

Duo LiveOak Program Offerings 2005-6

Duo LiveOak is supported in part by the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.
Please visit our website for fee support information.

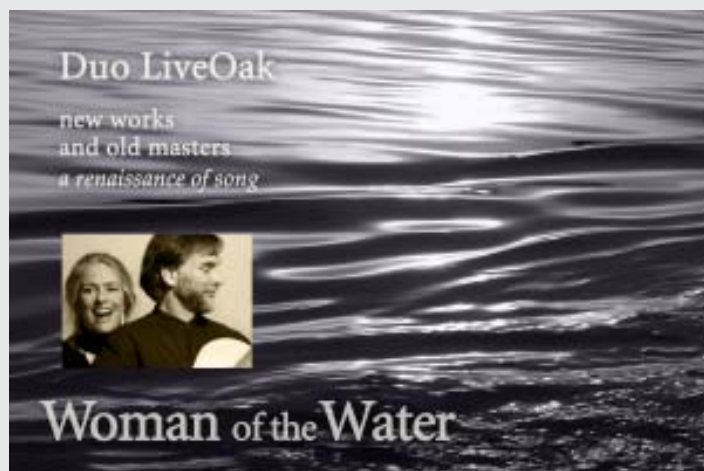
Harlequin in Love Songs of Frank Wallace

Nancy Knowles, *soprano, flute, poet*
Frank Wallace, *baritone, lute, guitar, composer*

Noted for its variety, humor and depth, this colorful program has a whimsical/wistful tone reminiscent of Arlecchino (Harlequin), the wise fool of *commedia dell'arte* fame. Wallace and Knowles shine separately and together in vocal duets, guitar solos and song cycles with guitar and lute, including the popular duo cycle **Bestiary** (2002). The songs are written to eclectic poetry, including Knowles, Roethke, Guillevic and Rumi. Wallace's arrangements of 19th and 20th century show tunes conclude the concert.

"[LiveOak] gave a superb concert...They are fully the equal of any of the best chamber ensembles active today. Wallace has developed a formidable compositional palette that incorporates influences from early music to the latest avant-garde techniques."

Boston Classical Guitar Society Newsletter



Woman of the Water

New Works and Old Masters: a Renaissance of Song

Nancy Knowles, *soprano, flute, poet*
Frank Wallace, *baritone, lute, guitar, composer*

This varied program showcases Duo LiveOak's rare blend of old and new. Celebrating nature in renaissance lute songs and recent works of Frank Wallace, it includes Wallace's major new work for soprano, baritone, flute, and guitar, **How Fragile She Is** (2004), his guitar solo **The Elements** (2004), and **Woman of the Water** (2002), a song cycle for soprano and lute, set to the poignant love poetry of Pulitzer Prize winner Theodore Roethke.

"In over 25 years of writing about music on recordings and in concerts, I have rarely been as captivated and enchanted..."

Classical Voice North Carolina

By the Light of the Lute Renaissance Masterworks for Lute and Voice

Nancy Knowles, *soprano, flute*
Frank Wallace, *baritone, lute, vihuela de mano*

Hear Duo LiveOak in the repertoire for which they have been hailed for decades by critics and audiences alike: 16th century lute and *vihuela* songs. Knowles and Wallace have clear rich voices that shine in solos and blend in duet. Wallace's accompaniments and solos are unrivalled. Includes the popular sung duet, **Pearly Everlasting**, inspired by Machaut, written by Wallace in memory of LiveOak co-founder John Fleagle.

"This was music-making on the highest international level!"

The San Francisco Chronicle



Duo LiveOak

*New Works & Old Masters:
A Renaissance of Song*

Frank Wallace

*composer, baritone,
classical guitar, lute*

Nancy Knowles

soprano, flute, poet



603-588-6121

pr@duoliveoak.com

75 Bridle Road

Antrim, NH 03440 USA

www.duoliveoak.com

The "live oak" is an evergreen oak known for its strength and long life, a symbol of revitalization since ancient times. In Catalan the word for the live oak is made into a verb, *alzinarse*, meaning to revitalize.

Passionate about the expressive and tonal powers of voices with plucked strings, Duo LiveOak is bringing new life to the long neglected form of the art song, creating "a brilliant collection of new repertoire performed...with equal amounts of grace, sensitivity and virtuosity." *Guitar Review*

Knowles and Wallace combine their considerable talents in composition, poetry, drama, and musical performance to create concerts with the intimacy of a poetry reading and the dramatic power of an opera. Hailed for many years on both sides of the Atlantic for their innovative concerts and recordings of medieval and renaissance music, echoes of the past reverberate throughout Duo LiveOak's new works.

