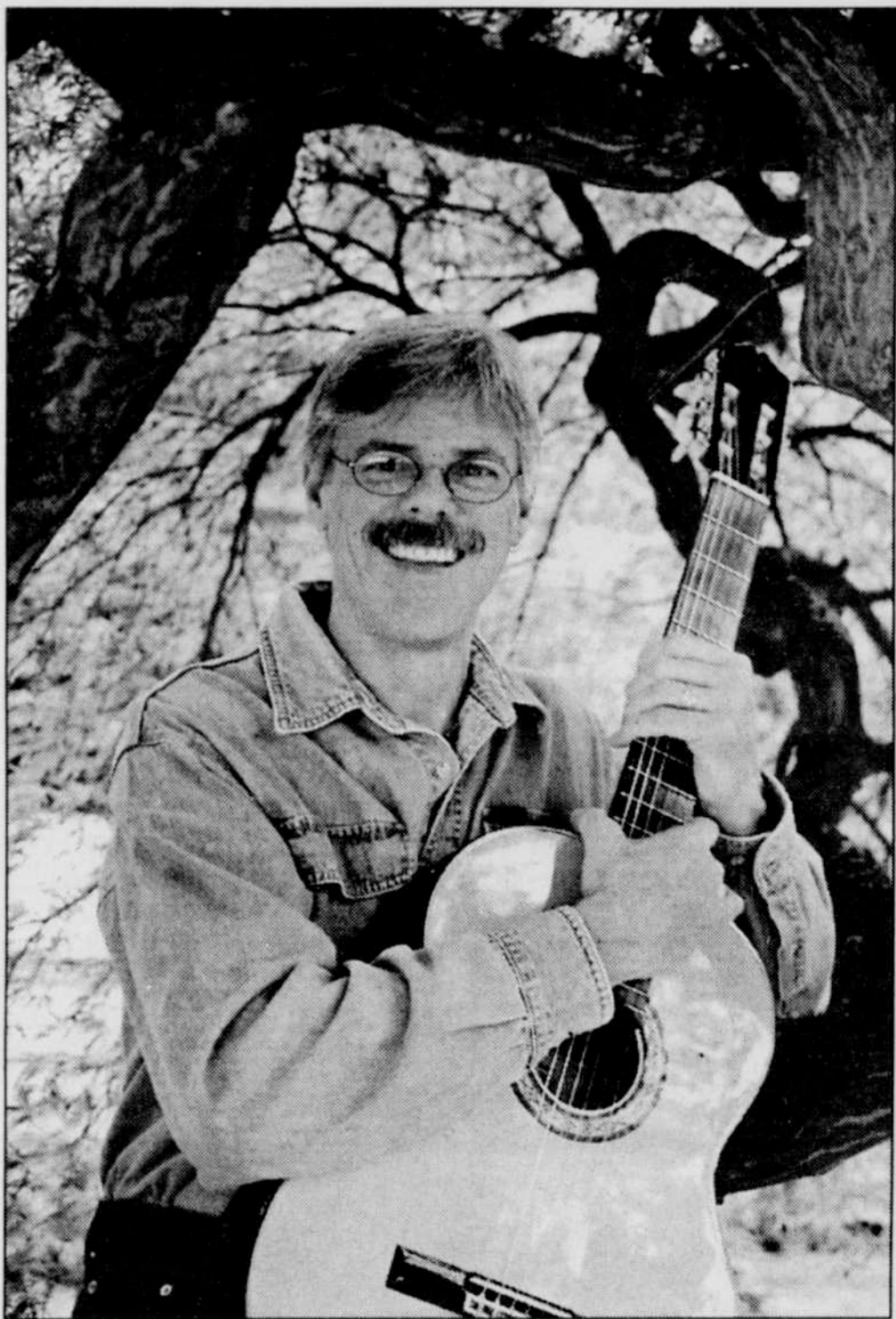


MUSIC



Richard Colombo and his guitar make beautiful music together

Portland guitarist Richard Colombo serves up music to dream by, meditate to, grieve to and even to make love to on his new CD, *Carry the Dream*. He displays a genuine gift for composition, writing all 12 tunes on the record.

Colombo plays a six-string acoustic guitar, but this is not like the ubiquitous folk music inundating Portland. He uses no vocals, although able sidemen add texture on some tracks with cello, violin, mandolin, flute and percussion.

What I like best about *Carry the Dream* is its cohesiveness, as if all of these songs are meant to live together on this disc. It's all rather ethereal and mellow, with no jarring cuts where he suddenly lapses into a flamenco number, although some pieces do move along at a quicker pace, giving Colombo an opportunity to showcase his considerable dexterity.

A melancholy stream flows through many of these pieces and is nicely accentuated by the instrumentation. As someone who knows her

reanean. In fact, several of the pieces on *Carry the Dream* reflect a Spanish influence.

The first cut, "Costa del Sol," lives up to its name, although ironically Colombo has yet to visit Spain. I can testify that it did transport me back to those sunny beaches and the winter of 1972—but that's another story. "It's the warmth of the Spanish passion, those minor chords, that I love," he says, settling this day for the warmth emanating from his cup.

The album is dedicated to his mother, Jean, who died before she could hear any of these pieces. She was an artist, and fittingly, one of her paintings provides the artwork for it.

