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# Saffire THE AUSTRALIAN GUITAR QUARTET



## Nostálgica





- 1 **JUAN MARTÍN** (b. 1943) arr. Koch  
**Rumba Nostálgica** 3'12
- 2 **ASTOR PIAZZOLLA** (1921-1992) arr. Grigoryan  
**Romance del Diablo** 6'09
- 3 **ROLAND DYENS** (b. 1955) arr. Koch  
**Tango en Skaï** 3'01
- BÉLA BARTÓK** (1881-1945) arr. Koch  
**Romanian Folk Dances** [5'49]
- 4 I. Stick Dance 1'20
- 5 II. Sash Dance 0'32
- 6 III. Stomping Dance 1'04
- 7 IV. Hornpipe Dance 1'23
- 8 V. Romanian Polka 0'32
- 9 VI. Fast Dance 0'54
- 10 **BILL WHELAN** (b. 1950) arr. Field  
**Riverdance** from *Riverdance The Show* 5'14
- 11 **CELTIC TRADITIONAL** arr. Koch  
**She Moved Through the Fair** 3'10
- 12 **BILL WHELAN** arr. Field  
**American Wake** from *Riverdance The Show* 4'26



Slava Grigoryan



13	CELTIC TRADITIONAL arr. Koch <b>The Salley Gardens</b>	3'41
	NIGEL WESTLAKE (b. 1958) <b>Six Fish</b> †	[15'45]
14	I. Guitarfish	2'15
15	II. Sunfish	3'38
16	III. Spangled Emperor	1'16
17	IV. Sling-Jaw Wrasse	1'53
18	V. Leafy Sea Dragon	2'34
19	VI. Flying Fish	4'10
	DEEP PURPLE (Ritchie Blackmore, Ian Gillan, Roger Glover, Jon Lord, Ian Paice) arr. Koch <b>Highway Star</b>	3'36
	Total Playing Time	54'39

† WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

### Saffire

#### The Australian Guitar Quartet

Antony Field • Slava Grigoryan • Karin Schaupp • Gareth Koch

The lively flamenco rumba dance style consists of elements from the Romany tradition in southern France and Catalonia, flamenco from the south of Spain, and rhythms imported from the Caribbean. The music reflects the soul of the Gypsies, the passion of flamenco, and the irresistible beats of Cuba. This accessible and upbeat style of flamenco has attracted fans across the globe and has experienced a kind of sea change during the past two decades, spurred by the relaxing of musical borders. Nowadays a rumba is likely to include multi-ethnic percussion, jazz riffs or a few bars of salsa added to the traditional rhythms. **Rumba Nostálgica**, with its uncompromisingly flamenco spirit, looks back to a more traditional style of rumba. Juan Martín learned his art in the land of its origin, Andalucía in southern Spain, where he developed his knowledge and skills in the disciplines of the purest traditions of flamenco.

Tango emerged in the 1890s in the tough, lowly suburbs around the edges of Buenos Aires. Born of the mostly immigrant working class, early tango carried echoes of zarzuelas, habañeras, polkas, waltzes and milongas. By the 1940s, riding a wave of prosperity, tango became a staple of radio and the ballrooms. It was a time of great orchestras, bandleaders and singers, many of whom Astor Piazzolla recalls in his memoirs as if invoking magical spirits. But by this time, however, Piazzolla was already

reworking tango's traditional form and sound. By the mid 1950s, after his stay in Paris and studies with Nadia Boulanger, Piazzolla was ready to do away with the rules altogether. In **Romance del Diablo** Piazzolla retains tango's poignancy and lyricism while rejecting its tendencies towards sentimentality and bouts of self-pity. He revised tango's harmonic language by incorporating the influences of Ravel, Debussy, Puccini and Messiaen, as well as the occasional nod to the cool jazz of Gerry Mulligan and Lennie Tristano. Piazzolla moved away from the dance floor but infused the music with a new vitality by using fugues, a walking bass and urgent brutish accents reminiscent of Béla Bartók.