Their song cycles tell stories in English, relevant to our times, set to tunes and harmonies that appeal

to a spectrum of twenty-first century tastes. Performing from memory, with a natural command of the stage, the duo moves together (Wallace stands to accompany) painting scenes and emotions with a wide palette of instrumental and vocal sounds.

Both as a duo and as members of the early music ensembles Trio LiveOak and LiveOak and Company, Wallace and Knowles have toured widely throughout the U.S. and Europe since 1976, performing at festivals such as the Holland Festival, the Regensburg Festival, Música en Compostela, the Boston Early Music Festival, and the Barcelona Festival. LiveOak has eight recordings to its credit, on Titanic, Centaur, Musical Heritage Society, and most recently, Gyre.

"The breadth of his musical activity recalls an earlier age, when a complete musician engaged in a broad range of creative activities as a matter of course."

American Record Guide

As a performer, **Frank Wallace** has distinguished himself not only as a soloist and accompanist on the classical and romantic guitar, *vihuela de mano* and lute, but also as a master of self-accompanied song. Since 1997, he has been emerging as a formidable composer of both solo and song repertoire for guitar and lute.

Wallace's compositions reflect his

colorful career, drawing on influences ranging from avant garde to medieval to the blues. A 21st century composer in the tradition of Schubert and Britten, Wallace writes songs that glory in rich, complex accompaniments and lyrical melodies.

Wallace's debut recording of his own compositions for solo guitar, **Frank Wallace—his own new works** (Gyre 10012), won him a 2001 Artist Fellowship from the Arts Council of New Hampshire. He released his second CD for solo *vihuela de mano* in March 2004. His composition for solo guitar, **The Stubborn Oak**, was published in 2000 by Tuscany Publications.

Nancy Knowles, soprano and poet, is consistently praised by critics and audiences alike for the beauty of her voice as well as for her presence and grace on stage. With a longstanding reputation for her skillful interweaving of song, poetry and drama in concert, Knowles works with the texts for Wallace's song cycles, conceiving programs that are both thought-provoking and whimsical. Her most recent theater piece is **The House of Fools** (2002), a dramatic musical memoir in two acts. An expert in medieval Spanish music, Knowles is currently performing an *a capella* program of the evocative solo repertoire of medieval Spain called **Voice of the Rose: the sacred feminine**, which harks back to an age when feminine virtues were a source of inspiration, praised in song and verse.

*"the soprano Nancy Knowles gave a vocal image of the "heavenly queen" in **Royne Celestre**—sturdy, compassionate, serene."*

The New York Times



"LiveOak lived up to its name...
[Their] eloquence could not have been improved upon."

The New York Times

"The whole program was incredibly graceful...
This was musicmaking on the highest international level."

The San Francisco Chronicle

"All of the music is in various ways delightful...
skill, style, and fantasy."

The Boston Globe

"always beguiling."

The Los Angeles Times

"a fascinating array of styles and influences...
expertly performed...adventurousness and skill"

ClassicsToday.com

"touching and eloquent"

American Record Guide

"I have rarely been as captivated and enchanted...
This is a first-rate chamber music duo
with a new and refreshing twist."

Classical Voice North Carolina

"Nancy Knowles is a wonderful soprano
who sings with passion and clarity...
Frank Wallace's renditions of instrumental works
and song accompaniments are exemplary."

American Record Guide

"If you have a chance to hear LiveOak in concert,
don't miss them. They are fully the equal of any
of the best chamber ensembles active today."

Boston Classical Guitar Society Newsletter

"The singing soars...and the instrumentals
are nothing less than inspired."

Renaissance Magazine

"...a captivating performance by Duo LiveOak."

Soundboard

"Knowles' exceptionally beautiful soprano
carried the evening...Wallace was also marvelous. "

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

"relaxed and at ease with their music and each other...
an unusual spontaneity"

The Peninsula Times Tribune (CA)

"When heard together their voices rise to an intensity
and beauty which is simply breathtaking..."

Boston Early Music News

"...a transcendent evening of music..."

The Tech (MIT)

"a sweep of exuberant originality..."

The New Haven Register

"Vocally [LiveOak] was sensational...
The group's instrumental prowess was likewise
world class.."

Tucson Citizen

"timelessness and peaceful ambience...suffused
with obvious confidence, conviction and ease...
[a] thoroughly authentic and delightful performance. "

High Performance Review

"...eindrücksvoll."

