

ZIGGY AND MILES

SIDEKICK

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Paulo Bellinati (b. 1950)	1. Jongo	4:01
Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)	Tonadilla	
	2. Allegretto ma non troppo	2:33
	3. Minueto pomposo	5:16
	4. Allegro vivace	3:52
Enrique Granados (1876-1916) (arr. Duo Gruber/Maklar)	5. Valses poéticos	14:14
Katie Jenkins (b. 2000)	6. Sidekick*	7:02
Claude Debussy (1862-1918) (arr. Ziggy and Miles)	7. Clair de Lune	5:01
Ken Murray (b. 1968)	8. Trin Warren Tam-boore*	7:31
Nigel Westlake (b. 1958)	9. Songs from the Forest	6:47

Total Playing Time: 56:17

*World Premiere Recording



Recorded March 2023
Skillman Music Recording Studio, New York City, USA

Recording engineer: Wei Wang
Editing Engineer: Shen (Rick) Liu
Mastering Engineer: Wei Wang
Producers: Alan Liu, Wei Wang, Ziggy Johnston, Miles Johnston
Photos: Shervin Lainez
Graphics design: Anthony Cristiano, Martin Wright
Liner notes: John Griffiths AM

Guitars built by Jim Redgate
Ziggy and Miles use Savarez strings

Thank you to Mum, Dad, Sharon, and Alan for all your support in helping us create this album.

Thank you to Sharon Isbin, Edna Landau, Ray Mase, Andrew Ousley, and David Ludwig for your mentorship and guidance.

Executive Producers:

Lora Aroyo and Chris Welty
Michael Purcell

Tina Gonzalez
David Reiter

Jeffrey King

Special thank you to Margaret and Ian Ross

This recording brings together several strands of repertoire for guitar duo, or perhaps for the guitar itself in the more general sense. It draws from the Spanish traditions from which the guitar is inseparable and that have close cultural and aesthetic connections with French impressionism. The works in this collection by Enrique Granados and Claude Debussy identify so closely with the spirit and language of the guitar that we can almost be excused for forgetting that they are originally solo piano works. Both born in the 1860s, they are an entire generation older than Joaquín Rodrigo, born just after the beginning of the new century. His *Tonadilla* is something of a bridge between the older Romantic and Impressionistic world and the modern age, even if his evocations of traditional Spanish music are cast in a more modernist idiom. It is, however, a work conceived from the outset for two guitars, one of the pioneering works for what has become a flourishing instrumental combination in the last fifty years. When we hear these earlier compositions, the sound of the works by Granados and Debussy recalls the earliest renowned duo of the twentieth century formed by the Spanish virtuoso Miguel Llobet (who premiered Falla's homage to Debussy)

and his Argentine student María Luisa Anido. The Rodrigo work, on the other hand was composed in 1958 for the legendary duo of Ida Presti and Alexandre Lagoya whose work through to the untimely death of Presti in 1961 consolidated and established the guitar duo as an inspirational combination. It was no doubt explains in part the duet partnership of Julian Bream with John Williams, and then a series of highly successful fraternal combinations of more recent decades—Sergio and Eduardo Abreu, Sergio and Odair Assad, Slava and Leonard Grigoryan, and now Ziggy and Miles Johnston.

These latter duos are musically of the same generation(s) as the more recent composers recorded here, half a century younger than Rodrigo. Paolo Bellinati and Nigel Westlake were born within a few years of one another in the 1950s, in Brazil and Australia, respectively. Their compositions, albeit in styles that are very different from one another, speak using a musical language that draws its inspiration from newer sounds and a vastly broader musical palette than the earlier compositions. Unlike the Westlake and Bellinati works that have enjoyed considerable success among guitar duos, the two *pieces de resistance* in the arsenal of the Johnstons are recorded here for the

first time, being works composed for Ziggy and Miles and dedicated to them by Melbourne guitarist Ken Murray and their Julliard colleague Katie Jenkins.

Paolo Bellinati is a Brazilian guitarist composer born in São Paulo in 1950, but who studied in Europe as well as at home. His career has seen him cross between classical and more popular streams, particularly related to jazz and Brazilian music. he has also worked extensively in recovering, publishing and recording forgotten Brazilian music, notably the works of Anibal Augusto Sardinha, known as Garoto. **Jongo** was composed in Geneva in 1988, with the version for two guitars the following year. It is based on the Afro-Brazilian genre of the same name and has become one of Bellinati's most iconic compositions. Its native characteristics dominate throughout and provide the melodic and rhythmic material that are developed and converted into a full-blown *tour de force*.

Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999) began his life as a composer aged 16, having become blind at the age of 3. His *Concierto de Aranjuez* (1939) has made him into one of the best-known guitar composers of all times. He composed more than twenty guitar

works, initially from 1926 and several of these have gained their place in the guitar's standard repertoire. The *Tonadilla* was composed in 1959, for the Presti-Lagoya duo, some thirty years after his famous concerto. In three movements—*Allegretto ma non troppo*, *Minueto pomposo*, *Allegro vivace*—and in virtuosic style, each movement is based on themes strongly reminiscent of Spanish traditional music, especially evident in its rhythms. Its language, often energetic and sometimes even quite harsh show the evolution of his language, but without swaying far from his nationalist roots.

