

NAXOS

SKYSCRAPER SOUP

Music for Flute and Guitar



**ZOË A. WALLACE • KATHERINE HOOVER • JOAN TOWER
LIBBY LARSEN • CLAUDIA MONTERO • STACY GARROP**

Alena Walentin • Niklas Johansen

Skyscraper Soup

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The challenge of writing music for flute and guitar, with their vivid and varied tone colours, has fascinated many composers. In the 20th century Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Piazzolla produced masterpieces in this genre. The selection on this recording presents female composers from North and South America, each bringing their unique visions of creative expressiveness to this combination. The imaginative potential of flute and guitar are explored throughout the album in a joyful union of memorable textures and fresh inspirations.

The Argentinean composer, **Claudia Montero** (1962–2021), studied at the Alberto Ginastera Conservatoire in Buenos Aires and at the University of Valencia, Spain. She was awarded four Latin GRAMMY Awards between 2014 and 2018 and was composer in residence with the Palau de Musica and the Valencia Orchestra. The conductor, David Brophy has described her as:

One of the most outstanding and acclaimed composers in Latin America. Her music is strongly rooted in South American traditional music. Apart from the joy it expresses there is also a sort of melancholy behind the music, not sadness, just an elegiac sense or yearning for older times is rooted in Claudia's traditions from that part of the world.

Katherine Hoover (1937–2018), American composer, flautist and conductor, studied at the Eastman School of Music, and the Manhattan School of Music. She became a faculty member of the latter and taught there for 15 years. She also instructed flute students at the Juilliard Preparatory School. Katherine Hoover was the recipient of many prestigious awards for her compositions.

Canyon Echoes, Op. 45, is evocative of the Old West with mysterious sonorities and many varied textures, creating multiple atmospheres of loneliness and wildness. *Caprice* opens with a mournful flute solo to which the guitar brings a walking accompaniment and arpeggiated chords. Later the flute offers elaborate ornamentation with the accompaniment of subtle guitar voices. The composer wrote:

This piece was inspired by a book called *The Flute Player*, a simple and beautifully illustrated retelling of an Apache folktale by Michael Lacapa. It is the story of two young Apaches from different areas of a large canyon, where the streams ripple and the wind sings in the cottonwoods. They meet at a hoop dance, and dance only with each other. The next day, as the girl works up on the side of the canyon in her father's fields, the boy sits below by a stream and plays his flute for her (flute-playing was a common manner of courtship). She puts a leaf in the stream which flows down to him, so he knows she hears. This continues for a time, until the boy is woken one morning and told he is of age to join the hunt – a journey of some weeks, leaving momentarily. The girl still listens each day for the flute until, feeling abandoned, she falls ill and dies. When the boy returns, he runs to play for her – but there is no leaf. When he learns of her death, he disappears into the hills, and his flute still echoes when the breezes blow through the cottonwoods, and the streams ripple in the canyon.

Elizabeth Brown Larsen, known as **Libby Larsen** (b. 1950), studied at the University of Minnesota, being awarded her doctorate in Theory and Composition in 1978. She co-founded the Minnesota Composers' Forum (later re-named the American Composers Forum) to stimulate the creation of new music. In 1983, she was appointed as one of two composers-in-residence for the Minnesota Orchestra. This was followed by the composition of her first symphony. The composer organised and became artistic director of the Hot Notes Series (sponsored by the Schubert Club of St. Paul) in 1993. This focuses on modern keyboard, and the interaction between performer and synthesized sound.

Libby Larsen has described the influences in her work as 'coming from unexpected places in my musical life – poets, architects, painters and philosophers. The other way I really learn is by reading scores voraciously, from Chuck Berry to Witold Lutosławski.' The composer has kindly provided this introduction:

Claudia Montero



Katherine Hoover



Libby Larsen



Zoë A. Wallace



Joan Tower



Stacy Garrop



Blue Third Pieces for treble wind and guitar is a little homage to the interval of the third and its place in the blues. The first piece, *Deep Blue*, is quiet and lyrical, beginning with a chorale-like motive. Its melody emphasizes the blue third in its lower notes. The title of the second movement is taken from the 1945 jazz piece *Salt Peanuts* by Dizzy Gillespie and Kenny Clark, which feature the famous 'salt peanuts' gesture consisting of a large leap back and forth in combination with a repeated, syncopated rhythm ('salt PEA-nuts, salt PEA-nuts'). This leap is usually that of an octave, although I have used the interval of a seventh (e.g., bar 31 and bar 51). A homage to Ray Charles, one of my musical heroes, is woven into the guitar writing of this.

Zoë A. Wallace (b. 1994) is a composer and concert guitarist living in California. She enjoys being inspired by text and it often plays a part in her artistic process, whether through translating a technical concept shown in a novel or through a more vague association. The composer comments:

Skyscraper Soup was based on the ninth section in the enigmatic poem *Spring and All* by William Carlos Williams. The text is the basis of both the form for the composition as well as the impassioned and slightly nostalgic sentiment imparted through the interactions between the flute and guitar.

Joan Tower (b. 1938), composer, performer and educator, is one of the most eminent American composers of her generation, and the recipient of a multitude of honours including the Gold Baton of the League of American Orchestras. She was awarded three GRAMMYs for *Made in America* (recorded on Naxos 8.559328 in 2006 by Leonard Slatkin and the Nashville Symphony Orchestra). Joan Tower was appointed Asher Edelman Professor Music at Bard College in 1972 and taught there for many years.

