

# MEMOIRS CLASSICAL GUITAR MAGAZINE

THE HUMAN BEHIND THE INSTRUMENT

Rebecca  
Oliveira

THE  
MUSICAL  
SOUNDS  
AND FUTURE  
OF THE  
CLASSICAL  
GUITAR



MINI BOOK SERIES



Photo: Rebeca Oliveira  
and her mother

**Rebeca Oliveira** is a classical guitarist from Madeira Island, Portugal. In July 2017 she completed her bachelor's degree with a distinction in classical guitar, in the "Conservatório Superior de Música de Vigo" (Spain), under the guidance of Margarita Escarpa and since September 2017 she is a master student (specialization in Performance and Chamber Music), in the "Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar" (Germany), in the class of the renowned Professor Thomas Müller-Pering. In 2018 she published her first transcription for classical guitar: Carlos Seixas' Sonatas 23 and 24 with Les Productions d'Oz and has become an Augustine Strings' Artist.

She started her guitar studies at the age of 15, in the "Conservatório Escola Profissional das Artes da Madeira – Eng.º Luíz Peter Clode", under the guidance of Pedro Zamora, completing the high school in classical guitar (2010/2013), with the highest grade. In her resumé there is more than thirty masterclasses with world renowned guitarists as David Russell, Paolo Pegoraro, Marcin Dylla, Elena Papandreou, Roberto Aussel, Raphaella Smits, Tilman Hoppstock, Carlo Marchione, Ricardo Gallén, Sérgio Assad, among others



In the field of competitions she won the “David Russell honorary prizes – for young talents” (2014) and the “Festival Internacional José Tomás – Villa de Petrer” scholarship (2014). In June 2016 she received 1st prize in “Concurso Internacional de Guitarra de Ourém e Fátima”. In 2017 she was awarded with 1st prize in the competition “Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga” (Bilbao, Spain) and “I Concurso Internacional de Guitarra de Vila Nova de Cerveira” (Portugal).

For MCGM, Rebeca Oliveira is the bright future of today's Classical Guitar world and music. She embodies the spectacular talents and hopes for, not only Portugal guitarists and musicians, but for many aspiring young artists of all nations.



Rebeca has taken some time out of her busy schedule to sit with MCGM and speak about her thoughts of her journeys through and with the Classical Guitar that has been leaving her audiences with wanting more of her special gifts.

**MCGM:** How did you begin in music?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** My first contact with music was when I was 8 years old, with Piano lessons. Unfortunately, I wasn't so motivated so I gave up one year after. After that, I learned a little bit of guitar (just some chords to play some pop songs) and only with 15 years I decided that I wanted to study Classical guitar and went to the Conservatory. And now here I am!

**MCGM:** Who were your first inspirations as a child?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Well, not really as a child, because I started with the guitar quite late, but my first inspiration when I started in the classical guitar world was David Russell. And it still is!

**MCGM:** Do you come from a musical family?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Not really. I don't have any professional musician in my family however, my mother and my aunt played Clarinet when they were younger.

**MCGM:** What influenced you to select the guitar as your instrument as a child?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I didn't really choose it... My aunt had a friend that taught some guitar group lessons in my village, every weekend and my mom told me to go and give it a try. After that I was really into learning guitar and after some time I decided to do it in a professional way.

**MCGM:** How much has your family influenced you when you were a child within music?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** They didn't influenced directly my music education...I think that happens mostly when you have professional musicians in the family, but they really wanted me to learn how to play an instrument and were really proud when I started to have music lessons. And since then they still are my number one fans!!

**MCGM:** When did you first realized that the guitar would be your life and career?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Actually when I think about it, I can't find the precise moment where I decided that I wanted to learn guitar or become a musician... It just started as a Hobby and at some point, I got really interested in music and particularly in the classical guitar repertoire. I remember going to a concert by a Spanish guitarist in my hometown and I was really fascinated! It was the first time that I was in touch with the classical guitar repertoire and I loved it! I guess it was probably after that, with 15 years old that I decided to become a classical guitarist.

**MCGM:** Where did you first study outside of Portugal?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** The first time I moved abroad was five years ago, to do my bachelor. I moved to Vigo, Spain, to study at the "Conservatorio Superior de Música de Vigo" with Margarita Escarpa.

**MCGM:** Who were you first music professors?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** My first guitar teacher was Pedro Zamora. He is a Venezuelan guitarist who lives in Madeira for almost 30 years and was a student of Antonio Lauro. He was my teacher for four years, before my bachelor, in "Conservatório de Música da Madeira – Eng.º Luíz Peter Clode".

