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NAXOS

Javier  
**CONTRERAS**

**Works for Two Guitars**

**CEM, Samba • Suite Latinoamericana  
Sonata for Two Guitars**

**Dúo Sudamericano**

**José Antonio Escobar, Javier Contreras**

Javier  
**CONTRERAS**  
(b. 1983)

**Works for Two Guitars**

	<b>Tres Nacimientos</b> (2018) (version for two guitars)	<b>7:43</b>
1	No. 1. Allegro	2:07
2	No. 2. Andante moderato	3:07
3	No. 3. Allegro vivace	2:29
4	<b>CEM, Samba</b> (2017) (version for two guitars, 2018) Espressivo – Allegro animato	<b>6:35</b>
	<b>Suite Latinoamericana</b> (2013–20)	<b>14:59</b>
5	I. Para el aire	2:57
6	II. Para el mar	2:29
7	III. Tren de tiempo	3:14
8	IV. Témpano	3:28
9	V. Festejo	2:51
	<b>Sonata for Two Guitars</b> (2019)	<b>15:12</b>
10	I. Allegro moderato	5:43
11	II. Misterioso	4:53
12	III. Allegro spiritoso	4:36
	<b>Tres Piezas Patagónicas</b> (2018)	<b>8:25</b>
13	No. 1. La Barcaza	2:34
14	No. 2. El Cruce	2:48
15	No. 3. Retruco	3:03
	<b>Tres Atemporías</b> (2020)	<b>6:53</b>
16	No. 1. Allegro	2:16
17	No. 2. Andante espressivo	2:20
18	No. 3. Allegro deciso	2:17

## Javier Contreras (b. 1983)

Javier Contreras is a Chilean composer and guitarist who is making original and significant contributions to contemporary Latin American music. Born in the Chilean Patagonia, his musical language draws from the landscapes of the far south, the cultural memory of southern Chile, and the rhythmic vitality of South American dances. His catalogue includes works for solo guitar, duos, string quartets, other chamber ensembles, and orchestral works, all distinguished by an eclectic aesthetic that integrates elements of jazz, Latin American folk music, modern harmony and a rigorous, expressive compositional approach.

Contreras began learning the guitar autodidactically under the guidance of his father, who introduced him to the instrument at an early age. He later continued his studies with the Chilean guitarist José Antonio Escobar, a decisive figure in his musical development. Together with Escobar, and through his own work as a soloist, he initiated the international dissemination of his guitar music. The two collaborated for years as soloists and as a duo, eventually forming Dúo Sudamericano, with which they have presented premieres, tours and recordings that have played a fundamental role in the circulation of Contreras's work.

Building on this foundation, Contreras's music has been performed in the United States, Europe, Asia, and South America by renowned soloists, ensembles and orchestras. Among the guitarists who have championed his music are Ana Vidovic, David Tanenbaum, Shin-Ichi Fukuda and Duo Halász. His works have also been embraced by distinguished performers of other instruments, including cellist Alexander Ramm, violinist David Lisker, violist Kimberly Sparr and percussionist Vivi Vassileva.

Contreras has collaborated and recorded with prestigious ensembles such as the Cuarteto Latinoamericano, and has received commissions from institutions and festivals including the Wiener Konzerthaus, Hakuju Guitar Festa, Cithara Sancta Foundation and the Orquesta de la Universidad de Santiago de Chile. His work has been recognised in composition and performance competitions in Chile, the United States and Spain.

Although currently based in Colombia with his wife, cellist Lucía Torres, Contreras maintains a strong connection with Chile and his hometown of Punta Arenas, collaborating on musical projects with different projects and musicians including his sister, Karina Contreras, who is also a renowned composer and pianist. In parallel, he continues an active creative career as a composer, expanding a catalogue that remains in constant growth.

### Works for Two Guitars

The guitar duo is a remarkable musical medium capable of producing kaleidoscopic colours, substantial structures, harmonic inventiveness and an orchestral richness of texture. Javier Contreras's compositions have extended the grand tradition of the guitar duo represented by former maestros of the genre such as Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Astor Piazzolla into the 21st century. His music is truly contemporary in form and vocabulary. We are thus drawn into excitingly inventive harmonic and rhythmic patterns with a range of cosmopolitan influences ranging from South American folk music to jazz concepts and 20th-century atonality.

