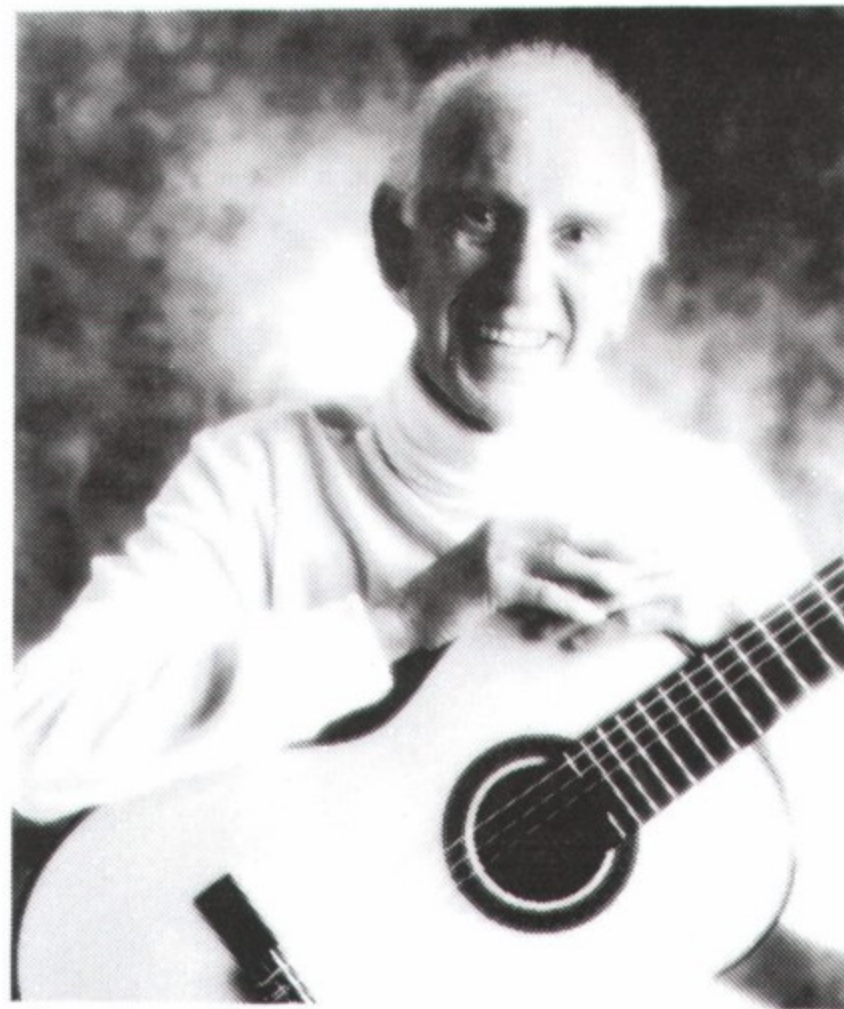




# CELEDONIO ROMERO

*Poet of  
the Guitar*



**Celedonio Romero**  
March 2, 1913 – May 8, 1996

Joaquín Rodrigo, Spain's greatest contemporary composer, said of Celedonio Romero: "He has contributed immensely through his artistic interpretations for classical guitar music. More importantly, he has enlarged and enriched the repertoire of 20th century music with his own compositions."

Composer, guitarist and poet Celedonio Romero was born on March 2, 1913 in Cienfuegos, Cuba while his father, an architect from Málaga, was constructing the Concert Hall in Cienfuegos. At a very young age Celedonio returned with his family to Málaga. Due to his prodigious talent on the guitar he was largely self-taught on the instrument. He studied music and received his degree at the Conservatory of Málaga, and later at the Conservatory of Madrid where he was a pupil of Joaquín Turina.

He first performed in public at the age of 10. After his formal debut at age 20, he played widely throughout Spain but was refused permission to perform outside of his native country. Deprived of his artistic freedom under the oppressive government of Generalissimo Francisco Franco, Celedonio escaped with his family to the United States in 1957.

Within two years the family settled in southern California, and Celedonio created a guitar quartet with his sons Celin, Pepe, and Angel - **The Romeros**. In an article in *The New York Times*, a noted critic wrote "... Collectively, they are the only classical guitar quartet of real

stature in the world today. In fact, they virtually invented the format." They became known as the "Royal Family of the Guitar". In 1990, grandson Celino replaced Angel, and the quartet comprised three generations of virtuosity. The family tradition continues with grandson Lito Romero joining the quartet upon Celedonio Romero's death.