Die Woche (Germany)

Eine echte Entdeckung war zweifellos die Gruppe
LiveOak

Bayerischer Rundfunk Musikmagazin (Germany)

"**Clamoroso Exito de LiveOak**...gran variedad y
originalidad...[LiveOak] elige un modo de toar muy
brillante y simpático..."

El Adelantado de Segovia (Spain)

discography

2004 **Sketches**

Soo Works by Frank Wallace

Frank Wallace, classical guitar, composer

Gyre CD 10052

2004 **Delphín**

Music for Solo Vihuela de Mano

Frank Wallace, vihuela de mano

Gyre CD 10042

2004 **Woman of the Water**

Songs by Frank Wallace

Duo LiveOak

Nancy Knowles, soprano

Frank Wallace, lute, guitar, baritone

Gyre CD 10082

2002 **Piva**

Renaissance Songs of Spain and Italy

Duo LiveOak Nancy Knowles, soprano

Frank Wallace, lute, vihuela de mano, baritone

Gyre CD 10032

2001 **Schubert and Mertz**

Duo LiveOak

Nancy Knowles, soprano

Frank Wallace, 19th century guitar, baritone

Gyre CD 10022

2000 **Frank Wallace, his own new works**

Frank Wallace, classical guitar

Gyre CD 10012

1996 **Lanterns of Fire:**

Love and the Mystic in Renaissance Spain

LiveOak and Company

Grant Herreid, Jane Hershey, Nancy Knowles, Frank

Wallace, voices, viols, vihuelas de mano

Centaur Records CD - CRC 2316

1994 **The Lost Spindle**

Theatrical Music from the Courts

of Ferdinand and Isabella

(Re-issue - see below)

LiveOak and Company

Steven Yakutis, Nancy Knowles, Frank Wallace,

voices, flutes, psaltery, vihuelas de mano, percussion

Musical Heritage Society

CD - 513558K

1992 **¡Ay de Mi!**

Music for Vihuela and Voice

Frank Wallace, baritone, vihuelas de mano

Centaur Records CD - CRC 2112

1992 **The Art of Flemish Song**

Duo LiveOak

Nancy Knowles, soprano, flute

Frank Wallace, baritone, vihuelas de mano

Centaur Records CD - CRC 2109

1989 **The Lost Spindle**

Theatrical Music from the Courts of

Ferdinand and Isabella

LiveOak and Company

Nancy Knowles, Frank Wallace,

Steven Yakutis, voices, flute, psaltery,

vihuela de mano, percussion

Titanic Records CD - TI 178

1983 **Don Alfonso the Wise**

Music of Medieval Spain

Trio LiveOak John Fleagle, Nancy Knowles, Frank

Wallace, voices, medieval instruments

Titanic Records LP - MN 4

1982 **Star Shining on the Mountain**

Trio LiveOak

John Fleagle, Nancy Knowles, Frank Wallace, voices,

oud, cornetto, flute, vihuela de mano, rebec, percus-

sion

Titanic Records LP - MN 2

1978 **LiveOak Live**

LiveOak Consort

Michael Blackwell, Margot Chamberlain,

John Fleagle, Nancy Knowles, Frank Wallace, voices,

medieval and renaissance instruments

Encina Records LP - 2037

"[LiveOak] lived up to its name... youthful suppleness and mature solidity... [Their] eloquence could not have been improved upon."

Edward Rothstein, **The New York Times**

"The whole program was incredibly graceful, delivering wonderful and wondrous music with smooth elegance. Performed entirely from memory, constantly shifting in instrumentation, LiveOak reached that ideal: the effect of natural improvisation... This was musicmaking on the highest international level. The sheer vivacity of their program, added to the surroundings, made for a major event of the season for the packed audience—with standees, five deep."

Heuwell Tircuit,
The San Francisco Chronicle

"All of the music is in various ways delightful... skill, style, and fantasy."

Richard Dyer, **The Boston Globe**

Composer/guitarist/baritone Frank Wallace and soprano Nancy Knowles have been performing together as Duo Live Oak for years and have built quite a following for their unique programs that often include original works by Wallace, either for solo guitar or for voice. This one features an entire Wallace program, with several texts provided by Knowles, the rest by various poets, primarily 20th-century American Theodore Roethke.

The songs are all well suited to Knowles' clear, warm-colored, wide-ranging soprano, and the musical settings reveal a strong focus on long-lined, lyrical melody. The guitar accompaniments obviously were conceived by one who not only knows the instrument, but is a master of it. Wallace uses articulation effects that exploit the instrument's multi-faceted technical and timbral possibilities—and indeed the guitar parts are an equal partner with the voice, supportive but often highly independent melodically and rhythmically. There's also a fascinating array of styles and influences at play here... [T]his very well recorded and expertly performed program is welcome... for the adventurousness and skill exemplified by both of these dedicated and personable artists in a field of music all too rarely appreciated by public and record companies.

