

Spanish Dances

BRAZILIAN GUITAR QUARTET



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SPANISH DANCES • BRAZILIAN GUITAR QUARTET

"The Brazilians played with one mind ... and conveyed all the mystery, joy, passion and pride in this music... this was magical music making." – *Palm Beach Daily News*

Manuel de Falla: *Cuatro Piezas Españolas:* Aragonesa; Cubana; Montañesa; Andaluza.
From *La Vida Breve:* Danza Española No.2

Enrique Granados: From *Goyescas, op.11:* El fandango de candil; El pelele

Joaquin Turina: From *Tres Danzas Andaluzas, op.8:* Zapateado

Joaquin Rodrigo: *Sonada de Adiós. Cuatro Piezas:* Caleseras; Fandango del ventorrillo;
Plegaria de la Infanta de Castilla; Danza valenciana

Federico Mompou: From *Cançons i Danses:* No.3, Modéré / Sardana - temps de marche;
No.6, Cantabile espressivo / Ritmado; No.1, Quasi moderato / Allegro
non troppo; No.8, Moderato cantabile con sentimento / Danza

Isaac Albéniz: *Azulejos* (incomplete; finished by Enrique Granados)

Total Playing Time: 73:21

All arrangements by Tadeu do Amaral



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SPANISH DANCES • BRAZILIAN GUITAR QUARTET

Manuel de Falla:

Cuatro Piezas Españolas (15:42)

1. Aragonesa (3:08)
2. Cubana (3:41)
3. Montañesa (4:11)
4. Andaluza (4:42)

Enrique Granados:

from *Goyescas, op.11*

5. El fandango de candil (5:42)

Joaquin Turina:

from *Tres Danzas Andaluzas, op.8*

6. Zapateado (4:41)

Joaquin Rodrigo:

7. *Sonada de Adiós (Homenaje a Paul Dukas)* (3:35)

Cuatro Piezas (11:48)

8. Caleseras (2:00)
9. Fandango del ventorrillo (1:43)
10. Plegaria de la Infanta de Castilla (4:52)
11. Danza valenciana (2:53)

Federico Mompou:

from *Cançons i Danses* (13:23)

12. No.3, Modéré / Sardana - temps de marche (3:56)
13. No.6, Cantabile espressivo / Ritmado (3:54)
14. No.1, Quasi moderato / Allegro non troppo (2:26)
15. No.8, Moderato cantabile con sentimento / Danza (3:07)

Manuel de Falla:

from *La Vida Breve*

16. Danza Española No.2 (4:10)

Isaac Albéniz:

17. *Azulejos* (incomplete; finished by Enrique Granados) (9:08)

Enrique Granados:

from *Goyescas, op.11*

18. El pelele (4:47)

Total Playing Time: 73:21

All arrangements by Tadeu do Amaral

As part of the *Guitarrísimo* series at *Instituto Cervantes*, it was my special pleasure to organize a concert tour of the Brazilian Guitar Quartet to many Brazilian cities in 2009, presenting their adaptation for guitar quartet of Albéniz's *Suite Iberia*. The freshness of the arrangements as well as the brilliant interpretations captivated audiences, and left me with a sense of ever-growing fascination. Their new album dedicated to – besides Albéniz – the great Spanish composers de Falla, Granados, Rodrigo, Turina and Mompou sets a new standard for guitar quartet interpretations of the Spanish repertoire. I am thrilled to discover – through this well-chosen program, so coherent and finely performed – the deep Iberian roots of the instrument and its spectacular development in Brazil: a country that shares with Spain the guitar as its favorite instrument. In this album, the BGQ again lays claim to the true “alma española” (Spanish soul), in all its richness and diversity.

Francesc Puértolas
Head, Department of Culture
Instituto Cervantes, Berlin

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM:

The Unique patterns and sounds of Spanish music – as perhaps most idiomatically realized in the more than 1,000 dance forms native to the Iberian peninsula – is one of the richest cross-cultural amalgams to be found anywhere. Its structural, harmonic and rhythmic foundations go back as far as the Moorish invasions, the Medieval Sephardic Jews, and the glories of the Spanish Renaissance. This broadly-based heritage, in turn, was carried across the Atlantic to the new world – where it became the primary foundation of Latin American music.

Acknowledging their debt to Iberian musical traditions, the members of the illustrious Brazilian Guitar Quartet were inspired to prepare a program devoted entirely to Spanish music. In this – the sixth of this Latin GRAMMY-winning ensemble's recordings for Delos – they pay passionate and sensitive tribute to their old-world musical heritage. Their selections – some well-known, some uncommon – are drawn mostly from the piano compositions by the finest Spanish composers of the 20th Century, expertly transcribed for guitar quartet by Tadeu do Amaral, the BGQ's gifted arranger.

