



American Record Guide



**CASTELNUOVO-
TEDESCO**

Music for Two Guitars • 1

**The Well-Tempered Guitars
Sonatina canonica**

Brasil Guitar Duo



Mario CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO, Music for Two Guitars - Vol. 1

This is wonderful music. It's obviously inspired by Bach, though it is not neobaroque. Like Bach, he has a delightful capacity to imbue the academic form of the fugue with an intense lyricism. Some of the preludes (also like Bach) are not melodies but rhythms and textures, exploring the nature of the key without needing a tune. Others have the most haunting melodies, which then inspire the subject of the following fugue. And each pair is distinct—there is never a sense of formula, only invention and imagination. The other work, described by the composer as “a small work without pretensions” is the Sonatina Canonica. As the title implies, each movement is filled with canonic imitation, mostly at the unison or octave. Only the composer's melodic gifts save that structure from predictability. It's actually rather hard to bring off unless the duo is especially sensitive and fleet.

The Brazil Guitar Duo is all this and more. It would be hard to imagine a better performance, unless one could hear the dedicatees, Ida Presti and Alexander Lagoya (Presti died in 1967, before the work was published). This is one of the few guitar duos I've seen where the players were not either related or married, but that doesn't keep them from absolute unanimity in playing. Their sounds are distinct—they make no attempt to sound like the same player. They both have a gorgeous tone, rock-solid rhythm, beautiful phrasing, and no identifiable technical flaws. This is great playing. This is wonderful music played at the highest interpretive level—one can only hope Volume 2 is soon to appear.

Kenneth Keaton