

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner, featuring the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters above a stylized illustration of a classical building with columns, all set against a blue square background.

NAXOS

Leo
BROUWER

Music for
Two
Guitars

A photograph of two men playing acoustic guitars. The man on the left is wearing a dark suit and has a beard, looking down at his instrument. The man on the right is wearing a blue shirt with white polka dots and has long hair, looking towards the other player. The background is dark with dramatic lighting highlighting the musicians and their instruments.

Brasil Guitar Duo

Leo Brouwer (b.1939) Music for Two Guitars

Triptico (1958)	13:47	11 III. Danza	0:55
1 I. Allegro	3:39	12 IV. Final	1:07
2 II. Interludio	4:42	Per suonare a due (1973)	14:15
3 III. Toccata	5:24	13 I. Prologo o Epilogo	1:13
Micro piezas (1957)	7:52	14 II. Interludio	3:43
<i>(Hommage à Darius Milhaud)</i>		15 III. Grand Pas de Deux	3:53
4 I. Tranquillo	1:12	16 IV. Prologo o Epilogo II	3:13
5 II. Allegro vivace	1:30	17 V. Scherzo Di Bravura	2:09
6 III. Vivacissimo muy ritmico	0:57	Sonata de Los Viajeros (2009)	28:38
7 IV. –	1:27	18 I. Primer Viaje a Tierras Heladas	10:22
8 V. Andante tranquilo	2:41	19 II. El Retablo de las Maravillas – La Venus de Praxíteles	6:43
Música Incidenta Campesina (1978)	4:14	20 III. Visita a Bach en Leipzig	2:53
9 I. Preludio	1:00	21 IV. Por el Mar de las Antillas	8:34
10 II. Interludio	1:12		

Leo Brouwer, from Havana, is universally acknowledged as one of the most challenging and innovative of modern composers. His prolific output ranges from solo guitar pieces to symphonic works, including concertos, chamber music, and many film scores. Brouwer's guitar works have developed over four decades through various styles embracing the avant-garde and the experimental, as well as neo-romanticism. His guitar music is now performed internationally wherever the guitar is played and frequently recorded, making him one of the most popular contemporary composers for the instrument.

On this recording Brouwer's contribution to the development of the guitar duo is fully demonstrated. The guitar duo tradition began in the early nineteenth century with the works of Sor and Giuliani, and was continued by composers such as Mertz. In the twentieth century the guitar duo repertoire was considerably developed especially by the presence of great partnerships such as that of the Presti-Lagoya duo and Julian Bream and John Williams who played concerts together and recorded many significant works. Leo Brouwer's work on behalf of the duo is, as with all his music, extraordinarily progressive and imaginative, extending the horizons of the duo medium both technically and artistically.

Triptico is a virtuosic composition exploiting the many creative possibilities for two guitars. *Allegro*, following a short introduction over a repeated dissonance, offers a sonata-like theme full of rhythmic variety and equal partnerships between the players. An *andantino* section provides a contrast before the recapitulation of the first section which climaxes in a short coda. The second movement, *Interludio*, in three-four/six-eight time, differentiates between images of a lively European waltz and the animation of South American dances with their cross-rhythms and unexpected contrasts. A later episode is marked *Tempo libero* (free tempo) with a solo section by the first guitar. When the second guitar joins in, the music returns to Tempo I, but the music has developed away from the simplicity of the opening textures in terms of melody, harmony, and rhythmic complexity. Finally *Toccata*, in three-four time, gives the performers an opportunity to demonstrate both individual brilliance and duo togetherness. Once again a middle section provides momentary contrast with a change of time signature to four-four, and the marking of *un poco sostenuto e cantabile* (a little sustained and with singing tone). The concluding pages offer further virtuosity in terms of rapid arpeggios, triplets, fast scale passages, and intricate rhythmic patterns.

