SAN FRANCISCO PERFORMANCES + Omni Foundation for the Performing Arts, inc.

present...

The Robert and Ruth Dell Guitar Series

LOS ANGELES GUITAR QUARTET

Bill Kanengiser
Matt Greif
John Dearman
Douglas Lora

Saturday, November 8, 2025 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR *(arr. W. Kanengiser)*
Danse Négre from African Suite Op. 35

PHILLIP HOUGHTON
Opals (1993, rev 2014)
Black Opal
Water Opal
White Opal

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN *(arr. W. Kanengiser)*
From "Moonlight" Sonata No. 14, Quasi una fantasia
Adagio sostenuto

IMAGENS DO BRASIL

HERMETO PASCOAL *(arr. W. Kanengiser)*
De Sábado pra Dominguinhos

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS *(arr. S. Assad)*
A Lenda do Caboclo

PAULO BELLINATI
A Furiosa

INTERMISSION

J.S. BACH (arr. S. Tennant)	from **Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, BWV 1048** *III. Allegro*
DOUGLAS LORA	**Maracasalsa** *Preludio* *Fuga*
WILLIAM KANENGISER	**Air & Ground**
FRANZ LISZT *(arr. S. Tennant)*	**Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C-Sharp Minor** *Lassan Frisska*

This series is made possible in part by the generous support of Robert and Ruth Dell.

This program is made possible in part by the generous support of Jason and Lola Laskey.

Los Angeles Guitar Quartet is represented by Frank Salomon Associates, Inc.
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ENSEMBLE PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Los Angeles Guitar Quartet for the fourteenth time. The ensemble made their SF Performances debut in February 1986. They also appeared twice on the Family Matinee Series.

The Grammy® Award-winning **Los Angeles Guitar Quartet** is one of the most multifaceted groups in any genre. The LAGQ is comprised of four uniquely accomplished musicians bringing a new energy to the concert stage with programs ranging from Bluegrass to Bach. They consistently play to sold-out houses world-wide. Their inventive, critically acclaimed transcriptions of concert masterworks provide a fresh look at the music of the past, while their interpretations of works from the contemporary and world-music realms continually break new ground. Programs including Latin, African, Far East, Irish, Folk and American Classics transport listeners around the world in a single concert experience. Their *Don Quixote* collaboration with Firesign Theater veteran, actor Philip Proctor, continues to expand and delight audiences and the work *SHIKI: Seasons of Japan*, written for the LAGQ plus guitar orchestra by composer Shingo Fujii, is connecting communities across the nation.

Winner of a 2005 Grammy Award, their *Guitar Heroes* CD released on Telarc is a brilliant follow-up to their Grammy nominated LAGQ–Latin. Spin (Telarc, 2006) continues their explorations of jazz and contemporary music. *LAGQ: BRAZIL* (Telarc, 2007), including collaborations with vocalist Luciana Souza, was released to rave reviews, and their newest recording of the Rodrigo *Concierto Andaluz* and Sergio Assad's *Interchange*, written specifically for them, was released on Telarc in Spring 2010, and quickly climbed to top spot on the Billboard charts. he live DVD of *The Ingenious Gentleman: Don Quixote* was released on the Mel Bay label in spring 2012. In 2015, the LAGQ released *New Renaissance*, a unique blend of renaissance originals and renaissance-inspired compositions by Dusan Bogdanovic and Ian Krouse.

Opalescent, released in Spring 2022, shows off the LAGQ's rich palette of colors and sparkling sound. 2021 albums include the Grammy-nominated collaboration with Conspirare, *The Singing Guitar* (Delos), featuring Nico Muhly's groundbreaking work "How Little You Are" and Pat Metheny's "Road to the Sun" (Modern Recordings/BMG), named for the title track written for LAGQ, which hit #1 on the Apple Music Classical chart. This monumental work features in their current American Guitar Masters program. In addition to solo programs, other touring highlights include collaborative works with choir, guitar orchestra, symphony orchestra and Latin Romance with vocalist and flamenco dancers; many of these works were written expressly for the LAGQ.

