

CD Review***Infusion: Jason Vieaux & Julien Labro***

by Mike Telin



In June of 2014, the dynamic duo of Jason Vieaux (guitar) and Julien Labro (bandoneón, accordion, and accordina) gave a spectacular closing concert of that year's Cleveland International Classical Guitar Festival. For those of us who were lucky enough to be in attendance, we can now relive that evening via Vieaux's and Labro's latest studio recording, *Infusion*, released on Azica Records on October 28, 2016. If you were not there, buy this album ASAP. It's a must-have.

The CD opens with Labro's striking arrangement of Leo Brouwer's *Tres Danzas Concertantes*. Vieaux, a Grammy Award winner, gives a splendid performance of the three-movement work, while Labro's skillful accordion playing provides a fitting replacement for the orchestra.

The duo give a sublime performance of Pat Metheny's *Antonia* featuring heartfelt, extended solos by Labro on the accordina. Ten minutes have never gone by so quickly.

One difference between that performance and this recording is the inspired decision to add bassist Peter Dominguez and percussionist Jamey Haddad to the mix for 20th-century Brazilian composer Radamés Gnattali's *Suite Retratos*.

The four-movement Suite pays homage to pioneers of Brazilian choro. The quartet sounds appropriately laid-back during "Pixinguinha," while the tempo changes during the waltz, "Ernesto Nazareth," are stunning. Following the tango-like "Anacleto de Medeiros," the players bring the Suite to a rollicking conclusion with "Chiquinha Gonzaga," which features extended improvisations by Vieaux and Labro, sensitively backed up by Dominguez and Haddad.

Astor Piazzolla composed *Escualo* (“Shark”) in 1978 for his longtime band member and friend, violinist Fernando Suarez Paz. Vieaux’s and Labro’s high-energy playing perfectly captures the Tango Nuevo flavor of the Argentine masters.

Back to that concert in June of 2014: when Jason Vieaux and Julien Labro returned to the Mixon Hall stage for an encore, the moment that Vieaux played the opening of the Tears for Fears classic *Everybody Wants to Rule the World*, there were more than a few audible laughs from the audience. Would the Festival really end with that tune? Yes it did, and as on that night, the dynamic duo perform this tune brilliantly, bringing the CD to a fabulous conclusion.

Infusion is available on [Azica Records](#).

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