Originally composed for guitar, piano, cello, and double bass, *Tres Nacimientos* ('Three Births') was arranged in 2018 by the composer for two guitars. The three pieces represent a fascinating triptych united by tonality and musical vocabulary. The title could be taken to mean 'inspirations' or 'beginnings'. Three separate moods express agitation, a kind of serenity, and finally an outburst of exuberance. The pieces are each written, unusually for guitar music, in a flat key, and wend their way through intricate modulations and exciting harmonies. The first movement delights in constant time signature changes giving a sense of tense activity and restlessness. The central movement is a lyrical ballad, while the climactic *Allegro vivace* is an exercise in perpetual motion.

*CEM, Samba*, originally composed for violin and guitar, was arranged for two guitars in 2018. The work begins with a gently sentimental introduction until a throbbing repeated bass note prepares us for the onslaught of a vigorously virtuosic samba. This is not a samba for dancing but rather a homage to the inner spirit of the dance. Repeated fragments of melodic lines and sharply punctuated rhythms demand brilliant playing from both partners. A slower section gives momentary serenity before a blistering coda exploits the rhythmic implications of the dance.

*Suite Latinoamericana*, in five movements, is a tribute to the music and general cultural atmosphere of Latin America. The first two works evoke the air and the sea. *Para el aire* is in the key of A major, and changes in time signatures impart a sense of melodic freedom and rhythmic variety. *Para el mar* depicts the sea in a slightly turbulent mood, enhanced musically by the key of two flats, and the switching of the time signature from 5/8 to 6/8. Both pieces demand dexterity and rapid responses.

*Tren de tiempo* ('Train of Time') is a highly rhythmic, jazz-influenced movement full of vivid harmonic colour and momentum. *Témpano* ('Ice Floe') is a lyrical work beginning in 5/8 time with occasional 6/8 bars as the movement progresses. *Festejo* ('Celebration'), in the key of G minor, opens with an extrovert, offbeat melody in 6/8 time. A quieter, more introspective section appears in the centre of the work before the festivities return in the recapitulation.

For his *Sonata* the composer has kindly provided a very useful introduction:

*Sonata for Two Guitars* was written in 2019 for Dúo Sudamericano. For several years now I have been inspired by the culture of southern Chile, especially an area rich in cultural traditions and interesting and diverse dances: the Chiloé Archipelago. This sonata repeatedly evokes a specific dance, very typical of the archipelago, called the *sirilla*.

As one of my favourite dances, I have dedicated a large number of works to the *sirilla*, considering it to be uniquely versatile. Despite this versatility, these 'Chilote' dances are not often used by national composers, but are essentially employed by folklorists from the south of the country. Perhaps it is my closeness to Chilean and Latin American folklore that has allowed me to use and master these little-known and exotic folk dances.

Considering the above, it is interesting to note that after a rhythmically severe beginning to the first movement, the work becomes increasingly dynamic and flexible with the first appearances of the *sirilla* rhythmic base. Later, in bar 28, a *sirilla* appears openly in the accompaniment.

The repeated notes in this work tend to reiterate the rhythmic base of the *sirilla*, which can be clearly heard in bars 123 and 124, as well as in bars 126 and 127, which begin the slow section of the first movement.

The sea of southern Chile and all its immensity also have their place in this work, especially in the second movement. The melodic poetry, the introspective harmonic work, and especially a kind of pointillism in the rhythmic work allow me to suggest my feelings about the vastness of the geographical nature of the south of his country, as well as the abundant worldview of that region of the continent.

Observed from close up, the rhythmic treatment of this second movement can be a little difficult to distinguish, but when viewed from a panoramic perspective, a well organised and perfectly defined structure can be perceived, referred to above as 'a kind of pointillism'.

