



Cronomias De Montevideo - Hommage a Abel Carlevaro

Janez Gregorič (guitar)

rec. 2002-2011, Konzerthaus Klagenfurt; 2010/2013, Kulturni dom
Bleiburg/Pliberk, Carinthia, Austria

GRAMOLA 99095 [71:42 + 78:36]

To avoid the turmoils of the Spanish Civil War, Andres Segovia, his second wife, Paquita Madriguera, and her three children fled from Barcelona to Italy. Via the USA, Andres and Paquita finally arrived in their new home, Montevideo, Uruguay, on April 30th 1937. In May of that same year Segovia received a young man in the hotel where he was temporarily residing. Abel Carlevaro was already a proficient player. He played several of Segovia's arrangements, including the Chaconne by J.S. Bach. He obviously impressed Segovia because the Maestro offered to give him private lessons, and these continued for several years. Carlevaro was the first student that Segovia publically promoted in concert.

From that beginning Abel Carlevaro became one of the most eminent figures in 20th century guitar circles. He developed a new, unique technical approach to playing the guitar and very successfully composed for the instrument; the volume was not large but the quality impressive. His creative urges then turned to the construction of the concert guitar, and in conjunction with luthier Manuel Contreras he produced a significantly distinctive instrument, internally and externally. The original Carlevaro guitar had no upper bout and no sound hole; the sound radiated from a channel which runs around the periphery of the sound board.

In searching for an instrument that conformed to his ideas about sound, Erlbach-based luthier Eberhard Kreul was motivated to build a Carlevaro design guitar in 1995. He then moved ahead with innovation, and in 2005 produced another Carlevaro guitar with a sound hole below the fingerboard. Three years later the design was again modified to include angled frets, sound holes and a double bottom. The different string lengths make this instrument particularly suitable for chamber music. These three different models of the Carlevaro guitar are all played on the review recording. While not specified, each guitar can be identified by correlating its year of construction with the track listings.

The current presentation of two CDs is a homage to Carlevaro on the occasion of the centenary of his birth by student Janez Gregorič. The compositions thematically centre on Montevideo, and include original works by Carlevaro, Agustin Barrios and Gregorič. That said, *Bottle Post* by Gregorič was inspired by the work of ceramicist Gerhild Tschachler-Nagy: "The bow of a ship, a sheet of paper with writing on it, and a setting sun stand for migration, for far-away lands and communication". It is representative of the composer's advancement at a particular time in his career, and included for this reason rather than being specifically related to Montevideo.

Janez Gregorič was born in 1965 in Klagenfurt, Austria and studied the guitar with Professor Martin Mysliveček at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, from which he graduated *summa cum laude* in 1994. From 1998-2001 he studied with Abel Carlevaro in Montevideo. Since 1998 he has regularly given lectures at international guitar seminars. He is also the author of the guitar school *Alles Claro* in which he follows the didactic path of his teacher Carlevaro. Gregorič has now become internationally recognized as a successful teacher.

One of the fascinating aspects of Carlevaro's approach to guitar technique is the elimination of the traditional string squeaks and whistles. These are characteristic of the guitar and present in all recordings unless minimised/removed by electronic editing. A refined technique limits them, but they are to be found even in the recordings of Segovia. Some listeners disregard these sounds while others refuse to listen to recordings of guitar music because of this potentially distracting factor. In reality they are akin to the clicking sounds that wind instruments make or the sound that a cello bow makes, particularly in unaccompanied works. Close arrangement of microphones makes these sounds, often inaudible in live performance, much more conspicuous. If guitar string whistle is anathema to you then the total absence of it in this recording should be attractive.

The thematic programme is well chosen and equally well played. The approach is more sure-footed than adventurous; the style of playing we have learned to expect from those players who win international guitar competitions. Given the advanced recording techniques available, it is difficult to judge the relative sound quality of the Carlevaro guitars used in the recording. Generally the sound is well balanced between treble and bass and devoid of the nasal sound so common in lattice-braced instruments used by many of today's players. On the subject of bass notes, in some tracks these, as executed by thumb, sound rather too 'naily.' In a generation of musicians hungry for 'big' sound without compromise to tonal quality, one can only assume that if Carlevaro guitars were uniquely superior in these characteristics they would be universally accepted and used.

One final point related to track listings: at the end of disc two there is an unidentified track. This is a spoken message, in Spanish, from Abel Carlevaro. The English translation can be found on page 21 of the liner notes.

For aficionados of the classical guitar this is an important initiative and contribution. It will be valued by students and those who appreciate the finer qualities of the guitar played by a capable and creative exponent.

Zane Turner