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DEAR READER,

A BRILLIANT CLASSIC FROM SARDINIA

The great Paraguayan composer Agustín Barrios Mangoré (1885-1944) has been for many years one of my favorite classical guitar composers. John Williams' CD from 1995 *'The Great Paraguayan'* containing 17 major pieces and David Russel's CD also from 1995 *'Music of Barrios'* containing 21 major pieces have been a constant companion at home or in the car. Although these recordings were fully dedicated to Barrios, and despite their great artistic value, they represent only a limited selection of Barrios' rich musical output. NAXOS produced three CDs in the first decade of the current century, featuring Antigoni Goni on volume 1 (2001), Enno Voorhorst on volume 2 (2003) and Jeffrey McFadden on volume 3 (2007). These three CDs together cover approximately half of Barrios' oeuvre.

As I took up classical guitar playing as an amateur musician some time ago, my interest in Barrios grew accordingly and I was thrilled to find an updated and definitive edition of Barrios' classical guitar output, published by MelBay in 2003 and entitled *'The Complete Works of Agustín Barrios Mangoré'*, in two volumes. Its author is Richard "Rico" Stover, who spent several decades researching Barrios' oeuvre and legacy, being now a leading authority on the life and work of this great composer (his other book, entitled *'Six Silver Moonbeams'* published by Guitar Solo Publications in 1992 is an invaluable source of information on the guitarist composer's life and work). Next to the scores of all works currently known, this edition is richly illustrated with period photographs, concert programs and Barrios' own drawings. Volume 2 contains also a CD on which 21 historical recordings from Barrios himself are compiled, constituting a real treasure. As John Williams rightly put it: *"With the recordings you are 100% certain that you are getting the real thing—Barrios."*

I was then wondering if it were possible to acquire the recordings of Barrios' complete oeuvre. And behold, it is possible! By searching I came across the name of Cristiano Porqueddu, who recorded in 2009 and 2010, in two churches in Nuoro, Sardinia, every solo guitar piece of Barrios. The work was released in 2010 on 6 CDs by Brilliant Classics, a record company located in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands; the notes to every piece were written by Richard "Rico" Stover. After listening to these CDs I was thrilled not only by the fact that now every guitar solo piece of Barrios is available on CD (in several cases the recording is a world première) but also by the style of the artist. The way Cristiano Porqueddu plays I can generally describe as 'Ur'-mode, with extreme power, but also with great thoughtfulness. My immediate impression was that at last I have found a classical guitarist who takes his role seriously. Many other guitar performers record CDs with 'Top Ten' pieces from multiple composers, definitely all of them recorded a zillion times before, in order to secure success and a guaranteed amount of sales. Cristiano Porqueddu proves that there exists another way. With humility and much labor, the empty spots of classical recordings can be filled in. As a reviewer rightly put it: *"A true milestone in the history of guitar recordings!"*

According to his biography he was born in 1975 in Nuoro, Sardinia, and began studying classical guitar at the age of seven under the tutelage of his father. Having obtained his diploma at the

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conservatoire of music, he attended different Master and specialist courses all over Europe to study the technique and interpretation of Baroque and 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century music in more depth. He also went on to win numerous awards and international competitions and eventually came to know the guitarist-composer Angelo Gilardino. Having struck a working relationship with the composer from Vercelli, between 1997 and 2002 and under his guidance he attended the Accademia Superiore di Musica "L. Perosi" in Biella where he obtained the Academic Diploma with Excellence and where he completed his additional 'virtuosity' year in 2003. He gives concerts around Europe and the US at important international festivals, as a soloist and in performances of chamber music and orchestral pieces. He sits on International Juries for Guitar contests and often holds his own specialization courses. Since 2008, the major Dutch label, Brilliant Classics, has distributed his recordings in over 40 countries. He lives in Nuoro, holds a professorship in classical guitar at the city's Scuola Civica, and is the Artistic Director of the Agustín Barrios International Guitar Competition as well as the Associazione Musicare, which has been staging festivals and events dedicated to the guitar since 1993.

Enchanted by the complete Barrios CD set, I have looked at the other CD recordings of Cristiano Porqueddu released by Brilliant Classics. My appreciation grew with every CD I listened to.

