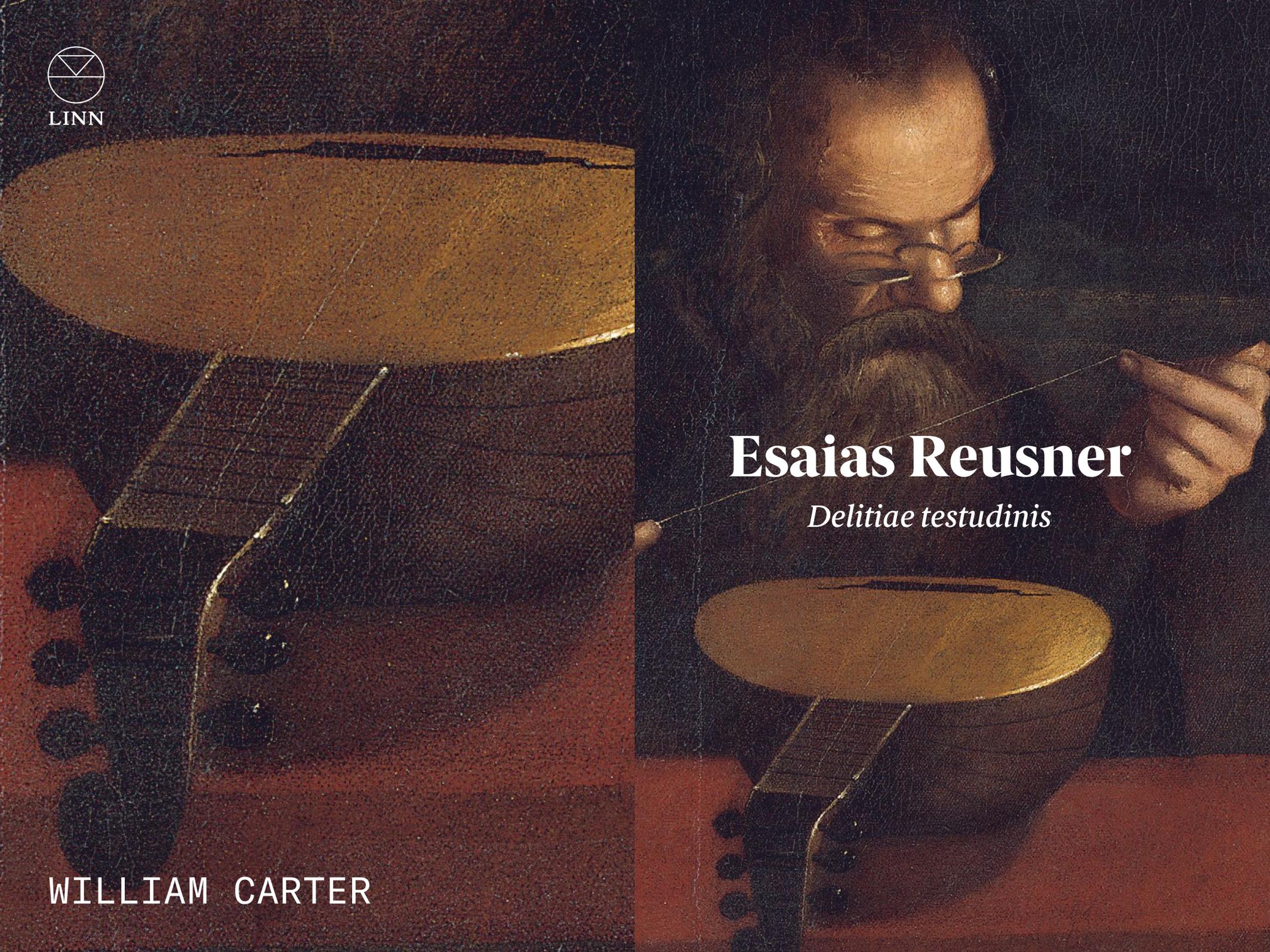




WILLIAM CARTER



**Esaias Reusner**

*Delitiae testudinis*

Credits →

Tracklist →

Programme note →

Biography →

# Esaias Reusner

*Delitiae testudinis*



LINN

Recorded in St Martin's Church, East  
Woodhay, Newbury, UK,  
on 5-7 July 2021

Recording Producer & Engineer  
Philip Hobbs

Post-production  
Julia Thomas

Label Manager  
Timothée van der Stegen

Design  
[stoempstudio.com](http://stoempstudio.com)

