous and moving dynamic juxtapositions. Mitsalas opens with a swaying and meditative work by Sinone Iannarelli entitled 'Per Sofia'. The piece delicately transports the listener into Mitsalas' musical world, drawn not only from a traditional-classical perspective, but also heavily influenced by modern Spanish and South American styles. Next are four Brevaduras composed by the legendary Brazilian guitarist and composer Sergio Assad. Had the entire disc been only these four pieces, I may have been satisfied, as they straddle a vast musical range, and require Mitsalas to explore the extremes of the instrument and his technique. The disc continues through several other lovely Spanish/South American works before it finally, and somewhat surprisingly, closes with Mitsalas' own arrangement of JS Bach's moving 'Chaconne' from the D minor Violin Partita. Why, after so many modern, Latin compositions are we suddenly thrust back to the Baroque period? From my perspective, this is very similar to what Bach had originally intended with the Chaconne. As the last movement of a violin partita, it was a disproportionately enormous and musically deep finale to an otherwise innocuous set of works for violin. Here again, just as Bach originally imagined it, we find the Chaconne placed where no one would expect it, concluding a seemingly unrelated set of works with a single massive and moving musical gesture. I can't imagine a better conclusion to this disc, as Mitsalas has delivered an absolutely impeccable recording that will definitely be turning heads, beginning to end.

***Timothy Smith - November 2014 (minor 7<sup>th</sup>)***

Having recently reviewed a rather lukewarm recording of a mixed repertoire nature that also included Egberto Gismonti's *Água e Vinho*, dangerously heading beyond ubiquity, it is most pleasing to say that this recording by Thanos Mitsalás is pretty red-hot.

The neat, fold-out packaging by Clear Note (USA) is minimal but delightfully so; four printed pages of notes without a booklet one can never get back into the pocket. So, appearances help but we know they're not everything and upon closer inspection the varied repertoire here is far from ordinary or common place, which is exactly the right thing to do if you're an aspiring virtuoso; a term not handed out lightly on the pages of Classical Guitar Magazine.

It is always a delight to hear Simone Iannarelli's music; while very much contemporary is always refreshingly accessible and uses the guitar's multitude of sonorities to great effect. Sérgio Assad's compositions cannot be seriously attempted without a formidable arsenal of technical ability and musical sensitivity. Gismonti's piece, here played brilliantly solo, and not overdubbed, (based on an arrangement by Daniel Wolff), is how it should be played, if one must! The premiere of the Assad piece *Eli's Portrait*, is a dedication to Canadian guitar educator extraordinaire Eli Kassner and his 80th anniversary. Using the musical alphabet as an armature the piece is, as expected, fluid and spectacular with underpinning luscious harmonies that one has simply come to expect from the pen of Sérgio Assad, a gorgeous addition to the repertoire.

And carefully placed, not too far from the beginning and not too close to the end, *Due Canzoni Lidie* by Nuccio D'Angelo, is using a slightly more taxing musical language but not too much so; the resonances of the Lydian mode are utilised in a most beguiling and attractive way.

And indeed the *Lullaby for Sarah* does lull us into a sense of great satisfaction and serenity but Mitsalás has not finished yet! His transcription of the great *Chaconne* from the *Violin Partita no2* BWV1004 is the valedictory wakeup call to pull us to our senses and make us leave the concert hall grinning from ear-to-ear, relishing in that postrecital glow, after witnessing something rather special. It really is a performance to wax lyrical about. The impressive restraint in the contemplative moments succeeds in making the explosive virtuosity of the fast passages doubly striking.

A wonderful example of how a recital CD should be presented. Highly recommended!

