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FEATURE REVIEW by Jerry Dubins

SEGOVIA *Estudios diarios. Estudio sin luz. For Carl Sandburg. Estudio in E. Estudio-Vals. Estudio para Deli. Macarena. Neblina. Leccion 11; Leccion 12. Tres Preludios en la mayor. Impromptu. Tonadilla. Cinco anécdotas. Once preludios* • Agustín Maruri (gtr) • EMEC 1070 (42:44)

ARPEGGIONE—Original Compositions for Cello and Guitar • Jones & Maruri Cello-Guitar Duo • EMEC 1081/1114 (2 CDs: 113: 40)

SCHUBERT Arpeggione Sonata (arr. A. Maruri). **B. ROMBERG** Divertimento, op.46. **SCHIKER** Variations for Cello and Guitar. **LEGNANI** *Introduction and Variations concertantes* for Cello and Guitar. *Potpourri concertant*. **BOBROWICZ** *Souvenir de la Pologne*. **GATAYES** Duo for Guitar and Cello on “D’un bouquet de romarin”

the Year

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Frank Brickle, Busoni, Pérotin: Ab Nou Cor

Hillary Tann: Here. The Cliffs

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Laura Schwendinger: Collected Works

Luisa Guembes-Buchanan: Beethoven in D, E. T. A. Hoffman Sonatas / Robert Schumann Kreisleriana, Late Beethoven

Melba: Benaud Trio, The Romantic Clarinet, The Virtuoso Piano Music of George Frederick Boyle, The Art of Nance Grant, Arcadia Lost, Elan Ballet Music from Operas of Saint Saëns, RAKHMANINOV: Leslie Howard, WAGNER: Das Rheingold, WAGNER: Die Walküre, WAGNER: Siegfried, WAGNER: Götterdämmerung, FERDINAND HÉROLD: La Somnambule

Michael Antonello: Collected Works

Open Goldberg: Open Goldberg Variations

Peter Halstead: RACHMANINOFF: Moments musicaux: No. 5 in D ♭

Rick VanMatre: Gray Then Blue

L. DE NARVÁEZ *Los seys libros del Delphin de Música* • Agustín Maruri (gtr); Marta Infante (mez) • EMEC 100/101 (2 CDs: 86: 05)

If, like me, you count yourself a lover of the classical guitar, these three albums—five CDs in all—will bring you over four hours' worth of contented listening, as they take you on a fascinating journey through time, back to some of the earliest music known for the instrument. But let me begin with the main featured artist on these discs, Spanish guitarist Agustín Maruri.

Internationally recognized as one of the world's top classical guitar players on today's stage, and a serious researcher and scholar in the field of music for guitar, its historical roots, and development, Maruri has recorded 23 albums since 1990, focusing on forgotten composers and little-known works for the instrument. He has resurrected works by



Andres Segovia Original Compositions (featuring Agustín Maruri on Andrés Segovia's 1962 Hermann Hauser II Guitar)
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The Jones & Maruri cello-guitar duo

Arpeggione
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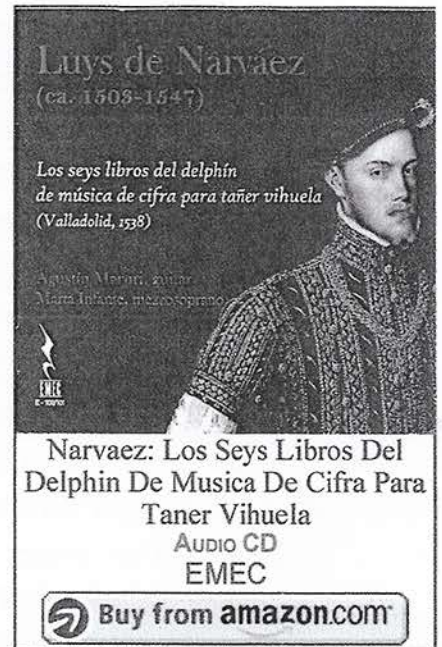
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Adam Falckenhagen, Wenzeslaus Thomas Matiegka, and Leonhard von Call; premiered works by Torroba—*Interludios*—and Francesco Telli—*Serenata*; and has had many contemporary composers—Pedro Sáenz, Jose Maria Sánchez Verdú, Josep Pascual, Erik Marchelie, Manuel Seco, Zhangbing, and Paul Coles, among them—write works for him.