Enrique Granados (1867-1916) is one of the outstanding representatives of Spanish nationalism alongside his compatriot and contemporary Isaac Albéniz. His training was first in his native Catalonia, and then in Paris, the city that had a magnetic attraction for Spanish composers in search of a nationalist voice. Granados composed in many genres, ranging from small to large, sometimes reworking the same pieces across genres. The *Valses poéticos* were composed between 1886 and 1894 at a time when Granados' style was at its most romantic. It is a single work comprising eight individual waltzes linked together, preceded by

a lively introduction. The individual waltzes are in binary or ternary form but, more importantly form a sequence that is best indicated by the tempo and mood markings at the beginning of each: 1. Melodioso, 2. Tempo di vals noble, 3. Tempo di vals lento, 4. Allegro humorístico, 5. Allegretto (elegante), 6. Quasi ad libitum (sentimental), 7. Vivo. One of the outstanding aspects of the work is the way that it is crafted into an organic whole rather seeming like an assemblage of individual pieces.

Katie Jenkins is a young Welsh composer and producer who now lives in New York. She is both a singer and violinist, strongly influenced by her Celtic heritage who composes for diverse media and performance contexts, also fond of collaborative work. Holder of the Henry Mancini Fellowship, she graduated from the Juilliard School in 2022 and is currently completing her master's degree there.

Sidekick was written for Ziggy and Miles Johnston in 2021. Katie Jenkins describes it in the following series of observations of the way remarkable features of Ziggy and Miles fraternal relationship and that explains what she has sought to portray in the music: Smack bang in the middle of the

Covid-19 pandemic, I found myself confined to the four, pale blue walls of my college dorm room. Across the hall were two guitarists, Miles and Ziggy Johnston; I was convinced, at the time, they were twins. I later realized that they were brothers who finished each other's sentences, read each other's minds and had a musical synergy that was quite remarkable. I noticed that at times, their performances would sound like one person playing with 12 strings! When they asked me to write them a duo, I knew that I wanted to create a custom character piece that was as playful and humorous as the dynamic between them. The result is a work that takes us through the many and varied moments I encountered, living with the Johnston brothers as Juilliard students. They make fun of each other but need each other, they compete with one another but are stronger together. Sidekick satires their unbreakably strong but at times hilarious brotherly dynamic. This work is dedicated to the Johnston brothers with deep gratitude for their musical super-powers, camaraderie, and friendship!

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) is regarded as one of the great innovators of *fin de siècle* Paris, the musical equivalent of the Impressionist

painters who brought a new style of composition, light, texture and mood to their paintings. His piano piece

Clair de Lune was composed in 1890-1891 as the third of the four movements of his *Suite bergamasque* but that developed quite a life of its own, given its individual beauty. The other movements—Prélude, Menuet, Passepied—indicate a work of neo-classical tendencies, looking back to French models of an earlier time. Clair de lune is so well known that little can be said of it other than to observe how beautifully it has been adapted to the medium of the guitar duo by Ziggy and Miles themselves, and performed in a rendition that captures so much of the mood and richness of the piano piece despite the narrower range of the guitar and the limitations normally imposed as a result.

Ken Murray is head of guitar at the University of Melbourne after having completed his tertiary studies there in guitar performance and musicology, later developing his skills as a composer. Among the diverse aspects of his performing career has been his concentration on little known Spanish guitar music of the twentieth century, extensive experience with Brazilian

and Latin American music, and his championing of contemporary music with which his own compositional activity is closely linked. He composed *Trin Warren Tam-boore* for the Johnston brothers in 2022. It is a work with an eerie flavour that has a local topographical inspiration, well explained by the composer himself who writes:

The piece reflects the joy I have felt at visiting the *Trin Warren Tam-boore* wetlands on the north-western edge of Royal Park in Melbourne over the past few years. During the lockdowns of 2020/21 residents were restricted to a five-kilometre zone for travel and Trin Warren was just within my range. It's a great example of urban design where stormwater is treated, and native birds are attracted by rich variety of plant and animal life. Trin Warren and its surrounds are a real haven for smaller birds such as honeyeaters, pardalotes, robins, wrens and finches, and also for parrots like the Eastern rosella, musk lorikeets and the red-rumped parrot. The name was given by the Wurundjeri people, the indigenous custodians of the Melbourne area, and means Bellbird Waterhole.

Nigel Westlake (b. 1958) is one of Australia's foremost living composers.

Starting his career as a clarinettist, his interests quickly broadened through involvement in myriad of ensembles, dance companies, and theatre groups. This diversity is felt in the eclectic nature of much of his composition, in the wide range of colours and sources of inspiration it embodies. Westlake's significant work as a film composer has also contributed to the astounding kaleidoscope of sound often found in his works. *Songs from the Forest* fits well into such a portrayal. It was composed in 1994 for John Williams and Tim Kain. A later version of the piece adds a double bass to the guitar duo. The work proceeds as a continuous evolution, as if a series of tableaux woven together in continuity but encompassing a wide range of styles and colours from quasi popular song through to sound envelopes. It comes to a logical conclusion by the recapitulation of the initial highly individual and almost unforgettable theme.

JOHN GRIFFITHS