PROGRAM NOTES

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in London to an English mother and a father from Sierra Leone, Africa. Although raised in England, he came to embrace the music of America, most notably in his popular trilogy of cantatas "Song of Hiawatha," and numerous works informed by African American musical influences. A prolific composer and active conductor, his career was tragically cut short at age 35, but not before he earned the respect of musicians and nobility across Europe and the US. He ultimately earned the moniker of the "African Mahler" (although this writer might suggest that "African Dvořák" would be more apt). His *Danse Négre* is the finale to a four-movement work entitled *African Suite*, originally written for piano, but subsequently arranged for full orchestra by the composer. Featuring a rousing introduction and ebullient theme, the piece moves to a middle section reminiscent of a spiritual and ends with a brilliant codetta. The simplicity of the themes belies a sophisticated sense of structure and harmonic inventiveness, and the piece seems to lend itself gratefully to this recasting on four guitars.

Phillip Houghton is one of the most recorded and influential Australian guitar composers. His work expresses a distinctly Australian aesthetic, reflecting the country's vast landscapes and mystical "dreamtime" Aboriginal legends. He was famously a synesthete, wherein he saw very specific colors when hearing musical tones and timbres. *Opals* (1993, revised 2014) is a three-movement work for guitar quartet, and it attempts to capture the myriad glints and sparkles emanated by Australia's opalescent national gemstone. In the score, there are detailed notes describing the colors and sheens that the music attempts to evoke. The composer provided the following notes for each movement:

"Rather than being pitch-black, the Black Opal is a stone of fantastic colour. Electric reds, purples, blues and greens of every shade predominate and refract and collide, in a fiery rainbow of splinters of brilliant light against a dark matrix. One could say that the opal is "made" from water, and, in the "Water Opal" movement, I imagined a kaleidoscope of colour in and against a transparent "water matrix"... colours floating, bleeding into each other. Against a white matrix the lighter colours of the White Opal are brilliant and translucent. Evident in this stone is what is called "pinfire" (glittering points of red and green) and the "rolling flash" (which describes the effect of layers of colour which, ripple abruptly and sparkle through the stone when the stone is moved)."

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Certainly, the *Moonlight Sonata* (1st movement of Sonata No. 14 in C-Sharp minor, Op, 27, No. 2, "Sonata Quasi una fantasia") by **Ludwig van Beethoven** needs no introduction. It stands as one of Beethoven's most recognizable works for solo piano, eclipsed perhaps only by *Für Elise* in popularity. Stunningly modern in its day (composed in 1801) it became one of Beethoven's most-requested pieces after his premiere of the work in 1802 (apparently, he played so forcefully in the 3rd movement *Presto agitato* that a number of piano strings snapped!). The evocative *Adagio sostenuto* movement features undulating arpeggios murmuring under a melody that Berlioz described as "a lamentation." With the instructions that "the entire piece should be played with the greatest delicacy and without dampers," it explores the full resonance of the lower tessitura of the piano in its most delicate dynamic range. The baritone voicing of the work lends itself well to the guitar, which already sounds an octave lower than written (although a number of the lowest bass notes traverse even the extended range of John Dearman's 7-string guitar). The challenge in William Kanengiser's arrangement was to attempt to mimic the resonant sustain of the piano, and the subtle pedaling effects that create its haunting atmosphere. Although every arrangement carries its own set of compromises, it is hoped that this one will shed new light on a much-loved Beethoven classic.

In this set of *Imagens do Brasil* (Images of Brazil), LAGQ pays tribute to the rich sonorities and infectious rhythms of Douglas Lora's home country of Brazil. The three selections presented here begin with a tune by the idiosyncratic jazz musician **Hermeto Pascoal**, sometimes referred to as the "Frank Zappa of Brazil". His *De Sábado pra Dominguinhos* is a fine example of the endless fount of tunes and surprising harmonic changes that characterize his music. This is followed by a piece by the great **Heitor Villa-Lobos**, one of Brazil's most celebrated classical composers, and a favorite among guitarists. His *A Lenda do Caboclo* (the Legend of the Native) was originally written for piano, and it features a gently gliding melody interrupted by a bow to the French Impressionist school. The set concludes with *A Furiosa* by the prolific guitarist/composer **Paulo Bellinati**, which was written for LAGQ. Inspired by the traditional brass bands that performed in small Brazilian villages, it begins with a mysterious introduction imitating the nature sounds of the Amazonian jungle and then opens to a joyous version of the *Maxixe* (an antecedent to the *samba*), ending with a percussive interlude in imitation of the traditional *batucada*.