Micro piezas, completed in August 1957, were dedicated to Darius Milhaud. The first four movements were published by Max Eschig in 1973, though the fifth came into print only in 1985. The work is in the form of a suite with echoes of a Cuban salon dance of the nineteenth century and presents contrasting rhythms with a vivid musical dialogue between the players.

There are many subtle aspects of interest within this suite. *Micro pieza No. 2*, for example, alludes to the conga at the beginning while *No. 3* just before the end quotes from Brouwer's guitar piece, *Danza característica*. Isabelle Hernández, in her biography of Brouwer, recommends that 'careful attention should be given to *Micropieza No. 4* since this piece contains some of the most successful polyphonic effects the composer has achieved'.

No. 5 takes the form of a theme with variations on the French children's song, *Frère Jacques*. This involves various styles and *tempi* from the comparatively traditional (as at the opening) to flamenco type embellishment, from markings such as *tranquillo* (just before the section in harmonics, the little bell-like sounds which sound poignant on the guitar), to *agitando poco a poco* a few bars later. The movement achieves its effect by the juxtaposition of many contrasts in remarkably close proximity subjecting the theme's familiar simplicity to a variety of unexpected dissonances and moods.

Música Incidental Campesina (Incidental Music of the Countryside) expresses the rhythms and energies of Cuban folk music. It has been arranged for various ensemble combinations such as two guitars, or mandolin and guitar.

Preludio uses the traditional alternation between 6/8 and 3/4 rhythms from bar to bar, the *hemíola*, as well as shifting to other time signatures within the piece, to communicate a sense of a group of rural musicians overheard from a distance. The intricate rhythms and syncopations are characteristic of folk music in this region. *Interludio* offers a moment of reflection with a plaintive tune accompanied by gentle chords. *Danza*, marked *Allegretto*, is a vigorous intermingling of rhythmic patterns beginning with a 5/8 time signature and moving rapidly to 6/8 and 3/4 alternation as in the *Preludio*. Once again a line of melody, switching from player to player and back again, is punctuated with energetic

chords, some syncopated. *Final* offers some dazzling interchanges between the two players involving intricate rhythmic effects. Though the rhythms are traditional the mood is modern with more than a hint of dissonance. The movement ends with a suddenly reflective chordal sequence.

Per suonare a due (1973) was written during the composer's avant-garde period when he delighted in exploring dissonant sonorities and unusual effects. During the 1970s comparable guitar works by Leo Brouwer included (among others), *La espiral eternal* (1970), *Parábola* (1973), and *Tarantos* (1974).

The piece begins with a *Prologue or Epilogue I* to be matched at the end of the suite by a similar movement. Here Brouwer uses note clusters to create specific textures, a device which can be particularly entertaining in live performance. After *Interludio*, with its unique individual units of sound, the next movement is humorously entitled *Grand Pas de Deux*. The music is as far from dance idiom as it is possible to be, but Brouwer's sense of humour should never be underestimated. *Per suonare a due* is not intended to be approached with an intense academic seriousness – it is rather a series of tonal colours akin to an abstract painting, where delight can be enjoyed in the variety and ingenuity of the presentation.

Sonata de Los Viajeros (Sonata of the Travellers) (2009) represents an international voyage in four movements. The first journey is to the Freezing Lands and for this the music is slow and frigid, harmonics being used with chilling effect. The second movement travels to the Altarpiece of the Wonders, the statue of Venus by Praxiteles of Athens, the fourth-century sculptor. His Venus is believed to be one of the first life-sized representations of the nude female body, showing Aphrodite, the goddess, as she prepares for the ritual bath that restores her purity. The next movement features a visit to J.S. Bach in Leipzig and thus represents Brouwer's personal homage to the German master. Finally the Sea of Antilles (often understood in various languages as the Caribbean), takes us back to Brouwer's homeland for a rhythmic and virtuosic finale which celebrates the music of Cuba.

