



ALEX WILSON AND OMAR RÍOS MELÉNDEZ

Present:

THE ART OF DEEP CONNECTION

Released: 20th February 2026



A piano. An acoustic guitar. Two virtuosos. Ten instrumentals. *The Art of Deep Connection*. An album to make you doubletake, and marvel, and feel. It's the stand-out debut from an exemplary acoustic duo: acclaimed pianist, producer and composer, Alex Wilson, and the London-based Nicaraguan master guitarist and composer, Omar Ríos Meléndez.

Recorded at Steve Winwood's Wincraft Studios in the heart of the English Cotswolds, *The Art of Deep Connection* boasts a track list of exhilarating originals and inventively rearranged covers that pulse with elements of jazz, flamenco and Latin American music. Here are duets that flow seamlessly, almost telepathically, and improvised solos - and two solo tracks - that beguile and dazzle, as befitting two maestros with collaborative smarts and a lifetime's worth of immersion in their craft.

Here, too, a sense of space being made, time being carved, for presence, sensitivity and connection. "Our music encourages people to be open about their emotions," says the Zurich-based Wilson, a Swiss/British national and Latin jazz piano legend whose career includes nine studio releases, production credits for over 25 recordings, a turn as musical director for Grammy-winning Mexican guitar duo Rodrigo and Gabriela and performances with the biggest names in jazz and global music.

"We are two men who are sitting down and connecting deeply in the studio and onstage, and having a dialogue with the listener, the audience, in the process," he continues. "These are crazy, overwhelming times. This album is our grano de arena, our little grain of sand, to help counter that. To try and say, 'Let's have some open and honest communication with each other in music and beyond.'"

Honesty. Unity. Real-playing values. Nestled alongside these and other qualities on the album is a combined aim to subvert the clichés that tend to accompany Latin music, and to present the genre as more affecting and nuanced than it is given credit for. Similarly, Ríos Meléndez - a musician widely held to be the finest guitarist in Nicaragua, the largest country in Central America, bordered by Honduras and Costa Rica - has granted fresh life to two of his country's most famous traditional tunes: 'La Mora Limpia', an instrumental considered Nicaragua's second national anthem, and 'Alforja Campesina' by beloved singer/songwriter Carlos Mejía Godoy.

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"I wanted to keep to the originals but include arrangements that allow for improvisation and take you to another mood," says thirty-something Ríos Meléndez, 23 years Wilson's junior, who has toured the world and - since arriving in the UK six years ago - released two studio albums under his own name. *"I love the way jazz and flamenco allow for new interpretations, and that we can mix them with the 6/8 rhythms of Nicaraguan music, of son nica,"* he says, referencing the musical genre often associated with the marimba, the so-called 'African piano', and Nicaragua's national instrument.

*"I grew up singing 'Alforja Campesina'. Everybody knows Carlos Mejía Godoy, who belongs to an extended musical family that includes [Nicaraguan American singer-songwriter] Luis Enrique, *El Príncipe de la Salsa*. The Prince of Salsa. These musicians helped put Nicaragua on the map."* The duo's version of Enrique's *Yo No Sé Mañana* - a salsa classic produced by revered American pianist/arranger Sergio George - finds the smash hit slowed down and sprinkled with jewel-like solos.

"Sergio George is one of my heroes," says Wilson. *"The way he plays and thinks about music and music production has been so formative. I fit like a glove into the first bar or two of the original before we branch off with our own extended arrangement."*

Ríos Meléndez's dynamic 'Nomad's Prayer (Part 1)' and 'Nomad's Prayer (Part 2)' is music as storytelling, reflecting a newcomer's attempts to establish himself in London - a city that can be inhospitable to foreign arrivals. The composition's cinematic narrative takes in the frustration of a man trying to find shelter, the false hopes dangled, joy snatched and new beginnings budding.