David Vernier, **ClassicsToday.com**



"In this well-chosen program Nancy Knowles and Frank Wallace give the listener a pleasing privacy of expression that is touching and eloquent. This is easier said than done, for the music's sparseness masks the demands made on the musicians... Knowles and Wallace use a subtle range of attack, decay, and articulation that is immediately attractive and yields depth on repeated hearings..."

Catherine Moore,
American Record Guide

In over 25 years of writing about music on recordings and in concerts, I have rarely been as captivated and enchanted... This is a first-rate chamber music duo with a new and refreshing twist.

John W. Lambert, **Classical Voice North Carolina**

"Meet Frank Wallace. He composes, sings, plays a formidable classical-romantic guitar and lute, and produces exquisite-sounding recordings. And Nancy Knowles. She sings, writes poems and sometimes lyrics, makes very arty photographs, and designs promotional material. (She's also very nice...) Together, they perform as Duo LiveOak and their new CD called **Woman of the Water** (songs written by Frank, of course) is terrific."

Jerry Bowles, **Sequenza21.com**

"Nancy Knowles is a wonderful soprano who sings with passion and clarity... Frank Wallace's renditions of instrumental works and song accompaniments are exemplary."

Paul Laird, **American Record Guide**

"[LiveOak] gave a superb concert... notable in that all of the music was written by Frank Wallace. Wallace has a wonderful baritone—dark, fast, agile, and never overbearing. The [instrumental] part was demanding throughout—one can only marvel how he can sing as well as he does and play as well as he does, all at the same time... Nancy Knowles [sang] superbly, with excellent diction, dramatic flair, great timing, and finely spun phrasing..."

If you have a chance to hear LiveOak in concert, don't miss them. They are fully the equal of any of the best chamber ensembles active today. Wallace has developed a formidable compositional palette for voice and plucked string instruments, one that incorporates influences from early music to the latest avant-garde techniques. The twentieth century repertoire for voice and guitar includes many outstanding pieces by some of the century's best known composers... Wallace's work in this genre stands up well to the competition."

Robert Margo, **Boston Classical Guitar Society Newsletter**

"The singing soars, capturing the joys and melancholy of Renaissance Spain... and the instrumentals are nothing less than inspired. **Lanterns of Fire** is one of the best compilations of Spanish vocal music available."

Marc Cramer, **Renaissance Magazine**

"It's a bit like inhabiting a mythical world, listening to these new songs by Frank Wallace... **Woman of the Water** offers the texture of early music combined with lyrics gleaned from poems by the likes of Theodore Roethke, Rumi and Robert Creeley, in addition to several by Knowles. Performed with the range and intensity of Duo LiveOak, the result is exquisite."

Jane Eklund, **The Monadnock Ledger (NH)**

"Seating and standing room capacities filled, the audience overflowed onto the stage, the house floor and into the lobby. Obviously delighted by this, the Boston-based group performed with gusto... The result was always beguiling."

John Ringold, **The Los Angeles Times**

"...a captivating performance by Duo LiveOak... They are a very endearing and multi-talented duo. Nancy Knowles projects a warm, friendly personality to the audience and has a beautiful voice particularly suited to their repertoire—and in addition to that, she is a fine poet. Frank Wallace is a very confident, capable performer, at home equally on the lute and guitar; he is a sensitive musician and composer and a good baritone as well. In this performance, their ensemble was very tight."

Mark Switzer, **Soundboard**

"Knowles' exceptionally beautiful soprano carried the evening in song and declaimed poetry...Wallace was also marvelous. His rich yet gentle bass voice was always well focused. He provided rich bottom in ensemble, and was also persuasive in solos."

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

"The musicians were not only relaxed and at ease with their music and each other, but by performing entirely from memory, they gave their concert an unusual spontaneity which resulted in a closer than usual rapport with their audience..."

Angela Owen,
The Peninsula Times Tribune (CA)

"They possess powerful voices, Wallace with a deep rich baritone and Knowles with a soaring soprano. [Wallace's] accompaniment... is extremely intricate and often breathtaking. The two instrumental pieces are outstanding..."

Kevin Caron,
The Keene Sentinel (NH)

"Ms. Knowles commands a tone of pure, full authority which is a great pleasure to hear...Mr. Wallace justifies his reputation as a lutenist with exquisite work on the *vihuela* and the *saz*, as well as his splendid singing...When heard together their voices rise to an intensity and beauty which is simply breathtaking..."

