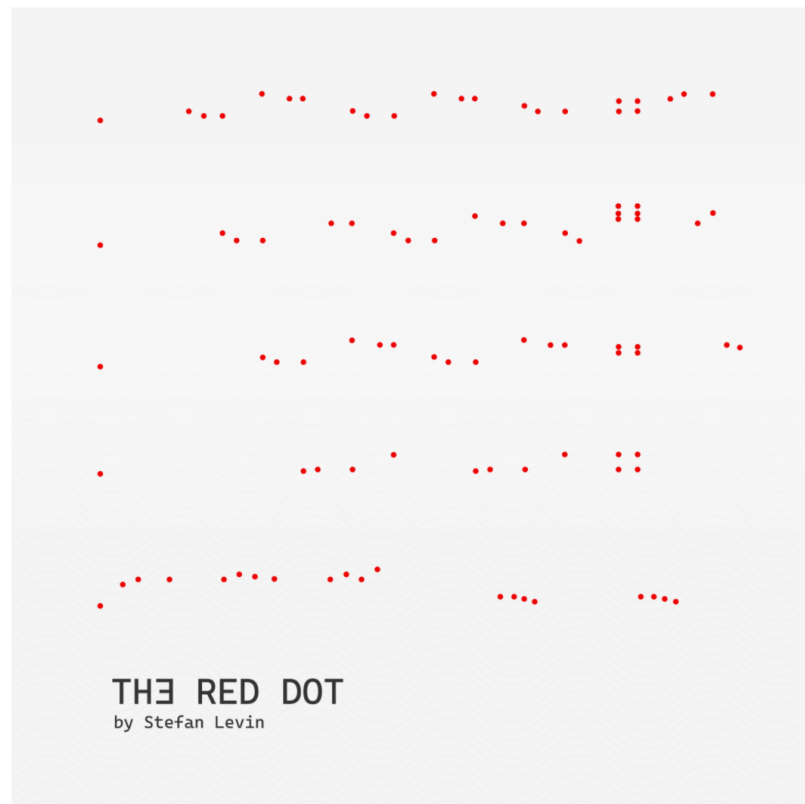


Stefan Levin

Music for solo guitar,  
Guitar Quartet and Guitar Quintet  
(1991-2024)

Release  
on all major  
streaming services

2024-06-14



## Preface

At the age of 13 I got hooked on the classical guitar. During the school's summer vacation you would find me in the basement of my family's house, studying the classical guitar music, deeply moved by the beautiful small pieces in "Die Stunde der Gitarre": Carulli waltzes, Sor studies, Giuliani etc. To me the tiny pieces sounded like an whole orchestra. I got the feeling that I was working as a court musician (far away from that basement and even more far away from the sunny summer).

It took some years, but at the age of 15 I discovered Leo Brouwer's music through his "Etudes Simples". I studied all the Etudes and found them beautiful. Wow! Is this also classical guitar music I definitely want to play more contemporary music! With 16 I got my hands on Danza Caracteristica and that piece (and Sor's Marlborough variations) got me in to the Conservatory of Music in Gothenburg when I was 17 to study with Josef Holecek. I graduated 4,5 years later and on my debut concert I played Brouwer's "El Decameron Negro", which might have been the first performance of the piece in Sweden. After my graduation I studied with Angelo Gilardino (who published my "Quattro Schizzi Veneziani" at Bérben in 1991) and I also went to the legendary Fereinkurse für neue Musik, Darmstadt where Magnus Andersson was teaching. During this period I wrote more experimental guitar music, pieces that might occur on a future album.

Up to 1994 I gave a lot of concerts, when my work as a full time composer took over. I started to write music for theatre plays in the mid 90s, and for contemporary dance productions ten years later. My latest added genre, since a decade back, is filmmusic.

The guitars were under my bed till the day in 2014 my spouse said: "I think you should start to play again or otherwise sell the guitars." I choosed to pick up the guitar and started the duo Nyman/Levin, where, we developed improvisations based on methods from the classical tradition.

The return to play the guitar also inspired me to compose for the guitar again. The first ideas that showed up were reminiscences of the repertoire that I played in my youth: Brouwer's "Etudes Simple". My Six Studies, composed in 2016, can be seen as an abstraction of Brouwer's Etudes, a grateful greeting to Mr Brouwer - his music was the injection that gave me a musical trip of a life time. The music is filtered through other music and artistic experiences that has occurred during the ca 45 years since I discovered the classical guitar in my teenage period.

