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FERNANDO SOR MINUETS

Agustín Maruri

(19th century guitar)

EMEC E-069 CD

Performed on a Lacote from 1840, this 35 item agenda presents the various minuets published *en bloc* in *Op.11* and elsewhere, alongside individual movements drawn from such large-scale works as the *Op.22* and *Op.25* sonatas. The question of whether or not this makes for effective programming is open to debate, suffice it to say that many of us would find the prospect of, say, a boxed CD set of *The Complete Bach Courantes* distinctly odd and more than a little daunting.

But in fairness to Maruri, the whole package is unequivocally presented as a historically-motivated 'reference' disc, complete with notes by veteran Sor guru, Brian Jeffery. In a brief but informative essay, Jeffery provides a thumbnail stylistic analysis of the works on offer and does much to unravel the chronological vagaries of the earlier opus numbers. This said, I'm afraid the logic of the following reference to *Gran Solo Op.14* escapes me: 'It is a grand work, long and modulating into remote keys, reminding us of Soler and Scarlatti. Sor was obviously aware of other composers of his time.' Apart from being a somewhat curious parallel to draw in the first place, there's also the small matter of one of the named composers having died two decades before Sor's birth and the other making his exit shortly after the fledgling musician and military campaigner celebrated his fifth birthday. So who exactly are these 'other composers of his time' that Jeffery is invoking? As the legendary Fleet Street journalist Sir John Junor would invariably type in response to his own rhetorical questions, 'I do not know, but I think we should be told...'

The performance is essentially typical of Maruri's considerable recorded output: cautious in tempo and understated in spirit, but essentially competent. Noise from the bass strings seems unduly prominent at the outset but, as often tends to be the case, the ear somehow adjusts to this ongoing impurity with remarkable rapidity.

An ably presented release, but one that appears to be aimed at a very limited market.

Paul Fowles