Cover Image  
'An old man stringing a lute'  
by Pietro Paolini (1603-1681)  
Christie's Images /  
Bridgeman Images

# Esaias Reusner (1636–1679)

## *Suites from Delitiae testudinis*

72:39

MENU

### **Suite XIII in E flat major**

- 1 — Paduana 5:49
- 2 — Allemanda 2:58
- 3 — Couranta 1:58
- 4 — Sarabanda 3:30
- 5 — Gigue 2:30
- 6 — Gavotte 1:19

### **Pieces in F major**

- 7 — Praeludium 1:34
- 8 — Chaconne, ou Cascades  
de Mr. de Launay 7:22

### **Suite IX in G minor**

- 9 — Praeludium 1:39
- 10 — Paduana 6:14
- 11 — Allemanda 3:03
- 12 — Couranta 2:19

### WILLIAM CARTER lute

12-course lute by Klaus Jacobsen (London, 2019),  
after Sixtus Rauwolf (Augsburg, c. 1590)

- 13 — Sarabanda 1:42
- 14 — Gavotte 1:11
- 15 — Gigue 2:11

### **Suite VI in E minor**

- 16 — Allemanda 4:30

### **Suite XI in C minor**

- 17 — Praeludium 1:08
- 18 — Paduana 6:47
- 19 — Allemanda 4:34
- 20 — Couranta 2:27
- 21 — Sarabanda 2:19
- 22 — Gigue 2:46

### **Hundert geistliche Melodien evangelischer Lieder**

- 23 — Wir glauben all an einen Gott 2:14

# The Delights of the Lute

## *Suites from Delitiae testudinis by Esaias Reusner*

When we think of the lute, it's usually somehow at the edge of the musical world: a wonderful and refined edge – but still, a bit peripheral to musical developments. The perfect instrument for easing the tensions of a weary pope or emperor, or, as *The Burwell Lute Tutor* (c. 1660) says, 'used commonly at the going to bed of the Kings of France'. And yet, in its quiet way, the lute was, from its beginning, at the centre of musical development in Europe. From the first printed music for an instrument (Petrucci, 1503), the first dynamic indications (*toca pian, piano* in the Capirola Lutebook, c. 1517, decades before Gabrieli's *Sonata pian' e forte*), the first theme with variations (Narváez, 1538) through to the first explorations of all the major and minor keys (Gorzanis, 1567, and Galileo, father of the astronomer, 1584) and the development of the solo art song (Caccini, c. 1570, and Dowland, 1597), the lute was at the cutting edge of musical evolution. This changed at the start of the seventeenth century, when the creative energy of the lutenists was turned inward as they explored the basic nature of the lute itself. Many different shapes and sizes, numbers of strings and, above all, tunings were developed and the results, while musically fascinating, couldn't really be exported to players of other instruments in the way abstract ideas like a varied theme or dynamic markings could. The most extreme change lay in the area of tuning. Dozens of systems were tried, tested, furiously debated, cherished and condemned. It's a lot of work to restring a lute and learn a completely different set of fingerings and the result of all this exploration is still

being evaluated today. Some tunings were quickly dismissed, but if they survived to spread (virus-like) to other players they were given names. Two of my favourite are ‘Ton ravissant’ (‘ravishing’) and the less enthusiastic ‘Ton enrhumé’ (‘with a cold’). This period lasted for roughly half a century (c. 1610–1660) and when the dust settled, most exhausted lute players were willing to agree on an instrument with eleven courses and a new tuning in D minor which it kept for its final century and a half. The development came at a cost though, and the lute ceded its place in the vanguard of musical development to players of the keyed and bowed instruments, which place they have retained to this day. But in 1667 there was still one musical trailblazer who was a lutenist and he is the subject of the present recording: the wonderful, unjustly neglected Esaias Reusner.