Peter Milford
Boston Early Music News

"...a transcendent evening of music... The church's reverberant acoustics caught the blissfully intertwining sounds of Nancy Knowles and Frank Wallace and lifted them to new heights."

Jonathan Richmond, **The Tech (MIT)**

"...when three performers can boast the talent and versatility of LiveOak and Company, staying home means missing the boat...Tuesday night's event closed this year's season with a sweep of exuberant originality..."

Scott Burnham, **The New Haven Register**

"Vocally [LiveOak] was sensational. Soprano Nancy Knowles sang in a vibratoless voice of unfaltering purity, intonation and expression, displaying in addition a range of operatic proportion. Her male counterparts, Frank Wallace and Grant Herreid, provided well-matched harmonies and fine solo work of their own. Individually they were a pleasure

to hear; collectively the voices were even greater than the sum. Pure artistry enhanced the way they jointly shaped the lyric with gentle swells and sharp rhythmic articulations. Moreover, their interlocking part-singing brought to mind the graceful flights of an acrobatic trio that no longer requires a net. The group's instrumental prowess was likewise world class..."

Daniel Buckley, **Tucson Citizen**

"The rubric "LiveOak" conveys much about this performance, its timelessness and peaceful ambience...In a performance suffused with obvious confidence, conviction and ease, Knowles and Wallace declaim the texts clearly and precisely... [a] thoroughly authentic and delightful performance. Highly recommended."

Juanita Karpf, **High Performance Review**

Frank Wallace's Compositions:

"...a vital and uplifting creation by an artist who has persistently focused his energies to bring audiences music that enriches life... [Wallace] is a formidable classical guitarist...upon repeated hearings, it becomes clear that the purely musical values that we have here result from experiences that left a profound impression on the artist's whole being... The diversity in Wallace's composition is impressive...masterfully written and expertly played...[He] is emerging as a performer and composer who is creating music of substance and beauty."

Louis Arnold, **Boston Classical Guitar Society Newsletter**

"His own guitar music is crafted with idiomatic skill and sensitivity, abetted by his keen ear for textural variety. The modern Spanish guitar school informs the aggressive flamenco-like strumming in the "Rhapsody" movement of *Quadrangle* and the three-movement *Stubborn Oak*. By contrast, spacious chant and glimpses of blues imbue *From the Windy Place*, while the five-movement *Sweet Lady'slipper* ventures out into more elaborate rhythmic terrain... Jazz-oriented modality influences *Quadrangle's* four movements—the first one suggests Larry Coryell and John Dowland in jubilant dialogue...the composer's elegant virtuosity and Gyre's gorgeous sonics help ensure a pleasant and comfortable 64-minute listening experience."

Jed Distler
ClassicsToday.com

"It is easy to feel an intimate connection to the ethereal beauty of Frank Wallace's compositions not only because of their individual splendor, but also because of the lush tone and sensitive perfection with which Wallace executes his music... Wallace's writing reveals interests in early music, American folk music, and the blues, as well as a more contemporary language...his harmony and counterpoint bring out some of the richest sonorities that the guitar has to offer...a brilliant collection of new repertoire performed by its composer, who happens to play with equal amounts of grace, sensitivity, and virtuosity."

Stephen Griesgraber, **Guitar Review**

"The works are melodically attractive and rhythmically exuberant...Wallace's music is exciting, unpredictable, and fresh..."

In its more introspective moments it can also be quite touching, as in several of the slow movements... Guitarists will be interested to hear these pieces, and they will certainly appeal to a broad listening public."

Steven Rings, **American Record Guide**

"...a wide range of influences melding together into a truly unique compositional style. Wallace takes medieval and renaissance polyphony, marries them with 20th century harmony, and even throws a little blues in as well. His formidable technique not only allows him to play fast intricate passages cleanly and articulately, but also to reveal all the color and beauty of the simplest melody..."

Donald Forsha, **Amazon.com**

"This recording of original compositions was written and played by Frank Wallace, who is an outstanding guitarist... He plays with authority, exhibits a great deal of acoustic presence, and offers clear, uncompromising musical ideas. His sound is simply wonderful..."