Maruri's concertizing and master classes have taken him to five continents and countries and cities too numerous to name. In 1991, Maruri met British cellist Michael Kevin Jones in Madrid, and together they formed the Jones & Maruri Duo to explore music written for cello and guitar. The second of the three albums headlined above, titled *Arpeggione*, features the Duo in a number of works for that instrumental combination.

In 1999, Maruri was invited by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York to start a series of recordings at the Museum, using the historical instruments collection. Recorded in the Kirtlington Park Room, Maruri pays tribute to his native country Spain by recovering in world-premiere recordings Spanish music from the 19th century unknown until now.

Few music lovers could fail to recognize the name Andrés Segovia. For the first half of the 20th century he was to the guitar what Pablo Casals was to the cello. And both men, celebrated mainly as virtuosos of the first

order on their respective instruments, also put their talents to composing, though neither made a career of it, and most of what they composed took the form of short, encore-type showpieces for their own instruments.

On the first of the above headlined albums, titled *Andrés Segovia: Original Compositions for Guitar*, Maruri gives us what looks to be the lion's share of Segovia's total output. The reason Maruri is able to do this on a single CD is that the longest piece on the disc, seventh of the *Once Preludios* (Eleven Preludes), lasts just under three minutes. Most of the pieces run between one and two minutes, with the shortest, the second of the *Tres Preludios en la mayor* (Three Preludes in A Major), lasting a Webernesque 31 seconds; and even at that, the entire disc times out at just under 43 minutes. Short as they are, however, all 32 pieces are beautifully crafted, classically proportioned, Romantic miniatures.

Lending particular interest to this album, aside from the fact that few of these pieces are currently listed in previous recordings, is that Maruri performs the entire recital on Andrés Segovia's 1962 Hermann Hauser II guitar, an instrument of ravishingly beautiful, seductively mellow tone that is rich in subtle nuances of color. Its chameleon-like character is exploited by Maruri to adapt the timbre of the instrument to each of the pieces. Take, for example, the "Lento malinconica," the third number in the set of *Cinco Anecdotas*, a dreamy, Impressionistic-sounding piece in which Maruri makes the guitar's halting phrases sigh with the most plaintive-sounding *dolente* you can imagine. You may just want to press the replay button on your CD player and listen to this disc over and over again.

I'm sure Agustín Maruri will forgive me if I

point out the obvious contradiction between the title of his second above-headlined album, *Arpeggione—Original Compositions for Cello and Guitar*, and the very first work that leads off the disc, Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata, which, of course, was not written for cello and guitar but for arpeggione and piano. We needn't quibble over the cello, since the arpeggione was consigned to the museum for musical relics almost as soon as it came into being, and today, Schubert's piece is, in fact, most often played on the cello. But here, Maruri has transcribed the piano part for guitar, and I'd be less than honest if I said that the arrangement is ideal. My main problem with it is the unmatched amplitude between the two instruments; Michael Kevin Jones's cello is miked up close and his generous tone often dominates the guitar, so that what we get is a kind of continuo effect instead of the equal duo Schubert probably had in mind.

The rest of the works heard in this two-disc album, however, are indeed original compositions for cello and guitar and are thoroughly engrossing. Bernhard Romberg (1767–1841)—not to be confused with the later Sigmund Romberg of operetta fame—was a noted cellist and technical innovator for the instrument. He is credited with lengthening the cello's fingerboard and flattening out the side of it under the C-string to allow greater clearance for the string to vibrate, and he standardized the number of clefs to three (bass, tenor, and treble) in which cello music is notated today. Romberg is also reported to have snubbed Beethoven's offer to write a cello concerto for him on grounds that he only played his own music. I'm sure that went over well.

Romberg's *Divertimento on Austrian Folksongs*, op. 46, for cello and guitar was

first published in 1829, and it's an unusual piece, to say the least. It sounds more or less of its time and place, hewing close to Hummel, Weber, and some of the other early Romantics. But beginning at 4:06 and continuing through 5:08 are passages for the cello that will make you roll on the floor laughing. They're filled with some of the funniest-sounding glissandos you will ever hear, as the cello repeatedly skates up to a high harmonic on the A-string. It's really quite hilarious.

