

## Salute To Classical Music Honors The Romeros

*"The Royal Family of the Guitar" adds the President's Merit Award to its regal legacy*

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The Old-World elegance of the Los Angeles Millennium Biltmore Hotel was well-suited for this year's GRAMMY Salute To Classical Music honoring the Romeros. Originated in Spain by Celedonio Romero, founder of the Romeros guitar dynasty, the guitar quartet encompasses three generations of Romeros.

They are known worldwide as the "The Royal Family of the Guitar," a name earned through their abundant contributions to the classical guitar genre. The Romeros are not only regarded as the inventors of their musical art form, they are also considered the only classical guitar quartet of real stature in the world.



What is remarkable too about the ensemble is how Celedonio Romero, a renowned self-taught soloist, instructed all of his sons at age 2 or 3 in playing guitar. By the time each turned 7, Celin, Pepe and Angel had made their performing debuts in Spain.

Recording Academy President Neil Portnow stated that the honorees' "passion for music and great love of the guitar are also clearly evident in the classroom. From a child's early lessons at his father's side, to countless master classes around the world, the Romeros have demonstrated an enormous commitment to educating the next generation of aspiring musicians. Many of their students have already gone on to become successful concert guitarists and sought-after teachers."

A video documentary at the event told about the family's 1957 immigration to the United States, where the boys performed as teenagers in the Romeros guitar quartet. In 1990, Celin's son, Celino, joined the group. Celedonio Romero passed away in 1996, and Angel's son Lito is in the current lineup.

Also depicted were the Romeros in some of their hundreds of international concerts, which include performances with major U.S. symphony orchestras. In the documentary, footage covered appearances at the White House, the Vatican, on the "Ed Sullivan Show" and in concert for Prince Charles.

All of the Romeros who have been in the quartet over the years were recognized at the GRAMMY Salute To Classical Music, and four generations of the Romero extended family were in attendance.

Robert Aubry Davis — Recording Academy Trustee, host of the nationally syndicated "Millennium Of Music" and XM Satellite Radio classical vocal channel VOX programmer — emceed the event. Davis began by acknowledging the GRAMMY nominees present, among them, triple-threat producer/engineer/mixer Leslie Ann Jones, nominated with Judy Kirschner for Best Engineered Album, Classical, for *Látigo* by Quartet San Francisco.

Davis also read letters of commemoration for the Romeros. The Consul General of Spain wrote that Romero family patriarch Celedonio "was a fantastically gifted artist [who] delighted millions of people throughout a very long career, a man of integrity who loved this country but never forgot that he was a real Spaniard. His children have inherited both things: artistically, an outstanding talent and technique, [and] as human beings, the integrity and the kindness passed to them by their parents, Celedonio and Angelita."

The Counsel General was not alone in his praise for the Romeros as proponents of the value of music and of family. Portnow commented on the large family's extraordinary closeness. He also applauded the Romeros for their enduring contributions in enriching the repertoire for classical guitar. "The Romeros have premiered or inspired many of the greatest guitar compositions of the 20th century," he said.

In accepting The Recording Academy's President's Merit Award, the Romeros underscored their twin loves of family and the guitar. Celino said, "It's been a dream for me," and he spoke of telling his own son, "You just go with your dream. You just keep practicing and practicing, and one day, it will happen."

That truth was borne out by the afternoon's excellent live performances by gifted young string players. Thirteen-year-old guitarist Tim Calobre's "Fuerza" was a captivating musical odyssey. After Calobre performed, Davis made it known that the impeccably rendered piece was composed by Calobre, eliciting cheers from the audience. Colin Davin's guitar interpretations of well-chosen material by Vivaldi was beautifully complemented by performers from the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra.