

The Romeros



Generations



The Romeros

From left to right: Celin, Celino, Lito & Pepe



THE ROMEROS *Generations*



With this new recording, The Romeros, the "Royal Family of the Guitar" celebrate an amazing tradition which now spans more than four decades and three generations. In 1957, the Romero family - Celedonio, his wife Angelita, and his three sons, Celin, Pepe, and Angel - emigrated from Spain to the United States. Although the most celebrated proponents of the Spanish guitar, from disciples of the great Tárrega and composers such as Turina and Rodrigo, had already acclaimed Celedonio Romero to be one of Spain's greatest guitarists and composer as well, Celedonio was no admirer of the fascist regime in Spain, and the regime had ways to guarantee that its critics would not prosper. In 1960, just three years after the family had arrived in America, Celedonio and his sons began to perform together and became the first touring, professional guitar quartet. By creating an entirely new repertoire of transcriptions and original works, the Romeros marked a revolution in music.

"One of the enduring mysteries of musical talent is how skills seem to flow genetically from musical parent to musical child. In the Romero family the flow has been swift and unimpeded. The virtuosity of the four Romeros was uniformly solid and finely considered, as if these techniques had derived from a single mold."

----The New York Times

Inspired by Celedonio's example, the Romero traditions of family and of love for the guitar provide fertile ground for the newest generation of guitar virtuosos. The Quartet has gone through natural transformations, and today consists of the second (Celin & Pepe) and third generation (Lito & Celino). The Romeros continue to dazzle audiences and critics around the globe with their striking mixture of matching techniques, individual brilliance, breathtaking precision, and perfect musical understanding. Surpassing the generations, "Los Romeros" have inspired dozens of composers to write for guitar quartet, and also have produced a large discography. The one seemingly irreplaceable element -- the love and inspiration of founder Celedonio Romero -- continues to be manifest in every performance by his sons and grandsons. Thus, an extraordinary family musical tradition appears secure for years to come, and this recording marks not a beginning, but rather a chapter in a continuing story.

"The Romeros: Guardians of the Holy Grail of the Classical Guitar. What the 'Three Tenors' are to the world of opera, the Romeros are to the classical guitar."
----Leipzig Volkszeitung, after a performance at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, Germany (1998)

Tomás Bretón (1850-1923)

Jota, from La Dolores

(arranged by Pepe Romero)

The Romeros

Tomás Bretón (1850-1923) was also a musical nationalist, and a militant

advocate of the establishment of a Spanish national opera liberated from Italian influences. After his first popular success, *Los Amantes de Teruel* (1889), he accompanied his friend Albéniz to London, where his conducting was also received warmly. Bretón's nationalism rejected a generalized Spanish style in favor of authentic regional settings. His *Garín* (1892) was distinctly Catalán, and the enormously popular zarzuela *La Verbena de la Paloma* (1893), set in Madrid, was inspired by the Castilian melodies and dances of the capital. To create *La Dolores* (1895), Bretón travelled to the Aragonese city of Calatayud where he studied firsthand the local dances and songs. He also listened carefully to the Aragonese *rondallas* and *bandas*, the region's characteristic string and wind ensembles, and evoked both in his orchestration. The libretto itself was based on a dark, naturalistic drama by the Catalán playwright Feliú y Codina (1847-1897) in which the beauty of Dolores, a maid in the village inn, results in the destruction of several men. The *verismo* of the plot and the authenticity and appeal of the music brought *La Dolores* instant acclaim throughout Europe and Latin America. The *jota* became Bretón's most familiar melody, surpassing even the tuneful arias of *La Verbena*.

A *jota* is a traditional song and dance from the Ebro valley of northern Spain. During his travels through Spain in the mid 1840s, the Russian composer Mikhail Glinka was entranced by the dance and made it the basis of his First Spanish Overture. Thereafter the *jota aragonesa* inspired musicians such as Gottschalk and Liszt, but by the first decades of the 20th century, Bretón's *jota* from *La Dolores* had replaced the others as the best known example of the dance. When the news of Bretón's death was

announced in December, 1923, the conductor Enrique Fernández Arbós halted a concert of the Symphonic Orchestra of Madrid for an impromptu performance of the late Maestro's *jota*. Pepe Romero's arrangement of this *jota* for guitar quartet is particularly appropriate, because it returns the music to a plucked string ensemble similar to the *rondallas* that inspired Bretón's original orchestration.