One could say that **Isaac Albéniz** (1860-1909), **Enrique Granados** (1867-1916) and **Manuel de Falla** (1876-1946) form the “great trinity” of Spanish nationalistic music. All of them were deeply influenced by the ideas of Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922), a Spanish composer and musicologist who set the premises for composing music with a strong national identity and bearing the particular influence of the *flamenco*, one of Spain’s most prominent folkloric styles, especially throughout Andalusia.

In 2006, the BGQ released an entire album presenting Albéniz’s monumental *Suite Iberia* – for the first time in an arrangement for a guitar quartet. Critic Arthur Nestrovsky, of the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, wrote that the arrangement was “the translation of the translation, taking the music back to its origins.” The reviewer thus acknowledged the fact that Albéniz sought inspiration (among other sounds and sights) in the different sonorities and stylistic nuances of the guitar as played in the streets of various cities and regions of Spain – whose names Albéniz applied as the titles of the work’s varied movements.

Iberia – perhaps the most virtuosic piano collection of its day – was finished in 1909: the last year of the composer’s life. *Azulejos* (track 17), the work from him heard here, was also written that year, though it was left unfinished when the composer died (Granados completed it after his death). Had he lived to finish it and go on from there, it would have been the prelude to a suite of similarly superlative pieces of the same name. Albéniz’s later music embodies the nationalistic influence in a way that is idiomatically true and highly evocative, though at times striking the listener as a Spanish take on the Impressionistic style. No wonder composers like Debussy and Messiaen praised the composer for his masterly use of tone colors and effects.

Azulejos is a rather intimate work, starting with a single line taken up by the 8-string guitar and slowly building up to more complex textures and patterns that we could associate with the mosaic patterns seen in the many examples of decorative tile found in the Iberian Peninsula. The music soon establishes a very entrancing atmosphere, with the theme meandering through different contexts and tonalities, as well as – in the BGQ’s arrangement –

different guitars. After coming to an unexpected pause near the end, the piece's opening line returns almost as a distant remembrance, soon spreading out and fading away – gently punctuated by chords that slowly settle the mood down, but leave a mysterious quality hanging in the air.

Of our “trinity” of Spanish masters, de Falla is the only one who was actually born in Andalusia. His early studies in theology finally gave way to the conviction that his destiny was to become a musician – whereupon he moved to Madrid to study composition with the above-mentioned Felipe Pedrell. Later developments took him to Paris, back to Madrid, then Granada; he finally emigrated to Argentina, following Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War. He excelled as a composer and is deservedly seen as the successor to Albéniz and Granados. The *Cuatro Piezas Españolas* (Four Spanish Pieces), dedicated to Albéniz, are from his initial years in Madrid; they clearly convey the strong influence of folk music from various regions of his country.

The work opens with “Aragonesa” (tr. 1), an elegant and rhythmically driven rendition of the popular *jota* dance, from the

Northeast of Spain. It is followed by “Cubana” (tr. 2), which – as the title implies – evokes the Caribbean atmosphere of the former Spanish colony: sometimes relaxed and contemplative, sometimes more passionate and dance-like.

“Montañesa” (tr. 3) depicts the Asturian landscapes of Northern Spain and is the most intimate movement of the set, despite its lively, folk-inspired central passage. Finally, the inspiration for “Andaluza” (tr. 4) is unmistakably the *flamenco* and particularly the *cante jondo* (a style of flamenco singing), which in this arrangement is given voice by the two 8-string guitars by turns.

From de Falla's rarely heard opera *La Vida Breve* (The Brief Life) comes “Danza Española No. 2” (tr. 16), which appears in the opera's second act; the operatic original is vocally punctuated. Indeed, this – as well as the well-known No. 1 dance – has been arranged for several different instrumental combinations; both are far better-known than the original opera. This is our program's only work that was not originally written for piano. The music is highly rhythmic and driven, full of bright tonal colors and irresistible Spanish flavors.

Enrique Granados, the “Spanish Chopin,” enjoyed – like Albéniz – an illustrious reputation during his lifetime, both as a composer and as a pianist. His music for piano evolved from a somewhat lighter Romantic style to a more complex and nationalist-inspired idiom. One can’t help but notice the influence of Spanish painter Francisco Goya (1746-1828) in some of his most important works – like *Goyescas*, *op.11*, a cycle from which the BGQ performs two movements in this program. The work is subtitled “Los majos enamorados” (The Gallants in love), and in spite of the direct inspiration, it is debatable whether there are particular associations of movements with specific works by the Spanish painter.