It has been a true pleasure to collaborate with Ariadna Abreu Ruiz and the Rebel Guitar Quartet on this album.

Dear listener, please lean back and close your eyes - I hope you will enjoy the Red Dot Album!



## The Red Dot

Yes, what is it about the Red Dot? :-)

Well, when building my studio in central Stockholm over two decades ago I spontaneously decorated it with round objects that carried the red colour. I furnished with red chairs and a red round table on a red round carpet. I also painted all round objects like drain pipes, ventilation lid covers in red. I am still not sure why...

When thinking of a title for this album I had the feeling that it would be about something circular - I revisit my youth and returning to a point that now has an other vantage point.

A decade ago I met William (Bill) Anders in, the man to took the worlds most known photo "Earthrise" from that tiny little window from Apollo 8 on 24 december 1968 - after the fourth orbit around the moon.

We are moving in circles to discover new things after every orbit. In all humbleness, for me this album is one orbit (more orbits to follow) around the six strings I have been close to the last +45 years...

I hope you enjoy it!

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate*

T.S. Eliot, from "Little Gidding," Four Quartets

Emilio Ramos is a audio/visual artist from Cuba that has made several short audio/visuals clips to my music through recent years. I contacted him and we talked about the red circle/dot. For Emilio it is the most natural symbol: nature moves in circular time, not in linear...

He wrote to me: "In your case you have completed a cycle and are somehow returning to your beginnings, completing the circle. Flowers are born and die, but they bloom again the following year and die again, responding to a cycle like the one we want to represent in this album."





## Six Studies - for the intermediate guitarist Homage a' Leo Brouwer

### Study no 1: "The Cuban Harp"

As the title suggests this piece mimics the sound of a harp, where the strings of the guitar should ring as long as possible. Here is the guitar sounding like we had the piano's left pedal, the one we so often are missing on the guitar. Try to get the legato play and campanella effects as smooth as possible. Be economical with the dynamics and build a nice bow throughout the whole piece.

### Study no 2: "The Singing local Baker"

When I started to study the guitar I wanted to play fast and be a virtuoso. What I realized later on was the effort it takes to get the guitar to sing. Due to the fact that the guitar tone dies in the same moment as you hit the string the challenge is to get the guitar to sing. We want to create an illusion that we can do a crescendo of a note that has already been played. And you can! Use the accompaniment to shape and help the melody to prolong the lines.

### Study no 3: "The Tornado"

Here you have the chance to show your virtuosity in fast gestures. The Tornado with its forceful rotating motions is the core of this piece. Use the dynamics to create whirlwinds! And as always, start slowly, practice carefully and be meticulous, then you avoid later errors...

### Study No 4: "Night in the village"

The fireplace is almost out. The sound of the ocean from a far distance. The accompanying rhythm under the solo melody can be seen as echoes from soft drums played earlier in the evening. You don't have to hide and play the piece too silently. Even though this is an introspective piece there is room to be expressive, like sung by a clear and strong inner voice that doesn't awake the sleeping village.

### Study No 5: "Departure"

This Study is an idiomatic piece where the fingers move in certain figures and patterns. Musically we are going back and forth between decisions. It might describe the uncertain feeling of leaving or staying. Finally you come to a decision to leave – in order to experience something new.

### Study No 6: "The Wild Dance"

For several centuries the guitar repertoire has contained many dance pieces. As a composer of contemporary dance productions I love rhythms and the energetic and clattering sixteenth notes that drive the bodies forward. In this piece your right hand can celebrate your virtuosity. To be rhythmic and keep the tempo throughout this intense movement is a challenge, a metronome is a good help. Celebrate the dance!  
(The righthand figure is of course from Brouwer's Danza Caracteristica, the piece that really got me started as a 16-year-old guitarist, now more than 40 years ago.)



## Awards

Guitar People Prize Stockholm, Sweden 2011. The justification being: *with her total dedication to the acoustic classical guitar and her unprestigious stance between folk music and classical guitar provides the conditions to create great curiosity among many younger female guitarists.*

National scholarship award by the Royal Academy of Arts in Stockholm, Sweden 2010.

IV Festival and International Guitar Competition of Torrent, Valencia Spain 2002. Mention of Honour.

X Festival and International Guitar Competition in Havana, Cuba 2000. Prize for best interpretation of Cuban music "Rito de los Orishas" by Leo Brouwer and "Como Son" by Harold Gramatges.