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

Granada: Serenata, from Suite española, Op. 47 **Celin and Pepe**
(arranged by Pepe Romero)

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) was a child prodigy who debuted as a pianist at the age of four, and entered the Madrid Conservatory when he was only nine. Albéniz had a troubled childhood, but anecdotes in which he stowed away on a ship to South America and worked his way from Argentina to San Francisco (California) playing the piano have been largely disproven. In the mid 1870s, Albéniz did give several concerts in Puerto Rico and Cuba (where his father was a customs inspector), and he did study with several famous maestros, but probably not with Franz Liszt. After 1883, under the influence of Felipe Pedrell, the leading advocate of Spanish national music, Albéniz devoted his talents to the music of his native land, creating a new repertory of art music steeped in national tradition. Albéniz composed (for the piano) dozens of character pieces that were inspired by the cities, regions, and folkloric songs and dances of Spain. Of these, perhaps his best known were the four movements of *Suite española, Op. 47*, first published in 1886 (an augmented suite with the same title was

published posthumously). *Granada*, the first piece in this suite, evokes the Andalusian city which is the site of the famous Moorish palace the Alhambra. Albéniz discussed the piece in a letter, "I [am writing] a Serenata, romantic to the point of paroxysm and sad to the point of despair, among the aroma of the flowers, the shade of the cypresses, and the snow of the Sierra. ... I am seeking the tradition ... [of] the guzla [a Moorish stringed instrument], the lazy dragging of fingers over the strings. And above all, a heartbreaking [modal] lament."

Pepe Romero (b. 1944)

Recuerdos del Pasado (Homenaje a Sabicas)

The Romeros

Recuerdos del Pasado was inspired by the friendship and mutual admiration shared by the Romero family and the great flamenco guitarist, Sabicas (1912-1990). From his Andalusian childhood, Pepe Romero immersed himself in the flamenco *genre* and while still in his teens had become a formidable flamenco virtuoso (as those who have heard his remarkable debut album of 1960 can attest); Sabicas (born Agustín Castellon Campos) was one of Pepe's greatest influences. Flamenco is capable of expressing profound anguish, but *Recuerdos del Pasado* is based on the *alegrías*, a joyful *cantiña* from Cádiz, where it is performed at *fiestas* by a singer, dancer, and guitarist. *Alegrías* is particularly demanding upon the guitarist as he accompanies the spontaneous, quick-changing movements of the dancer, while at the same time improvising a stream of melodies that display his virtuosity.



The Romeros and producer Wilhelm Hellweg during a playback session of *Generations*.

Jorge Morel (born 1931)

Al Maestro (In memory of Celedonio Romero) **Pepe Romero**

The Argentine composer Jorge Morel first learned to play guitar from his father, a noted actor; he continued his studies with other distinguished teachers in Buenos Aires, including Amparo Alvariza and Pablo Escobar. By the time he moved to New York in 1961, he had already developed his distinctive style and had written several of his beloved compositions for guitar. Four years later Morel met the Romeros, a fortuitous encounter which resulted in a long and close friendship. After the death of Celedonio Romero in 1996, Morel wrote *Al Maestro*; it was premiered by Pepe Romero the following year.

Horacio Salgán (b. 1914)

Two Tangos: A Fuego Lento, Don Agustín Bardi
arrangement by Jorge Morel (b. 1931) **The Romeros**

Horacio Salgán is one of Argentina's most beloved musical figures. In his youth, Salgán was strongly attracted to the tango, particularly the music of the legendary *Guardia vieja* or "Old Guard." He studied the piano and in time became well known as a performer, as a composer of tangos (his works were performed by many of his country's most popular singers), and beginning in 1950-as a recording artist himself. Together with Astor Piazzolla, Salgán became one of the leaders of the "new tango." Well into his 80s, Salgán continues to perform in Buenos Aires with his group, El Quinteto Real. His fellow Argentine Jorge Morel has selected two of

Salgán's most beloved works and arranged them for four guitars, evoking the rich sound of the tango orchestra. *A Fuego Lento* exemplifies the tango's sensuality and driving rhythms, while *Don Agustín Bardi* is Salgán's homage to another great tanguero (1884-1941) of the *Guardia vieja*.

Celedonio Romero (1913 - 1996)

Zapateado **Lito and Celino Romero**

Celedonio Romero was born in 1913 in Cienfuegos, Cuba (where his parents were involved in an architectural engineering project), but the family returned to its native Málaga while Celedonio was less than a year old. There he began his study of music and the guitar with teachers such as Rivera Pons, Joaquín Turina, and Daniel Fortea, himself a pupil of Tárrega. It was in Málaga that Celedonio married Angelita and their three sons were born. It is therefore no surprise that Don Celedonio's music is steeped in the fiery dances and ancient songs of his native Andalusia (the south of Spain). A *zapateado* is a such a dance, born in Andalusia but also widespread throughout the Americas. Typically the *zapateado* is danced by a man who marks the rhythm with his intricate footwork, thus it is named from the Spanish word for shoe.

