



# Recuerdos

Athens Guitar Duo



CLAUDIO

“These fragments I have shored against my ruins” – T.S. Eliot  
**RECUERDOS**

The role of music in the awakening of memory, in the creation of an inner vision and in freeing of the human imagination, is a role that has long been recognised as a key element in its powers of suggestion and the awakening of the human heart. Poets over the centuries have written of the power of the mind to recall events which impress the heart much as did Thomas Bailey Aldrich who wrote:” My mind lets go a thousand things, Like dates of wars and deaths of kings, And yet recalls the very hour.”

Researchers in our own time speak of the power of autobiographical memory and emotion. Hans Baumgartner at Pennsylvania State University spoke of this power and how it “sometimes happens that a piece of music becomes associated with an event from a person’s life so that hearing the piece of music evokes memories of the original experience”.

In this recording, that very power of art to awaken our remembrance of things past, to recall visions and awaken fantasy is the rationale for the selection of repertoire. The arrangement by **Julio Sagreras** (1879 – 1942) of **Francisco Tárrega’s** (1852 – 1909) immortal *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* evokes a dizzying world of multiple guitars each submerged in the magic of the memory it evokes and hidden behind a cloud of musical mystery. Sagreras was an Argentine guitarist and composer known for his arrangements but also for his original works for guitar and piano. It is, however, his arrangement of Tárrega’s masterpiece for two guitars, a work for guitar solo originally conceived as a tremolo etude, that adds both power and a special softness to this evocative portrait of Granada’s “pearl set in emeralds”. The Alhambra or, in Arabic *Al-Hambrá* or “The Red One” was built in Granada in 889 and reconstructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the Moorish Emir Mohammed ben Al-Ahmar. It was converted into a royal palace in 1333 by Yusuf I, Sultan of Granada but reclaimed by the court of Ferdinand

*very strongly recommended issue, outstandingly well recorded.*  
-Musical Opinion UK

The Athens Guitar Duo has performed and taught throughout the United States, Europe, and the People’s Republic of China. They have also been invited to perform for an impressive list of distinguished guests. These include former President of the United States, Jimmy Carter; the Pulitzer-Prize winning composer, William Bolcom; Simone Fontanelli of the Mozarteum in Salzburg; and the world-renowned guitarist, Christopher Parkening. The AG<sup>2</sup>’s explorations into the depth and wealth of the guitar repertoire, along with their increased flexibility and dedication to producing great performances, will open to new audiences the joys to be found in this music. In the words of St. John Brown, of MeridianFM (in the UK): “I’m not really a great fan of the guitar, but I thought [their CD] was wonderful, and I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it!”

*There can be no doubt as to the commitment of the Athens Guitar Duo to this music. There is a crispness, a colouration and a sense of involvement which is most attractive. As must be a requirement of good duos, they play as if joined at the hip.*  
-David Billinge (Music Web International)

Dusty is on faculty at Georgia College and State University as well as Augusta University. Matt is on faculty at Reinhardt University.

*“The Athens Guitar Duo would like to dedicate this CD to their wives, Jordan and Molly; their daughters, Denley and Ellie; and their mentor, the late John Sutherland.”*

Whether it is for a large audience in Beijing, China, or an intimate in-home concert for a collection of enthusiasts in Monterrey, California, the Athens Guitar Duo (AG<sup>2</sup>) is becoming known for leaving “a deep impression on the audience with their passionate, meticulous, and masterful artistry.” They have opened up the world of the guitar to new audiences and have promoted the works of both modern and traditional composers with a youthfulness and freshness that makes the music of those composers come alive.

*It's really exciting, the way they play the guitar; it's like they bring something quite new out of it. The guitar has a sort of sound which everybody knows, but you listen to the way they are playing it and they are treating it as if it's a new instrument... I thought [their performance of Princess of Lykia] was really riveting: beautiful playing. Very sensitive.*  
-Gregers Brinch, Composer

Dusty Woodruff and Matthew Anderson met while studying at the University of Georgia with renowned teacher and Segovia student, John Sutherland. Formerly a part of the Athens Guitar Trio, Woodruff and Anderson have performed together for over a decade. Each member plays a guitar built by master luthier, Kenny Hill; these include an extremely rare 11-string guitar that extends the ensemble's range. With this unique combination, the AG<sup>2</sup> explores the expressive capabilities of their instruments through diverse repertoire selections and creative and entertaining arrangements—some of which can be found on their debut CD, *Magellan's Playlist*. This recording has received many positive reviews, and it has been featured on NPR's “Classical Guitar Alive!,” BBC Radio's “Late Junction with Nick Luscombe,” as well as other radio stations throughout the world.