Stephen Waechter, **Soundboard**

For additional information,
please visit *Duo LiveOak's* website
or contact:

Duo LiveOak
75 Bridle Road,
Antrim, NH 03440 USA

603-588-6121

email: pr@duoliveoak.com
www.duoliveoak.com



Composer/guitarist/baritone Frank Wallace and soprano Nancy Knowles have been performing together as Duo LiveOak (and before that as Trio LiveOak) for years and have built quite a following for their unique programs that often include original works by Wallace, either for solo guitar or for voice. This one features an entire Wallace program, with several texts provided by Knowles, the rest by various poets, primarily 20th-century American Theodore Roethke. Wallace adds a couple of his solo-guitar works--one is a sort of demonstration-piece, the other is for guitar and dancer, written for the composer's son.

The songs are all well suited to Knowles' clear, warm-colored, wide-ranging soprano, and the musical settings reveal a strong focus on long-lined, lyrical melody. The guitar accompaniments obviously were conceived by one who not only knows the instrument, but is a master of it. Wallace uses articulation effects that exploit the instrument's multi-faceted technical and timbral possibilities--and indeed the guitar parts are an equal partner with the voice, supportive but often highly independent melodically and rhythmically (and often very busy). There's also a fascinating array of styles and influences at play here--none of which dominates or even presents itself for very long--but Spanish, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and especially the polyphonic lute-song style of Dowland are happily evident and effectively employed. Wallace even manages to work in a tune by Machaut among the lines of his opening song, Pearly Everlasting, a tribute to the duo's late performing partner John Fleagle, its text written by Knowles.

Although there are some fine songs here--Bestiary, settings of six animal poems by Roethke and Knowles, is best, for its engaging characterizations and colorful descriptive effects--several don't meld music and words so convincingly. For example, in "Her Words" the running figurations in the accompaniment and the rhythmic scheme in the melody don't always accommodate the changing emphases of the text, causing certain words and phrases to sound forced or just awkward. Knowles' "Pearly Everlasting" is one of those free-verse poems whose inherent musical quality resists any attempt to impress it with actual notes. In other words, it works better as a poem--Wallace's meandering lines are more distracting than illuminating. Nevertheless, this very well recorded and expertly performed program is welcome if only for the adventurousness and skill exemplified by both of these dedicated and personable artists in a field of music all too rarely appreciated by public and record companies.

--David Vernier

Festival Highlights

Duo LiveOak's Performance*By Robert Margo*

Many of the best guitar ensembles are related by blood or marriage. The Duo Assad and the Katona Twins are examples of the former (brothers) and the Presti-Lagoya Duo is an example of the latter. Assuming the "fundamentals" (technique and musicianship) are right, growing up together or living together as a couple seems to impart an advantage. In some lines of work familiarity might breed contempt but not, it seems, on the guitar.



The husband and wife team of Frank Wallace (guitar, lute, and voice) and Nancy Knowles (voice) make up Duo LiveOak. They gave a superb afternoon concert at Wellesley's Jewett Auditorium. The concert was also notable in that all of the

music, some of it for solo guitar, was written by Frank Wallace.

The concert began with "Voices in the Dark" for baritone voice (Wallace's) and 10-course lute. Wallace has a wonderful baritone—dark, fast, agile, and never overbearing. The lute part was demanding throughout—one can only marvel how he can sing as well as he does and play the lute as well as he does, all at the same time. "Voices" was followed by "Woman of the Water," a premiere, for soprano and lute. Based on the work of the American poet Theodore Roethke, it had a mysterious quality that fit the poetry well. It, too, was sung superbly, this time by Knowles, with excellent diction, dramatic flair, great timing, and finely spun phrasing. The first half closed with a duet for soprano and baritone, "Pearly Everlasting," again performed simultaneously on the lute by Wallace.

The second half featured two of Wallace's compositions for solo guitar, the second of which ("Harlequin in Love") made a strong impression. It also featured another recent song cycle, "A Single Veil," based on poetry written at a workshop held at the duo's farm in southern New Hampshire, and another work based on Roethke's poetry, "Bestiary," for baritone, soprano, and guitar. These song cycles were also given outstanding performances.

If you have a chance to hear Duo LiveOak in concert, don't miss them. They are fully the equal of any of the best chamber ensembles active today. Wallace has developed a formidable compositional palette for voice and plucked string instruments, one that incorporates influences from early music to the latest avant-garde techniques. The twentieth century repertoire for voice and guitar includes many outstanding pieces by some of the century's best known composers (for example, Britten, Rodrigo, and Walton). Wallace's work in this genre stands up well to the competition.

