

GUITAR REVIEW

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Music by Dowland, Rodrigo, Sor, Bach and Barrios

Marcos Díaz, guitar

Ópera Tres CD 1033-ope

reviewed by Stephen Griesgraber

With the multitude of recordings submitted to Guitar Review, it is rare that one which presents what is essentially a recital style program proves to be so rewarding. According to the liner notes, Marcos Díaz selected works that would represent ‘cornerstones of the guitar repertory’. Indeed, Dowland Fancies, Rodrigo’s *Invocation y Danza*, Sor’s *Grand Solo*, Bach’s first *Cello Suite*, and Barrio’s *La Catedral* and *Una limosna por amor de Dios*, are some of the guitar’s most frequently performed works. Yet while the repertoire Mr. Díaz has selected could hardly be more standard, his performances are anything but.

The four works by Dowland; Preludium (P98), A Fancy (P5), Sir John Smith, his Almain (P47) and A Fancy (P73), were selected in part for their ability to work together as a sort of ‘suite’. To this end, Mr. Díaz makes a most convincing case. His transcriptions capture the essence of the music with breathtaking purity and his performance offers no indication of technical limitation. With exquisite tone and phrasing both supple and dynamic, Díaz reveals all of the grace and architectural splendour inherent to this music.

Moving into the twentieth century, Díaz proves he is as comfortable with contemporary literature as he is with that of the late Renaissance. His performance of Rodrigo’s *Invocation y Danza* is rife with coloristic contrasts and tasteful rubato. Again, his vast dynamic range contradicts the instrument’s reputation, yielding depth and intensity.

The *Grand Solo Op.14* may be the most famous piece from Fernando Sor’s oeuvre. Díaz’s romantic sensibility and warm tone work to great however, is one of the few places where Mr. Díaz’s performance is lacking. Despite solid and accurate playing, the body of the piece lacks the gallant energy required. Still, this argument finds its foundation in the quality of the performances found earlier on the disc. Without such a precedent one could be less critical as Díaz’s playing is hardly mediocre.

Owing to the relative ease of its Prelude, Bach’s *Cello Suite BWV 1007* is a piece often performed by students and amateurs. It is refreshing to hear this great work interpreted in its entirety by an artist such as Díaz. Many believe that Bach is the one composer whose works need not be embellished by lavish interpretation. Díaz strikes a perfect balance, building and breathing at appropriate moments, yet never obscuring rhythm or counterpoint.

To conclude, Díaz performs two of Barrios’s best works; *La Catedral*, and the tremolo etude *Una limosna por amor de Dios*. As before, the playing is of the highest calibre making disc this a worthwhile addition to any guitar lover’s collection.