



## **Sephardic Journey Cavatina Duo**

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The Cavatina Duo's *Sephardic Journey* is a remarkable, expressive, emotive CD that takes the listener on a true journey of sound. The duo, Eugenia Moliner and Denis Azabagic, are joined by cellist David Cunliffe, violinist Desirée Ruhstrat, and the Avalon String Quartet. All of the playing is inspirational, combining rich, gorgeous, colorful tone quality with impeccable phrasing, technique, and ensemble playing.

The CD's music resulted from a number of commissions, all inspired by Moliner and Azabagic's shared familial history with Sephardic Judaism. Each composition effortlessly evokes a sense of melancholy, celebration, and story, while the skill of both composer and performers brings the music to vibrant life.

Carlos Rafael Rivera's *Plegaria y Canto (al Bodre de la Mar)* is tragically lovely. Based on a poem about love and death, this work inverts what might be a more usual hierarchy by utilizing alto flute and guitar with a higher, sweeter violin line. The combination of alto flute with violin above is gorgeous and interesting, and Moliner and Ruhstrat play with such close ensemble that they might as well be one person.

"Isabel," written by John V. Williams II, was inspired by the story of Isabel de los Olives y López, a woman from the age of the Spanish Inquisition who suffered torture and betrayal over her secret faith. Williams' music, angular and dissonant with barely controlled chaos, beautifully illustrates the internal turmoil she must have faced in her time of trial.

Clarice Assad's *Sephardic Suite* is at once elegant and folksy, ending with exuberant clapping. Throughout, Assad utilizes the extended possibilities of the flute to expand the vocabulary of the composition. Moliner flutter-tongues, creates breathy sounds for a rhythmic obbligato, and at one point plays a dramatic and lovely cadenza. The members of the Avalon String Quartet, alone with Azabagic and Moliner, create a rich, almost symphonic sound, and in the second movement, the hauntingly hollow timbre of harmonics for the violin offset the smoothness of the flute. Assad's skillful exploitation of texture creates an extremely evocative musical world.

This album is a perfect medium for appreciating Moliner's exquisite playing. Her control, her impeccable intonation, and her ability to blend seamlessly with subtle changes of tone color are second only to her expressive artistry. Every moment of the CD is entertaining, moving, and impressive. The listening was over too soon!

**THE FLUTIST QUARTERLY—Jessica Dunnivant**