Ruperto Chapí y Lorente (1851 - 1909)

Preludio, from La Revoltosa
(arranged by Lorenzo Palomo [b. 1938]) **The Romeros**

Ruperto Chapí was born the son of a barber in a small village near

Alicante, but he became a prize-winning student at the Madrid Conservatory. An ardent musical nationalist, he composed over a hundred zarzuelas, many of which received both popular and critical success; he was also one of the great rivals of Tomás Bretón, whose Jota is presented elsewhere on this recording. *La Revoltosa* (1897) was a one-act zarzuela hailed by many as a masterpiece; its rousing Preludio was arranged for the Romeros by still another great Spanish composer, their dear friend Lorenzo Palomo. Like Chapí, Palomo has gained renown for his Spanish songs, but Palomo has also fallen under the spell of the guitar, resulting in several successful collaborations with the Romeros. In addition to the present arrangement, Palomo has written several concertos for guitar and orchestra. His *Concierto de Cienfuegos* for four guitars and orchestra, dedicated to the memory of Celedonio Romero, was premiered by The Romeros in 2001.

Celedonio Romero (1913-1996)

Los Maestros

Lito Romero

Celedonio Romero's fame as a performer and as patriarch of a dynasty of virtuoso performers has tended to eclipse his reputation as a composer. In all, he wrote over 150 works, including nine concertos; until recently only a fraction of them has been published. He was also a fine poet whose Spanish verse was vivid, elegant, witty, and passionate; this poetic sensibility is apparent throughout his recordings and his musical *œuvre*. In 1989 Celedonio composed *Los Maestros*, a loving homage to his three sons, bearing the subtitle "Tres canciones para tres principales."

Don Celedonio left the public to guess which of the pieces was for each of his sons, but in fact "Coplas" was for Angel, "La Rueda" for Celin, and "Baile" was for Pepe.

Federico Moreno Torroba (1891-1982)

Burgalesa

Celin Romero

Federico Moreno Torroba (1891-1982) was not yet famed for his zarzuelas and Spanish operas such as *La virgen de Mayo* (1926) and *Luisa Fernanda* (1932) when the young Andrés Segovia first approached him to write for the guitar. The composer's uncanny ability to match haunting or vivacious melodies with lush chords made his works for guitar extraordinarily successful although the fact that he did not himself play the instrument meant that they are often technically daunting. Moreno Torroba enjoyed a long and friendly relationship with the Romeros, dedicating to them, individually and collectively, a number of pieces, quartets, and concertos. *Burgalesa* -- the title makes reference to the city of Burgos, home of El Cid and capital of the medieval Kingdom of Castile and León -- is one of his beautiful miniatures, written for Segovia in 1928 in the unusual (for the guitar) key of F# major.

José Muñoz Molleda (1905-1988)

Tríptico

The Romeros

The composer José Muñoz Molleda was also a native Andalusian, but he studied in Madrid with the illustrious Conrado del Campo, and in Italy

with Ottorino Respighi. In his long and productive career Muñoz Molleda earned a reputation for his religious works, notably the early oratorio *La resurrección de Lázaro* and the *Rimas de Santa Teresa*. Because his circle of friends included Celedonio and Angelita Romero and also Federico Moreno Torroba, it is surprising that he wrote only a few works for guitar—solo for Andrés Segovia, and the present quartet—although some of his works for other instruments, including several of his *Miniaturas medievales*, have been transcribed for guitar. Like much of his music, the *Tríptico* evokes the flamenco music of the south of Spain; its three movements are a soulful Seguiriya, a Tiento, and an extraordinary Baile (actually a *bulerías*) which becomes a sort of *flamenco fugado*.

Fernando J. C. Bustamante

Misionera (arranged by Jorge Morel)

Celino Romero

Fernando J. C. Bustamante, an Argentinian composer of popular melodies and love songs, dedicated "Misionera" to the ladies of the remote Misiones province, which lies between Brazil and Paraguay in the northeasternmost part of the country. Folkloric tunes such as Misionera were traditionally performed by piano, harp and guitar ensembles, but the Argentinean composer and guitarist Jorge Morel's brilliant transcription for solo guitar of Bustamante's rhythmic dance has become a modern classic on that instrument.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Allegro, from Brandenburg Concerto No.3, BWV 1048

The Romeros

(arranged by John Knowles)

The polyphonic textures of the High Baroque seem particularly suited for the guitar quartet; through the years the Romeros have programmed many pieces by Vivaldi, Telemann, and their contemporaries. This lively arrangement of a Bach masterpiece was one of the signature pieces of The Romeros years ago, and it seems fitting that the newly constituted quartet recalls its beginnings by reviving an audience favorite.

Notes by Richard Long



*From left to right: Pepe, Angelita, Celedonio, Celin & Angel
Sevilla 1956*



Celedonio Romero, Malaga, 1954
"He is the spirit of the quartet; all our concerts
and recordings pay homage to him."