After the quartet's first tour of the United States in 1961, they immediately went on to perform on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, at Carnegie Hall, and at the Hollywood Bowl. Since then The Romeros have played most of the great concert halls in America and have performed with virtually every major symphony orchestra in the world, including those of Cleveland, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Houston, Pittsburgh, Boston, San Francisco and Dallas in the United States, and The Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the Vienna Radio Orchestra and la Orquesta Nacional de España in Europe. They collaborated with many of the world's finest conductors, including Sir Neville Marriner, Eugene Ormandy, Arthur Feidler, Lawrence Foster, Jesús López-Cobos, Rafael Frübeck de Burgos, André Kostelanetz and Morton Gould. The Romeros have performed at White House state dinners by invitation of two Presidents, at the Vatican for Pope John Paul II, for King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia of Spain, and for His Royal Highness Prince Charles, Prince of Wales. Celedonio's voluminous discography, both in solo recordings and with the quartet on the Delos and Philips labels, brought his music to an ever-widening audience around the world.

Celedonio Romero was highly decorated for his contributions to the Spanish culture and to the world of the classical guitar. King Juan Carlos presented him with Spain's highest award bestowed upon a civilian, the title *Commendador de Número de la Orden de Isabel la Católica*. He received many other high honors and awards from leaders around the world including *Caballero del Santo Sepulcro* ("Knight of the Holy Sepulchre") given by Pope John Paul II (for which he was subsequently addressed as Sir Celedonio Romero), the *Gold Medal of the Japan Festivals*, the *Placa* given by the Red Cross of Mexico, the *Insignia de Santiago el Mayor*, and the *Artista de Honor y Amigo de San Diego* given by the Mexican and American Foundation. Among the local honors he received, Celedonio was especially proud of the Beethoven Award by KFSD, the classical radio station in San Diego, and "Celedonio Romero Day" (January 14th) proclaimed by the Mayor of San Diego. For his 80th birthday gala celebrations were held around the world in Málaga, Sevilla, Berlin, London and San Diego. The city of Málaga named him *Hijo Predilecto con la Medalla de Oro* and created a museum and foundation in his name. In 1995, Celedonio was awarded the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa* by the University of Victoria, British Columbia.

Much of the credit for today's high regard for the classical guitar can be attributed to the life work of Celedonio Romero. His compositions for classical guitar, numbering over 100 (including ten concertos)

have emerged as masterpieces for the guitar. Once an instrument associated only with folk music, the guitar is now firmly established in the symphonic setting and is a favorite for recitals in cultural arts performance series. Joaquín Rodrigo said of Celedonio: "He has developed the technique of the guitar by making what is difficult to be easy. He is, without a doubt, the grand master of the guitar." Celedonio Romero was known and respected around the world, and *The Celedonio Romero Method for the Classical Guitar* is taught in Master and Doctoral programs in the universities of North America and Europe.

#### Celin's Eulogy to His Father May 13, 1996

He had an elegance in his personality that only those who are touched by genius have. His goal was to fill his music with love without ever damaging a single note. To the end of his life he experienced the magic of music like a little child in an enchanted castle. He was the greatest of virtuosos, yet virtuosity as an end in itself was very upsetting to him. Music, the guitar, the poetry of love and life, his devotion to art...this is what burned in his passionate being.

He was an artist of great inspiration and fantasy who was incredibly dedicated to art. But what touches me very deeply is his dedication as a father. He was never too busy for me and my brothers. He was always there for us, for whatever we needed. He brought us unending patience with love, and always made us feel that we were the most important thing to him. To the end of his life he was very demonstrative of the pleasure he had when we played for him. It was in watching him react to our playing that made us search for the essence in the music.

He always let us have guitars before him and was always very careful not to hurt our feelings. I remember one day I was playing one of his favorite guitars, a 1930 Domingo Esteso. My mother had just waxed the floor. While going to another room I fell down, and the great guitar was broken into small pieces. Witnessing the incident, my father looked at the guitar completely destroyed and said, "Celincito, are you all right?" His only concern was for my well-being. This was typical of the wonderful way he took care of our feelings. I treasure the memory I have of him.

He was a great father. He taught me the sense of music. But what I hope is that he taught me more of how to be a father, because he was a great one.

### Pepe's Eulogy to his Father

My father was a genius. My father was an immortal man. I always wanted to believe in immortality. I always wanted to believe in eternal life, and intellectually I did...but in my heart...I always had doubts. In the last moments that my father and I spent together, he took these doubts away. He taught me that, indeed, there is a God. He taught me that there is eternal life, and we made a pact that we would soon be together, reunited, again in full recognition of each other.

My father taught us many things. My life has been fifty-two years of the most beautiful and the most perfect love affair that two people could have. My father was the greatest guitarist known to me, for everything that I personally am is only an offspring of that magnificent tree of music that he was. And everything that comes from me into the future generations is an off-shoot of that beautiful root that was completely ingrained in the earth of music.

My father was a humble man. I remember from when I was a little boy, my father always treated each of us in a very individual way, in a one-to-one way. From the time that I can remember, he made me feel that I was a musician, that I was a guitarist, that I was his friend, and that I was his partner. That's how he taught.