In 2010 the CD *'Ferdinando SOR – 20 studies for guitar'* was released. This again shows the great humility and artistic devotion of Cristiano Porqueddu because the great popularity of Sor's studies notwithstanding, its commercial feasibility is still risky. Ferdinando Sor (1778-1839) was one of the greatest guitarists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and also a brilliant composer and pedagogue. His *'Method for the Spanish Guitar'* is still a basic book for guitar students. Next to that he composed a large amount of studies for guitar students, for all levels. In fact these studies, without exception, are gems, because in them a great pedagogical spirit is combined with equally great aesthetic value. To this day Sor's studies form an integral part of a guitarist's education. Their popularity is shown by the numerous edited publications, e.g. David Grimes (MelBay – 1994) or Brian Jeffery (Tecla – 1996). However, their great value was revealed in a much earlier period, by the greatest guitarist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Andrés Segovia. He selected 20 studies that he liked most, altered them and published them in 1945. From that date on the Segovia version was for guitarists the canonic version. Nevertheless, not too many recordings were made of them. In a later edition of Segovia's version Paul Henry is performing the pieces on a bonus CD. And David Tanenbaum recorded the studies as well on his *Estudios* double CD released in 2000 (he wrote also a commentary booklet to these 20 studies published by Guitar Solo Publications in 1991). But the need for an Urtext still was looming. Thanks to Angelo Gilardino, that work has been performed and a magnificent publication was released in 2007 by Edizioni Curci in which an Urtext was painstakingly created and published together with Segovia's version, complemented by an introduction by Angelo Gilardino in which the historical context of Segovia's revision is presented. Cristiano Porqueddu used this Urtext version when recording Sor's 20 studies. The result is breathtaking. To this day I am listening to this CD at least twice a week.

Three other recordings are related to Angelo Gilardino (b. 1941), mentor and friend of Cristiano Porqueddu. First to be mentioned is the 5 CD set: *'TRASCENDENTIA – Complete studies for guitar'* released in 2009. This box covers Angelo Gilardino's five volumes of studies (12 studies in each volume). Written between 1981 and 1988, officially called *'Studi di virtuosità e di trascendenza'*, the studies form a continuous chain of experimentation of musical ideas. The liner notes are extraordinary; they offer on 30

pages a detailed dissection of the historical and musical significance of each of the 60 pieces. Recorded in the Chiesa della Solitudine in Nuoro, these 5 CDs are an ideal companion when the listener is ready to embark on a transcendental journey.

The next CD recording related to Angelo Gilardino is the '*Concerto di Oliena*'; released in 2010 it is the third concert written by Angelo Gilardino for guitar and orchestra and in this case dedicated to Cristiano Porqueddu. Accompanied by the Sardinia Chamber Orchestra, it is a world première recording. It is a piece of work that reflects the latest artistic development of the composer, inspired by a gaze on the town and surroundings of Oliena, Sardinia. It is a good idea to get accustomed to the transcendent studies first, before listening to this concert.

The third recording related to Angelo Gilardino is the complete '*20 Studi Facili*' ('*20 Easy Studies*'), released in 2012. The liner notes are written by the composer himself; first the general framework of these studies is given, those areas in which these studies differ from those of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and next they provide a short introduction to every individual study. The scores are available from Edizioni Curci; hence these studies form a great source for every aspiring guitar student and supporting teacher.

Last but not least to be mentioned is the 3 CD set '*Novecento Guitar Preludes*', released in 2012. Again, Cristiano Porqueddu proves to be a guitarist, who is devoted to the creation of recordings that require much devotion and humility. This CD set contains preludes of Boris Asafyev (1884-1949), Manuel María Ponce (1882-1948), Henk Badings (1907-1987), Henri Sauguet (1901-1987), and Ferenc Farkas (1905-2000). On these CDs we find a wide variety of music pieces that are disparate in form, duration, and character. In case of Asafyev, Badings and Sauguet this CD set is a world première recording. Taken all these pieces together the preludes present a clear concentration of musical ideas.

According to the website of Cristiano Porqueddu two other CDs of him will be released by Brilliant Classics in 2014: '*Novecento Guitar Sonatas*' (4-5 CD set) and '*Angelo Gilardino – Guitar Concertos*'. The critics related to him as "... a point of reference for the new generation of guitarists...". I can only fully agree with this assessment. I have already marked Cristiano Porqueddu as a point of reference and I can hardly wait to listen to his new recordings next year, next to the existing ones. It is a real enrichment for all of us that the Dutch label Brilliant Classics has teamed up with such a brilliant classic from Sardinia.

Flórián Farkas

Editor-in-Chief

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