serving the composer’s melodic abilities beautifully. Within our little world there has been a longstanding interest in Scarlatti, and to a lesser extent Vivaldi; nowadays I see Rossini as the next potential borrowed hero. The St Cecilia Trio, being talented, apparently interested in arrangement, and Italian to boot, seem to have the pre-requisites for a programme built on these lines. They do their compatriot proud here. I suppose Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue is also a natural choice for such musicians, and once again they provide an entertaining and skilled setting for this music, closing this rewarding CD in a substantial manner.

Chris Kilvington

UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS

SALVATOR: Overture, Rain Song, Mirrors, Channels to the Sea, Echoes Response, Tell Me a Story, I Can’t Stop Thinking About You. LINNELL/FLANSBURGH: Hide Away Folk Family, ROTA: Music for Nono. Tom Salvatori
Big Dreams Studio, Illinois, USA. BDS1995-0

If you can wade your way through the pretentious twaddle related in the sleeve notes by Salvatori, then you will reach the point at which you can relax and try to enjoy this music. Stating that ‘being self-taught, I never thought that the terms “discipline” and “study” should necessarily apply to playing the guitar. I also never aspired to fit the mould of the pretentious player-artiste; whose overbearing focus on form seems to produce little more than sterile interpretations of the works of the Masters in measured calisthenics...’ only serves to get one’s back up and sour one’s opinion as to the music coming up. Infantile remarks made to impress such as ‘playing normally takes place while I’m laying on my back watching the ceiling fan circle above my head’ only reinforces the image one gets of this player.

The recording took place in August 1994 while a thunderstorm was taking place. Rather than call the recording session off, it was decided to go ahead and integrate the thunder and rain noise into the music – and very well it works too, up to a point. Around track six one wishes that the weather would clear up and the incessant downpour would give way to quieter times. On the good side, the weather conditions apparently made the recording engineer’s job easier, as it ‘conveniently masked the tape hiss’ (with an even louder one?)

The music is slow, rarely changing mood from track to track and is the kind of intimate music suited to late night listening. It is pleasant and not unattractive. Of particular note is Mirrors, a lovely haunting composition and easily my favourite track of the programme. Overture is another piece which initially catches the interest but at only 55 seconds (actually 44 seconds – thunder noise taking up the last 10 seconds of the track) it never develops: a pity. The two final pieces are the only two non-original works and keep the mood in similar style to the Salvatori compositions.

Steve Marsh

MASTERS OF FLUTE AND GUITAR


There is some doubt as to the authenticity of the Sonatas in C major, but whether it is by Bach himself or a composer obviously influenced by him, it is still a wonderful piece and certainly worthy of inclusion on this programme.

The Handel work is the third of the Fitzwilliam Sonatas. This is a lovely composition containing excitement and lyricism and very well performed here by this excellent duo.

The evergreen Scheidler Sonata makes an appearance in the first of the two works representing the early nineteenth century. The Linde/Ragossnig duo give an energetic account of the outer movements contrasting sharply with the attractive Romance.

Of all the works by Giuliani, I have always regarded his opus 85 as among his best and most attractive compositions, so the performance on this recording I found to be a little disappointing due to its brevity. The other versions I have of this appealing work are both based on the first edition which includes a third movement, a Scherzo (missing from this recording). There are also many bars omitted from the first and third movements reducing this performance to around 14 minutes as compared with an average 20 minutes. The duo play this Sonata so well it would have been nice to hear it in its original form.

Linde and Ragossnig perform competently together. Their sound is attractive and appealing with some well thought out phrasing. The Giuliani aside, this is a most enjoyable recording.

Steve Marsh

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FERNANDO SOR (Vol. I)

FANTASIES OPUS 4 À 16


FERNANDO SOR (Vol. II)

FANTASIES OPUS 21 À 59


Alain Prevost, Guitar romatique

De Plein Vent – PVC36 CD 9463 and CD4964

Mr Prevost does a good job of presenting an essentially archival recording of the complete Sor Fantasies on his 'Romantic guitar' – a copy of a René Lacoste by Carlos Gonzales Marcos. Performed in chronological order, the fantasies on this two volume set are particularly useful to the historically inclined listener who may be interested in tracing the compositional development of Fernando Sor.

Almost two hours and forty minutes of what is essentially (for Sor) a Theme and Variations form can be tough going for the listener, but discovering the fascinating, lesser known gems embedded in all this material will make it all worthwhile. The minor variation of the Opus 10 in F major (with the sixth string tuned to F), for instance, is one of Sor's more touching moments and the unexpected chromatic language of Opus 16 is some of the strangest Sor I've heard. Two seldom played complete works. Opus 52 and Opus 56, will provide a substantial work for any innovative guitar programmer. Such composition can, and ultimately will, highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the featured composer. Cantabile melodies, idiomatic and effective guitar writing (arpeggios, sixths thirds and harmonics) are some of Sors' strengths. A lack of truly memorable original melodies.
unimaginative and predictable harmonic progressions, and relatively little compositional development from variation to variation are some of the apparent weaknesses.