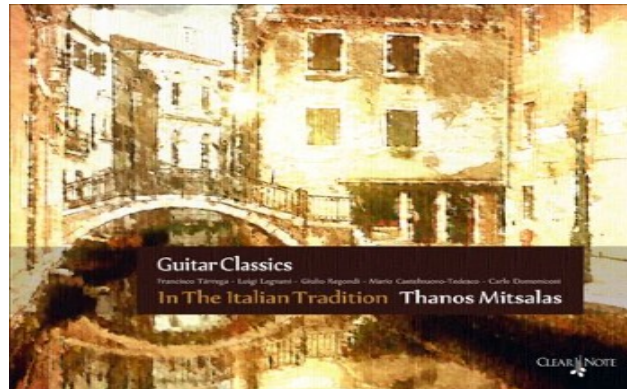
***Tim Panting - Nov 2014 (Classical Guitar Magazine)***





## REVIEWS FOR THANOS'S SOLO CD

### "Guitar Classics-In the Italian Tradition" (ClearNote 2012)



One can argue with the designation of this program as a representation of the “Italian Tradition”; the first work is by a Catalanian, the last more Turkish than Italian. But that is of small consequence when the program is so well played. Mitsalas has a finely developed technique—this is a challenging program, and he never struggles. He has a wide range of timbre and dynamics, though he never overplays. He has a free yet convincing use of rubato. Overindulgent rubato can really ruin a piece—it should always have a purpose, either to clarify the architecture or to enhance the expression of a phrase. Most important, it should always seem natural and convincing. Some players leave me scratching my head; but with Mitsalas I always feel that this is right, there is no other way to do this passage. He can even make silk purses out of proverbial sow’s ears. Tarrega’s ‘Carnival of Venice’, based on Paganini’s, is not great music. It’s stuff to have fun with. Mitsalas gives it a royal treatment, without any sense of how tacky this can be. Giulio Regondi often overstays his welcome. He had lovely melodic talent, but his massive technical ability causes him simply to keep going until the point of absurdity has been crossed. It takes a great musician to make these pieces work, and I’ve never heard them played better. Luigi Legnani was Paganini’s friend, the guitarist in his many works for guitar and violin. I didn’t know this Fantasia, but it recalls Giuliani (or, more accurately, Rossini) in its sheer joyousness. The Castelnuovo-Tedesco Capriccio Diabolico is one of his most beautiful and most difficult works. In the last issue (J/A 2012) I had good things to say about Renato Samuelli’s performance, but this is stronger on all counts. The Domeniconi is ubiquitous—the “It” piece for guitarists. There are many strong performances of this hauntingly beautiful work, but this is as fine as any.

***Kenneth Keaton - September 2012 (American Record Guide)***

As far as the guitar is concerned, I'm not sure there is an "Italian tradition" as much as there is a rich history of Italians writing music for and playing the guitar. (Do we speak of the "pasta tradition," after all?) Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalas's new CD explores that "tradition" with most enjoyable results. It opens not with an Italian composer, however, but with one from Spain—the colorful Francisco Tárrega, who was active as a guitarist and composer during the latter part of the 19th century. Apparently no one knows who wrote *The Carnival of Venice*, but it has been the theme for variations written by a number of composers, including Paganini (for violin) and Johann Kaspar Mertz (another version for guitar). In their increasing difficulty, Tárrega's variations seem to have been inspired by Paganini's, but Mitsalas seems unfazed by at all, spinning out the ever more complicated figurations almost nonchalantly. The long-lived Legnani (1790-1877) was not only a guitarist, but also a tenor, who sang in operas by Rossini, and others. He too was inspired by Paganini, and even wrote a set of *Caprices* for guitar. After a grave introduction, his *Fantasia* takes off on a charming flight of fancy that doesn't sound unlike something that Rossini might have composed, had he composed for the guitar. Castelnuovo-Tedesco came to the United States in 1939 as a result of increasing anti-Semitism in his homeland. This *Capriccio diabolico* dates from 1934, and also was inspired by Paganini—including by that composer-violinist's rumored pact with the devil! In the United States, Castelnuovo-Tedesco's pupils included film composer John Williams (not the guitarist by that name!). Some of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's concert music sounds like John Williams, although of course it really should be the other way around. The *Capriccio diabolico*, however, really is steeped in the "Italian tradition." It is most diabolical in the way that it heaps one difficulty upon another for the performer. Again, Mitsalas copes with it all with a smoothness that seems, well, almost devilish. Although his music has been given a new lease on life in recent years, Giulio Regondi is something of a mystery. Not very much seems to be known about him—there are even questions about the precise date and place of his birth. (He was, however, born in 1822.) Many of his later works were composed for concertina. The two guitar works recorded here quickly entered the repertory of (advanced) guitarists when they were recently rediscovered. The Nocturne "Reverie" is wistful throughout, and its relaxed melodic bent certainly suggests Italy. The booklet notes describe it as "perhaps the greatest tremolo piece written for the instrument," and if it fatigues Mitsalas, there is no hint of that in this performance. The Introduction and Caprice also has a low-key charm. Regondi may have been a virtuoso, and these two works may be difficult to play, but the emphasis here is on a singing line and on creating a sense of



