

Guitar works provide variety of exploration

> Original music for cello and guitar; Michael Jones, cello, Agustin Maruri, guitar; EMEC CD 001.

> David Russell Plays Baroque Music; David Russell, guitar; Telarc CD 80559.

> Adam Falckenhagen, six sonatas; Agustin Maruri, guitar; EMEC CD 022.

By Bryan James

These three recently released CDs all offer music of interest to classical guitar enthusiasts and provide examples of the range of music for the instrument being explored by some of the younger performers on the international stage.

The most intriguing of the three is half a dozen works written for the unusual combination of cello and guitar, and performed by Michael Jones and Agustin Maruri. While such a combination was not uncommon two or more centuries ago, very little new music was written for it until after the Second World War, when many pieces appeared, prompted by demand from aspiring young performers.

Some three-quarters of this disc, for example, is of music written expressly for this duo. While the contemporary material is where the strength of the disc lies, and contains much interest for the exploring listener, the recording begins by presenting a kind of marker point: a typical example of 19th-century salon music for such a duo, Friedrich Burgmüller's *Nocturnes*. This is not music you can metaphorically get your teeth into. That comes later: try Francesco Telli's *Alba*, or Max Baumann's *Hommage a de Falla*. In much of this later music, the full sonorities of both instruments are exploited, with composers keen to use pizzicato from the cellist — they are, after all, stringed instruments.

Few of these composers are widely known and in some cases this is the first recording of their

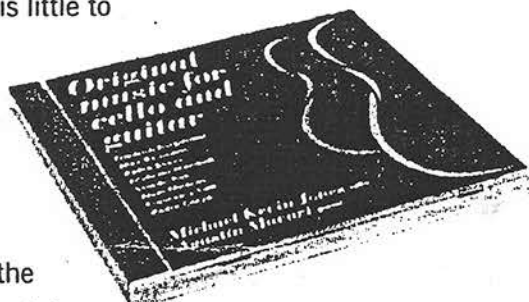


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works for these instruments. Musically, most of the material is satisfying to the ear and offers relatively rich rewards for the open-minded listener.

The other discs in this selection are of greater technical interest to performers of the classical guitar. David Russell performs his own arrangements of sonatas by Vivaldi, Handel, Scarlatti and Loeillet, most originally written for keyboard, and there is little to distinguish this particular disc from others in a well-ploughed field.

Agustin Maruri's recording on guitar (the first) of six sonatas for lute by Adam Falckenhagen, a contemporary of J.S. Bach, is of considerable technical interest, and comparatively speaking, Maruri is much the better guitarist. The instrument, however, is far too closely miked and the many undesired squeaks of sliding fingers on the back of the fretboard and on the metal strings seriously interrupt the listener's concentration and full enjoyment of these pleasant minor works.



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