Reusner came from a family of Silesian lutenists. His father (also Esaias Reusner) published the last music in Germany for the lute in the old Renaissance tuning, but the ordered calm of a musical upbringing must have contrasted bizarrely and tragically with the outside world. The first twelve years of Reusner’s life were the final, most bitter years of that extraordinary disaster, the Thirty Years’ War, and his home town of Löwenberg was at the centre of the struggle. It was captured and lost repeatedly by each side, never held for long, and its misery was compounded by multiple outbreaks of plague. It’s hard to get a clear idea of the savagery of the conflict but a few surviving documents give us an inkling. Before the start of the war Löwenberg’s population was estimated at around 10,000; at its close, 148. Because of the length of the struggle and the repeated bankruptcies of the combatant nations, soldiers were often unpaid and saw civilians as legitimate and necessary prey for their survival. Large-scale atrocities (something rare in Europe before then) became

commonplace. Callot's engravings 'The Miseries and Misfortunes of War' give a clear flavour of the world Reusner grew up in. Another detail to illustrate the insanity of everyday life at the time can be found in the Swedish General Johan Banér's organized bouts of drunkenness in which drinking was synchronized with artillery fire, one marathon carousal lasting for four hundred salvos! Reusner seems almost to reference this in the preface to *Delitiae*: 'Some may be drawn to the brilliance and noise of thunder and lightning, but ever since my youth the soft and sweet sonority of noble music ... has been my only pleasure and therefore I have sacrificed the greater part of my time to the lute ...'. It's dangerous to make assumptions about a composer's state of mind from his external life but it's almost impossible to resist connecting the pervasive melancholy of Reusner's music with the Thirty Years' War. Reusner's mother died when he was seven and the family moved to Wrocław which was behind the front lines and relatively safe. From here, the ten-year-old Reusner, whose father had noticed his 'sonderliche Lust zur Laute' ('particular desire for the lute'), travelled as a prodigy to Gdańsk, where he played before the Polish Queen. His father also arranged for him to have lessons with an unnamed French virtuoso – the French were considered to have the edge in lute playing – and a series of court appointments followed.

When the war finally ended there was a new flourishing of the arts and Reusner's first book, *Delitiae testudinis* (1667), can be seen very much in this context. It contains several milestones. It's the first book of lute music published for the new eleven-course lute in D minor and, more importantly, it contains the first works organized as suites (Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Gigue, etc.) for any instrument, anywhere! This is such an important development as

instrumental composers at the time were wrestling with the problem of creating larger structures to sustain their music. The suite and the concerto were to become the favoured solutions. Because of the destruction and confusion of the war, we'll never know who actually 'invented' the suite (manuscript suites by Froberger, Reusner's older colleague, likely predate his own), but Reusner was definitely first in print and he was only 31 at the time! It's also telling to compare the dimensions of Froberger's suites with Reusner's. Froberger's are essentially exquisite miniatures – never more than four movements – while the Suites on this recording are each over twice the length of anything by Froberger. To find works of similar density and substance we have to look forward 50 years, to the mature suites of Bach and Handel. The suites in *Delitiae* started a flood of similar, though less ambitious, works for harpsichord, viol and various ensembles, but Reusner didn't rest on his laurels. After a brief visit to Vienna to play for the Emperor, he composed and published five more books of music in the dozen years left to him: two books of ensemble music, two of lute music, and one book which is lost. He moved from post to post, briefly serving at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig before winding up as lutenist for the Elector of Brandenburg in Berlin where he died after a brief illness in 1679. He was only 43 years old.

I love all of Reusner's music but the suites from his first collection are for me the summit of his art. They are savagely difficult without ever being flashy and the fact that they exist in many manuscript versions which are tactfully thinned out in texture (lute music, transcribed for the lute as it were) in addition to the much more modest demands of the later collections tell me that there must have been aching fingers 300 years ago just like mine in the present day. Difficult this music may be, but it was also tremendously admired. *Delitiae*

was reprinted again and again – the last edition in 1697, Leipzig, was 30 years after the first – something almost unheard of at the time.