Guitarist Roland Dyens improvised **Tango en Skai** at a party in Paris in 1978. Since then it has become one of his most famous compositions. Dyens describes the piece as 'a joke', or 'imitation' – in fact *skai* is a French caricature for fake leather. He advises performers not to take the piece too seriously, but rather to recreate the party atmosphere in which it was born. Saffire has taken his advice by recording it with several 'additions'.

In 1905, Bartók undertook a profound and scientific study of the true folk music of Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. In 1914 he wrote: 'It is hard to imagine that anyone could go on collecting folk songs in times like these.



Karin Schupp





Anthony Field



But it can be done. The amazing thing is that you can do it exactly as in peace-time. The peasants are so merry and lighthearted, one might think they don't care a rap about the war.' By 1915, the year in which the **Romanian Folk Dances** were written, Béla Bartók had amassed some 16,000 Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Bulgarian, Serbian, even Arabic folksongs. His original compositions between 1910 and 1915 are sparse, and the bulk of his output from this time is derived from the Romanian material he had started to gather in 1909. There are many treasures to be found here, including the *Romanian Folk Dances* for piano, one of his most popular works, which the composer himself arranged for small orchestra. Since then the work has been arranged for almost every conceivable instrument. An examination of Bartók's transcript of what the peasant musicians actually played him on their strange violins, flutes and bagpipes reveals the subtlety and delicacy of the composed version. His uniquely personal style unifies the exotic nuances and mannerisms, rendering them alive and intelligible to the concert performer and sympathetic listener. In Bartók's view, folk music was as fruitful in revealing new harmonic possibilities as it was in enriching conventional conceptions of melody and rhythm.

What is Celtic music? The simple answer is that it's music from Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man,

Cornwall and Brittany, certain Spanish and Portuguese regions (Celtic Iberia), and in particular, Ireland. It is a compound of many elements, but fundamentally it is the traditional musical heritage of the various territories we identify as Celtic. This brew has been peppered with many ingredients, most recently contemporary musical influences, from rock and jazz to techno and trance. Apart from its inherent musical qualities, Celtic music has also been influenced by wide-ranging non-musical factors, such as a new sense of cultural identity and political self-determination within the Celtic nations.

At one end of the spectrum we have the traditional songs and tunes played as they have been for generations. Although the arrangements for guitar quartet of **She Moved Through the Fair** and **The Salley Gardens** are, in a sense, contemporary, they nevertheless belong to this tradition. These melodies have a simple structure but within this display a remarkable diversity of form. One of the most interesting features of Celtic music is the use of the pentatonic scale. In the folk music of Ireland and Scotland the melodic potential of the five-note scale is exploited to the full, and melodies commonly embrace a range of two octaves. At the other end of the spectrum are the high-tech, state-of-the-art fusions generated as folk meets rock, jazz, ethnic or dance-floor grooves.

Looking across to Ireland, the biggest phenomenon by far in recent musical history is **Riverdance**. The original seven-minute orchestral piece *Riverdance* was conceived for hard-shoe Irish dance, written for the interval act of the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest. On a symbolic level, *Riverdance* combines elements of nature and Irish folklore into a musical dance celebration. The underlying idea is that the Earth, represented by the male dancer, unites with the Riverwoman, who personifies the river nourishing the land. The Earth and the Riverwoman are evoked through contrasting rhythmic and melodic motifs.

The idea of **American Wake** stems from the 'send-off' given to Irish immigrants on their way to America. The two tunes heard in the piece are similar to those found not only in Ireland but in Nova Scotia, musically illustrating the connection between the two places. The second tune in particular bears a striking resemblance to 'set dancing' music normally associated with the music heard at a wake. When Irish composer Bill Whelan completed *Riverdance The Show*, which incorporates *American Wake*, it went on to play to millions of people worldwide. The most dynamic feature of this new Celtic flowering is the cross-genre or cross-cultural experimentation. *Riverdance* is an outstanding example of Celtic traditions embracing both the modern world and other world music styles.

