**Aquarelle Guitar Quartet**

Mike Baker, Vasilis Bessas, James Jervis, Rory Russell

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This document provides materials for both your early publicity and also the day of the concert.  Please use the full, complete biography in your printed concert programme whenever possible.

**Quotes**

“if one guitar quartet can give a traditional string quartet a run for its money in terms of abundant technique and breath-taking artistry, it is the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet” **International Record Review**

“The guitar quartet shouldn’t really work—four instruments with identical range. That hasn't kept ensembles like Los Romeros, the LA Guitar Quartet, or the Aquarelle Quartet from outstanding music making.” **American Record Guide**

“with outstanding playing and infectious spirit, this is no mere niche guitar CD, but a luscious and lively general-appeal winner” **BBC Music Magazine**

“this British ensemble seems incapable of playing with less than a glorious range of sound, perfect ensemble, and exquisite taste.  This is superb playing, and the music is ravishing” **American Record Guide**

**Introduction**

Recognised as one of the world’s leading guitar quartets, the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet is a dynamic and innovative group known for its extraordinary ensemble in performance, expansive repertoire and ground-breaking work in developing the guitar quartet medium. The quartet has performed extensively across the UK and abroad to critical acclaim, and is admired for its original arrangements of music from a wide range of styles, periods and cultures. They have received many awards and their recordings for Chandos Records have been widely acclaimed.

**Short Biography (425 words)**

Recognised as one of the world’s leading guitar quartets, the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet is a dynamic and innovative group known for its extraordinary ensemble in performance and expansive repertoire. Formed originally at the Royal Northern College of Music (in 1999), under the guidance of Craig Ogden and Gordon Crosskey, the quartet went on to study with renowned guitarists such as Sérgio Assad, Oscar Ghiglia and Scott Tennant. Their early successes included winning awards from the Musicians Benevolent Fund, Tillett Trust and Tunnell Trust.

In 2016 the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet was invited to perform at *Classic FM Live* at the Royal Albert Hall with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields. The concert, which also featured Maxim Vengerov, Debbie Wiseman, Laura Wright and Wayne Marshall, was recorded for subsequent broadcast. The Aquarelle Guitar Quartet has performed in many other major concert halls in the UK, including Perth Concert Hall, Wigmore Hall, St. Martin-in-the-Fields and Bridgewater Hall. Their engagements have taken them throughout Europe, most recently visiting Germany, Spain, Denmark, Greece, Estonia, Poland and Ireland. The ensemble made its debut in Asia in 2014 with a series of concerts in Seoul and they returned to South Korea in 2016, this time to perform at the Daejeon International Guitar Festival.

The AGQ is dedicated to presenting music from around the globe, spanning the period from the renaissance right through to the present day. Alongside their own arrangements of music from various genres, including works by Gismonti, Mussorgsky, Rossini, and film music composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, the quartet has been invited to perform the work of many established international composers, including Carlos Rafael Rivera (U.S.A), Phillip Houghton (Australia), Stephen Dodgson (U.K) and Nikita Koshkin (Russia).

The group commissioned Brasilian composer Clarice Assad to write a piece for their debut Chandos CD in 2009, and her work ‘Danças Nativas’ was nominated for a Latin Grammy® award for best classical composition. Ten years on, the quartet has developed its relationship with Clarice Assad into a collaboration which will present an eclectic and genre-defying programme by the AGQ with voice and piano in the coming seasons. A new CD featuring this exciting new combination will be released by Chandos in July 2020.

The Aquarelle Guitar Quartet has been signed exclusively to Chandos Records since 2009, during which time they have recorded 5 albums: ‘Spirit of Brazil’ (March 2009), ‘Dances’ (June 2010), ‘Final Cut’ (June 2012), ‘Cuatro’ (Nov 2013) and ‘Aspects’ (Nov 2016) all received highly enthusiastic reviews in the press.

Recognising the responsibility artists have to impart some of their knowledge and experience to future generations, the ensemble embraces every opportunity to be involved in education work. They all enjoy teaching posts in the north-west of England and the quartet regularly gives masterclasses to guitarists and chamber musicians, ranging from enthusiastic youngsters to aspiring professionals, including students at the RNCM and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

**Full Biography (812 words)**

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BBC Music Magazine awarded ‘Spirit of Brazil’ five stars for both performance and recording, commenting:

“with outstanding playing and infectious spirit, this is no mere niche guitar CD, but a luscious and lively general-appeal winner”

Subsequent release, ‘Dances’, received excellent reviews from both Gramophone and International Record Review, the latter concluding:

“After a first hearing, I felt as if I had musically travelled all over the world and was more than ready to get back on the plane for another round-trip”

‘Final Cut’, featuring the group’s own arrangements of celebrated film themes, was chosen as Classic FM Drive’s CD of the week on its release in June 2012, was given a five stars review by Time Out Magazine and has since been given exceptional praise by Sinfini Music (Universal), International Record Review and American Record Guide:

“Every so often a CD lands on your desk, travels to the player and stays there, going round and round and round…So I’ll just hit the pause button to read the name on that shiny piece of plastic – Final Cut by the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet. Right, press play again…”

“All four guitarists have shared the arranging between them; the results are uniformly excellent, with the parts well distributed and all the coloristic resources of the guitar exploited”

“this British ensemble seems incapable of playing with less than a glorious range of sound, perfect ensemble, and exquisite taste. This is superb playing, and the music is ravishing”

‘Cuatro’, a tribute to the Music of Spain, was released in November 2013 and was prominently featured in Classical Guitar Magazine. It again received excellent reviews in the press.

Their latest, highly anticipated, CD – ‘Aspects’ – was released in November 2016. It was selected as “Editor’s Choice” in Gramophone Magazine, with the full review concluding:

“All is performed with that same customary blend of high-octane virtuosity, relaxed lyricism, tonal richness and perfection of ensemble which has made the Aquarelle Guitar Quartet not merely one of the world’s leading guitar ensembles but, for sheer imagination and musicality, equal to the finest string quartet going”.

Recognising the responsibility artists have to impart some of their knowledge and experience to future generations, the ensemble also embraces every opportunity to be involved in education work. They all enjoy teaching posts in the north-west of England and the quartet regularly gives masterclasses to guitarists and chamber musicians, ranging from enthusiastic youngsters to aspiring professionals, including students at the RNCM and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Their former association with Yehudi Menuhin’s scheme ‘Live Music Now’ has also equipped them with experience and expertise in providing educational recitals to a wide range of audiences.