“El fandango del candil” (Fandango by candlelight, tr. 5) is based on the typical couple-dance in triple meter that originated as early as the 16th century. Once considered an overly sensual dance, it made its way from its popular origins to high Spanish society – as shown by Boccherini, who composed a *fandango* as part of a famous string quintet while in service to the Spanish court. In this extremely rhythmic number, Granados builds up tension by adding layers to a motivic cell in triplets

which recurs throughout the whole piece: sometimes isolated and sometimes in more complex figurations, they form sensual and sinuous lines that occasionally give way to strongly driven melodies.

“El Pelele” (The straw doll, tr. 18) concludes the original suite (and the album), almost as a “cherry-on-top” offering to the listener after the preceding movements’ dense and complex characteristics. There actually is a painting by Goya bearing this exact title, depicting a scene of popular amusement wherein a straw puppet is being tossed high up in the air by a group of women: an image that is wonderfully conveyed by Granados’ exuberant music.

Following the 1907 première of his *Piano Quintet*, Op. 1, **Joaquin Turina** (1882-1949) met with de Falla and Albéniz to discuss the young composer’s desire to create music in a modern, yet authentically Spanish idiom. He soon produced a number of works that captured the regional flavors of his native Andalucía and its historic city of Seville. Among these was his *Tres Danzas Andaluzas*, op.8.

The set's third and final "Zapateado" (roughly, "Shoe dance," tr. 6) is often extracted from the set and performed by itself, as it is here. As part of the entire set, it follows a rather impressionistic flamenco-flavored piece and a stylized Spanish tango in which the characteristic dance rhythms are somewhat masked by their musical textures. But this one remains entirely true to the form's original rhythmic character, projecting a livelier and more percussive sense of intermittent "shoe-stomping" that sets it apart from its preceding companion pieces. This impression contrasts nicely with the gentler middle section in 5/8 time that recalls a section of the set's first piece, "Petenera" – which is in turn derived from the *zortzico*: a Basque dance form.

Following the death in 1935 of Paul Dukas, his teacher during his Paris years, **Joaquín Rodrigo** (1901-1999) was moved to commemorate him in music (as did Messiaen and De Falla, among others). The result is one of Rodrigo's most touching piano works, the *Sonada de adiós* (tr. 7) – heard here for the first time in an arrangement for guitar quartet. Written in a modern style for its time, the piece's expansive, stately tempo, minor-hued sonorities, and

gradual buildup of dissonances combine to create a sonic tapestry of quiet, yet despairing grief.

Rodrigo described this piece as "written on a type of pedal ... that is to say an ostinato, well harmonized with a good melody ... It is like a tolling of bells ... and upon this basis are founded the two short themes." Many, from the title, misconstrue this as a sonata – but *Sonada*, meaning "sounding," makes the translation of the piece's title something like "Sonorities of farewell."

Rodrigo composed his *Cuatro Piezas* (Four pieces) for piano between 1936 and 1938. Almost totally blind since childhood, his handicap didn't keep him from becoming one of his nation's most beloved composers, as well as a brilliant pianist and musicologist who saw himself as an extension of Renaissance Spain's "golden age" of music – reflected in his use of polyphonic structure and ancient tonalities in many of his works.

The original piano pieces are often of rather complex nature, making it almost impossible to set them for solo guitar – hence these beautiful arrangements for guitar quartet that evoke the spirit of Spanish

dance as well as the nation's ancient Moorish and Renaissance musical roots. Three of the set's numbers are characteristic of Andalucía; only the final piece represents Rodrigo's home region of Valencia.

The set opens with "Caleseras" (tr 8) a musical evocation of a ride in a *calesa*: a Madrid-style horse-drawn carriage. The piece's syncopated rhythms and melody effectively convey the horse's steady trotting, while blending a wealth of other influences – like the use of the ancient Phrygian mode and a Moorish-style droning effect in the opening bars. But the salient influence is that of Federico Chueca (1846-1908), one of his nation's foremost composers of the Zarzuela, or Spanish operetta; in fact, the piece was written as a tribute to him. Echoes in the style of Chueca's catchy Zarzuela tunes and lively waltzes are heard throughout.

"Fandango del ventorillo" (Fandango of the old tavern, tr. 9) is based on a popular folk-theme. Rodrigo originally dedicated it to Mariemma, a prominent Spanish ballerina of the day. The *fandango* – one of Spain's most frequently heard and seen historic dance forms (as discussed above) – draws from other styles and dance forms

like the *malagueña*, *granadina*, and *rodeña*. You'll appreciate the music's often capricious and playful nature.

The gentler strains of "Plegaria de la Infanta de Castilla" (Prayer of the Princess of Castilla, tr. 10) hardly seems to be an actual dance, though it is reminiscent in places of the ancient *sarabande*. That and other characteristics make this piece the set's most palpable representation of Spain's golden age. The Phrygian mode resurfaces here, and is used more extensively than in "Caleseras." Its stately, somberly searching course has given rise to speculation that the piece may be a prayer for peace in musical disguise, with the "princess" symbolizing a nation that had been caught up in the agonized turmoil of the Spanish Civil War for about a year when the piece was written.