La Gran Guitarra

(A mis hijos)

Al duende invisible de la "Gran Guitarra"
con las cuatro cabezas de clavijas doradas.
¡Oh! Duende invisible de las 24 infantas,
que cantan atadas,
sobre el mástil moreno de mi gran guitarra.
Con las cuatro cabezas, cuatro cabezas
muy desmelenadas y muy bien tembladas;
Por las tardes, por las noches
y en las madrugadas,
Bach se pasea encantado
con las cuatro voces de sus "Brandenburgos",
sobre el mástil moreno
de la gran guitarra, con sus cuatro cabezas
de clavijas doradas y sus notas largas,
con suspiros del alma y
llantos de nubes blancas.
Cuando llega el alba,
duendes verdes suben
los largos caminos
de la gran guitarra;

con las cuatro almas,
en manojo trenzadas,
sobre el mástil de ensueño
de esta gran guitarra.
Las cuatro cabezas
de clavijas doradas,
en las noches largas
esperan al alba.
¡Oh guitarra eterna!
¡Oh guitarra mágica!
Guitarra amada
de todas las princesas
que llevas atadas...
sobre el mástil moreno
de la gran guitarra,
cuatro jinetes la elevan
en las noches largas.

Celedonio Romero

The Grand Guitar

(To my sons)

To the invisible muse of the "Grand Guitar",
with four heads of golden pegs.
Oh! Invisible muse of the 24 princesses,
That sing bonded.
over the dark mast of my grand guitar,
with the four heads, four heads
with tangled hair and so well in tune;
In the evenings, the nights
and during dawn
Bach strolled enchanted
with the four voices of his "Brandenburg"
over the dark mast
of the grand guitar, with four heads
of golden pegs and long notes,
with sighs from the soul and
weeping from white clouds.
When dawn arrives
Green muses climb
The long paths
of the grand guitar

with four souls
woven into a bouquet
over the mast of dreams
of this grand guitar.
The four heads
of golden pegs
in the long nights
await the dawn.
Oh eternal guitar!
Oh magical guitar!
Guitar beloved
by all the princesses
that you hold bonded
over the dark mast
of the grand guitar
four horseman that lift her
through the long nights.

Celedonio Romero

Yo Quiero

Yo quiero, cuando yo muera,
juntar las cuatro guitarras,
para que sean tocadas
con las campanas del Alba.
Mi Guitarra, sin sonidos,
yo no la quiero olvidada,
la quiero siempre sonada
como fue siempre conmigo.
Yo quiero que por las noches,
sueñe con notas muy largas
y que vuelen por el Cielo
y vuelvan de madrugada,
para dormir en su estuche
hasta otra nueva jornada.
Yo quiero, cuando yo muera,
juntar las cuatro guitarras,
para que sean tocadas
con las campanas del Alba.
Y en vibraciones eternas
estén siempre con mi alma.
Yo quiero señor, yo quiero,
oir siempre a mi guitarra
aunque no pueda abrazarla.

Celedonio Romero

I wish

I wish, when I die,
to unite the four guitars,
that they be played
with the bells of the dawn.
My soundless guitar,
I do not wish her forgotten.
I want her sounding always
as she was always with me.
I wish, that in the night,
she dream with long notes
that fly to the heavens
and return in the dawn
to sleep in her case
until a new journey.
I wish, when I die,
to unite the four guitars
that they be played
with the bells of the dawn.
I wish, in eternal vibrations,
let them be ever with my soul.
I wish, Lord, I wish
always to hear my guitar,
even if I cannot embrace her.

Celedonio Romero

The Romeros

Celin, Pepe, Celino, Lito

Total playing time:
66:17

Tomás Bretón / <i>P.Romero</i>	1	Jota "La Dolores" The Romeros	8:02
Isaac Albéniz / <i>P.Romero</i>	2	Granada Celin & Pepe Romero	4:35
Pepe Romero	3	Recuerdos del Pasado The Romeros	4:38
Jorge Morel	4	Al Maestro Pepe Romero	6:58
Horacio Salgán / <i>J.Morel</i>		Two Tangos The Romeros	
	5	A Fuego Lento	3:18
	6	Don Agustín Bardi	3:38
Celedonio Romero	7	Zapateado Celino & Lito Romero	2:11
Ruperto Chapí / <i>L.Palomo</i>	8	Preludio "La Revoltosa" The Romeros	5:17
Celedonio Romero	9	Los Maestros Lito Romero	6:44
Federico Moreno Torroba	10	Burgalesa Celin Romero	3:01
José Muñoz Molleda		Tríptico The Romeros	
	11	Elegía "Seguiriya"	2:52
	12	Tientos	3:32
	13	Baile	2:23
Fernando J.C. Bustamante / <i>J.Morel</i>	14	Misionera Celino Romero	3:03
Johann Sebastian Bach / <i>J.Knowles</i>	15	Allegro The Romeros	5:58

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