

For Classical Guitarist Pablo Saínz Villegas, His Talent is His Business

by John Whitman



Spanish classical guitarist Pablo Saínz Villegas came to New York City six years ago with a dream of expanding his artistic talent and continuing on his journey of professional development. He arrived, he says, with “my suitcase in one hand, and my guitar in the other.” Filled with hope and illusion, he was about to begin studies at the Manhattan School of Music with the renowned guitarist David Starobin.

Yet like so many who come to New York, there laid in the works events and experiences beyond what he could ever have imagined. His date of arrival? Just one week before Sept. 11, 2001.

While making arrangements for housing, he took a room on the 41st floor at the New Yorker Hotel on 34th Street and Eighth Avenue.

As he was getting up on the morning of Sept. 11, “the huge shadow” of the first plane passed over the hotel. After the second plane hit, he left the hotel and headed uptown.

“It was such an intense beginning,” he says. “I sometimes thought about returning to Spain, of fleeing from my plans. But my decision was to stay in New York.”

Over the next several years his determination paid off, as he completed studies on two separate degree programs at the Manhattan School of Music, including one that he entered in May 2006. This second one was a highly specialized program that only three students from the entire school population were allowed to enter each year.

In June 2006, he won the highly coveted Gold Medal Stotsenberg Prize at the Parkening International Guitar Competition at Pepperdine University in California.

Now, at just 30 years old, Mr. Saínz Villegas has an impeccable academic background, has been crowned at the preeminent classical guitar competition in the world, has signed with an agent in New York, and is building an amazing professional career.

His schedule for the next year includes solo recitals and orchestra concerts that will take him to five countries on four different continents.

Mr. Villegas has received more than twenty-five international awards for his playing, including the Andrés Segovia Award. He has performed as a soloist with the New York Virtuosi Chamber Symphony, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, and the Orquesta de Radio Televisión Española. He has performed on broadcasts on ABC, the BBC, Radio 2 Clásica RNE, TVE, Radio France, and Euroradio. His recordings include Luciano Berio’s “Sequenza” and a series of Spanish works for the Naxos label. He has performed in twenty-one countries and in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall in New York and Sala Verdi in Milan. He has even given master classes at the Royal College of Music in London and at the Australian National University.

First and foremost, Mr. Saínz Villegas is an artist, but to build and maintain this international career, he also thinks of himself as an entrepreneur whose business is his own talent. He sat down with *Spain: The Business Link* this summer to discuss what it’s like to be in the business of the arts.

LINK *Do you consider yourself a business person, with music being your business?*

SAINZ VILLEGAS As a musician in the twenty-first century, I have to involve myself and take advantage of those things that directly impact the development of my life, my music, and my career. I am an artist immersed in a way of life based on the appreciation of beauty. At the same time, I live in a society that expects economic growth and the uplifted social welfare that accompanies that growth.

Businesses provide the foundation, and music as a luxury item is in the hands of the business world. As such, I consider myself not only to be an artist and musician, but to be a business person as well with the civic responsibility to create well-being and to humanize our experiences. I also have the financial responsibility to earn the most possible from my work.

LINK *Do you manage your talent like a business? Do you think of your talent and skill as a product that you have to manage?*

SAINZ VILLEGAS Music, concerts, recordings, and image rights—these are the musical products that are in the market and with

which people in the music industry make their living. My talent and skill are qualities inherent to me as a person, the fruit of my natural abilities and of the years of demanding daily work. These are the means through which I can offer a quality product.

LINK *Do you have artistic goals for yourself. If so, what are they?*

SAINZ VILLEGAS On a professional level, I dream of the day that the guitar returns to captivate the imagination of music lovers, as the legendary guitarist Andrés Segovia was able to do.

LINK *Do you have goals that could be called business goals within your life as a musician?*

SAINZ VILLEGAS The career of a concert musician is based on three main pillars: agency management, recording contracts, and artist quality. The first two fall within a business framework. My goal is to improve relationships and contracts with management agencies and recording companies that would be allow me to continuously participate in the world of the musical elite. This means developing projects that lead to both economic and artistic growth and expansion. The marketing and publicity that is done around an artist directly and reciprocally influences in the development of these three pillars.

Another one of my main business goals is to enter into sponsorships with corporations that wish to project—through my concerts and

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my image—an image of themselves that is modern, elegant, dynamic, and successful to exclusive circles around the world.

LINK *Do you have particular ways that you can measure these goals, in the same way that a company can measure growth in sales, growth in profit, etc.?*

SAINZ VILLEGAS I'm afraid that they aren't as exact or sophisticated as the ones that large corporations use. Basically, I rely on the information available to me about my own demand—the number and prestige of my concerts, my caché as an artist, record sales, the number of private and institutional sponsors, the amount of traffic to my website, and my level of presence on the internet and in the media.

LINK *I've heard that you may have a sponsorship deal in the works?*

SAINZ VILLEGAS I am currently in negotiations with the government of La Rioja, through the Consejería de Agricultura, to enter into an agreement for the worldwide sponsorship and promotion of the wines of La Rioja through my concerts and my image. This would not be an exclusive arrangement.

LINK *Which of your qualities as a classical musician do you find that draws sponsors to you?*

SAINZ VILLEGAS What I have found is that sponsors see that classical music represents quality, elegance, distinction, success, and exclusivity—and that creating a link between music and a sponsoring company is a way of bettering and humanizing the image of a company and of publicizing itself across a global network of people who have greater purchasing power and greater cultural knowledge. Beyond that, the guitar is an instrument and a symbol that much of the rest of the world finds inextricably linked to the idiosyncrasy of Spain. This combination creates a direct impact on the consumer.



Where You Can Catch Pablo Sáinz Villegas in 2007–2008

From Spain to New York to Russia to Austria to Brazil, audiences around the world will have the opportunity to experience the art of Pablo Sáinz Villegas on the classical guitar. Check out his schedule below to see if he will be playing in a venue near you.

2007	Orchestra	"Are More"	Festival
SEPT. 27 Annual Gala Dinner of the Spain-U.S. Chamber of Commerce New York, NY	Concerto nº1 by M. Castelnuovo-Tedesco South Bay, CA	Spain	Vigo,
OCT. 3 Recital, Lafayette, LA	OCT. 23 Lexington Symphony Orchestra	NOV. 16 Ft. Worth Guitar Society	
OCT. 6 Acadiana			Ft. Worth, TX
OCT. 7 Carnegie Hall	Concierto de Aranjuez by J. Rodrigo	MAR. 27– Moscow Symphony Orchestra	
Orchestra Concierto de Aranjuez Marius Smolij (conductor) Lafayette, LA	George Zack (conductor)	MAR. 30 Orchestra Russian Philharmonia	
Kravitz (flute) and Pablo Sáinz Villegas (guitar)	Lexington, KY	Concierto de Aranjuez	Teatro
NY	OCT. 26– Lexington Symphony Orchestra	OCT. 29 Tchaikovsky	Moscow, Russia
OCT. 12– Riverside Symphonia	OCT. 13 Concierto de Aranjuez by J. Rodrigo	APR. 10 Orquesta Sinfónica de la Comunidad de Madrid	
Aranjuez	Marius Smolij (conductor)	George Zack (conductor)	Concierto for Guitar and Orchestra by J. Guinjoan
Lambertville, NJ	Lexington, KY	NOV. Internacional Music	National Auditorium,