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REVIEWS records

THE ESSENTIAL JULIAN BREAM

TÁRREGA: *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*. VILLA-LOBOS: *Etudes 7, 8 and 12*. MALATS: *Serenata*. TURINA: *Fandanguillo*. ROUSSEL: *Segovia Op.29*. WALTON: *Five Bagatelles*. FALLA: *Homenaje; The Miller's Dance*. PUJOL: *Guajira*. RODRIGO: *Invocation and Dance*. BRITTEN: *Courtly Dances from 'Gloriana'*. SANZ: *Galliardas; Canarios*. GUERAU: *Villano; Canario*. J.S. BACH: *Trio Sonata No.1 in E flat BWV 525*. AGUADO: *Rondo in A minor Op.2 No.3*. SOR: *Variations on a Theme of Mozart Op.9*. BOCCHERINI: *Introduction and Fandango*. GIULIANI: *Rossiniana No.1, Op.119*. GRANADOS: *Valses Poeticos*. ARNOLD: *Lento from Guitar Concerto Op.67*.

Julian Bream (guitar, lute and baroque guitar) with **George Malcolm** (harpsichord), the **Julian Bream Consort** and the **Melos Ensemble** conducted by **Malcolm Arnold**

Sony BMG 886972-14422 (2 CDs)

No matter how even-handed the selection process may have been, you can bet your last farthing that a compilation attempting to condense Bream's three decades with RCA onto just two discs will be greeted with howls of derision from those whose favourites have been excluded. Not only did our cricket-loving MG driver turn out a colossal 28 CDs' worth of music during that vintage era, he also managed to do so without releasing a single dud track. Some of the older performances naturally reflect the taste and spirit of their time, but the sheer quality of the playing remains humbly undiminished. And before anyone accuses me of being a self-appointed Bream cheerleader, let it be stated here and now that I'm fully aware of the often alarmingly erratic live appearances that took place during the RCA years and beyond. Despite regularly attending Bream concerts from the mid 70s onwards, I never once witnessed him maintain his best form for a full evening. But when it came to delivering the goods in front of the microphones in Wardour Chapel and elsewhere, his capacity to enchant remains unsurpassed to this day.

So how did our compiler fare? Those harbouring a taste for the Spanish repertoire will have little cause for complaint, with no fewer

than 14 items hailing from that one nation. Add to this Boccherini's exuberant celebration of an overtly Hispanic form and an unacknowledged and highly questionable bias begins to emerge. We can certainly expect much gnashing of teeth at the total absence of English renaissance lute music, despite both Dowland and Campion being mentioned by name in the disappointingly brief programme notes. Britten's Elizabethan vignettes may be inspired and enduring creations in their own right, but the full-on genuine article they most certainly aren't and were never claimed to be. And speaking of Britten, was it really necessary to leave out the *Nocturnal*? This deservedly revered 'variations and theme' was, after all, present in its entirety on a much earlier two LP compilation titled *The Art of the Spanish Guitar*. Some might even take the line that no document of Bream's career could possibly be complete without this cornerstone of 20th century guitar writing, a viewpoint with which it is hard to disagree.

All this makes it rather astonishing to be told that 'for this all-new collection, Julian Bream himself has selected his favourite recordings from his acclaimed RCA Red Seal catalogue'. Needless to say, many of the selections are items the man might reasonably have been expected to pick, that scorching premiere of the Walton *Bagatelles* from 1973 and the three Villa-Lobos *Etudes*, identifiable from the spectacular slurred scales in *No.7* as the definitive 1978 recordings, being obvious examples. But does Bream really rate his relatively brief foray into the baroque guitar higher than all those historic Dowland recordings of the 60s? And what about the smaller but equally significant portfolio of lute songs for which Bream accompanied no less a figure than Peter Pears, more than a decade before he became a Sir?

More puzzling still is Falla's *Homenaje*, which turns out to be the 1962 version from *Popular Classics for Spanish Guitar*. This seems highly dubious for two reasons. Firstly, *Popular Classics* was arguably the only Bream RCA release on which the sound quality was less than satisfactory. Even sessions that took place as far back as 1959, represented here by the Arnold concerto and Roussel's delightful Gallic waltz, are

noticeably superior in this respect. Secondly, the early account of *Homenaje* inevitably contains the Miguel Llobet embellishments. Although many of us retain a certain affection for these harmless period addenda, the fact that Bream omitted them from his 1983 recording strongly suggests he does not. So why would he wish to reintroduce them in 2008?

