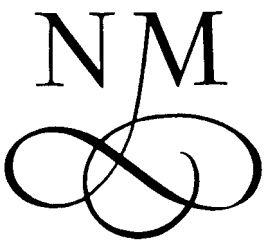
NICHOLAS
MAW

Music of Memory

FOR SOLO GUITAR

(1989)



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The first performance was given by Eliot Fisk in the Lady Chapel at Lichfield Cathedral, as part of the Lichfield Festival on 9 July 1989

Duration: 20 minutes

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First published in 1995 by Faber Music Ltd
Bloomsbury House 74–77 Great Russell Street London WC1B 3DA
Music processed by Mary Criswick
Cover design by S & M Tucker
Printed in England by Caligraving Ltd
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ISBN10: 0-571-51454-5
EAN13: 978-0-571-51454-0

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Performance Note

⌒ = left hand legato or slur
harmonics are shown by diamond noteheads at true pitch

Programme Note

This work is a somewhat freely-organised set of variations – though 'meditations' would be a more apt description of some of them – on the Intermezzo from Mendelssohn's String Quartet in A minor, opus 13. Mendelssohn's theme is a simple song in A-B-A form. I have not presented this theme *in toto* anywhere in my work, but separated its parts and embedded them throughout, so that the listener is reminded of its haunting presence even though the immediate musical events might seem considerably far-removed.

The overall shape of the work also takes its cue from the tripartite nature of the theme. After a rather dramatic introduction the first phrase of the theme is stated and followed by three variations: *Tranquillo ma con movimento*; *Poco vivace* and *Andante placido*. Then comes the middle phrase of the theme, followed by two further variations: *Deliberato ed appassionato* and *Impetuoso*. The reprise of the theme's opening phrase is then followed by a final five variations which culminate in a fierce *rasguardo* (the flamenco-derived technique of a fast strumming action across all the strings): *Senza rigore, non troppo lento*; *Poco presto*; *Moderato e risoluto*; *Allegro energico*; *Tempo giusto*. This leads straight into the coda, where the theme is interspersed with short fragments recalled from the preceding variations. The music plays without a break.

The work's title, *Music of Memory*, refers to the long-term memory of a golden age (and the corresponding hope that it can continue to nourish our own art) represented by the Mendelssohn; the shorter-term 'memory' of an original that lies behind the variation form; and the use of different kinds of memory-related techniques and material during the work – 'guitar sounds' typical of the instrument and its repertoire, and the 'memory recalls' of the coda.

The work was written as a tribute to the extraordinary artistry of Eliot Fisk.

N.M.

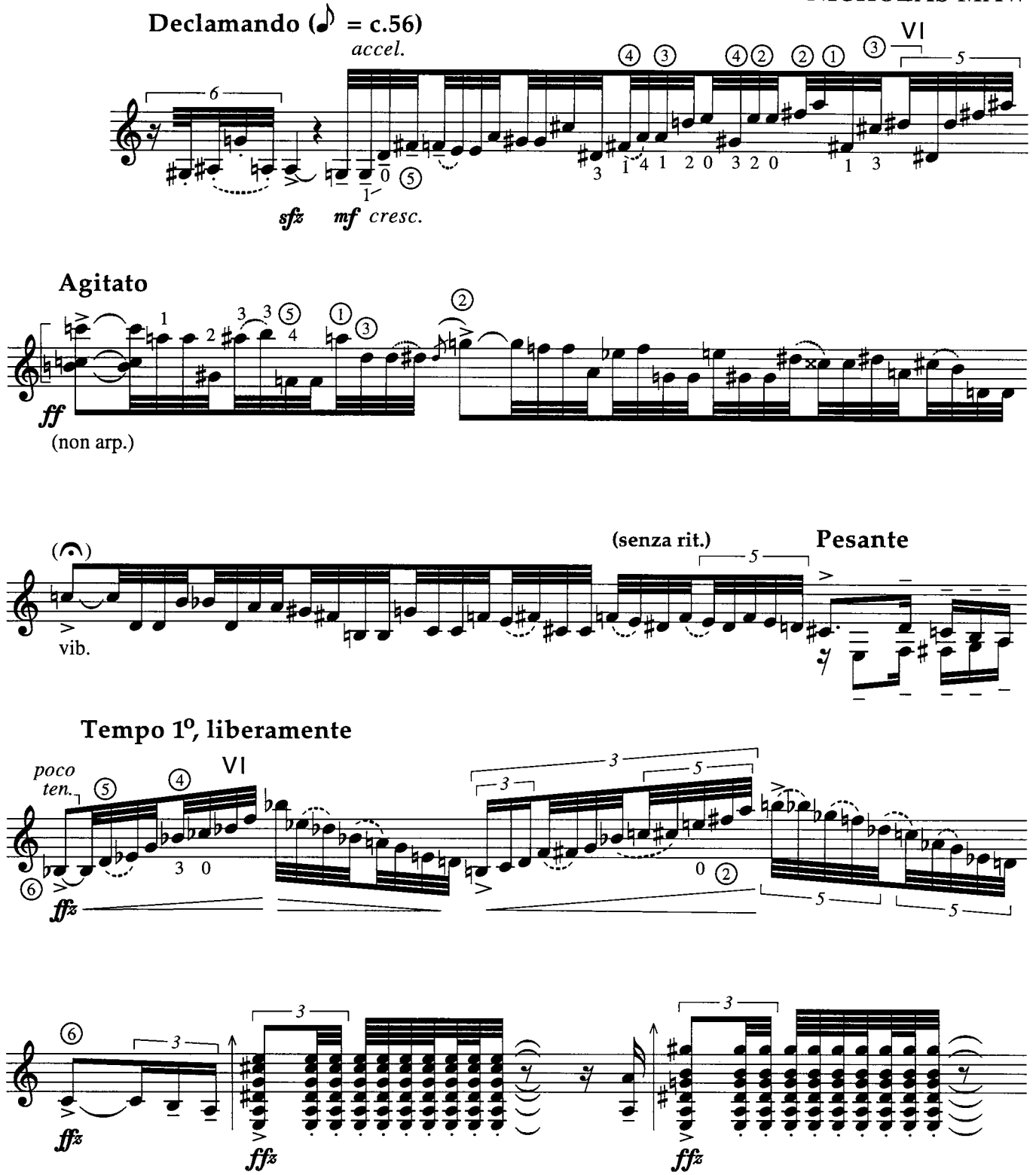
Written for and dedicated to my friend

Eliot Fisk

MUSIC OF MEMORY

for solo guitar

NICHOLAS MAW



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