Prize Celedonio Romero: Concert guitar made by Manuel Contreras (father) 1987 that was part of the private collection of guitars of Celedonio Romero and Spanish guitarist Pepe Romero.

Prize Association Hermanos Saiz.

## Ariadna Abreu Ruiz

As an 8-year-old child prodigy, Ariadna entered Havana's Music Institute for Young Talents where she has studied to perfection. She graduated with a Bachelor's degree from the Instituto Superior de Arte ISA La Habana, Cuba, with a gold medal diploma in profile guitar and pedagogy.

She then continued her studies in Sweden where she obtained a Master's degree from the Academy of Music and Drama at Gothenburg University and as well as a second Master's degree in interpretation and chamber music from the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm in 2011.

Her teachers include: Leo Brouwer, Issac Nicola, Clara Nicola, Rey Guerra, Marta Campos, Martin Pedreira, Peter Berlin Carlsson, Erik Stentadvold and Gunnar Spjuth.

She is active in Stockholm Contemporary Guitar Ensemble as well as in Duo Abreu Sisters, together with her sister Lissy who plays the violin.

Ariadna plays on guitars made by the Spanish luthiers Manuel Contreras (father) 1987 and Antonio Morales 2009.



Photo Charrel Hermosa

Rebell Gitarrkvartett & Stefan Levin  
present

# ALL FOR NOW



A cinematic musical experience

PRODUCTION PART: REBELL GITARRKVARTETT STEFAN  
LEVIN EVELINA LUNDBERG 376FILMS DANIEL ÖRCKE  
SCENA WIKSTRÖM SOPHIE JONSSON BENJAMIN HOLMÖVIST

## All for Now

This suite was a surprise composition for the Rebel Guitar Quartet, created during the pandemic. I met the members of the Rebel Quartet in 2017 while giving a workshop in classical improvisation.

The different movements represent different emotions I experienced through the pandemic: the swing between feeling isolated, dancing the blues, irritation, but also time for reflections, calmness, the hope that things would take a turn for the better.

Originally it was eight movements. For this album I have chosen seven of them and divided them into two parts:

First part:

*Prelude  
It will be better  
Make it happen!  
And then we danced*

Second part:

*Head against the wall, again  
We dreamed about Butterflies*



## Rebel Guitar Mission

We believe in a world where contemporary classical music is alive, exciting and accessible for the broader audience. Therefore we constantly strive to collaborate with many different bookers of live music. Previous concert venues include bars, concert houses, clubs, churches, cinemas and festivals.

Our repertoire is a mixture of original modern music for guitar quartet, as well as our own arrangements in the style of contemporary classical music, but also cross-genre concepts. We have premiered a number of pieces written for and dedicated to Rebell Gitarrkvartett, including original music by Stefan Levin, Annette Kruisbrink and Gabriel Stenborg.

## Rebel Guitar Quartet

Four friends - four guitarists.

Our aim is to share modern day music written or arranged for guitar quartet. In doing so we wish to explore new artistic ground and invite new audiences. Through collaborations with composers, artists and creators we are constantly in search for new exciting expressions and venues.

The music we perform is instrumental, often abstract, but also melodic. Together our four classical guitars create an acoustic world of resonance, in which both contemplation and lively energy has its place.

Rebell Gitarrkvartett was founded in 2019 during studies at the school of music, art and drama, Örebro University, but are currently based in Malmö.





## Quattro Schizzi Veneziani

During the summer of 1991 I spent a few weeks in Venice, Italy. Instead of composing I started to create musical drawings. I never thought I had any talent for drawing, but then I encountered the celebrated Norwegian/Danish painter Nils-Eric Gjerdevik who thought my drawings were original and interesting. That inspired to explore my newfound interest.

### Quattro Schizzi Veneziani I

I arrived late in the evening to Venice, the silence was overwhelming. Immediately I started to compose the Prelude, a classic form to present the material. The major 7th is the consistent interval through all four movements. The surprise in the piece is the "inverted cadenza". Normally you show off your skills when reflecting over the material in your cadenza. But in this version I condense it, like a tape played fast forward – reflecting virtuosity.

### Quattro Schizzi Veneziani II

This depicts my afternoon at the crowded San Marco Piazza. An attempt to musically illustrate the rush hour at the cafés, the movements of busy tourists and the ancient bell towers sounding in poly-rhythmical patterns.

