

## VIDA GUITAR QUARTET

Bringing together four of the UK's most exceptional guitarists, the **VIDA Guitar Quartet** has appeared on some of North America's and Europe's most prestigious stages for classical guitar, including the Long Island Guitar Festival and the Allegro Guitar Series in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Las Vegas. They have been chosen as the keynote performers for the 2015 GFA (Guitar Federation of America) Annual Conference, one of the world's most high-profile engagements for guitarists. There the quartet will perform not only a full-length opening night concert, but also a concerto with orchestra.

Since forming in 2007, VIDA has performed to critical acclaim in major UK venues including King's Place (London), The Purcell Room (London), The Sage (Gateshead) and St George's (Bristol). They are sought-after artists for festivals and concert series throughout the UK, Europe and North America. In 2011 VIDA made highly successful US débuts in Los Angeles and New York, and since then have appeared in Washington DC, Miami and dozens of other cities.

Renowned as educators and for their innovative outreach, VIDA runs the world's largest youth guitar education program (200+ students each summer) in the UK, and were Artists-in-Residence at Cal State University Monterey Bay's Summer Arts program in 2012.

VIDA members **Mark Ashford** and **Amanda Cook** are both internationally renowned performers in their own right, and **Mark Eden** and **Christopher Stell** (aka the Eden Stell Guitar Duo) is one of the most sought-after guitar duos in the world.

Following on from their acclaimed début CD, "Love, the Magician," VIDA released their latest CD, "Rhapsody," in April 2013, featuring works by George Gershwin, Malcolm Arnold and Adam Gorb.

VIDA are D'Addario Strings classical artists.

**Mark Ashford** is an internationally renowned performer and teacher. A former scholarship student at both Chetham's School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, Mark finished his studies with the eminent guitarist David Russell in Vigo, Spain. He is a prize winner at many national and international competitions including the Guitar Foundation of America, Alessandria International Guitar Competition, Scandinavian International Guitar Competition, Julian Bream Prize, and BBC Radio 2 Young Musician. He has performed as a soloist at major concert halls including, the Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Bridgewater Hall, Queens Hall (Edinburgh), St George's Bristol and the Guildhall London. Mark's latest solo CD is Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez" recorded with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He teaches at the Birmingham Conservatoire of Music and in 2003 was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music for his achievements in the music profession.

**Mark Eden** and **Christopher Stell** are well known as the Eden Stell Guitar Duo, one of the most sought-after guitar duos in the world. They formed in 1990 while studying at the Royal Academy of Music, and continued their studies with Sérgio and Odair Assad in Brussels. The duo's career was launched auspiciously as winners of both the South East Young Musicians Platform and the Park Lane Group young artist concert series. Since then they have gone on to record eight CDs; their latest "Music for an Island" is a multimedia CD. Mark and Christopher have performed in over 20 countries at venues including London's Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre and Germany's Stuttgart and Beethoven Halle.

The duo's concerto engagements have included performances with renowned ensembles such as the Prague Chamber Orchestra, and they are the only guitarists since Julian Bream to receive an "Editor's Choice" in Gramophone Magazine. They hold teaching positions at the Royal College of Music, Birmingham Conservatoire and Guildhall School of Music and Drama Junior department, and give classes in music academies and guitar festivals all over the world. They were elected Associates of the Royal Academy of Music in recognition of their performing achievements.

**Amanda Cook** has performed in the USA, South America and throughout Europe. In the UK her performances include the South Bank, Wigmore Hall, King's Place and The Sage Gateshead. She has performed and been broadcast live on television and radio, both abroad and in the UK. Amanda has also been interviewed and played live several times on the BBC shows "In Tune" and "Woman's Hour," and on Classic FM. Amanda won several prizes while a scholarship student at the Royal College of Music and outside of College she won the Admira Young Guitarist of the Year, Ivor Mairants Guitar Award and the Carol Evershed Martin Award for solo instrumentalists. After studying at the RCM, she went to New York to study with Benjamin Verdery.

Amanda's solo albums include "Debut," "Strictly Latin," and "Selected Guitar Works of William Lovelady." Several composers have dedicated works to her. She plays in several ensembles including the guitar trio "Appassionata" and the "G Plus Ensemble" (string quartet, percussion and two guitars).

### **Critical Acclaim**

"Vida sparkled with vitality and spontaneity, weaving a rich tapestry of colour and breathtaking range of dynamics and percussive effects that held the audience spellbound . . . the visual interplay between them enhancing an already superb performance. These are outstanding musicians, if you can, go hear them play."

—**Acoustic Magazine**

"VIDA conjure up an orchestral palette of colour and effects . . . they play with technical brilliance and precise ensemble, creating alternately smoky and glittering colours in Falla's El amor brujo that suit the gypsy heart of the music so well."

—**Classic FM**

"Their range of timbres and colouration is so broad that one really does forget that there are four identical instruments. Their dynamic control, which ranges from an almost inaudible pianissimo to ranging fortissimos, is impressive. The Vida Guitar Quartet's ensemble throughout is exemplary and seemingly achieved with ease . . . their blending of tone is remarkably unified. The recording is well balanced and natural, with a warm tone quality and intimate clarity. This is a thoroughly enjoyable disc."

—**International Record Review**

"A crossover Fab Four . . . the Vida Guitar Quartet played Sunday's concert in Miami Shores 50 years to the day from when the Beatles were unveiled to the American public on The Ed Sullivan Show . . . the electrifying Vida Quartet gave them a run for their money . . . The capacity audience took every opportunity to praise the quartet—standing, shouting, and clapping with gusto." —**The South Florida Classical Review**