Classical Voice North Carolina

March 2004

Classical Voice North Carolina
online classical music journal

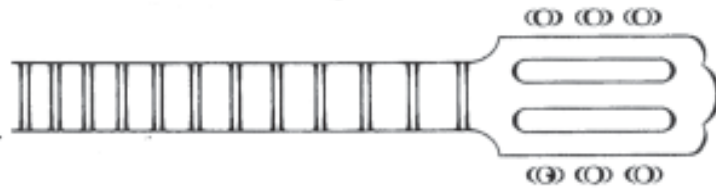
<http://www.cvnc.org/CDreviews.html>

Frank Wallace: *Woman of the Water*. Duo LiveOak (Nancy Knowles, (mezzo)soprano/poet, & Frank Wallace, baritone/guitar/lute). Gyre 10082 (<http://www.gyremusic.com/>). (59:51).

In over 25 years of writing about music on recordings and in concerts, I have rarely been as captivated and enchanted by any item, and particularly an item sent on spec, as this new CD from Duo LiveOak, a new – to me – ensemble established in 1976. The group was recommended to us by none other than Richard Motylinksi, the NCS' stellar percussionist, whose alter ego dwells in the era of early music – really early music. Don't be misled by the name, which may conjure up images of traditional music, for better or worse. This is a first-rate chamber music duo with a new and refreshing twist. Its artists are steeped in early music, and Wallace's songs and duets, deftly accompanied, evoke memories of our distant cultural past, ever so gently wrapped in occasional quasi-contemporary enhancements. Cynics might brand the Dowland-inspired results "cross-over"; would that all such products were as worthy as this one! The CD's only major drawback is its brevity, for it ends sooner than any reasonable person who hears it would wish. The texts are by Knowles, better-known authors including Rumi and Rothehe, and names that may not be as familiar – Shem Tov Ben Palquera, Eugène Guillevic, and Robert Creeley. Wallace accompanies himself (in two instances) and Knowles, wrapping the texts in music of exceptional beauty, using lute or guitar with the skill of a master. Two short pieces round out the CD, the chief attractions of which are three substantial groups of songs – "A Single Veil," a six-part guitar-accompanied set, "Bestiary," also consisting of six numbers and involving both vocalists with guitar, and the nine-number title work, "Women of the Water," for mezzo-soprano and lute. The CD opens with a moving duet with lute accompaniment, "Pearly Everlasting," written in memory of the Duo's former partner and co-founder, John Fleagle. The two solo guitar pieces are "Dake's Song," for guitar builder Dake Traphagen, and "Débil del Alba," the title of which comes from poet Pablo Neruda. All these works were composed between 2001 and 2003. HIP (that's "historically informed performance") readers will want to know that the instruments used are guitars by Ignacio Fleta (1964) and Traphagen (1997) and a lute by Joel van Lennep (1980). The recording venue was the Hillsborough (NH) Congregational Church. The CD comes with extensive notes and song texts (tucked into an inside pocket and easy to overlook), and the whole thing is in an environmentally friendly package (not a jewel box). Go for it!

Note: LiveOak performs tonight (3/21) in Raleigh. See our calendar for details.

John W. Lambert



LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA

Voices of the Guitar:
The GFA International
Convention and Competition
October 1-6, 2001

by Mark Switzer
Photos by Tom Roach

The 1:00 p.m. recital on Tuesday was a captivating performance by Duo Live Oak—Nancy Knowles, soprano, and Frank Wallace, baritone, lute, and classical guitar. Their program was entitled *Tears and Sighs, Songs and Strings*. Before beginning their recital, Nancy made the comment that “We have no idea why we put together a program with so many tears ...” and in a very solemn and respectful way alluded to and dedicated their concert to the United States and the victims of 9/11. They are a very endearing and multi-talented duo. Nancy Knowles projects a warm, friendly personality to the audience and has a beautiful voice particularly suited to their chosen repertoire—and in addition to that, she is a fine poet as well. Frank Wallace is a very confident, capable performer, at home equally on the lute and guitar; he is a sensitive musician and composer and a good baritone as well. In this performance, their ensemble was very tight. They were very good at capturing the spirit of their early music selections, and effective in putting across their own compositions.

The highlights of their concert included *Four Seventeenth Century Airs de Cours*: “Cesses mortels de soupirer,” “Sejour de la divinité,” and “Qui prestera la parole,” all by anonymous composers; and “Donques par force” by Pierre Guedron. All of them were engagingly presented. These were followed by a duo by Claudio Monteverdi entitled *Pur ti miro*. The first guitar solo by Frank Wallace was entitled *Carolan* and it had an intriguing left-hand ostinato with a very active right-hand melody. Next, they presented a world premiere of a song cycle by Frank Wallace, *A*

Single Veil for soprano and guitar. It consisted of five songs, my personal favorite being *Towards the Sun* (text by Nancy Knowles). Following *A Single Veil*, Frank displayed his guitaristic and compositional talents with his *Suite in G Minor*. *Pearly Everlasting*, a song for soprano, baritone, and lute (with text by Nancy Knowles) brought their recital to a fitting close.