comfort and ease. Here, Mitsalas shows that he can play in a warm, cantabile style; he's not just a dazzler. Carlo Domeniconi is in his sixties, and his "greatest hit" probably is this four-movement suite. Koyunbaba means "sheep father," which is another way of saying "shepherd." It was inspired by Domeniconi's travels in Turkey. "Koyunbaba" is also a family name—there was an actual Koyunbaba in the 1200s—and some believe that the land on which he lived and worked is bewitched; many outsiders who have attempted to settle upon it apparently have become ill! Domeniconi's suite could be a curse on unprepared guitarists; it is highly demanding. Again, Mitsalas has it all under control. He aptly conveys the music's mystery and legendary qualities, and generates a good deal of intensity. The final Presto is unbelievable, in its speed and clarity. Mitsalas has been given excellent engineering, although some of the tracks cut off too quickly, robbing some of the decay from the guitar's final notes. The booklet notes give a good introduction to the repertory, but they needed a good editor.

***Raymond Tuttle – August 2012 (classical.net)***

Greek virtuoso Thanos Mitsalas has hopped the pond—in this case the Ionian Sea—for a diverse program of music by Italian composers. It is a fruitful journey, for he brings to this nicely varied program flawless musicianship, winning musicality, and beautiful tone. In fact, my only cavil with the disc is the first work, the Tárrega Variations on the "Carnival of Venice." In a piece like this, which we must admit does not plumb any musical depths, a sense of abandon is really needed, and at times Mitsalas seems a bit constrained, not technically, but in the necessary sense of playfulness without which the piece is less effective. But from the Legnani Fantasia which follows to the end of the disc, we are fully in the hands of a top-flight player. The Legnani, for instance, displays Mitsalas' wonderful sense of balance among voices. It is something which should always happen, but often does not. Castelnuovo-Tedesco's Capriccio diabolico gets an exemplary performance distinguished by exquisite phrasing, variety of tone and articulation, and well-chosen use of agogic accents. Good job, Thanos! He also has a fine way with two of Regondi's greatest hits, Nocturne "Rêverie" and Introduction and Caprice. Not to detract from the merits of his performance, these pieces always leave me wanting not more, but less. They seem to substitute rhetoric for real drama. But that's me—you may love them. Mitsalas is doing everything he can. Carlo Domeniconi is Italian but the Turkish roots of Koyunbaba are a bit out of the "Italian tradition." No matter. It is a fun piece, very well played here. We'll just assume that he hopped an alternate pond. Recorded sound is excellent. —

***Al Kunze - Soundboard (vol 38, n4)***

## **REVIEWS FOR THANOS'S SOLO CD "Thanos Mitsalas plays music by Sergio Assad" (ClearNote 2009)**

**Thanos's recording of Assad's FANTASIA CARIOCA is included in Enrique Robichaud's book "Guitar's Top 100".**



....Mitsalas's playing is excellent. He has a fine feel for Assad's idiom in these pieces, and his technical command and sense of invention and expression are impressive.....this is an excellent introduction if you are not familiar with his music.

***Kenneth Keaton - May 2012 (American Record Guide)***

Like Argentine tango fusionist Astor Piazzolla, Brazilian guitarist Sergio Assad has considerable gifts as a composer, merging national rhythms with more extended compositional concepts. His works have begun to enter the guitar repertoire and to attract performances like this welcome debut from Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalas. Avoiding the usual weakness of the independent guitar releases, he is nicely recorded by Cue Productions studio in Thessaloniki, and has plenty of power in reserve in the difficult 3 Greek Letters (tracks 12-14). If you want the fireworks of which Assad is capable, go there to hear them in a slightly Greek-inflected form. The work was not composed for Mitsalas but is natural for him.....A highly recommended CD!