Finally, the design of the third movement unifies all the previous concepts in a virtuoso movement versatile enough to allow for almost sudden and repeated changes in character and tempo in a natural way and constantly to call upon or dialogue with the two previous movements. It is therefore a very dynamic movement that concludes with a virtuosic and challenging finale for the duo.

*Tres Piezas Patagónicas* ('Three Patagonian Pieces') evoke the vividly colourful folk music of Patagonia. Patagonia is not a country but an immense region at the southern point of South America, shared by Chile and Argentina. It comprises the southern parts of the Andes Mountains in the west and extends east to the Atlantic Ocean.

*La Barcaza* ('The Barge') is a witty movement with catchy fragments of melody depicting the activities of the busy river craft. At given points the composition exploits the highest notes of the fingerboard. *El Cruce* ('The Crossing') begins with a slightly offbeat 5/8 time signature and alternates between that and 6/8 in a lyrical intermingling of harmonies and subtle modulations.

*Retruco* ('Retort') is a brilliant, high-speed dialogue between the two guitars which remains good-tempered but intense, requiring, as ever, virtuosity from both partners.

*Tres Atemporías* (atemporal, without consideration of time) presents three diverse works. The first *Allegro* begins featuring a frenetic conversation between the participants interspersed with an ethereal slow section before the recapitulation. *Andante espressivo* floats effortlessly beyond time in exquisite colours where the guitars blend harmoniously into a united musical togetherness.

In the final movement, *Allegro deciso*, the composer returns to the fast and furious though once again offering a few bars respite reminiscent of the second movement before returning to the primary energetic mood.

**Graham Wade**

## Dúo Sudamericano



Founded in 2003 by renowned Chilean guitarists José Antonio Escobar and Javier Contreras, Dúo Sudamericano seeks to primarily expand Latin American guitar duo repertoire, promoting the works of some of the region's greatest composers including Ginastera, Piazzolla, Ponce, Villa-Lobos, Sérgio Assad, Egberto Gismonti, Leo Brouwer and Javier Contreras himself, while also embracing European traditions. Featuring virtuosic synchronisation and exceptional musicianship, the duo has garnered acclaim from both general audiences and music critics. Its debut album, *Truco* ('Trick'), was released independently in 2009, and the duo has toured the United States, Europe, India, Colombia and Chile.

José Antonio Escobar (left) is one of Chile's foremost classical guitarists, acclaimed for his refined musicianship and his contributions to the Latin American repertoire. An international soloist, he has performed in more than 30 countries, appearing in major venues such as Carnegie Hall in New York, the Purcell Room in London, the Brahms-Saal in Vienna, Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow, Hakuju Hall in Tokyo and Taipei National Concert Hall. The winner of several major international guitar competitions, including the prestigious Francisco Tárrega International Guitar Competition, he has recorded multiple acclaimed albums for Naxos. Escobar currently resides in Chile, where he serves as professor at the Instituto de Música of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

Javier Contreras (right), a former student of Escobar and the winner of multiple composition and performance competitions is developing a notable career as a composer and classical guitarist, as well as creating other diverse group projects. He has recently appeared as a soloist at the invitation of the International Mozarteum Foundation in Salzburg and artistic director Rolando Villazón, and performed at the inauguration of La Ballena Azul at the Centro Cultural Néstor Kirchner in Buenos Aires in 2015.

This album showcases recent works for two guitars by the Chilean composer and guitarist Javier Contreras. He is joined by fellow Chilean guitarist and pedagogue, José Antonio Escobar – a decisive figure in Contreras’s musical development – to explore the composer’s inventive harmonic and cosmopolitan influences, which range from South American folk music to jazz. The *Sonata for Two Guitars* evokes the uniquely versatile *sirilla* dance in a work that marries introspection with vitality and virtuoso flourish. Elsewhere, Patagonian folkloric elements, exotic dances, high-speed dialogues and exquisite colours are conjured up in music of subtlety and energy.

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<b>10–12</b>	<b>Sonata for Two Guitars</b> (2019)	<b>15:12</b>
<b>13–15</b>	<b>Tres Piezas Patagónicas</b> (2018)	<b>8:25</b>
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**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS**

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**José Antonio Escobar, Javier Contreras**

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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