**MCGM:** How did your university professors impact you?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think Margarita Escarpa was the teacher that impacted me the most since I studied my bachelor (4 years) with her. I was young, I played guitar for only three/four years and I was living abroad for the first time, so things were quite difficult for me. But everything makes sense when you have the opportunity to learn with someone like Margarita. She is so dedicated to her students and her job! By studying with her I improved a lot in a technical and musical way and also learned that only hard and focused work can make you succeed. It was hard sometimes, but I don't regret a thing!!! With her guidance, I was able to become what I am today, and I am truly grateful for that.



PHOTO: PEDRO ZAMORA  
AND REBECA OLIVEIRA





PHOTO: REBECA OLIVEIRA AND HER GRANDFATHER

**MCGM:** What advice from your music professors would you say has changed your personal views about music?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think all my teachers changed my personal views about music. Pedro Zamora, my very first guitar teacher, fed my passion and love for music and classical guitar; Margarita Escarpa showed me that everything is possible with hard work, taught me to become more focused and determined, to pay attention to every little detail and to always do my best; Thomas Müller-Pering is helping me to find myself as a musician, how to find my own way in this world and to develop my sensibility and a more refined music taste and approach.

**MCGM:** What masterclasses have you attended during your university years?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I have done more than 40 masterclasses during my university years. I had masterclasses with Carlo Marchione, Paolo Pegoraro, Sérgio Assad, Tilman Hoppstock, David Russell, Roberto Aussel, among others.

**MCGM:** What are your personal thoughts about the idea of masterclasses?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think they are extremely important! Although one hour is not enough neither to get to know the teacher nor to work on a piece, masterclasses have a different rhythm and also a different approach. You learn how to work in a more efficient way and how to absorb the most you can in a short period of time.

**MCGM:** Why are they important for the student?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** First of all, for what I said before: we learn to work on a different way, with a different teacher in a short period of time.

It is also really good to enrich your musical knowledge since you normally get a different opinion and musical approach to the piece you are playing. You can also listen to the other students playing and working with the teacher. I think this is very important because it is way easier to understand some musical aspects when we are not playing and under pressure. Also, you get to know lots of different players around the world, different teachers and ways of teaching.



**MCGM:** What advice did you receive during masterclasses that affect you as a performer today?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** So many! I think I took in mind every advice I received in Masterclasses since I always tried to be open-minded and tried always to improve. But I think that the ones that were not so nice were the ones that affected me the most!! I remember a masterclass where the teacher told me that I had an ugly and “plastic” sound. After that, I was really upset and I got a little bit obsessed with improving and having a better sound! You can only change and improve when you are not satisfied with something you do.

**MCGM:** What concert within the classical guitar has inspired you the most?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** It is difficult to choose but probably the Bach/Piazzolla concert by Zoran Dukic

**MCGM:** Being from Portugal, do you feel that it influences you in how you interpret guitar music?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think so! I think the place where you come from is always an important part of your personality, and as a consequence, in the way of playing and feeling the music.



Not only because of the kind of music and musicians that I grew up hearing to, but also due to the Portuguese culture and way of living that are, like in each country, unique. I believe that all this external factors helped me building my own personality and who I am today.

**MCGM:** What is the classical guitar in Portugal and its social view?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Well, although I haven't study neither my bachelor nor my master in Portugal, I did some masterclasses and competitions there. I think the future of the classical guitar in Portugal is in really good hands. There is a new generation of young guitarists that are really great and have been working really hard to get a high level education. However, I think the social view of classical guitar is not the best one. There are not so many people interested in our instrument and attending concerts, and like always, problems with financial foudns from our government.

But, as I said I am really confident that it will be better in a couple of years. In Portugal we have an official music education system that prepares students really well, and for me that is a really important thing to reach success within a musical career.

**MCGM:** Do you feel that Portugal needs more support in helping younger persons who want to become classical guitarist?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Definitely! I think we need mostly more financial support for people who want to study music. It is extremely hard and expensive to study a musical instrument: we need to pay the normal studying costs like housing, transports, university fees, etc... plus buying an instrument, going to masterclasses, doing competitions, etc. If you want to have the "full experience" and try to get the best of it, it is extremely expensive. I will just talk about my personal experience, since I don't know if there are any exceptions, but I personally never had any kind of support neither for social activities neither as concerts nor for studying. By my experience and also seeing my colleges from other instruments, if you want to study you need to have the money for it, most of the time depending on your parents' financial support.