*The playing is first-class, utterly convincing and the overall impression is one of deep musicality and welcoming, fascinating moods. A*

and Isabella after the Moors were driven from the Spanish peninsula in 1492.

The palace is a magical evocation of colours and shadows, a sea of gardens and rooms full of history and an incomparable architectural style that has since impressed itself on Spanish culture and in the memories of the countless visitors who have wondered at its eternal beauty.

The memory of art and architecture does not restrict itself to grandiose structures or opulent palaces. The young Swedish composer and guitarist, **Johannes Möller**, has been described as “a Swedish Mozart”. The piece on this CD, *When Buds are Breaking*, is, in the composer's words, “about the process of becoming.” Its “transparent textures and unfolding melodic lines” resemble a Sonata with “episodes that go into different modes.” The work evokes the memory of and is a tribute to the American glass sculptor, Dale Chihuly. Chihuly's creations are considered unique in the world of glass and evoke a phantasmal vision of light and shadow just as does Möller's homage in music.

**Astor Piazzolla** (1921 – 1992) is best known as a composer of Tangos and as a virtuoso bandoneon performer and arranger. Born in Argentina, Piazzolla had been described as “the world's foremost composer of tango music” by the American music critic, Stephen Holden. In his childhood years, from 1925 until 1936, Piazzolla lived in New York where he began composing Tangos, the first of these being *La catinga*, which he wrote in 1932. In his later years, he studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris before returning to his native Argentina in the 1950s. Piazzolla is credited with inventing the *nuevo Tango* combining the traditional tango form with elements of jazz and using extended harmonic materials and much dissonance. His music evolved from the creation of a simple dance form to musical structures incorporating complex counterpoint and into the writing of extended compositional forms such as the present *Tango Suite*, written in 1984. This music is an evocative memory of his Argentine childhood, of his international lifestyle and of the countless experiences taken from a long and productive

concert life. In the *Tango Suite* one can hear the bustle of New York, the rolling of the wind across the Argentine plains and the music of those with whom he worked and studied. Piazzolla's work is truly cosmopolitan but also a uniquely Hispanic work in its power to consolidate and to define the memories that constitute life.

However, music can do more than help us to recall concepts and ideas. It has the power to help us visualise events, to define them in an emotional, social and political context. **Cody Brookshire** has done this in his work, *Prism*, a three-movement composition which, in the composer's own words, "draws its name from the eponymous NSA spying programme revealed by Edward Snowden in June of 2013. The harmonic and melodic material of *Prism* was derived by studying the spelling of the words in the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution and then mapping each letter to a specific pitch...My mapping choices were not arbitrary, and I sought to make each word mean something sonically in context of the topic matter as it currently stands...The titles and musical effects of each movement are meant to bring to mind ideas related to this illegal spying program: the bending and manipulation of the law to suit a particular objective ("Refractions"), how a dissident message or thought might be shared and then subsequently stifled ("A Chilling Effect"), and the systematic hacking and decryption that is happening to our personal communication ("Bullrun Toccata")."

Returning to the past, **Manuel de Falla's** 1919 ballet, *El sombrero de tres picos*, has entered the ballet repertoire as the paramount Spanish work in this genre. It was premiered in London in that same year with sets and costumes created by Pablo Picasso. The music quotes Andalusian folk tunes and even delves into the classical repertoire, at one point quoting Beethoven's c-minor symphony. *La danza del molinero* or "Miller's Dance", is taken from the ballet's 2<sup>nd</sup> act and, in its version for guitar, has become a popular transcription for this ensemble. This transcription is by Patrick Russ.

The Finnish composer, **Pehr Nordgren** (1944 – 2008) is known for his 12-tone technique which, tonal and harmonically simple, makes the works on this recording unique in themselves. *Portraits of Country Fiddlers*, from which these movements were taken, is one of Nordgren's most performed orchestral works and was originally written for string orchestra. This arrangement by **Dusty Woodruff** for two guitars of the movements "The Thinker" and "The Fiddler's Favourite Tune" display some of Nordgren's usual style and his bitonality. In one movement Nordgren simultaneously tosses about the motives of the first theme, but in different keys. In the second movement, the mid-section displays portions of the main theme but in the original, this accompanied by a sustained cluster chord. With this guitar, this is impossible, but Dusty Woodruff has created an alternate accompaniment, true to Nordgren's intentions. Performed on the 11 string guitar, this solution fully captures the composer's intentions while bringing this wonderful and adventurous music to a vast audience of guitarists.

©Kevin Wood, 2016