"People have been moved to tears when we've played this live," says Wilson. *"It conveys what those who aren't fortunate to have been born in a stable country go through, and the deep journey Omar has experienced since leaving Nicaragua."*

Wilson was introduced to the work of Ríos Meléndez via social media in pandemic-era 2020 and, suitably wowed, invited the guitarist to guest at this headline show at the 2021 London Latin Jazz Festival - an ongoing annual event that Wilson founded in 2013 and ran until 2017.

"I invited Alex to guest on my second solo album, and the stars aligned because he happened to be in London," says Ríos Meléndez. *"We played without rehearsing, very organic and real. Then we played *Yo No Sé Mañana* as a duet at a gig in Switzerland. Everybody kept saying we had to make an album."*

Imbued with the same free-flowing spirit, *The Art of Deep Connection* was recorded over three days in a room mic-ed to highlight the natural acoustics. Wilson had originally wanted to record a homage to Nicaragua, diving deep into the culture in ways akin to *Mali Latino*, his seminal 2010 album with the Malian kora player Madou Sidiki Diabaté. But Ríos Meléndez - as a Londoner - wanted to go broader.

"I miss my country and my family, of course," he says. *"It is my dream that by connecting the music of Nicaragua with other styles it feels more universal and becomes better known worldwide."* The album's title came first, so that each tune had to speak to its sentiment.

Tracks such as Wilson's achingly beautiful solo rendition of the iconic 'Bésame Mucho' by Mexico's Consuela Velásquez, which leans into the danger inherent in a kiss. The album's other solo track, Ríos Meléndez's 'Water Reflections' - written after attending a shamanic ritual near the waterfalls of Nicaragua's lush Macizo de Peñas Blancos region - carries with it the notion of healing, of living in peace and harmony.

Wilson wrote the tune 'Lanzaté' with Ríos Meléndez in mind. "Lanzaté" means 'grab life,' he says. *"I gain so much inspiration from Omar's virtuosity and energy. He's at that stage of life when your instrument matters more than anything, which I remember so well, and which reminds me of the work I did with Rodrigo and Gabriela. There's continuity here."*

'William's Theme' is a cover of the popular bolero 'El Tema de William' written by guitarist William Malespin and recorded in the '70s by the mighty Nicaraguan jazz rock band Los Rockets. "The melody is beautiful," says Ríos Meléndez. *"I'd played it with a trio on guitar, bass, bongo and cajón, keeping the bolero and adding Cuban-style son cubano. I showed Alex this version, and we went for it."*

Then, in closing, comes the title track. A painterly meditation that finds the duo adding layers, expanding harmonically, taking listeners on a journey - to themselves, and to each other.

The Art of Deep Connection, then. Sometimes we only know our longing when we hear it.

Words by Jane Cornwell.



MUSICIANS:	COMPOSITION CREDITS
Omar Ríos Meléndez - Guitar	1. La Mora Limpia (<i>Justo Santos</i>)
Alex Wilson - Piano	2. Yo no sé mañana (<i>Jorge Luis Piloto & Jorge Villamizar</i>)
Produced by Alex Wilson & Omar Ríos Meléndez	3. Alforja Campesina (<i>Carlos Mejía Godoy</i>)
Recording & Mixing Engineer - James Towler	4. Nomad's Prayer (Part 1) (<i>Omar Ríos Meléndez</i>)
Mastered by Stefan Heger	5. Nomad's Prayer (Part 2) (<i>Omar Ríos Meléndez</i>)
Studio: Recorded at Wincraft Studio	6. Bésame Mucho (<i>Consuelo Velázquez</i>)
Management: Peter Conway Management	7. Water Reflection (<i>Omar Ríos Meléndez</i>)
Artwork by Brian Hanlon for OG Media Group	8. Lanzate (<i>Alex Wilson</i>)
Photography by Robert Crowley	9. Williams Theme (<i>William Malespín</i>)
Liner Notes Jane Cornwell	10. The Art of Deep Connection (<i>Omar Ríos Meléndez & Alex Wilson</i>)
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