***James Manheim - April 2012 (All music review)***

.....The majority of the works here put considerable technical and at times, musical demands upon the performer being rife with virtuosic rapid arpeggios and intricate scale passages. Mitsalas takes all this in his stride and the compositions are never musically compromised, the player showing a high respect for these pieces and his enjoyment in performing these works coming across very well...

***Steve Marsh - May 2010 (Classical Guitar Magazine)***

.....Though tackling these works would seem like a daunting task for any accomplished guitarist, the Juilliard trained performer and educator excels in the face of this challenge, producing an album that is not only enjoyable to listen to, but that stands up to the level of scrutiny that any work containing Sergio's music would surely face.....

***Matt Warnock – January 2011 (Guitar International Magazine)***



.....The young Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalas has recorded a large part of Sergio Assad's original compositions for solo guitar....Mitsalas seems thoroughly at home in this repertoire. The syncopations of the first of the three divertimentos appear to come naturally to him; so do the relative formalities of the Sonata (a particularly interesting work). Remembrance and Farewell were written as film music and get attractive and evocative performances. Fantasia Carioca, written to celebrate the City of Rio de Janeiro, is a striking tone poem, playfully (and thoughtfully) various tempos and phrasing, and Mitsalas invests it with real feeling. Everywhere one senses a vitality of personal commitment and a disciplined freedom in his interpretations.

Thanos Mitsalas is an impressive soloist and here he throws a rewarding light on some interesting compositions. He benefits from a recorded sound that is intimate without being over-close.

***Glyn Pursglove - June 2010 (musicweb-international)***

Although most classical guitar enthusiasts know Sergio Assad as one half of the legendary Assad Brothers Duo, in recent years his solo guitar compositions have been garnering attention from performers and concert goers alike. His music is a unique blend of South American melodies backed occasionally by risque contemporary harmonies. It is this music that makes up the debut CD of Greek guitarist Thanos Mitsalas. The fluid and expressive nature of Assad's works leave plenty of room for unique interpretation, and Mitsalas takes full advantage of this. Instead of simply reciting the compositions according to Assad's directions, there is a true sense that Mitsalas wanted to use the works as a medium for his own artistic statement. While it may be Assad's notes, the music is undoubtedly coming from Mitsalas. He delicately phrases the characteristic Latin melodies and effortlessly navigates the technically challenging passages. Although young, Mitsalas's musicianship is remarkably mature, and this disc serves as an excellent introduction to this budding guitarist.

***Timothy Smith – Jan 2010 (Minor 7th music magazine)***

.....This young performer has a lot going for him, and I predict his name soon will become more familiar among guitar enthusiasts....Assad's music is not easy to play, but it falls easily on the ear - not because it is simple, but because it is full of piquant harmonies and rhythms, and other pleasant surprises! It has many twists and turns, but it is never unfriendly. Mitsalas plays it cleanly and expressively, and is not ruffled by the complicated rhythms in the *Fantasia Carioca*, for example. The recording captures the warm sound of his Thomas Humphrey guitar.

If you don't know Sergio Assad's solo guitar music, Thanos Mitsalas's CD will give you an excellent place to get started.

