Individually, we are Saul, Aron and Alvaro Bitran, and Javier Montiel. Together, we are known as the Cuarteto Latinoamericano. Our audiences have lots of questions about us. For example, whether that big case that we carry with us is a *guitarrón.*

No, it’s a cello.  And we are not a mariachi band; we don’t play with *ponchos* or guitars, despite what many people ask.  We know that our name may be a bit misleading, but there are reasons for it: not only do we hail from Latin America, but mainly, we have made an almost forty-year-long career by mostly playing concert music by composers from countries South of the Rio Bravo. This music—the music of our continent—is as varied as its culture, its geography, its food and history.  Some of these composers undoubtedly draw from Latin America’s rich popular music tradition, while others write music that sounds universal, and could have been written anywhere in the world.  Having said that, it does seem that a lot of the Latin American repertoire prominently features rhythm (or so we are told). But in any case, our only criterion for selecting our Latin American repertoire is its artistic quality.

Of course, like any budding string quartet, in the distant year of 1982 in Mexico City, we started with Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Borodin, Ravel, etc.  But soon thereafter we began to discover the wonderful repertoire awaiting us in our own neck of the woods and, in parallel, we found out that it was very much appreciated in different parts of the world.  This is how this music, which we have recorded on over 80 CDs, has gotten us many awards—such as two Latin Grammys, multiple Grammy nominations, and the coveted *Diapason d’Or*in France, among others—and has brought us to renowned halls such as the *Teatro alla Scala*in Milan, Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw and other marvelous concert venues in Israel, China, Japan, New Zealand, and practically all of Europe and the Americas.

This is how, until this very day we continue to travel the world with our beloved scores by Villa-Lobos, Revueltas, Ginastera, Piazzolla and many other great Latin American masters in our briefcases.  Sometimes we wonder ourselves how it is even possible to have lasted for so many years together.  We think we owe this to several factors, not least among them good luck. A musician’s career is fragile by nature, as it is totally dependent on the performer’s good health.  When multiplied by four, this situation turns even more delicate.  Thus, fate has been generous with us, not to mention other very relevant issues: the love for what we do, having incredibly supportive families, the affection amongst us four and, last but not least, the sense of humor with which we approach our career and especially our travels, which delight us with plenty of hilarious and absurd situations.

Equally important for our long career has been the support we have received from many institutions which we cannot thank enough.  In particular, we are indebted to Mexico’s National Fund for Culture and Art (FONCA), which has supported us uninterruptedly since 2004 through its *México en Escena* grant. We are also thrilled with our teaching activities at the multiple music schools, universities and conservatories with which we collaborate regularly, as well as the numerous international festivals in which we participate year after year. And, undoubtedly, we have been inspired by our collaborations with brilliant artists, such as Janos Starker, Eduardo Mata, Rudolf Buchbinder, Manuel Barrueco, Itamar Golan and many others.

As our fortieth anniversary approaches, we keep traveling around the world. Our hair has become grayer and scarcer, and our instruments seem to weigh a bit more each day. But our desire to keep performing the marvelous Latin American and mainstream string quartet repertoire, and of course the mutual rapport among ourselves, keep us together, full of energy and forever thinking about our next concert. All this seems like a miracle to us, and we feel incredibly lucky and grateful to have made an entire life out of our Cuarteto Latinoamericano.