

MAK GRGIĆ | guitar

Touted as a “gifted young guitarist” by the *New York Times*, and “a guitarist to keep an eye on” by the *Washington Post*, 2-time Grammy®-nominated artist Mak Grgić [GER-gich] is a star on the worldwide stage. An expansive and adventurous repertoire attests to his versatility and wide-ranging interests. From the ethnic music of his native Balkans to extreme avant-garde and microtonal music, his roles as soloist, collaborator, and Grammy-nominated recording artist are fueled by curiosity, imagination, and boundless energy. As a testament to his versatility and wide-ranging appeal, in 2018 Mak was invited by legendary singer-songwriter k.d. lang to perform as the opening act for the North American leg of her *Ingénue Redux* Tour.

An avid new music proponent, Mak has commissioned a multitude of new works for solo guitar and guitar with ensemble. Some of these include works by Michael Gordon, Julia Adolphe, Nina Senk, Leon First and Cengiz Eren, to name a few. In fall 2022, he premiered and toured a newly commissioned guitar concerto by Michael Abels, composer for the Oscar-winning motion picture *Get Out*, while future concerto commissions include those by composers Vito Zuraj, Austin Wintory and Christopher Tin.

As both soloist and collaborator, Mak averages eighty-five performances a year — nearly two bookings per week. He is a founding member in two duos—the Flamenco-style “Duo Deloro” with Adam Del Monte, and the new music-focused “FretX Duo” with Daniel Lippel, guitarist of the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE). As Young Artist in Residence with the Da Camera Society of Los Angeles, he founded “DC8,” an octet declared “an inspiring addition to the contemporary music landscape in Los Angeles [*Los Angeles Times*].” Other collaborations include the JACK Quartet, The Assad Brothers, violinists Augustin Hadelich, Curtis Stewart, Martin Chalifour and Chee Yun, and cellists Jay Campbell, Joshua Roman, John Sant’Ambrogio, and Clive Greensmith, formerly of the Tokyo String Quartet.

In 2009 at the age of 22, Mak made his professional debut in Russia, performing the Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* with the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra under Vladimir Lande. He now makes two regular tours to Asia each season and performs in Europe every other month. Recent engagements include performances and residencies at the Musikverein and the Konzerhaus in Vienna; the Konzerthuset in Stockholm several venues in Portugal; Teatro Cervantes de Bejar in Castilla-Leon/Spain; the Sarajevo Music Academy; several venues in Slovenia; the Paris Guitar Foundation; Zurich University of the Arts; Taipei National Theater; Shanghai Grand Theater; and the Hong Kong International Guitar Festival.

In North America, he has performed at Walt Disney Hall/Los Angeles; The Morgan Library; The Kennedy Center; the National Gallery of Art; NAMM Show/California; Strathmore Hall/Maryland; the New York Classical Guitar Society; the Pacific Symphony; Mainly Mozart/San Diego; Beyond Microtonal Music Festival/Pittsburgh; the Dallas Opera for performances of Peter Maxwell Davies's *The Lighthouse*; Dumbarton Concerts/Washington, D.C.; the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and numerous other venues and guitar societies across the globe.

Highlights of the 24/25 season include appearances with the Pacific Symphony, Charleston Symphony, Boise Philharmonic, Sedona Symphony and the East Coast premiere of "Borders," by Michael Abels with the American Composers Orchestra in Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall.

An enthusiastic recording artist, Mak's albums capture a probing and continuous exploration of the world of guitar and all its possibilities. His latest recordings, "Balkanisms" for Naxos Music plus "MAKrotonal" and Grammy®-nominated "Mak|Bach" for MicroFest Records, explore a vast repertoire spanning ethnic music, microtonal, new music and early music on re-fretted instruments, such as a "zig-zag fretted Bach prototype guitar" that allows him to create a "well-tempered guitar" for "Mak|Bach." Mak is also featured on another Naxos release, "La Buena Vida" with flamenco guitarist Adam del Monte. Other albums include a Grammy-nominated project "A Night in Upper Town – the Music of Zoran Krajacic on Roundtone; "Peaceful Guitar" on Symphonic, Mak's first recording of his own compositions; and an upcoming all-concerto recording of Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez," Abels' "Borders," and "The Beatz" by Leon First with the Slovenian National Radio Symphony.

Also, an active entrepreneur and educator, Mak has been a member of the leadership teams of several organizations including the European Guitar Festival Collaborative (EuroStrings), the Zagreb Guitar Festival, and the Connecticut Guitar Festival. He served as an adjunct faculty member at Mount St. Mary's University in Los Angeles, and was a director of Elemental Guitar in Santa Monica, a program designed especially for young people. In 2022, he founded "Notey's World" and the company Notey Inc, to develop a unique game for tablets and smart phones intended to popularize music learning and make it more fun. As a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, he founded the Virtual Guitar Orchestra, gathering more than 5000 guitarists from more than 50 countries to date. VGO is a community-oriented project, recognized by the Library of Congress for its cultural contributions, and has also formed collaborations with the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and the Augustine Educational Foundation, to help ensembles be active virtually.

Born in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in 1987, Mak studied guitar in Zagreb with the revered Ante Cagalj at the Elly Basic Music Academy. By the age of 14, he was balancing his world champion status in karate with his love for the guitar. Following an injury to his left thumb, he made the decision to focus solely on a career in music, going on to complete a bachelor's degree with Alvaro Pierri at the University for Music and

Performing Arts in Vienna. In the fall of 2017, he began the Artist Diploma program at USC, the first guitarist in the university's history to be admitted to this elite program. Mak currently holds a full-time teaching position at University of South Carolina.

Mak plays and endorses an array of outstanding concert guitars made by diverse craftsmen, including German luthier Antonius Müller, the Chinese master Hanson Yao, Bosnian Slavko Mrdalj, Slovenian Samo Sali, Polish Rafal Turkowiak, a 1966 José Ramírez, as well as other re-fretted and remodeled guitars.

Mak is also proud to be involved with the Bosana Foundation, an organization that raises money for Bosnian youth. He also regularly awards education-furthering scholarships to select students across South America.

"His execution of the sometimes thorny passages was highly dexterous and — especially in the movement marked *sempre espressivo* — expressive."

Paul Bonner, TGS News