These performances are very literal interpretations – all repeats are taken. The phrasing is thoughtful and well behaved. the tone is good, and Alain Prevost shows fine musicianship and a flair for the style. There is, however, a distinct unevenness in the quality of performance. Some Fantasias are technically secure and musically astute (Opus 7, 40 and 59 in particular) while others are not as successful and seem less prepared as in Opus 7 where harmonics are unclear and in Op. 10 and 12 which both have missed notes and ornaments. Generally, there is an unsteadiness of rhythm in the faster tempos. It is in the slow to medium tempos that Mr Prevost shows his best playing.

Mr Prevost provides excellent sleeve notes. The general information about Sor, the description regarding the genre ‘fantasy’ and the specific comments about each piece are scholarly and interesting. Bibliography and source material are also provided. The recording quality is questionable due to some unpleasant overtones and a distinctly boomy sound.

I admire Mr Prevost for taking on such an extensive project. I would hope that he will give us another reading of these pieces after further years of reflection and performance. Performers have done this with Bach, Mozart and Haydn, perhaps Fernando Sor deserves no less. 

Peter Argondizza

As well as solos, Lalanne is joined on many tracks by other musicians featuring saxophone, trumpets, trombone, percussion, bass, keyboard and the singer Claudia Ben on the first of a Latin ‘set’.

Muriel Anderson (with whom Lalanne has made a duet CD) makes a guest appearance on two movements from his Symphonie pour un ‘Country Gentleman’. Lalanne is a first-rate guitarist and it is interesting to follow his development as a composer from track to track. I found his style most appealing and thoroughly enjoyed every track of this most entertaining programme.

Steve Marsh

ANGEL BARRIOS - OBRA COMPLETA PARA GUITARRA

Gabriel Estereillas
Opera Tres 1019/20 (Two CDs)

Angel Barrios (1882-1964) is a name which crops up from time to time in the guitar world, but the full extent of his contribution to the repertoire has always been something of an unknown quantity. Now, thanks to this new offering from Opera Tres, we have an unprecedented opportunity to evaluate both the man and his music.

A close friend of Falla, Barrios wrote in a style which lies midway between Torroba and Turina. The important difference is that, whereas Turina drew on flamenco influences in order to create his own unique idiom, Barrios could and frequently did achieve a more than passable imitation of the real thing. I’m drawing no conclusions from this comparison – there’s something to be said for both creative processes. Either way, it is clear from the 44 items presented here that Barrios was an able and consistent purveyor of mainstream Hispanic miniatures.

So how can it be that, despite a distinguished career producing zarzuelas and the like, the guitar music of Barrios has remained obscure? The answer lies in the superb biographical notes by Javier Suarez-Pajares which accompany this recording. According to Suarez-Pajares, the main body of Barrios’ guitar works were only completed during the last few years of his life and, although this is not stated in so many words, the poor chap could scarcely have timed it worse. It was the end of the fifties, and the new generation of guitarists were looking to expand their musical horizons. The established Segovia repertoire was already well-known to them, and the one thing they didn’t need was more of the same. It cannot be mere coincidence that two out of the three A. Barrios entries in the Orphee Database refer to recordings by guitarists born before the First World War.

So is his work worth reviving in 1996? On the whole, I would say it is. Like almost any complete works, the present recording contains some pretty low calibre stuff. There is, however, much to commend. Flor Granadina is an imaginative pastiche of the more lyrical side of flamenco, and the boisterous Bulterias del Maccaco is a delightful example of those sunny Spanish lollipops which ‘serious’ guitar buffs just love to hate. Finest of all is the opening Sueno Juvenil – a charming three movement work which could one day rival the Torroba Sonatina in the popularity stakes.

As for the performance, Estereillas makes a tidy job of what must have been a daunting schedule. My only reservation is the rather laborious approach to the rasgueado passages in such items as Tango Zapateado and Sal y Pimienta – a situation not helped by the leaden sound quality of the recording as a whole. I have to say I was in two minds whether or not to raise these points, because the last thing I want to do is put anyone off what is otherwise an exemplary production. The fact remains, however, that the sound could have been much better.

Otherwise, I have no hesitation in recommending this latest major release from an enterprising company whose track record remains one of excellence.

Paul Foules

LA DANZA

VILLA-LOBOS: Choros No. 1, Suite Popular Brasileira.

Eduardo Fernandez
Decca 443 99-2 CD

Here are almost 80 minutes of the finest South American repertoire performed by Mario Biondo.

Starting with a smooth and perfectly-shaped Choros No. 1, Fernandez sails through this physically demanding programme without putting a finger wrong.