LiveOak Duo



American Record Guide, Jan-Feb, 2004, by Catherine Moore

Piva: renaissance songs of Italy & Spain - Collections

Tromboncino, Verdelot, Milano, Dalza, others Duo LiveOak; Nancy Knowles, s; Frank Wallace, bar, lute, vihuela—Gyre 10032—64 minutes

Implicit in the lute song repertoire is an intimacy of performance and a personal striving to reach out to the listener. In this well-chosen program Nancy Knowles and Frank Wallace give the listener a pleasing privacy of expression that is touching and eloquent. This is easier said than done, for the music's sparseness masks the demands made on the musicians. The Renaissance ideal of crafted nonchalance (Castiglione made the term "sprezzatura" famous in his Book of the Courtier) is contemporary with the music presented here and relevant to its evaluation.

Elsewhere I have commented on similar programs' lack of variety and a certain stiffness in performance (July/Aug 1995, p 257; Sept/Oct 1995, p 281), sometimes caused by too much emphasis on rhythm. This music must, of course, be clearly articulated and have rhythmic shape, but it suffers if it is too angular and punctuated. Knowles and Wallace, who have performed together since 1976, use a subtle range of attack, decay, and articulation that is immediately attractive and yields depth on repeated hearings.

Eight separate solo pieces for lute or vihuela complement the songs, and others are attached to songs as frames or introductions. Some songs are duets, and the voices match each other very well. Wallace's voice has a certain earthy quality that suits the music, and with Knowles in the "cucu-rucu" refrain of Tromboncino's 'Quasi Sempre' the effect is especially engaging. 'Piva' in the tide (literally "bagpipe") is a lively lute piece by Joan Ambrosia Dalza, attached here as a coda to the vocal piece. Long bass notes vaguely resemble a drone, but otherwise the piece does not sound like bagpipes.

The program is extremely well sequenced, beginning with the Spanish pieces and ending with a very beautiful group of five Verdelot settings interweaved with lute pieces by Francesca da Milano and Arcadelt's 'Bianco e Dolce Cigno'. John Barker reviewed two Verdelot programs (Sept/Oct 1998), both with good qualities but neither ideal.

Concludes Summer Music Series

Duo LiveOak Resonates With Original Works

By ELEANORE SHAVER

A spellbinding performance at the North Falmouth Congregational Church recently by Duo LiveOak, a creative and accomplished husband-wife team based in New Hampshire, kept the audience mesmerized.

The concert was the last in this season's Summer Music Magic Plus Concert Series sponsored by the church. Nancy Knowles opened with a set of Sephardic wisdom songs sung with astonishing presence and breath control that were equally present in her soulful playing of a wooden, reed flute from India.

Her soprano voice resonated in "the little white church" as if she were singing in a medieval cathedral. In their duets together, Frank Wallace displayed

his wonderful, warm baritone.

However, it is in Mr. Wallace's original pieces for the lute and the classical guitar that his gift and virtuosity are truly revealed. His elegant, complex compositions draw upon and expand the richness of both traditional and contemporary art song. A lovely, lyrical guitar solo entitled "Debil del Alba" or "Tenderness of the Dawn" delighted both the ear and the intellect with musical poetry.

The duo performed three song cycles assembled from different cultures and eras. Theodore Roethke's poetry and original poems by Ms. Knowles provided much of the text. The different sets offered the listener a delicate soprano voice and lute in "Woman of the Water," a dissonant "A Single Veil"

with soprano voice and guitar, and a humorous "Bestiary" with both soprano and baritone voices and guitar.

While Mr. Wallace tuned his guitar, Ms. Knowles shared that they had a second reason for being in North Falmouth. Her husband was having a custom guitar built by a talented young guitar maker living in North Falmouth and present in the audience, Steven Connor. Mr. Connor builds about 12 guitars each year and one of his clients is Eliot Fiske.

This wonderful evening's performance of original music by consummate poet/musicians was deeply satisfying. Duo LiveOak and Frank Wallace CDs are available on the Gyre Music label.

Falmouth Enterprise
October 4, 2004



Duo LiveOak—Nancy Knowles soprano, Frank Wallace guitarist/lutenist, baritone, composer • Photograph © 2004 Elsa Voelcker

www.duoliveoak.com