***Raymond Tuttle – Sep 2009 (classical.net)***

## REPERTORY :

### *GUITAR + QUARTET / GUITAR+STRINGS / GUITAR + SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA*

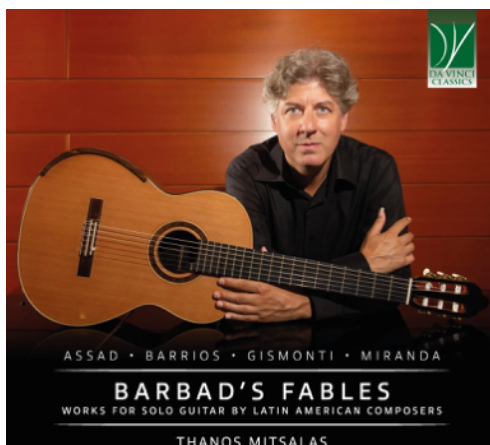
<b>Thanos Mikroutsikos</b>	“Suite for guitar and String Orchetra”
<b>Antonio Vivaldi</b>	Concerto in C major RV 425 (Guitar +Strings or String Quartet) Concerto in D major RV 93 (Guitar +Strings or String Quartet)
<b>Luigi Boccherini</b>	“Fandango” Quintet (Guitar + String Quartet)
<b>Mauro Giuliani</b>	Concerto in A major (op.30) (Guitar + Strings + timpani or Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Franzt Schubert</b>	Arpeggionne Sonata D821 (Guitar + Strings)
<b>Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco</b>	Primo Concerto in D (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Concerto in C (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Mario Castelnuovo Tedesco</b>	Quintette (Guitar + String Quartet)
<b>Manuel Ponce</b>	Concerto del Sur (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Heitor Villa Lobos</b>	Concerto pour guitare et petit orchestre (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Joaquin Rodrigo</b>	Concerto de Aranjuez (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra) Fantasia para un Gentil Hombre (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra) Concerto Andaluz (4 Guitars + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Sergio Assad</b>	“Mikis” Concerto Fantasia (Guitar + Strings or String Quintet) 5 World Dances (Guitar + String Quartet) “Naousa – Concerto (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra) “Concerto do Rio” (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)

<b>Ernesto Cordero</b>	Concerto Antillano (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra) Concerto Evocativo (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Astor Piazzolla</b>	Double Concerto for guitar, bandoneon and Strings
<b>Leo Brouwer</b>	Concerto No.6 “Volos” (Guitar + Strings)
<b>Leo Brouwer</b>	Concerto No.5 “Helsinki” (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Leo Brouwer</b>	Concerto No.4 “Toronto” (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Leo Brouwer</b>	Concerto No.3 “Elegiaco” (Guitar + Symphony Orchestra)
<b>Leo Brouwer</b>	Quintetto (Guitar + String Quartet)
<b>Leo Brouwer</b>	Quintetto (fl+ob+cl+gtr+Vc)
<b>Leo Brouwer</b>	Tres Danzas Concertantes (Guitar + Strings or String Quartet)
<b>Arvo Part</b>	Fratres (Guitar +Strings + Percussion)
<b>Maximo Diego Pujol</b>	Suite “Buenos Aires (Guitar + String Quartet)
<b>Roberto Sierra</b>	Triptico (Guitar + String Quartet)
<b>Jacques Hetu</b>	Concerto op.56 (Guitar +Strings)
<b>Roland Dyens</b>	Tango en skai (Guitar +Strings or String Quartet)
<b>Denis Gougeon</b>	Concertino (Guitar +Strings)
<b>Dusan Bogdanovic</b>	Byzantine Theme and Variations (Guitar + String Quartet)



# RECORDINGS :

## **“Barbad’s Fables”**



### **S.Assad (1952-)**

1. Sun Wukong's Toccata \*

### **E.Gismonti (1947-)**

2. Memoria e Fado

### **R.Miranda (1948-)**

3. Apassionata

### **E.Gismonti**

4. Palhaço

### **A.Barrios Mangoré (1885-1944)**

5. Una Limosna por el Amor de Dios

### **S. Assad**

6. Barbad's Fables \*
7. Preludio op.5 No.1
8. Las Abejas

**Link to Video Sample:**



**\*Premiere CD Recordings**



## **“Seikilos Epitaph’s Fantasy”**



### **J.Rodrigo (1901-1999)**

1. Toccata for Guitar (1933)

### **G.Drozd (1950-)**

Two Songs. Op.172

2. In a mood

3. Song

(Dedicated to T.Mitsalas)

### **S.Iannarelli (1970-)**

4. Fantasia in Re

(Dedicated to T.Mitsalas)