In the brief silence following the cascading chords which open Nigel Westlake's new quartet, the guitars spill into the music like sparkling flashes of darting fish. The piece then literally ripples to life, its bright reflective textures fizzing with effervescence. The splashes of colour in **Six Fish**, rarely heard in guitar quartet repertoire, are due to the unusual grouping of guitars. Two classical guitars, played by Karin and Slava, carry much of the melodic material, and are frequently involved in a dialogue with one another. These are pitted against the shimmering sound of a steel string guitar (played by Antony) and a throaty resonator guitar (played by Gareth) which serve to open up and colour the sound of the ensemble in a fascinating and unique manner. The resonator guitar, with its traditional blues associations, would appear at first glance to be a curious choice of guitar for a 'classical' composer, but the effect of the resonator in *Six Fish* is strangely undulating and swelling – almost aqueous. The resonator even produces 'whale song' in *Leafy Sea Dragon* – thanks to bottleneck slide technique. Throughout *Six Fish* there is a feeling of buoyancy, and the compositional techniques are deftly handled – from glistening harmonics like droplets, to diving liquid slides. In describing *Six Fish*, Westlake says: 'As the movements took shape, they seemed to take on a life of their own, each one marked by individual, distinguishing characteristics. I was



Gareth Koch



reminded of various fish I have encountered in the wild – the diversity, awesome beauty and weirdness of sea creatures is of great interest to me. I was also reading Richard Flanagan's extraordinary work *Gould's Book of Fish* at the time, which may have been an influence.' *Six Fish* was commissioned by Saffire and premiered at the Third Australian Guitar Competition and Festival in 2004.

'The pace is blistering, almost too fast for comfort, with lyrics that turn it into something breathtakingly homicidal.' This extract from *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1972 neatly sums up the driving energy and high-octane character of **Highway Star**. According to British rock band Deep Purple, the genesis of *Highway Star* was a coach trip, during which band members Roger Glover and Ian Gillan began working on chord

progressions and lyrics to a song. Upon arrival the new work was rehearsed, and later that evening *Highway Star* received its debut at Portsmouth Guildhall. The subsequent recording, which included the legendary *Smoke on the Water*, was released as the *Machine Head* album. The inclusion of *Highway Star* into guitar quartet repertoire, with its relentless tempo and huge virtuosic demands, makes it a technically challenging yet spectacular concert item. Apart from the pulsating rhythm, the music is defined by its spartan use of thirds, and emphasis on the harmonic intervals of the fourth and fifth. In the hands of a guitar quartet this feature creates a distinctly modal (at times almost Eastern) and subtle Celtic effect.

#### Gareth Koch

#### Saffire – The Australian Guitar Quartet

The members of Saffire, The Australian Guitar Quartet, are four of the most successful and talented guitarists that Australia has produced: Gareth Koch, Antony Field, Karin Schaupp and Slava Grigoryan. The group formed spontaneously in 2002 for a large outdoor concert, playing to some 2000 people. Based on the success of this concert and their synergy as an ensemble, the four soloists decided that Saffire should become a permanent ensemble. In June 2003, Saffire released their debut CD with ABC Classics which soared to number one on the Australian Classical Music Charts within days of its release. In November 2003, Saffire won an ARIA Award for Best Classical Album.

The quartet has toured extensively throughout Australia, playing major concert venues as well as appearing in live radio broadcasts. The group's performances are characterised by spontaneity and a joy in music-making, combined with a striving for perfection which four established soloists bring to an ensemble. Saffire also delight in bringing humour and enjoyment into their performances, resulting in a dynamic that goes well beyond the music. The instruments played by Saffire include classical, flamenco, steel-string, baritone, eight-string, national resophonic (dobro) and octave guitars. Plans for 2005/2006 include extensive touring in Australia, Japan, USA and Europe.

