Laureate Series • Guitar

Srdjan Bulat
First Prize
2011 Tárrega International Guitar Competition, Benecasim

GUITAR RECITAL
RODRIGO
REGONDI
TÁRREGA
ŠULEK
ALBÉNIZ
BRITTEN
Srdjan Bulat: Guitar Recital

This selection moves from high romanticism through neo-romanticism to the centrepiece of the twentieth-century guitar, Britten’s progressive and revolutionary Nocturnal after John Dowland. Op. 70. Spain’s impressionism is represented by a transcription of Albéniz’s exquisite descriptive miniature while Rodrigo’s art creates a poem in sound dedicated to the gardens of the Alhambra Palace in Granada. The sonorities of the guitar unite these diverse musical concepts with no sense of incongruity or paradox. The instrument’s versatile voice encompasses moods from any nation while its lyrical songs and variety of tone colours evoke every shade of feeling from the melancholy to the festive.

Joaquin Rodrigo is acknowledged as one of the great Spanish composers of the twentieth century. Though blind from infancy he wrote almost two hundred works, including orchestral, choral and ballet music, many concertos, a host of songs, and a quantity of instrumental music. The composer’s contribution to the guitar is now appreciated as one of the central pillars of the concert repertoire. Over the years Rodrigo explored the Spanish nature of the guitar, responding to the distinguished history of plucked instruments going back to the sixteenth century. His achievement remains a significant aspect of the guitar’s development since the 1940s.

Siegfried Behrend. The Generalife overlooks the city. The composition is in two parts, a gentle introduction with fast scale passages, some of the latter being delightfully chromatic. A middle section offers contrasting arpeggio patterns and sweet melodic lines over Albéniz’s first basses before a return to the first section followed by a brief coda.

Francisco Tárrega was a leading personality of immense significance in the guitar’s development over the last two centuries, in terms of technical innovations, compositions, and the art of arrangement. His advocacy of new concepts of guitar construction embodied in the work of Antonio de Torres (1817–1892), the great Spanish luther, has proved influential right up to the present time. Working with the Torres type of instrument (with its five string quartets, several concertos, and a quantity of vocal and chamber music, as well as solo instrumental works. The Troubadours Three, composed for the Croatian guitarist Darko Petrinjak, offers three movements written in a lyrical neo-romantic style. The first, Melancholy, contains elements of Spanish influence as well as quotations from Bach, along with gently introspective sections. Sonnet begins in a song like mood which leads on to a more playful, skittish episode. Towards the end a new theme emerges with light accompaniment. The final bars use subtle harmonics in a calm resolution. Celebration begins with vigorous strummed chords which give way to quieter explorative moments. But ultimately the festive mood, reminiscent of the last movement of Manuel Ponce’s Sonatina Meridional, triumphs.

Isaac Albéniz was born in Campprodon, in northern Spain, spending much of his childhood in Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. Yet though Catalan by birth his celebration of the great cities of Andalusia remains a perennial evocation of Iberian romanticism. Albéniz composed mainly for piano, writing nothing directly for the guitar, but ever since Tárrega first transcribed some of his pieces, Albéniz’s music has remained at the very heart of the guitar repertoire. Malorca was composed in London in 1890 and the score was published there the following year. The piece is in the genre of the barcarolle, and portrays the beautiful island in the maritime and pastoral serenity that Chopin encountered when he spent some time there. Completed in 1963, Nocturnal after John Dowland, Op. 70, by Benjamin Britten, the greatest English composer of the mid-twentieth century, was soon acknowledged as one of the most significant and original compositions in the history of the guitar. Dedicated to Julian Bream, it unites the contemporary world of dissonance and strangeness with the Elizabethan concepts of deep emotion and melancholy. Though written for the guitar, at Julian Bream’s request, the work also pays homage to the dedicatee’s affinities with the lute of John Dowland whose music Bream took to international
audiences, demonstrating its eternal depths, uniqueness, and relevance.

The composition is a set of eight variations with the theme, Dowland’s song Come, heavy Sleep appearing at the very end:

Come, heavy Sleep, the image of true Death,
And close up these my weary weeping eyes,
Whose spring of tears doth stop my vital breath,
And tears my heart with Sorrow’s sigh-swoll’n cries.

Come and possess my tired thought-worn soul,
That living dies, till thou on me be stole.

The Nocturnal is an exploration of the many moods of sleep, passing through states of intense agitation and disquiet, leading towards the final statement of melancholy serenity which resolves all tensions.

The work was first performed by Julian Bream at Aldeburgh on 12th June 1964, and recorded soon afterwards, bringing about a virtual re-orientation of the guitar’s repertoire and expressive capabilities.

This selection ranges from the romanticism of Francisco Tárrega, the Spanish impressionism of Albéniz’s Mallorca and the neo-romanticism of the contemporary Croatian composer, Stjepan Šulek, to Rodrigo’s masterly evocation of the gardens of the Alhambra Palace in Granada and Britten’s revolutionary Nocturnal after John Dowland. Croatian guitarist Srdjan Bulat has won numerous prestigious awards, and was winner of the Certamen Tárrega 2011 which included a special award for his performance of the work of Francisco Tárrega.

SRDJAN BULAT
Guitar Recital

Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-99)
1 Junto al Generalife (1955) 5:59
Giulio Regondi (1822-72)
2 Étude No. 8 in G major (c. 1854) 5:46
Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909)
3 Preludio No. 1 (1902) 1:36
4 Endecha (1909) 1:45
5 Oremus (1909) 1:11
6 Rosita – Polka (1903) 1:37
7 Capricho arabe (1902) 6:01
8 Melancholy (1982) 4:45
9 Sonnet (1982) 5:22
10 Celebration (1982) 4:29
Stjepan Šulek (1914-86)
11 The Troubadours Three (1982) 14:36
12 Mallorca (1890) 8:10

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)
(transcr. Yasuo Abe)

Benjamin Britten (1913-76)
14 Celebration (1963) 8:10

Recorded at St John Chrysostom Church, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada, from 15th-17th February, 2012
Producers: Norbert Kraft and Bonnie Silver • Engineer and editor: Norbert Kraft
Booklet Notes: Graham Wade
Publishers: Bote & Bock, Berlin (track 1); Editions Orphée, Inc. (track 2); Chanterelle Verlag (tracks 3-7); Cantus (tracks 8-10); Zen-On Music Co., Ltd. (track 11); Faber & Faber Ltd. (track 12)
Guitar: J. Paleodimopoulos, Thessaloniki, Greece • Cover photograph by Boris Poljicanin

Graham Wade