**MCGM:** What is "Fado"?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Fado is for Portugal what Flamenco is for Spain!!



Well, Fado is a Portuguese traditional music genre really appreciated and known overseas. The normal aggrupation is with a singer, a guitar that does some accompaniment and a Portuguese guitar, a plucked string instrument, with double strings. The lyrics are probably the most important aspect of Fado. Besides that, Fado means also destiny, what will come, the future, one's fortune. Fado is always associated with the word "Saudade", a Portuguese word that has no translation in any other language (besides Galician that could be translated like "morriña"). Saudade is a mixed feeling of missing somebody or something, like missing your own country. This was a common feeling that started in the Age of Discovery, when the Portuguese men left their families and country behind to discover a new world. Because of the huge emigration movement we always had in Portugal, it is a feeling that is present in almost every Portuguese Family.

**MCGM:** How important is traditional and region music from Portugal?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think it is really important! It is part of the cultural identity and people feel connected to it and understand it better. I think Fado is by far the most important and known traditional music, at least overseas, but we also have lots of "Folclore" with lots of popular songs played with unique traditional instruments, that change depending on the region. The traditional music from the south of Portugal is different from the one in the north of the country or even from the islands.

**MCGM:** Tells us more about your Transcriptions of Carlos Seixas.

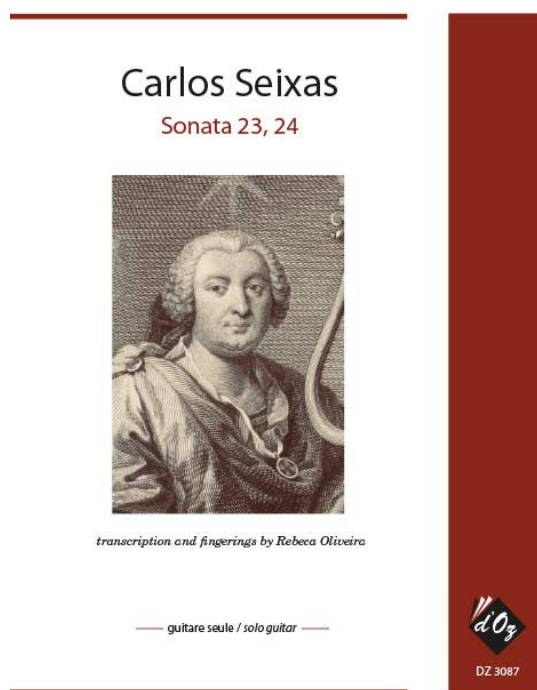
**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I decided to do these transcriptions three years ago. In my third year of bachelor I decided that I wanted to go to a competition in Portugal, where they asked for a Portuguese piece, and a competition in Spain, where I needed to play a baroque piece. My idea was to find something Portuguese and baroque so I could play it in both competitions. **Carlos Seixas** was probably one of the most important Portuguese composer so, after listening to all his sonatas I had no doubt that it would sound gorgeous on the guitar.



First I decided to transcribe Sonata 23 because I really liked it and I wanted to play it, and then, since the idea was to play two sonatas, Sonata 24 because it is written in the same tonality and had lots of contrast, comparing to Sonata 23. It took me a little bit more time to decide to transcribe Sonata 24 because it was really challenging in a technical way, but with a good fingering it works pretty well.



After having some lessons I was really interested in transcriptions and started to transcribe some pieces for myself, pieces that I wanted to play, like Albéniz, Scarlatti and later on, Seixas. The idea of publishing my transcriptions only appeared a couple of years later, when I started to notice that there were people interested in playing my transcriptions.



**MCGM:** What is your process of transcribing for the guitar?

**MCGM:** When did first decide to make transcriptions and why?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I had a subject during my bachelor that was “Transcription”, so it started more or less as an obligation! I had three semesters of this subject and I learned how to transcribe different styles, some basic rules to follow when transcribing, ways of solving voicing problems, etc.

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Well, first of all, I hear the piece really carefully and with the original score so I can have an overall idea of how it works in terms of harmony, phrasing, texture, etc. After that, I try to put as much as possible in a guitar way of writing. Then comes the “real” work that starts with thinking about fingering and good musical solutions, when it is not possible to play everything. For me, this is the part that takes more time since I keep changing my mind and finding better solutions to improve the final result.