**Gareth Koch** has released many solo albums in a career encompassing flamenco, classical, New Age and world music styles. Reviewing his album *Journey to the Otherworld*, Britain's *Classical Guitar Magazine* commented: 'This is possibly the best CD I have ever reviewed.' Trained in Sydney, Madrid and Vienna, Gareth holds a PhD in music and is Artistic Director of the Australian Guitar Competition and Festival. His solo recordings are available through ABC Classics.

**Antony Field** studied at the Canberra School of Music with Timothy Kain, graduating in 1995 with First Class Honours and winning the 'Most Outstanding Graduate' award. He has won prizes in national and international guitar competitions, and tours internationally as a chamber musician. Since 1998, Antony has been head of the guitar department at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne.

**Karin Schaupp** won prestigious international prizes while she was still in her teens. She tours regularly throughout Europe, Australia, Asia and the US, performing as a recitalist, soloist and festival guest, as well as making regular TV appearances. A German review stated that her playing is 'so perfect, so complete, that it seems like a miracle'. Karin's albums are released through Warner Music and ABC Classics.

**Slava Grigoryan** has performed extensively throughout the world. Reviewing his New York debut, the *New York Times* said: 'A remarkable recital ... what comes across here is guitar playing of uncommon originality and authority.' Slava's 1996 debut at Wigmore Hall was received with rave reviews. He began studying guitar with his father and made his professional debut at 14. His recordings are available through Sony Music and ABC Classics. His album *Sonatas and Fantasies* won an ARIA Award in 2002.

**Executive Producers** Robert Patterson, Lyle Chan  
**Recording Producer** Isolde Schaupp  
**Recording and Mastering Engineer** David Neil/  
Jumpstart Productions, Brisbane  
**Percussion in *Rumba Nostálgica*** Alex Pertout  
**Recordings Manager** Virginia Read  
**Editorial and Production Manager** Hilary Shrubb  
**Cover and Booklet Design** Imagecorp Pty Ltd  
**Photography** Ingrid Kaiser  
**Clothing** Karin Schaupp's dress by Wayne Cooper,  
Slava Grigoryan's shirts by Brown Directions.

Recorded 4-16 June 2004 at Jumpstart Studios,  
Brisbane.

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## Instrumentarium

Flamenco guitar 1998	Gerard Gilet
Baritone guitar 1999	Graham Caldersmith
Eight-string classical guitar 2000	Simon Marty
National style resophonic guitar 2002	Gerard Gilet
Classical guitar 2001	Simon Marty
Octave guitar 1977	Manfred Pletz
Classical guitar 1999	Simon Marty
Classical guitar 2001	Greg Smallman
Steel-string guitar 2004	Christopher Melville
Classical guitar 2002	Simon Marty

RUMBA NOSTÁLGICA: Flamenco – Gareth; Classical – Slava; Classical – Karin; Classical – Antony  
ROMANCE DEL DIABLO: Classical – Antony; Classical – Karin; 8-String – Gareth; Baritone – Slava  
TANGO EN SKAI: Classical – Karin; Classical – Slava; Classical – Antony; 8-String – Gareth  
ROMANIAN FOLK DANCES: Classical & Octave – Karin; 8-String – Gareth; Baritone – Slava; Classical – Antony  
RIVERDANCE: Classical – Antony; Classical & Octave – Karin; Classical & Steel-String – Slava; 8-String – Gareth  
SHE MOVED THROUGH THE FAIR: Classical – Slava; Resonator – Karin; Classical – Antony; 8-String – Gareth  
AMERICAN WAKE: Resonator – Antony; Classical – Slava; Classical – Karin; 8-String – Gareth  
SALLY GARDENS: Classical – Karin; Classical – Slava; Classical – Antony; 8-String – Gareth  
SIX FISH: Classical – Slava; Classical – Karin; Steel-String – Antony; Resonator – Gareth  
HIGHWAY STAR: Classical – Slava; Classical – Karin; Classical – Antony; 8-String – Gareth