Antoine Schiker (1790–1850) is a composer apparently so obscure he doesn't even have a biographical Wikipedia entry, but imslp.org gives the publication date of the composer's 10 Variations for Cello and Guitar as c. 1806. The album's enclosed program note confirms Schiker's virtual anonymity by saying, "Little or nothing is known of his life and work," and that's all we're told about him. We don't even know if the variations are based on a theme of Schiker's own invention or if he borrowed it from another composer's work.

By no means is Schiker's 10 Variations an insubstantial piece; it runs for a full 20 minutes. But if Romberg's work sounded more or less contemporary with its time and place, Schiker's work sounds rather retro for 1806, more like something by a fetal Mozart. Still, I would guess from listening to the piece that Schiker had to have been a very proficient cellist (and guitarist too), for he spends much effort exploring the upper reaches of the cello, taking it up to notes that are practically off the end of the fingerboard. Jones, who is a technically adept player, really proves his mettle in this work.

Disc two of this album introduces us to Luigi Legnani (1790–1877). He was an Italian guitarist, composer, and singer, whose vocal

talents were apparently cultivated enough to land him roles in operas by Rossini and Donizetti; but the trade by which he became best known later in life was that of luthier of violins and guitars. His “Legnani model” guitar was popular with players through the middle of the 19th century. As a point of historical reference, Legnani was an acquaintance of Johann Georg Stauffer in Vienna, the one and the same Stauffer who masterminded the cello-guitar hybrid known as the arpeggione.

Legnani, the composer, was fairly prolific, leaving a catalog of around 250 works, best known of which was his 36 Caprices for Solo Guitar, most likely modeled after Paganini’s 24 Caprices for Solo Violin. Legnani is represented by two works on the program, the *Introduction and Variations concertantes* and the *Potpourri concertant*. Unfortunately, the album note provides no real information about either of these pieces, telling us only that they are little known and published only recently. This would seem to suggest that these works have not been previously recorded, but they’re not claimed to be world premiere recordings, so I can’t say whether this is their first time on disc or not. Both works are of the highly popular “brilliant” salon style of the day which one encounters in the duo works of composers such as Chopin, Spohr, and Paganini, in which potpourris and variations were spun out over opera tunes by Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti, and others.

The remaining two works on disc two are by composers practically as anonymous as Schiker—Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz (1805–1881) and Guillaume-Pierre-Antoine Gatayes (1774–1846). At least Bobrowicz has a biographical entry on Wikipedia. A Polish virtuoso guitarist, he was dubbed the “Chopin

of the guitar.” He also worked as an editor for the publishing firm of Breitkopf & Härtel, and later founded his own publishing firm which published hundreds of titles, mainly in Polish. At a very young age, Bobrowicz was sent to study in Vienna until he turned 15, and it was during this time that he took guitar lessons from the famous guitarist Mauro Giuliani. Bobrowicz’s interests as an author and linguist may have taken precedence over his dedication to music, for as a composer his output numbers no more than 40 works, almost all of which take the form of variations on popular opera arias of the day. Though his work on this disc is titled *Souvenir de la Pologne*, it is, like the other pieces on the program, a virtuosic salon-type piece that is variations-based.

An Internet search on Gatayes yielded even less information than it did on Bobrowicz. I had to rely on the booklet note to learn that Gatayes was the illegitimate son of Prince Conti (whoever he was) and that Gatayes studied for an ecclesiastical career. His main claim to fame seems to be his authorship of the first guitar method to be written by a Frenchman. As a throwaway line, the note tells us that Gatayes “also composed trio, duos, and other chamber works with guitar.”

If I’m being a bit critical of the dearth of information provided by the album notes, it’s only because these are all very enjoyable works, superbly written by composers who were obviously highly talented performing virtuoso cellists and guitarists, and inquiring minds would like to know more about them and their music. I cannot be critical of the playing, however, by cellist Michael Kevin Jones and guitarist Agustín Maruri, whose delectable performances are an absolute delight to the ear. The repertoire of original works for cello and guitar, I’m sure, must be

quite limited, as is evidenced by Maruri and Jones digging as deeply as it appears they have in order to unearth these rare gems. This is definitely a disc for all who can appreciate this unusual but lovely sounding combination of instruments.