I'll conclude with just a few remarks about specific pieces. The Paduanas are all extraordinary. The dance was popularized by English expatriate string players in the years leading up to the Thirty Years' War and was old fashioned by the 1660s. Reusner seems to be channelling the spirit of the great English pavan composers Robert Johnson and William Lawes, and translating their sublime and melancholy art into the new idiom of the eleven-course lute. Notice the tone cluster worthy of Lawes at the end of the E flat major Paduana and the wonderful reverse Picardy third which ends the C minor Paduana (and its final Gigue), where the music cadences to a conventional major closing chord and then twists back to the minor. This is a musical gesture I've only ever found in Reusner but it agrees so well with the mood of the English school.

Reusner learned with a French virtuoso and so I wanted to give an idea of their elegant and refined art. The 'Cascades' is a work existing mainly in German sources but is attributed to Mr. DeLaunay in some, Vieux Gaultier in others and nobody at all in the rest. Each source is different, so the player has to make choices to create a performable piece. I've arrived at my own version but the main outlines are those of Hopkinson Smith who played this work on a recording of Gaultier many years ago. Other solutions are possible but this is how I first heard it and I just can't imagine it any other way!

The Sarabandas are all remarkable. The G minor has a sleek minimalism but the one in E flat major shows all the lyricism of a Handel aria. To write

a work looking forward to ‘Lascia ch’io pianga’ in 1667 is extraordinary, but the C minor Sarabanda is the most wonderful of all. It is completely unlike a sarabande and evokes nothing so much to my mind as dead leaves drifting slowly to the ground. The only work like it is the equally enigmatic Sarabande (also in C minor) from Bach’s fifth suite for cello, which he later arranged for lute. Did Bach know Reusner’s sarabande? We’ll never know, but given Reusner’s connections with Leipzig and Bach’s apparent quoting of a Reusner string sonata in Cantata BWV 70, I think the answer is more likely yes than no.

The Allemanda in E minor is equally striking. It is all about one musical event: the close of the opening section on the expected dominant chord of B major and the wrench at the start of the second section which begins in E flat minor! This is truly one of the most extraordinary moments in seventeenth-century music.

I close with a chorale prelude from the ‘100 sacred melodies’ of 1678. In this last year of his life Reusner finishes with a nod towards his father’s book of chorales from decades and a vanished world earlier.

© *William Carter, 2022*



Jacques Callot (France, 1592–1635)  
The hanging from the suite The Miseries and  
Misfortunes of War, 1633  
etching, 8.1 x 18.6 cm  
Art Gallery of New South Wales  
Purchased 1963  
Image © AGNSW DO10.1963.11

# William Carter

## *lute*

Born in Florida, William Carter received a rigorous but conventional training as a classical guitarist with Bruce Holzman at Florida State University before falling in love with the earlier plucked instruments and the world of historical performance. Following initial guidance from Pat O'Brien in New York City, he travelled to London as a Fulbright Scholar where he studied the lute with Nigel North and quickly established himself as one of the leading players on old instruments.

Concert tours and festival appearances followed, throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas, both as an orchestral player and as a chamber musician, and soloist with his own group, The Palladian Ensemble. Carter has an extensive discography (including ten albums with The Palladian Ensemble) and has featured on numerous recordings of the Academy of Ancient Music for which he is the principal lutenist. He is also an enthusiastic teacher and is Professor of Baroque Studies and Lute at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London.

2005 saw Carter embark on a series of solo Baroque guitar recordings for Linn: the first, *La Guitarre Royale: The Music of Francesco Corbetta*, was named in *Gramophone's* Critics' Choice end of year list. Carter has been awarded *Gramophone's* Editor's Choice twice, for *La Guitarra Española: The Music of Santiago de Murcia* and *Fernando Sor: Early Works*. His most recent

recording in the series, *Le Calme: Fernando Sor Late Works*, was awarded an Opus d'Or and also topped *Gramophone's* Critics' Choice list. His most recent album of Bach's solo lute music was featured on BBC Radio 3 and chosen as one of the 10 best Bach recordings of 2018 by *Gramophone*.



