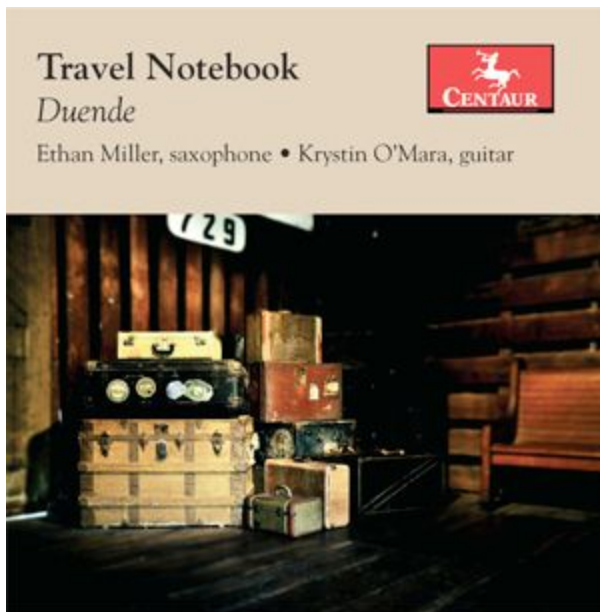


**CD Review*****Travel Notebook: Duende*****Ethan Miller, saxophone, Krystin O'Mara, guitar**

by Jeremy Reynolds



Guitar and flute may be a standard instrumental duo, but guitar and saxophone? *Travel Notebook* convincingly combines the talents of guitarist Krystin O'Mara and saxophonist Ethan Miller on Cleveland-based Duende's debut album, released earlier this year on the Centaur label.

Just over an hour in length, *Travel Notebook* includes arrangements of music by Heitor Villa-Lobos, Manuel de Falla, Astor Piazzolla, Agustín Barrios Mangoré, and Pedro Iturralde, and a commissioned work by James Wilding.

O'Mara sets up a rock-solid groove in the opening track of Iturralde's *Suite Hellénique*. Miller weaves his sound around his partner's ostinatos with a delightful sensuality. Duende handles the other four movements with aplomb. Miller's technique is in full evidence and his smoky sound calls to mind a balmy Mediterranean evening.

The pair gives James Wilding's *Three Cities, Three Streets* a spirited performance. Composed specifically for Duende and based on three photographs taken by the composer, the work begins with "Prague," a slow, dreamy introduction to "Barcelona" and "Palermo," two livelier, more virtuosic movements that showcase the Duo's ensemble — not always perfectly tight, but consistently riveting.

Three stand-alone pieces — Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5*, Barrios' *Julia Florida*, and de Falla's "Nana" from *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas* — an aria, a love song, and a lullaby — are quite lovely and fit nicely among the larger works.

“Nana” is particularly effective, Miller’s lower register melody humming gently against a slow, gentle pattern in the guitar.

*Travel Notebook* concludes with Piazzolla’s *Histoire du Tango*, a work originally composed for flute and guitar, and since adapted for many different instrumental combinations. Saxophone and guitar make an excellent pairing for this work, though I hear Piazzolla’s “Bordel 1900” with a bit more flair and rhythmic precision than Duende supplies. On the other hand their sound perfectly compliments “Café 1930’s” nostalgia. “Night-Club 1960” and “Concert d’aujourd’hui,” like “Bordel,” could have used more Argentine character. The muggy voluptuousness of Piazzolla’s *Oblivion* winds down this debut recording quite nicely.

*Published on ClevelandClassical.com June 17, 2017.*

*Click here for a printable copy of this article*

[Return to the Front Page.](#)