



DEL AGUILA: *Wind Music*

Wind Sync—Azica 71364—36 minutes

In the early 20th Century, Uruguay prospered as the “Switzerland of the Americas”; but after World War II, exports decreased, wages dropped, and social services folded. Students, labor unions, and young professionals united to form a Marxist-Leninist group to demand more from the government; and the response from Montevideo was a repeal of constitutional rights, military spending at the cost of education, and a gradual escalation of violence that led to torture, unjust imprisonments, and a police state. In June 1973, Uruguay descended into a full-blown fascist dictatorship where anyone suspected of leftist sympathies could suddenly disappear. 5 years later, the midst of this terrifying climate, a young aspiring composer and his parents fled the country and settled in Ventura County in southern California.

The talented 20-year-old Miguel Del Aguila (b. 1957) immediately earned a scholarship to the San Francisco Conservatory; and on graduation, he spent the next decade in Vienna, where he furthered his studies and launched a professional music career. In 1992 he returned to California to take care of his parents; and while he had missed home, he found the artistic tastes of Ventura County too conservative. In 2000 he moved to New York; and in 2005-2006, he served as the Composer-in-Residence of the New Mexico Symphony.

Along the way, he garnered acclaim for his distinct Latin American voice that com-

bines the classical architecture of his formal training with the melodic and rhythmic personality of his birthplace. This culminated in several awards for his scores, commissions for original pieces, and three Grammy nominations. Today he lives in Seattle, where he continues to compose and contribute to the postmodern milieu of contemporary music.

Founded in Houston, the woodwind quintet Wind Sync embraces the works of living composers; and though ensemble members are now scattered across the United States, they still assemble to give concerts and make albums designed to generate enthusiasm for their medium and for new music. In November 2022, Wind Sync visited the famous Abbey Road Studios in London and devoted this release to Del Aguila and his recent music for winds.

The recital begins with ‘Sambeada’ (2022), a Brazilian dance celebration expressly written for Wind Sync and this project; and it concludes with the first commercial recording of *Blindfold Music* (2021), a meditation on law, justice, and fairness first performed in Portland, Oregon by the Imani Winds. In between are ‘Absent Lights’ (2019) a pandemic memorial transformed from the original oboe, viola, and double bass into a reed trio; and *Quinteto Sinfonico* (2019), a three-movement “symphony in miniature” premiered by the well-known Quebecois woodwind quintet Pentadrede at the Montreal Conservatory.

Although Del Aguila can be a thorny modernist sometimes, he stays true to his South American roots; and he knows how to craft a haunting scene. He whisks the listener through catchy dance passages; he experiments with poignant colors and piquant dissonances; and he occasionally pushes instruments out of their comfort zones. His music here requires skilled performers; and Wind Sync is more than up to the task.

The presentation is very professional, replete with clear timbres, sparkling technique, snappy rhythms, sensitive phrasing, judicious dynamics, and excellent balance, blend, and teamwork.

Readers not yet familiar with Del Aguila and his music will find a breadth of repertoire that is vibrantly scored, easily accessible, sometimes daring, and always well crafted.

HANUDEL