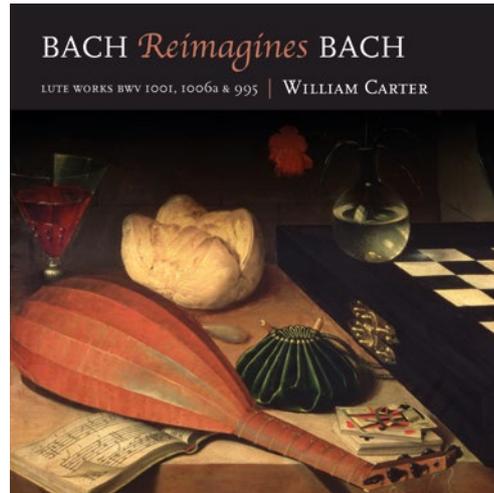
© Amit Lenmon

# Acknowledgements

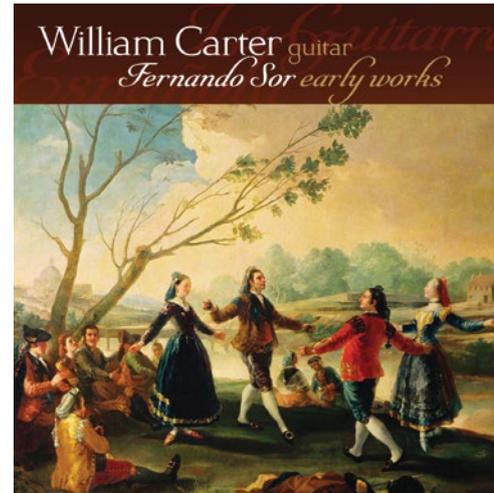
Thanks first of all to Phil Hobbs and Julia Thomas for their patient and tactful producing and editing. Without them, nothing. Thanks also to Timothée van der Stegen for finding the wonderful cover image. I had help with musical sources from John Robinson and André Burguete who supplied some crucial pieces. But most of all I owe a tremendous amount to Tim Crawford who was so generous, not just with sharing sources but also his vast knowledge of Reusner and the musical world of the seventeenth century. Thank you, Tim!

*Also available on Linn*

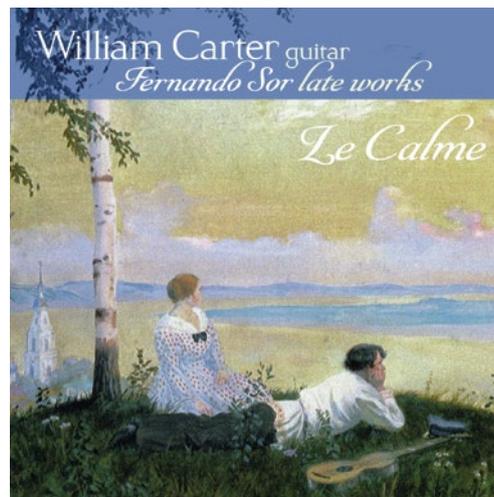
MENU



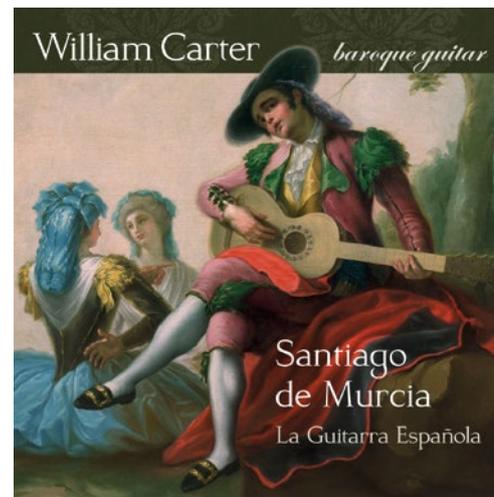
**CKD 445**



**CKD 343**



**CKD 380**



**CKD 288**



*out*here  
M U S I C

FOR EVEN MORE GREAT MUSIC VISIT  
[LINNRECORDS.COM](http://LINNRECORDS.COM)