Classic performances from a great artist, but a far from representative choice of material.

Paul Fowles

MUSIC OF MIKHAIL GLINKA

GLINKA: *Polonaise from 'A Life for the Tsar'*; *Tell Me, Maiden; Kamarinskaia; Lyudmilla's Cavatina; Lyudmilla's Aria from 'Ruslan and Lyudmilla'*; *Fantasia from 'A Life for the Tsar'*; *La Séparation; Ruslan Potpourri; Romance; Cavatina from 'Ruslan and Lyudmilla'*; *Potpourri from 'A Life for the Tsar'*; *Trot de Cavalerie*.

Oleg Timofeyev and **John Schneiderman** (Russian Seven-String Guitars and Quart Guitars) Profil PH 07008 CD

Oleg Timofeyev is a figure whose growing international stature is richly deserved. Timofeyev it was who, together with such other pioneering figures as Matanya Ophee, made the world aware of the extraordinary breadth and diversity of music composed and arranged for the Russian seven-string guitar. To suggest Timofeyev *et al* 'discovered' this blue chip resource is perhaps something of an exaggeration insofar as the Russians undoubtedly knew it was there all along. But the mere fact that such works were virtually unheard of in the west a couple of decades ago surely illustrates the extent of what has subsequently been achieved.

Joining forces with John Schniederman, previously best known for his enterprising catalogue of lute recordings, Timofeyev offers an impressive array of period arrangements in which the influential figure of Count Vladimir Ivanovich Morkov (1801-64) figures prominently. I suspect I'm not alone in harbouring a secret regret that the Russian guitar, despite its radically different tuning system, differs only marginally in tone from its western counterparts and thus lacks the distinctly Slavonic voice that might have

been expected. So the warmest of welcomes to the quart guitar that, in tandem with a standard instrument, was the favoured combination in Morkov's arrangements. The ringing sustain and slightly metallic timbre of this smaller instrument is so evocative of its home territory that you can almost smell the huge pot of borsch simmering on the stove. Nowhere is this more prominent than in the eight minute exploration of *Kamarinskaia*, a wonderfully exhilarating mix of themes that also captured the imagination of Beethoven and others. It is here that the listener becomes fully aware of the individual and collective skills of both players, the strummed chords and quick-fire glissandos in the upper voice being despatched with consummate skill and more than a hint of gentle humour.

Elsewhere, we find contributions from such less familiar arrangers as Petrov and Palevich, not to mention one Oleg Timofeyev. No, it isn't not a hitherto unacknowledged 19th century forebear but surely a latter-day musician with such a comprehensive knowledge of the turf is justified in submitting a couple of fully disclosed 'forgeries' with *La Séparation* and *Trot de Cavalerie*.

Compelling archive material lovingly restored to its former glory.

Paul Fowles

MARIONAS -

the guitar music of Francisco Guerau

GUERAU: *Marionas; Marizapalos; Jacaras de la Costa; Pasacalles por Patilla 8 tono; Gallardas; Pasacalles por 3 tono; Villanos; Folias; Canarias.*

Gordon Ferries (baroque guitar)

Delphian DCD34046

Francisco Guerau's *Poema Harmonico* published in 1694 in Madrid is arguably the finest book of guitar music from the 17th century. It differs markedly from Sanz's publications, which preceded it by 20 years, by stating from the outset that his material was definitely not for beginners and for consisting of extended works rather than the short pieces favoured by Sanz. So we find a total of nine works taking a little over 64 minutes to play, giving you an idea as to how extended some of these pieces actually are.

The pieces themselves vary from the almost introverted sound of the *Pasacalles de Patilla 8 tono*, an extended exercise on variation form, to the more extrovert music found in *Canarios*. Indeed it appears that

Guerau's sets of variations were more extended than most of his contemporaries and do need considerable technical mastery on the baroque guitar to really make them shine.

