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ON THE TOWN

**PHIL MATHIEU AND GIORGIA
CAVALLARO**
**“American Music
for Two Guitars”**

Independent

Who is William Foden and why have guitarists Phil Mathieu and Giorgia Cavallaro devoted nearly an entire album to his genius? Born in 1860, the St. Louis native is remembered in guitar circles — to the extent that he's remembered at all these days — for his virtuosity, compositions,

arrangements and instructional method books. Mathieu and Cavallaro are a pair of latter disciples, custodians of a rich but underappreciated legacy.

Though far removed from his twangy alliance with Ruthie and the Wranglers, Mathieu sounds comfortable in this setting. He and Cavallaro are well matched, playing nylon string guitars throughout most of their recording, “American Music for Two Guitars.” Foden, who died shortly after

World War II, is represented by a pair of lengthy interludes. The seven part “Neo Baroque-Suite” finds the guitarists nimbly moving through a colorful assortment of French and Italian dances, from the intricately woven “Allemande” to the neatly harmonized “Gavotte” to the courtly coda “Bouree.” The second section is devoted to songs and dances that radiate more homegrown charm and features previously unrecorded Foden pieces, including the

unabashedly romantic “Flowery Dell Waltz.” Whether composing or arranging, Foden apparently had a gift for making the most of melodies, allowing them to linger in the air. Mathieu and Cavallaro follow suit, honoring his memory and work with an appropriately lyrical touch. The album closes, by the way, with a rootsy twist. Mathieu's own “Sugarloaf Rag” is brightly orchestrated by the duo's steel string and resonator guitars.

-- Mike Joyce