### Quattro Schizzi Veneziani III

This movement reflects the historical view of Venice. Meditating on the mythical history, the beautiful architecture – the island full of hidden messages. In some parts of the piece I even flirt harmonically with the romantic era (Brahms) – go with it!

### Quattro Schizzi Veneziani IV

I haven't been to the carnival in Venice, but I think this movement could represent the swirling, high-energy music. A movement where you can really express theatrical gestures.

Stefan Levin's music  
is electrifying and  
takes care of the  
dramatic  
nerve  
POLITIKEN

Cover Icarus:  
Clément Legrand



"There is newly composed music  
by Stefan Levin for the work, and  
it is a luxury.  
The sound is a mixture of electronic  
and acoustic music, which is both  
melodic and perhaps inspired by  
folk music in several places.  
It is delightfully easy to listen to,  
and it supports the dancers in the  
best possible way."  
Kulturtid.dk

Ariadne was composed for the Danish  
Dance Theatre for a Pas de Deux in the  
creation "Icarus" by choreographer  
Pontus Lidberg, premiered in October  
2022 at Skuespilehuset in Copenhagen.

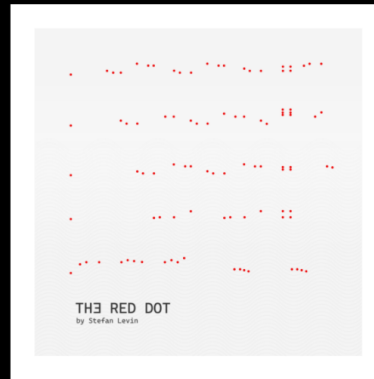
Initially I played the four guitars on the  
Icarus Album, but this time the Rebel  
Guitar Quartet interprets the piece.



## L'Aube



It's no secret that I like rhythmical patterns. One of my most played pieces is "La Nuit" that I wrote for Acosta Danza in 2018. A mix between classical guitar tradition and electronic instruments. L'Aube can be seen as a continuation of that piece although here I work exclusively with acoustic guitars (and a subbass). When I had the Rebels in the studio I asked them to repeat a D-minor arpeggio in two octaves and to gradually go from damped to a full sounding chord. That was the starting point of composing this minimalistic piece. I have then processed the arpeggio-sound, mostly using a 3/16th delay (like Avicii :-)) but also added some wobbling effects. The calmer solo guitar is played by me, comfortably leaning towards the more energetic youths in the Rebel Guitar Quartet. L'Aube can be seen as a bridge to a future album containing my music for guitar and other instruments/ synths etc.



*My gratitude to The Swedish Arts Council for supporting this production.*

*Thank you Ariadna Abreu, Hannes Wikström, Jonathan Bernhardsson, Henning Gren och Emil Miranda Holmgren for making this album come alive.*

*It has been a breathtaking journey revisiting parts of my guitar music from the last thirty years. I am honoured that you wanted to be a part of this adventure!*

*Thank you Emilio Ramos for your inspiring cover art and sharing your thoughts around the "Dot".*

*I dedicate this album to my dear mother, who throughout the years has believed in my choice to chose a life in music.*



**Six Studies** - Hommage a' Leo Brouwer  
Performed by Ariadna Abreu.  
Recorded in Levin Studios autumn 2023.

1. Study No 1 -The Cuban Harp
2. Study No 2 -The local singing Baker
3. Study No 3 -Tornado

**All for Now**  
Performed by Rebel Guitar Quartet.  
Recorded in part in Levin Studios autumn 2023.

4. Prelude
5. It will be better
6. Make it happen!
7. Head against the Wall, again...
8. And then we danced

**Quattro Schizzi Veneziani**  
Performed by Stefan Levin.  
Recorded in Ås kyrka, Jämtland, Sweden in the winter of 1992.

9. Movement I
10. Movement II
11. Movement III
12. Movement IV

**All for Now**  
Performed by Rebel Guitar Quartet

13. The Get-out-of-my-Face-Blues
14. We dreamed of Butterflies

**Six Studies**  
Performed by Ariadna Abreu

15. Study No 4 - Night in the Village
16. Study No 5 - Departure
17. Study No 6 - The Wild Dance

**18. Ariadne**  
Performed by Rebel Guitar Quartet

**19. L'Aube**  
Performed by Rebel Guitar Quartet & Stefan Levin