

HOMAGE TO VILLA-LOBOS

Guitar Music for Five Fingers

DEBUSSY: *Dr Gradus ad Parnassum; La puerta del vino.* POSTLEWATE: *Homage to Villa-Lobos; Variations on a theme of Prokofiev; Improvisation on Green Dolphin Street.* VILLA-LOBOS: *Prelude no.2.* MAGUIÑA: *José María.* BRAVO DE RUEDA: *Virgenes del Sol.* SOR: *Study in E minor; Study in A major.* BARRIOS: *Una limosna por el amor de Dio.* MORENO TORROBA: *from Sonatina in A Major: Allegro.*

Charles Postlewate

Prism 9904 (Mel Bay 98711CD)

For once it is the subtitle, Guitar Music for Five Fingers, that the guitarist should concentrate on. There are places in the guitar music of Villa-Lobos where the 5th finger could be used, but Segovia and other guitarists since have always managed pretty well without it. The story goes that when Segovia explained to Villa-Lobos that the little finger was not used in classical guitar, the Brazilian composer replied "Then cut it off!"

Charles Postlewate has worked on his little finger for many years, and this remarkable CD is convincing evidence that he is on to something important, possibly of seminal significance. He has gone a long, long way and it has taken him many years of tracking and backtracking; but anyone willing to follow in his footsteps will have the benefit of his acquired knowledge and consequently should be able to achieve results in far less time.

Is this innovation bound to take root and thrive? Yes, if the example of the pre-Bach keyboard thumb is anything to go by. There came a time when keyboard players began to see the absurdity of not using all the tools that nature had given them, and set to work to make them work. No doubt there will be many teachers who will point out the impossibilities, if not the difficulties, of using the 5th finger, but I am an optimist. One reason for my optimism is that the finger in question, though the smallest, is by no means the weakest. That distinction belongs to the ring finger, which guitarists have elevated into the position of Melody Player in Chief - a heavy burden to bear for a finger not so well equipped as

its neighbours. Then there are the advantages of playing a 5-note chord, to say nothing of other benefits in arpeggio and tremolo playing.

If you have a little finger whose tip barely gets past the 1st joint of the ring finger, it's going to be more difficult, but it would on the piano too. I hope that adventurous spirits will at least give it a trial and see if the results are encouraging enough for further and more intensive study.

Charles Postlewate's example, in both argument and performance, presents a compelling case. His own *Variations on a theme of Prokofiev* and *Improvisation on Green Dolphin Street* together make an excellent example of what can be achieved with this extended technique. And of course he is justified in reminding us that the great Fernando Sor flourished at a time when the ring finger was only just beginning to be added to standard technique, and even argued against its use.

The stage is set for an argument to run parallel with the ongoing strings debate. While we make up our minds whether or not to increase the number of strings from six, we can perhaps decide at the same time on the number of fingers we are going to use to play them with.

Colin Cooper

GUITARREO

Musiche rioplatensi

ALBERTO GINASTERA: *Sonata op.47.* CARLOS PEDRELL: *Danzas de las tres princesas cautivas; Al atardecer en los jardines de Ariaia; Improvisación; Trois pièces.* GILARDO GILARDI: *Serie Argentina.* GUIDO SANTÓRSOLA: *Sonata No.4 (Italiana) Sonoridades.*

Antonio Rugolo

Stradivarius STR 33686

I remember Antonio Rugolo winning the 1st Isernia competition in 2000, in a convincing performance. That same year he won a second prize in Gargnano. Another first followed a year later in Savona. Advanced studies with Frédéric Zigante and Oscar Ghiglia complete the picture of a young guitarist of ability and excellent credentials.

His Ginastera, one more for the already large list of recordings, is

notable for its clarity. There is a touch of deliberation here and there, in the prolonged 'squeak' for instance, the length of an opening door. But the Scherzo bounds along swiftly and easily, though great speed is not an issue. The Canto is exceptionally coherent and thoughtful; seldom has it sounded so poetic, and I liked it very much. A properly rhythmical Finale sets the seal on a fine performance.

Carlos Pedrell (1878-1941), like Ginastera a Uruguayan but a generation older, was a relative of the musicologist Felipe Pedrell. He wrote a number of operas, ballets and orchestral works, but his guitar output totalled less than half an hour. Antonio Rugolo has recorded it all here. *Danzas de las tres princesas cautivas* (Dances of the three captive princesses, based on a story by Washington Irving) is a highly original piece of music.

Gilardo Gilardi (1889-1963) was from Argentina and wrote operas, string quartets and music for piano and for violin. His three pieces have traditional elements that every listener aware of the work of Morel and Cardoso will recognise.

Guido Santórsola was born in Italy but moved with his family to Brazil when he was four, settling eventually in Uruguay. Composed in 1977, a year after Ginastera's great work, his Italianate *Sonata no.4* for guitar is a work of power and rhythm, with a slow movement of lyrical beauty, the whole making what can only be an important contribution to contemporary guitar literature. I cannot remember hearing it before; it is my loss. I can only hope that the exposure given to it in this compelling recording by Antonio Rugolo will do something to get it into the kind of circulation its merits deserve.

Apart from the Ginastera work, everything on this CD is unfamiliar; yet it is good music. Not for the first time, it is clear that guitarists' habitual caution in taking new works into their repertoire gives a totally false impression of what is available. With more persuasive performances such as Rugolo's, this music could easily become standard repertoire.

Colin Cooper