### **A.Barrios Mangoré (1885-1944)**

5. Un Sueno en la Floresta

### **G.Drozd (1950-)**

Kaleidoscopic Waltzes, op.169

6. No 1

7. No2

(Dedicated to T.Mitsalas)

### **Sergio Assad (1952-)**

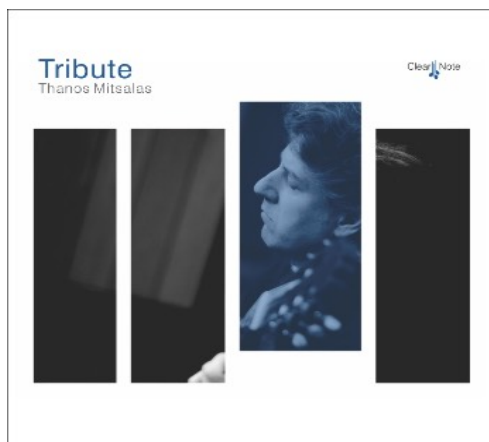
8. Seikilos Epitaph's Fantasy

(Dedicated to T.Mitsalas)

**Link to Video Sample:**



## “Tribute”



**Link to Video Sample:**  
<https://youtu.be/bWhx47pDJm4>



### **J.Rodrigo (1901-1999)**

1. Tiento Antiguo

### **M.Llobet (1878-1938)**

2. Variations on the theme of folias de Espana  
("folias de Espana")

### **A.Tansman (1897-1986)**

3. Variations on a theme of Scriabin

### **J..Rodrigo (1901-1999)**

4. Un tiempo fue Italica famosa

### **Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)**

5. Primavera Portena

6. Invierno Porteno

### **Simone Iannarelli (1970-)**

7. Tribute to Keith Jarrett

### **Sergio Assad (1952-)**

Sandy's Portrait

8. Prelude

9. Passacaglia

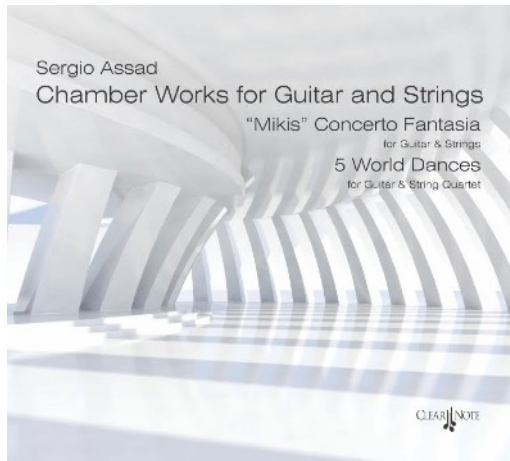
10. Toccata

### **Andrew York (1958-)**

"Encore piece" (Bonus Track)