Snow Dreams, written for the flautist Carol Wincenc and guitarist Sharon Isbin, received a grant from the Schubert Club of St. Paul and was premiered in April 1983. Joan Tower has described the work:

There are many different images of snow, its form and its movements: light snow flakes, pockets of swirls of snow, rounded drifts, long, white plains of blankets of snow, light and heavy snowfalls, and so forth. Many of these can be found in the piece if, in fact, they need to be found at all. The listener will determine that choice.

Stacy Garrop (b. 1969) lives in the Chicago area. Her creative output comprises works for orchestra, opera, oratorio, chamber music, and works for solo instruments. Dr Garrop's music is founded on dramatic and lyrical story-telling, creating vivid images of many kinds. Of *Sueños de Flamenco*, the composer writes:

Flamenco is an art form involving highly dramatic music and dance. The form is strongly associated with the Andalusia region of southern Spain. Its actual origins are less clear, though historians theorise that gypsies brought the predecessors of flamenco to the region as they migrated from India prior to the 15th century. The form took on traits from cultures that the gypsies encountered in Andalusia, including Spanish, Sephardic, Islamic, and Moorish musical traditions.

Over the centuries, Spain's ruling classes undertook systematic persecutions of populations who did not agree with their religious ideals, forcing gypsies to take refuge in Andalusia's isolated mountain regions to survive. Not surprisingly, the topics of the gypsies' songs frequently touch on longing, despair, rage, anguish and hope.

Sueños de Flamenco ['Flamenco Dreams'] portrays a young gypsy couple who dance the flamenco with great longing, passion and vigour. The piece was commissioned by Duo Montagnard (Joseph Murphy, saxophone, and Matthew Slotkin, guitar). I subsequently arranged the piece for flute and guitar.

Alena Walentin



Photo: Sebastian Bak

Alena Walentin is a winner of 26 awards and prizes with a versatile international career as a soloist, chamber musician, arranger and artistic leader. She has been guest principal flute with leading orchestras such as the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, National Orchestra of Sweden, Iceland Symphony Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra, and others. With her great passion for sharing her knowledge since a young age, Walentin is highly sought after as a flute and chamber teacher, and has already held teaching positions at five conservatoires and one university in the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark, including the Royal Danish Academy of Music, the Royal Conservatoire The Hague and the Junior Royal Academy of Music in London. She has also given masterclasses in Switzerland, Portugal, Canada, Australia, the UK, Denmark, Singapore, Italy, Japan, Taiwan and the US. She is an associate of the Royal Academy of Music and is a former vice chair of the British Flute Society. She is also an artistic leader of the Soundscape Festival MS in Denmark – festival of music and dance. Alena Walentin has released albums with Swiss, German and Danish record labels, with her debut album being chosen as an Album of the Week by the Danish National Radio. Having given several premieres of works and worked closely with many composers, she is particularly keen on supporting female composers who were for a long time underrepresented in the classical world due to their gender. Alena Walentin is an Altus Artist.

www.alenawalentin.com

Niklas Johansen



Photo: Sebastian Bak

Niklas Johansen is a Danish classical guitarist who has won numerous first prizes at international guitar competitions in countries such as China, Greece, Bulgaria and Germany, and nationally he has received numerous awards and grants such as the P2 Talent Prize and the Sonning Talent Prize. He studied classical guitar at The Royal Danish Academy of Music with Jesper Sivebæk, at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt in Weimar with Ricardo Gallén, and at the Universidad de Alicante with David Russell and Manuel Barrueco, among others. As a concert guitarist, Niklas Johansen has played in more than 20 countries around the world. He has often performed with renowned orchestras and ensembles such as the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, the Danish National Vocal Ensemble and ADDA Simfònica Alicante, and performs both as a solo guitarist and in various chamber music contexts. His love for contemporary music has led to numerous first performances and collaborations with contemporary composers. Besides his concert activities Niklas Johansen has a teaching position at The Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen as well as two pre-academy institutions of Copenhagen, and he is the co-founder of the annual international summer course Danish Guitar Camp.

www.niklasjohansen.dk



Photo: Sebastian Bak

The artists wish to thank the following sponsors



Six acclaimed female composers from North and South America present a diverse selection of works for the unique combination of flute and guitar. From Katherine Hoover's evocation of the Old West in *Canyon Echoes*, via Libby Larsen's jazz-infused *Blue Third Pieces*, and to Stacey Garrop's dramatic and lyrical *Sueños de Flamenco* – the imaginative potential of these instruments is explored in a joyful union of memorable textures and fresh inspirations.

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Claudia Montero (1962–2021)		Libby Larsen (b. 1950)	
Suite de los Buenos Aires (2009) 8:27		Blue Third Pieces (1996) 6:31	
1 I. Preludio y Nanita	3:07	9 I. Deep Blue	3:18
2 II. Intermedio melancólico	2:23	10 II. Salt Peanuts	3:13
3 III. Fuguetta y Despedida	2:49	Zoë A. Wallace (b. 1994)	
Katherine Hoover (1937–2018)		11 Skyscraper Soup (2018)* 4:09	
Canyon Echoes, Op. 45 (1991) 17:26		Joan Tower (b. 1938)	
4 I. Dance	4:14	12 Snow Dreams (1983) 9:07	
5 II. Serenade	6:00	Stacy Garrop (b. 1969)	
6 III. She Mourns	1:52	13 Sueños de Flamenco (2018)* 5:20	
7 IV. He Returns	5:20		
8 Caprice (1999)	4:17		

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Alena Walentin, Flute • Niklas Johansen, Guitar

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