Graham Wade

Leo Brouwer on Brasil Guitar Duo

When we talk about the history of guitar duos since Presti and Lagoya – the ensemble formed in the early 1950s by French guitarist Ida Presti and her Greek-Italian husband Alexandre Lagoya – we immediately think of two sets of brothers from Brazil: Sérgio and Odair Assad and Sergio and Eduardo Abreu. Now we have the Brasil Guitar Duo, which covers the two-guitar repertoire as broadly as the Assad Duo has done for more than 30 years. In October 2014 the Brasil Guitar Duo, along with cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Carlos Prieto, premiered my piece *El Arco y la Lira*, for two guitars and two cellos based on Octavio Paz, one of the 20th century's greatest poets and writers. It was astonishingly successful. This is a duo that digs deeply into many styles of music. They have recorded my complete works for two guitars exceptionally well for the Naxos label, putting their virtuosity at the service of musical expression. I have always said that with our best performers, the key element is articulation; the rest is just *solfeggio*. Pay attention to these two guitar virtuosos!

Leo Brouwer Havana, April 13, 2015



Douglas Lora and João Luiz Photo: Gal Oppido

Brasil Guitar Duo

The Brasil Guitar Duo, a 2006 winner of the Concert Artists Guild International Competition, is equally at home in classical and world music. Its innovative programming features a seamless blend of traditional and Brazilian works, resulting in a full global touring schedule and a growing catalogue of critically acclaimed recordings. The Duo has appeared internationally in major concert series and at festivals in Cuba, Germany, England, South Korea, Colombia, Brazil, Austria, Panama, Poland, and Bermuda. Committed to performing new chamber music employing the guitar, the Duo joined cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Carlos Prieto in the October 2014 world première of *El arco y la lira*, a work for two cellos and two guitars by Leo Brouwer. On the same programme the Duo gave the Cuban première of Brouwer's *Sonata de Los Viajeros*, which they had presented in its United States première the previous month. Duo members **João Luiz** and **Douglas Lora** met in São Paulo as teenage guitar students and have been performing together for eighteen years. The Duo's primary studies were with Henrique Pinto alongside Fabio Zanon, Paulo Martelli, Sergio Abreu and Alice Artz. Douglas Lora earned his Master's degree at the University of Miami as a student of Rene Gonzalez. João Luiz received his Master's degree from Mannes College, the New School for Music, and with sponsorship from the Augustine Guitar Scholarship Fund a Doctoral degree from Manhattan School of Music. His teachers were Michael Newman, Frederic Hand and David Leisner. He is head of the guitar department at the State University of New York at Purchase, and also teaches guitar at New Jersey City University.

Acknowledgements

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With a prolific output ranging from solo guitar pieces to symphonic works, including concertos, chamber music, and many film scores, Leo Brouwer is recognised as one of the world's most innovative and internationally performed contemporary composers. In this recording his progressive and imaginative contribution to extending the horizons of the guitar duo is fully demonstrated. Subtle allusions to dance styles, virtuosity, and rhythms referencing Cuban folk music are some of the features of these exciting pieces which range from the special sonorities of *Per suonare a due* to the *Sonata de Los Viajeros*, an international voyage in four movements.

Leo
BROUWER
(b. 1939)

Music for Two Guitars

1–3	Tríptico (1958)	13:47
4–8	Micro piezas (1957) (Hommage à Darius Milhaud)	7:52
9–12	Música Incidental Campesina (1978)	4:14
13–17	Per suonare a due (1973)	14:15
18–21	Sonata de Los Viajeros (2009)	28:38

Full track details will be found in the booklet

Brasil Guitar Duo
João Luiz • Douglas Lora

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Producers: Norbert Kraft & Bonnie Silver • Engineer & Editor: Norbert Kraft
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Guitars: Sergio Abreu, Brasil (JL: six strings 2008; DL: seven strings 2009)
Cover photo of Brasil Guitar Duo by Gal Oppido



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Playing Time
69:06



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