

CLASSICAL GUITAR MARCH 2001

MARCOS DÍAZ, Guitarra

DOWLAND: Preludium; A Nancy; Sir John Smith, his Almain; A Nancy.

RODRIGO: Invocación y Danza

SOR: Grand Solo Op.14.

J.S.BACH: Suite BWV 1007.

BARRIOS: La Catedral y Una limosa por amor de Dios
Opera Tres CD 1033-ope.

Recordings from the label Òpera Tres are high quality affairs, or at least the ones I have come across certainly are. This, with production by John Taylor, certainly falls within the category of being 'excellent'.

This is the first I have heard of Brazilian born Díaz, and it would be a great pity if, it was the last. Often, with recordings of 'quality' the record company or whoever makes the commercial decisions seem to omit the task of deciding upon a title for the CD. Not that it needs a dramatic title but a point of reference is always useful. The title given to the liner notes, then maybe trimmed, '*Cornerstones of the Guitar Repertoire*' would have sufficed.

Díaz's own transcriptions of the Dowland and Bach are, in some places breathtaking. The Dowland 'suite' is played with a marvellous concoction of distinctly Latin persuasion, which actually lifts this wonderfully contrary music into an area that feels just right. It was after all, a time of great change and discovery, and real political unsteadiness. Díaz breathes a sense of crispness into this music, which I found very satisfying.

Invocacion y Danza is indeed a landmark of 20th century guitar music. I cannot think of another piece, except maybe something from Brouwer, that has such dramatic writing conveyed with such economic skill. The tension and darkness is quite beautiful and Díaz hammers the piece in all the right places.

The disc continues in exemplary form, the form being much like a rather conventional but not-able-to-fault-the-taste type of recital. A hint of the Russelian influence maybe. Not a negative thing in the slightest, for Díaz's handling of the different styles is impressive. The Sor, which I find is not one of his greatest compositions, is given a lithe rendering that positively chimes. The occasional fluttering of extraneous nail sound is all that tickled my ear, otherwise it sounded remarkable.

The soulful intensity of the Bach Cello Suite was nicely rounded and not too cluttered, guitarists are becoming aware of the strength of Bach's music without a cloud of ornaments.

Finishing with Barrios's testament to Bach, well the experience of hearing his music in the house of God anyway, Díaz ends a 'recital' of pieces, which really do shape the nature of the beast that is the classical guitar as we now know it. It is not extreme but neither is it safe. 'Quality will out' as they say. Recommended.

Tim Panting