One of the first lessons that he taught me, I remember, was he used to talk very well about a guitarist from Granada. And, finally, this guitarist from Granada came over to the house. My father had said many, many nice things about him. And this gentleman played. And I told my father-when I was a very little boy --I said, "Papa, he is the worst guitarist I have ever heard!" He said to me, "You didn't look, you didn't listen to the gentleness of his thumb." To me that was a great lesson.

The greatest, most cherished lessons that I will ever have are those that I had with him during this last year. I started the year full of confidence in myself and in my own standing as a guitarist and as a musician. My father, with his love, and his knowledge, taught me more in this year than I could ever learn in the rest of my life. We had a lesson every single day that I was home.

But above all, my father was a good man. My father spent a year of suffering. He taught us how to suffer and how to accept suffering. He endured this year with suffering, with love and with music. Music and love were his medicines, they were his pain pills. The more he could not breathe, he would just turn to music and he would forget it. And at the very end he could not breathe at all, therefore, he could not produce a sound, so he just moved his lips to tell us what he wanted. And what he wanted was peace

between my brothers and I forever. He wanted that we should protect each other and we should protect our mother, that we should protect our children and love them.

He asked for his guitar at the end...and then he left...thinking of God, and releasing his body and soul to Him. My father died a saintly death. I will always love him from the deepest depths of my soul.

## Angel's Eulogy to his Father

There's nothing much that could be added to what Pepe has said, except my own memories, which I could spend the whole day telling you about.

He taught me never to be envious of anything - just look ahead and get the good out of everything in my life. But in front of him I must say that I envy one thing of my brothers and that is, being the youngest I have spent almost 10 years less with my father than they have.

I remember when he used to go away on tour when I was 3, 4 and 5 years old. We had a balcony and I used to wait to see him go down the street. There was a corner where he would have to turn and disappear. I remember telling him very dramatically, but very much felt, "No te vayas corazón mio, que me rompes el alma!" ("Don't go my beloved, you break my soul to see you go!") And he used to smile back and then disappear around the corner. But I would wait because I knew that he would always turn around about 2 minutes later to say another good-bye or to wave to me. When he finally left, I used to sneak (when my brothers or my mother were not looking) and I used to go into his room where he kept one of his precious instruments, a Santos Hernandez. And I used to hold it - as it reminded me of my father, who had just left.

Now, the other day when my father was in his final journey I found myself searching for that guitar among his possessions. I had forgotten that the guitar was in my own home, a guitar he had given me for my 40th birthday.

I remember one of the greatest gifts my father has given to me is to let my own music flow within my soul - he never pushed it on me. He never believed in pushing anything on anybody, except if they were willing to take it. The greatest gift has been to leave for me a great source of inspiration, an inspiration that I have taken with me and it has made me grow. When I had a great review or a "prize" I could not wait to bring it immediately to him, even in his last year, and he was always very happy; as if he had heard the concert himself, and certainly he had.

The last time I saw him - and he was a fighter until the very last moment - I called my family because we had a tour in Europe. I talked to my oldest brother who is, by the way, my godfather, and I asked him if Papá's wishes were for me to go to Europe or not. He answered, "Yes, go. He will be fine, and he will be here when you come back". When I arrived I was just to turn around and get back on the same airplane and come back again and I shared the last three hours of his life.

I have never seen such misery in a human being. And it was overpowering; this powerless feeling that I was not able to take it away from him, which I would have and even possessed it in my own body. I held his hands, his beautiful hands, the greatest hands of anybody, of any guitarist to my taste. He held up mine and he had a smile, even just two hours before his death. He held them and he wanted to say something to me and he said "You have such powerful hands, use them well." And that was the last time I saw my Dad, but I will always remember him.

I go out at night and look at the stars, because he said in one of his poems, "If you want to see me, look at the stars, they will shine even brighter now, when I die, because my love will be embracing you from them. And I will wait for you. I will wait for you to play together again."

I just loved him so much, an overwhelming love. I have never experienced any higher love and shall never - my heart goes with him on this final trip and his heart stays with mine.

# CELEDONIO ROMERO

*Poet of the Guitar*

## A. Celedonio Romero ..... Suite Andaluza

- 1 *Soleares*
- 2 *Alegrías*
- 3 *Tango*
- 4 *Zapateado*
- 5 *Fantasia*

## B. Isaac Albéniz

- 6 *Sevilla*

## C. Fernando Sor

- 7 *Fantasia*

## D. Heitor Villa-lobos

- 8 *Prelude No. 1*
- 9 *Etude No. 1*
- 10 *Prelude No. 3*

## E. Isaac Albéniz

- 11 *Asturias*

## F. Francisco Tárrega

- 12 *Capricho árabe*

## G. Johann Kaspar Mertz

- 13 *Hungarian Fantasy*

## H. Celedonio Romero ..... Los Maestros

- 14 1 *Copla*
- 15 2 *La Rueda*
- 16 3 *Baile*



**Total Playing Time**  
**73' 58"**