**MCGM:** What are the difficulties of transcribing for the guitar?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think that it is really difficult to transcribe well for guitar. The guitar is an extremely difficult instrument, with lots of technical limitations. It is so difficult to play legato, to hold a note, to play counterpoint passages, to do different articulations... everything! So, as I said before, for me the biggest difficulty when transcribing for the guitar is finding good fingerings that don't change the musical result. Sometimes you need to add some kind of effects to get what you are looking for. I also think that it is very important to try to respect as much as possible the composer's idea and the style and character of the piece.

**MCGM:** Are your publications and transcriptions available to the public?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Yes, they are! They are published by Les Productions d'Oz.

**MCGM:** Within the classical guitar world, what are your opinions about competitions? Do you feel they are important for the young guitarist?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think competitions are really important for young guitarists because it is always a motivation to work harder and to show your work to other people. However, I think we should not give too much importance to competitions since they are based only in the opinion of a small group of people that are there judging you, people with their own personal taste and opinion. It is always dangerous to judge music interpretations since it is always so subjective.





**MCGM:** What is music in general for you personally?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** It sounds like cliché, but music is everything. By now music is present in every aspect of my life: my studies, my work, my friends, my hobbies, etc. So it is something that makes me feel complete and happy with what I am trying to build in my life. I think I have an extrovert personality but at the same time, I am really focused on my work and in getting what I want. And that is exactly what music is for me: pleasure and hard work!

**MCGM:** How would you like to change or contribute to the classical guitar?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think the best contribution that one can make as a musician is being a good teacher and having good and focused students wanting to learn from you. Of course, I would also like to be a reference as a guitarist, through my interpretations, but I think I would be completely satisfied if someday I could be a reference as a guitar teacher



**MCGM:** What new ideas do you feel you would like to bring to the classical guitar?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I am not sure, I haven't thought so much about it until now, but I think I would like to keep working with transcriptions in order to both embrace more this way of arranging music and to enrich and diversify the guitar repertoire.

**MCGM:** Do you feel the classical guitar world has changed, is changing, or is at a standstill?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think most of all it has changed a lot and it is still changing. Right now there is so many great guitarist and teachers with whom you can study and learn so much. It is also incredible the amount of information that is available for free: scores, videos, recordings, books, live streaming (that I love!!), etc. So yes, I think it will keep changing...we live in a world that is always changing!







**MCGM:** In today's world technology has become a great influence around the world. How much do you feel this is a good thing or a bad thing?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I think it is always good to have lots of information available and with social media, we have that. It is also really useful for us, as musicians, to spread our work and show what we are doing. However, I think social media changed a lot the idea and concept of a live performance.

People don't feel the necessity to go to a concert if they have free videos and recordings on social media, so the magic of a live performance, and also the way of listening music changed a lot! In my opinion, this is one of the biggest problems concerning technology in the music world.

**MCGM:** As a performer, what is your mental state? How do you approach each performance?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I am always nervous when I need to perform, so I try to stay calm and relaxed, sleep well and be comfortable. I don't have any kind of mental ritual for each performance, it depends a lot of the day, the repertoire, the place, etc.



PHOTO:  
RALPH  
(FROM  
SICCAS  
GUITARS)  
AND REBECA  
OLIVEIRA



**MCGM:** Where have you performed?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I performed mostly in Portugal and Spain, but lately also in Germany, since I am now living there.

**MCGM:** Do you have any plans for a future album recording? If yes, what would you like to record? How will you approach each composer and their compositions?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Yes, I have but anything concrete yet. I would like to record an album in the next years, but for now it is impossible due to financial problems. I would like to record some pieces that I worked and that are important for me, and of course some of my Seixas' transcriptions. The approach to every composer and piece will be the same that I use to perform: try to respect the composer's ideas with flexibility and showing also my own way of understanding the music.

**MCGM:** Do you feel you can bring or will offer new fresh views and looks of interpretations of previously recorded guitar composers and compositions?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** I hope so!! I think that every recording and interpretation is unique, so it is always something new and fresh to the guitar repertoire. I try always to follow my own ideas and not to copy too much what other people do, so the main goal is always trying to do something new and fresh.

**MCGM:** What advice can or would you give to your generation that want to continue in the classical arts and the classical guitar?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:** Work hard and try to always do the best you can. Also: be patience, be open-minded, learn as much as you can, hear as much as you can and try to find happiness doing what you love the most.





**MCGM:** Where would you like to be in 5 years from now?

**REBECA OLIVEIRA:**

In 5 years I would like to be a classical guitar teacher and work with focused and talented students. It will also be great to give some concerts and masterclasses, travel around the world and meet different people. I would also like to have some chamber music projects and continue doing and publishing transcriptions. And also: record my first CD!