I am happy to report that Gordon Ferries is absolutely top class in every way. The pieces could not wish for a finer advocate than Ferries. The guitar sound moreover is sublime with the natural echo of the Crichton Collegiate Church in Edinburgh providing the ideal listening experience.

Chris Dumigan

MUSIC FROM FILMS

BONFÁ: *Manha de Carnaval*. FAIN: *Secret Love*. KERN: *The Way You Look Tonight*. E. BERNSTEIN: *To Kill a Mockingbird*. COODER: *The Long Riders*. LENNON/McCARTNEY: *Yesterday*. GOUNOD: *Funeral March of a Marionette*. WARBECK: *Pelagia's Song*. MORRICONE: *The Maestro and Margarita; Once Upon a Time in the West*. ARLEN: *Over the Rainbow*. TRAD: *The Water is Wide; Wild Mountain Thyme; Blue Bell; Jump in the Line*.

Tom Ball

Dog Boy Records Dog Boy 05

There is no doubt that Tom Ball is a quite exceptional player as this recording proves. He does, however, stretch the boundaries a little as this album is recorded using a 1936 Gibson Steel String, which is beyond the normal remit of our magazine. That said, the playing is of such a standard and the CD so enjoyable that I see no harm in extolling its many virtues in these pages, especially as he treats the movie themes in such a classical manner for much of the time.

His fingers certainly fly around his instrument in a masterly fashion; just witness the ragtime arrangement he gives Jerome Kern's *The Way You Look Tonight*, or the emotive qualities of his fine arrangement of the traditional *The Water Is Wide*. Ry Cooder's theme from *The Long Riders* is beautifully caught, and is a mixture of the slow and haunting mixed in with sudden bursts of high energy. Lovely! Calamity Jane's ballad tune *Secret Love* with its evocative use of the guitar is another highlight, but to be fair there are simply no downers on this album, for every arrangement is class.

So, this is a CD to wallow in and to sit back and marvel at Ball's dexterity and imaginative arranging; if it is not played on our classical nylon guitar, so what? Good music is good

music whatever the method of performing it is! Give it a chance; I think you will like what you find.

Chris Dumigan

ROMANZA ANDALUZA FOR FLUTE AND GUITAR

SARASATE: *Romanza Andaluza*. PESSARD: *Andalouse*. PUJOL: *Suite Buenos Aires; Dos Aires Candomberos*. RODRIGO: *Aria Antiqua; Serenata al Alba del Dia*. GONZALEZ: *Danza de los Amantes Efimeros*. GRANADOS: *Danses Espagnoles nos 4, 10 and 11*.

Laurel Zucker (flute), **Mark Delpriora** (gtr)

Cantilena Records 66023-2

This is the third pairing on disc of American flautist Laurel Zucker and guitarist Mark Delpriora. (Zucker has also recorded with guitarist Richard Savino.)

Almost from the first notes, you feel this is going to be a terrific disc, and so it turns out. Both players are superb; but they are also genuine duo, rather than virtuosos who happen to be performing together. This is shown in their interaction, and the precision of their ensemble. They sound as though they are thoroughly enjoying the music, and the enjoyment spread to the listener.

The music is a mixture of the familiar and unfamiliar. The Granados *Danses Espagnoles* represent the familiar. Among the unfamiliar, are the two Rodrigo items. Given Rodrigo's status in the guitar world, you might imagine that his guitar output had been thoroughly investigated by performers, but the two chamber pieces are not widely known. The *Aria Antiqua* (which also exists for flute and piano) is a short lyrical piece, evocative of a lost past. The *Serenata al Alba del Dia*, in two movements, is more astringent, with sudden alternations of mood in the first movement, and a perky, fiesta-like feel in the second.

The highlights of the disc are the pieces by Maximo Diego Pujol. These characterful pieces are immediately appealing and deserve to become classics of the guitar and flute repertoire.

Allan Clive Jones

ROMANCERO GITANO

CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO: *Romancero Gitano*. PIAZOLLA: *Jacinto Chiclana; La Muerte de Angel*. GOLDMANN: *Hava Nageela*. ANON.: *Tourdion Eli, Eli, Lamna Sabacthani*. MOORE: *An Irish Blessing*.