Johann Sebastian Bach's Six *Brandenburg Concertos* take their place as some of the most beloved works in his extensive oeuvre. Composed in 1721 during his residency in Cöthen, they were dedicated to Christian Ludwig, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt. They were composed following the tradition of Correlli's and Handel's magnum sets of *concierti grossi*. These pieces explore the coloristic and antiphonal effects of mixed instrumentation, as well as dividing the musicians into soloistic roles (ripieno) and full ensemble (concertino). The *3rd Brandenburg* is somewhat unique among the other five of Maestro Bach; as opposed to mixed instruments, it is scored for strings alone, and for low strings at that. Violas, not violins, carry the highest parts in the group. This makes it especially amenable to a guitar adaptation, with the guitar's similar tessitura. Scott Tennant's arrangement of the third movement was inspired by the version he "grew up" listening to, by his mentors Los Romeros. But he included the extended range of John Dearman's 7-string guitar, keeping the full range of Bach's original (despite changing the key from G major to D major).

As a foil to the preceding Bach prelude and fugue, LAGQ features a composition by their newest member, **Douglas Lora**. *Maracasalsa* is cast in the form of a prelude and fugue, with the imitative counterpoint and thematic unity of the Bacchian model but rooted in traditional Brazilian rhythms. Based on the *maracatú*, an ancient dance-form descended from the Afro-Brazilian culture of the northern state of Pernambuco, *Maracasalsa* playfully explores the rhythmic interplay of superimposed motives, as well as unexpected harmonic and textural changes. This technically and musically challenging work was written when Douglas was only 25 years old and serves as a bridge to the exploration of Brazilian works that follow.

Although he has arranged dozens of pieces for guitar and guitar quartet, LAGQ's **William Kanengiser** has written only a handful of original compositions, all for four guitars. *Air & Ground* was the third work he penned, following two other pieces for LAGQ, *Mbira* and *Gongan*. "I actually consider this my first original composition," says Bill, "in that it wasn't directly imitating a particular ethnic tradition, such as African or Indonesian music. The first thing that came to me was the title, which I found intriguing because of its double meanings. 'Air' is a Baroque term for song, and 'ground' refers to a type of Baroque variation developed upon a repeating bass line. These terms suggested the general idea of a slow lyrical introduction followed by a more forward-moving section. The non-musical connotations of air and ground—the sense of yearning upwards towards the sky and being tempered by a downward pull to the earth—yielded the germ of the melodic material (G# reaching up to A and falling back down to G#) and gave me an emotional context for the piece. As I discovered my own compositional voice, I found myself being surprised by where it took me. Although I began with neo-Baroque leanings, I somehow ended up in bluegrass country, with a banjo-inspired stomp!"

Hungarian-born **Franz Liszt** was a unique "sibling" indeed amidst a formidable "brotherhood" of composer/performers (such as Chopin, Paganini, Kreisler, and Rachmaninov, to name a few) whose music and peerless virtuosity on the piano made him an international superstar of his time.

As was common and, most likely, expected of a composer such as Liszt, he dove deeply into his ethnic roots for those pearls that would make his music truly and unmistakably Hungarian. Bela Bartok would later praise Liszt and his music, particularly the Hungarian Rhapsodies, calling them "perfect creations", while at the same time hastily pointing out that the material Liszt was using was essentially Gypsy, and not entirely Hungarian.

The second of Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* is one of his better-known works. It was originally composed in 1847 as a solo piano piece dedicated to the Count László Teleky and published in 1851. An orchestral version followed soon thereafter. Most of his rhapsodies, including this one, are comprised of two parts: a slower and expressive part which Liszt marks Lassan (lassu), and a final section marked Frisska (friss) which builds up in intensity into a frenzied swirl.

On a contemporary note, the piece has found its way into the television and film media, appearing in such favorites as the Bugs Bunny "Rhapsody Rabbit" episode, and the movie "One Hundred Men and a Girl."

—Program notes © William Kanengiser