In some ways, the third of the three headlined albums may be the most interesting, for it's the one that looks back the farthest into the antiquity of the guitar. Titled *Los seis libros del Delphin de Música de cifra para tañer vihuela*, which I would translate as "The Six Books of the Delphin's Tablature Music for Vihuela," the two discs feature both works presumed to be originally composed for guitar by Luys de Narváez (c. 1503–1547) as well as transcriptions by him of works by Nicolas Gombert, Josquin des Prez, Jean Richafort, and other Renaissance composers.

If the album notes to the *Arpeggione* album are sketchy and not as helpful as one might wish, the booklet notes to this third album, authored by Antonio Martin Moreno, professor of music history at the University of Granada, more than compensate in the opposite direction. What we're given is a virtual treatise on 16th-century Spain, its courts, its sovereigns, its politics, and its composers, musicians, and musical instruments. By the time you finish reading the good professor's dissertation, you will be thoroughly versed in Spain's Renaissance history.

To distill it down to its basics, Luys de Narváez was born in Granada. The first official references to him date from 1526, placing him in the household of Francisco de los Cobos y Molina, a patron of the arts and secretary of State for the kingdom Castile under Charles V. By 1548, Narváez turns up as a musician in the Royal Chapel, where he

taught music to choristers and worked side by side with the well-known keyboard composer Antonio de Cabezón. The following is excerpted from Wikipedia's entry on Luys de Narváez. It's the same information given in Antonio Martin Moreno's album notes, but in much more condensed form:

“Narváez's most important surviving music is contained in *Los seys libros del delphín* (Valladolid, 1538), a six-volume collection of music for vihuela. The collection begins with a preface, in which the composer dedicates the work to his patron, Francisco de los Cobos. A short text on notation follows (Narváez uses a slightly modified version of Italian lute tablature), then the table of contents and an errata sheet.

“The first two volumes contain fourteen polyphonic fantasias, modelled after Italian pieces of the same kind. They are characterized by smooth, competent imitative writing in two and three voices. Occasionally Narváez resorts to using short motifs with identical left hand fingerings, probably reflecting the techniques he used for improvisation. The third volume of the collection is dedicated exclusively to intabulations of works by other composers: selections from Masses by Josquin des Prez, the famous song *Mille Regretz* by the same composer (subtitled “La canción del Emperador,” probably suggesting that it was Charles V's favorite song), and two songs by Nicolas Gombert and one by Jean Richafort. The second of the two songs is wrongly attributed to Gombert; it is a work of Jean Courtois. The intabulations are of high quality, but without any particular distinguishing features.

“Volumes four to six have mixed content. The most important pieces are Narváez's six

diferencias, or variations, the earliest known examples of the form. Narváez's models include both sacred (volume 4 only) and secular melodies, and the music stands out by virtue of a very wide palette of techniques. Apart from melodic variations, there are also two sets on ostinato harmonies: *Guardame las vacas* and *Conde claros*, both in volume six. The remaining music comprises villancicos, romances, and a *Baxa de contrapunto*.

“With the exception of two motets, no other music by Narváez survives, although he must have composed a substantial amount of vocal music.”

Agustín Maruri, joined by mezzo-soprano Marta Infante in the vocal numbers, gives us all six volumes, complete, of this important milestone on the road to accompanied monody and solo instrumental music for vihuela, lute, and guitar. One easily succumbs to the spellbinding beauty of this music, which has the effect of transporting one back to a time and place of courtly manners in an age of tranquility secure in its sovereignty and free of doubt; yet it's easy to forget that Narváez composed and published this momentous collection in the midst of the Spanish Inquisition. How does one understand the soaring of the human spirit to such heights of the sublime and, at the same time, its descent into such depths of moral depravity?

That's an age-old question, and not one to which I have the answer. But I do have a word of advice: acquire this Maruri album—indeed all three of them—without delay. Josquin des Prez may have had *Mille Regretz*, but I promise that you won't have a single one when you hear these magnificent releases. **Jerry Dubins**