Colombo remembers her in "I Miss You" and "Song for Mom." "I added violin to that last song because she played violin," he says quietly, agreeing that he must have come by his talent genetically.

And like many budding musicians he started out in a cover band as a teen-ager. "We were horrible," he confides with a laugh. "But my mom was always my biggest fan and wanted to

way around a good depression, I actually enjoy sad music, especially on a nasty January night.

It doesn't try to cheer you up or fake you into thinking tomorrow will be somehow sunnier. I'd just call it the blues, except this music is more airy, less down-in-the-dumps dirty.

This is a CD I expect to enjoy for a long time—unless, of course, I go and fall for some dame and suddenly require silly, giddy love songs!

Colombo and I chatted over hot drinks at Torrefazione, apropos of his Italian heritage and his affinity for things Mediter-

In remembrance

A mother's love inspires gay guitarist

BY ORIANA GREEN

hear me even when no one else did."

"Bob Dylan, the Beatles and Simon & Garfunkel were my gods. I was so lucky to grow up in a time when music was really changing the world and impacted us all," he says.

In 1980 while living in the San Francisco Bay area, Colombo decided to become a full-time musician. He managed to get steady gigs both as a solo artist and as a duo, playing guitar and singing.

"I didn't consider myself an instrumentalist because I totally played by ear," he reveals. "But I knew if I really wanted to make it, I needed to go back to school."

Colombo moved to Portland in 1985 and later earned a degree in classical guitar from Portland State University. Now he also teaches guitar.

"I love teaching, and I have a full-time load of 22 private students," he says enthusiastically. Colombo teaches beginning to intermediate, classical, folk and even rock, plus music theory and songwriting to guitarists of all ages.

"I consider my students my best teachers," he adds. "Every day I learn something."

Colombo laments the loss of music education in public schools. "My belief is everyone has music in them," he says. He has noticed a recent increased interest in the guitar and theorizes, "Because we live in such a high-stress techno world, a hands-on, organic instrument has a lot of appeal."

Two cuts, "Song of Peace" and "Hope for Tomorrow," impart Colombo's reaction to recent events. "After Sept. 11 I just didn't feel like doing anything, but each time I played music with my students I felt better."

In all of his endeavors Colombo draws strength from his partner of 3 1/2 years, Jim Morris. "My partner is so supportive and is even helping to market the CD."

Colombo clearly is appreciative of someone with talents that differ from his own. "Yesterday Jim sold 22 CDs!" he exclaims, still showing the ebullience of a fresh relationship.

"I don't know if I could have done this CD

without him. He gives me the foundation and the emotional support," he says. "I feel really blessed. I do what I love surrounded by what I love."

The second cut, "Home at Last," was written for Morris and celebrates the joy of building a home and family with him.

"Queer Child" reflects the tension and anxiety Colombo felt in his youth. "When I was a queer little kid in school I was always afraid—making sure no one would know."

Carry the Dream represents two years of work for Colombo. "In order to do something it has to start as a dream, so this is my dream...to express myself musically without words."

He says some songs evolve from improvising, which he loves. "It's such a peak experience. I improvise a lot with my students. It's a way to find out what's inside you."

Every few months Colombo and Morris hold jam sessions at their home, where he says they have "every rhythm instrument known to man—even a marimba." With all the high-energy drumming, singing and chanting, he exclaims, "It's magic!"

Colombo used to perform with Bridges and the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, but these days his gigs are mostly casual. As a musician who's paid his dues playing bars, he adds, "I

don't want to be in a corner with people sitting with their backs to me, talking."

So what would his devoted mom think of *Carry the Dream*? Colombo takes a deep breath and talks more about her.

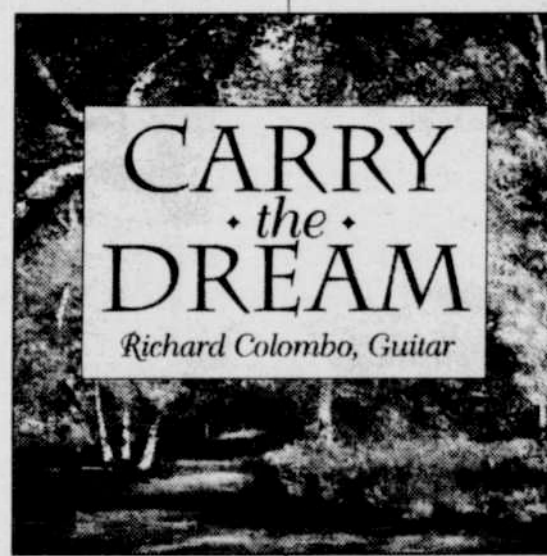
"She was the original PFLAG mom...she'd come up for Pride, and when I was in the chorus she'd go to rehearsal, and

we'd go out to gay bars afterward. She loved it." He pauses, then confides, "She died in my arms."

Colombo wrote "Song for Mom" for her memorial service and first performed it there. Afterward his father told him, "Richard, you lost your biggest fan."

That's undoubtedly true, but thanks to his new CD, I think there are about to be many more fans of Richard Colombo's music. **JM**

To inquire about classes or bookings, call RICHARD COLOMBO at 503-235-2233 or write RCGuitar@aol.com. *Carry the Dream* is available at Gai-Pied, Everyday Music and Music Millennium.



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