11. By Candlelight

**Sergio Assad - "Mikis"  
Concerto Fantasia**



**Link to Video Sample:**  
<http://www.mitsalas.com/cd2.htm>

**Chamber Works for Guitar  
& Strings**

**"Mikis" Concerto Fantasia (world premiere  
recording)**

1. Allegro
2. Andante
3. Vivace

**"5 World Dances"  
for Guitar & String Quartet**

4. Middle-Eastern
5. Celtic
6. African
7. Balkan
8. Latin American

***"Contemplation"***

**Simone Iannarelli (1970-)**

1. Per Sofia

**Sergio Assad (1952-)  
Brevaduras (from Seis Brevaduras)**

2. Chuva
3. Tarde
4. Cantiga
5. Saltitante
6. Preludio e toccatina
6. Preludio e toccatina (from Aquarelle)

**Egberto Gismonti (1947-)**

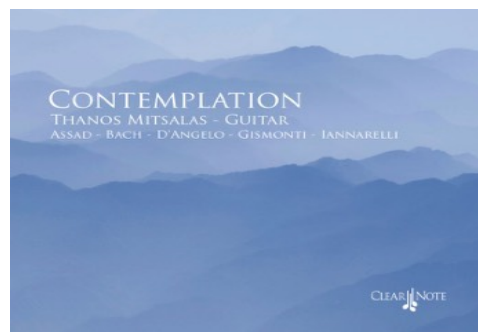
7. Agua e Vinho\*

**Sergio Assad (1952-)**

8. Eli's portrait (world premiere recording)

**Nuccio D'Angelo (1955-)  
Due Canzoni Lidie**

9. Tranquillo
10. Agitato



**Link to Video Sample:**  
[https://youtu.be/is\\_NJtAPxHA](https://youtu.be/is_NJtAPxHA)

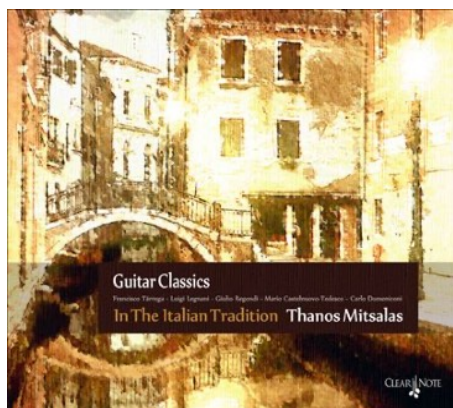
**Simone Iannarelli (1970-)**

11. Lullaby for Sarah

**J. S. Bach (1685-1750)**

12. Chaconne (from the 2<sup>nd</sup> solo  
violin partita BWV1004)

## *“In The Italian Tradition”*



**Link to Video Sample:**

**<https://youtu.be/MYITkpbXoUA>**

### **Francisco Tarrega (1852–1909)**

1. Variations on the theme Carnevale di Venezia

### **Luigi Legnani (1790-1877)**

2. Fantasia Op.19

### **Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968)**

3. Capriccio Diabolico

### **Giulio Regondi (c. 1822)**

4. Nocturne Reverie Op.19
5. Introduction and Caprice

### **Carlo Domeniconi (b. 1947)**

Koyunbaba

6. Moderato
7. Mosso
8. Cantabile
9. Presto

*“Thanos Mitsalás plays music  
by Sergio Assad”*

### **3 Divertimentos**

1. Abaete
2. Arpoador
3. Parati

**(from Summer Garden Suite)**

4. Remembrance

### **Sonata**

5. Allegro moderato
6. Andante
7. Presto [3:07]

**(from Summer Garden Suite)**

8. Farewell

### **9. Fantasia Carioca**

**(from Summer Garden Suite)**

10. Dreams



**Link to Video Sample:**

**[https://youtu.be/Vfme0Q\\_\\_nx4](https://youtu.be/Vfme0Q__nx4)**

**(from Aquarelle)**

11. Valseana

### **3 Greek Letters**

12. Pi / 13. Psi / 14. Sigma



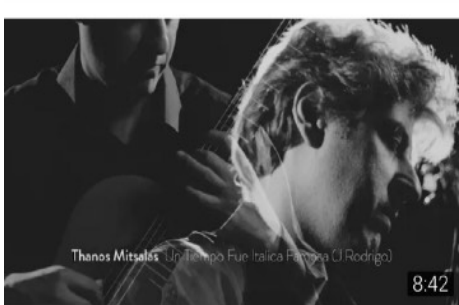


<https://youtu.be/1NhXtceO3QY>



Thanos Mitsalas performs Toccata by Sergio Assad

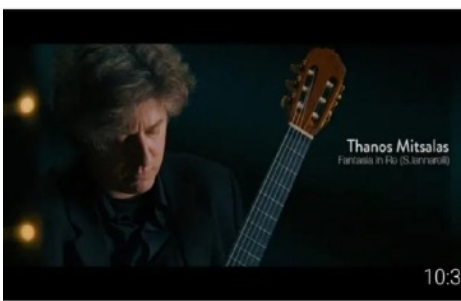
<https://youtu.be/bWhx47pDJm4>



Thanos Mitsalas - Un tiempo fue Itálica famosa (J. Rodrigo)



Thanos Mitsalas plays Seikilos Epitaph's Fantasy by Sergio A...



Thanos Mitsalas plays Fantasia in Re by Simone Iannarelli

<https://youtu.be/0oqP7YZWkBU>

<https://youtu.be/htSzfKsBp3I>

# CONTACT

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