Oddly, Rodrigo seldom used native source material from the music of his home region of Valencia; "Danza valenciana" (tr. 11) is one of the few exceptions. The main thematic element of this work was adapted from a well-known folk tune known as "El u y el dos" (The one and the two) – a dance in the style of a *jota*: a lively form in triple meter from Northern Spain. It's normally

performed by at least one couple, to the accompaniment of a singing guitar player, plus castanets. Of the set, this piece, in particular, exemplifies the Spanish concept of “Casticismo,” reflecting a reverence for long-standing artistic traditions, and – in general – cultural purity.

The *Cançons i Danses* (Songs and Dances) is a fifteen-piece collection of (mostly) piano pieces by **Federico Mompou** (1893-1987); they were not intended to be grouped as a formal cycle, having been composed intermittently between 1918 and 1962; all four items excerpted here began musical life as piano pieces. Each one – rather like the Hungarian *csardas* – begins with a slow introductory *cançó*, followed by a livelier *dansa*, usually based on (or combined with) the same theme. The thematic source materials are mostly actual Catalan folk melodies and dances. The essence of Mompou’s genius lay in his knack for melodies and harmonies that sound deceptively organic, or even simple – but that are actually quite sophisticated and highly original.

The first and third pieces heard here were written during Mompou’s early years in

Paris, where he came under the influence of the late French romantics and impressionists. Erik Satie seems to have been a salient influence in both, with the first of the set (in third place here – tr. 14) sounding almost like a kind of dreamy Hispanic *gymnopédie* – even in the not-so-fast *dansa*. The No. 3 is heard first here (tr. 12): it’s based on the *sardana* dance form. After the wistful opening *cançó*, it comes across as a steady march, but in 6/8 time; the music was salvaged from a discarded string quartet.

The original set’s sixth piece (tr. 13); it begins as a tenderly poignant and heartfelt song, before a manic variation of sorts brings it to its conclusion. It employs the rhythmic characteristics and projects the often sultry moods of West Indian music. The aching melancholy of the opening *cançó* of No. 8 – heard last here (tr. 15) – is offset by a cheerful *dansa* that projects an air of contentment and leaves a smile on the listener’s face; it’s based on a popular Catalan folksong known as “La Filadora.”

– Lindsay Koob and
(BGQ member) Luiz Mantovani

Winner of the 2011 Latin GRAMMY Award in the “best classical album” category, the Brazilian Guitar Quartet has established itself as one of world’s leading guitar ensembles. Praised by the Washington Post for its “seductive beauty” and “virtuosic gusto,” the group’s unique combination, of regular six-string and extended-range, eight-string guitars, allows for the exploration of an original and unusual repertoire. In their fifteen years of activity, the BGQ has performed over 300 concerts in the Americas, Europe and Asia, often receiving ecstatic audience responses, garnering rave reviews, and meeting sold-out halls.

Highlights of the BGQ’s past seasons include performances at the 92 Street ‘Y’ and the Metropolitan Museum in New York, Spivey Hall in Atlanta, Vancouver Playhouse, Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, Dumbarton Concerts and National Gallery in Washington, D.C., Chamber Music Albuquerque, Beethovensaal in Hanover, Wortham Theater in Houston and Libby Gardner Hall in Salt Lake City, as well as at the Hong Kong Arts Festival, Felicja Blumental Festival in Tel Aviv, Colorado Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, Carmel Bach Festival and some of the major gui-

tar festivals in the U.S., Brazil, Australia, Denmark, Scotland, Mexico, Portugal and Germany.

In 2004, the Brazilian Guitar Quartet were “headliners” at the inaugural World Guitar Congress in Baltimore where, together with the Baltimore Symphony, they gave the world premiere of a specially-commissioned concerto by Brazil’s 2001 “Composer of the Year,” Ronaldo Miranda. In 2009, the Quartet performed the *Suite Iberia* by Isaac Albéniz in a Brazilian tour that included the major capitals of that country, sponsored by Instituto Cervantes in honor of the 100th anniversary of the composer’s death.

Counting this CD, the BGQ’s discography includes six CDs for Delos. Three of them are devoted to Brazilian Music: *Essência do Brasil* (1999), *Encantamento* (2001) and the Latin GRAMMY winner *Brazilian Guitar Quartet plays Villa-Lobos* (2011). Two recordings present, in their entirety, two great works of Western classical music, Bach’s Four Orchestral Suites (2000) and Albéniz’s *Suite Iberia* (2006).

BRAZILIAN GUITAR QUARTET: Everton Gloeden and Luiz Mantovani - eight-string guitars Tadeu do Amaral and Gustavo Costa - six-string guitars

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Additional assistance provided by Noah Ross

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