

**Early Music on the Classical Guitar**

# CLASSICAL GUITAR

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# REVIEWS... PRIVATE CD RELEASES

## EMERGENCE

FALLA: *Dance from La Vida Breve*. GLASS: 'Opening' from *Glassworks*. HAYDN: *Minuet and Trio from Piano Sonata no. 47*. TAKEMITSU: *Bad Boy*. BROWN: *Nine Bagatelles for Guitar Trio*. DVORAK: *Silhouette; Humoresque*. FAURÉ: *Pavane*. CORELLI: *Concerto Grosso, op. 6, no. 8 'Christmas'*; BACH: *Prelude and Fugue in C minor from the Well-Tempered Clavier*.

## Athens Guitar Trio

This disc by the Athens Guitar Trio nicely mixes familiar guitar-trio repertoire with less familiar items. At first sight, the omission of anything Hellenic seems surprising – until you realise the group hails not from Greece but from Athens, Georgia, in the USA.

The precision of their ensemble is striking, as is the uniformity of their dynamic shading. This is particularly evident in the *Nine Bagatelles for Guitar Trio* by Gregory W. Brown, a multi-faceted piece that, one suspects, could easily collapse without a high level of unanimity from the players. The liner notes, regrettably, tell us nothing about the composer.

Corelli's *Concerto Grosso op. 6 no. 8* known as the 'Christmas Concerto' works surprisingly well in the new medium, as does the *Prelude and Fugue in C minor* by Bach, here given a sprightly performance. The old favourites by Falla, Dvorak and Fauré are respectively as invigorating, charming and gracious as expected.

This disc appears to be an own-production by the Trio, but any search engine will get you to the group's home page from where it can be bought.

Allan Clive Jones

## NADAV LEV

JOHN DOWLAND: *Fantasia*. MALCOLM ARNOLD: *Fantasy op107*. FERNANDO SOR: *Fantaisie op30*. ABEL EHRLICH: *Will It Work?* JOAQUIN RODRIGO: *En Los Trigales*.

## Nadav Lev

To send a 'privately released' CD for review to a specialist magazine, and that CD contains no details whatsoever about where to obtain the disc from, is unbelievably negligent. There is no web-site address for the

performer or recording studio ... nothing! It almost makes one decide not to bother writing a review and take the attitude of 'if they cannot make the effort, then neither can I'.

Having read through the sparse sleeve notes that Nadav Lev studied with David Leisner and David Starobin, has attended master classes with the likes of Barrueco, Isbin, Russell and Pepe Romero and was the 2006 Andrés Segovia Award Winner in Spain, I decided to pass through the stage of 'not putting myself out' and decided to give Mr. Lev's disc a listen; a session which brings forth the very pleasant news that here is a CD to savour and delight in. His playing is of the utmost authority and the entire programme is a sheer delight from start to finish.

The only true rarity on this programme is the set of four strangely titled miniatures *Will It Work?* by the unbelievably-prolific East-Prussian composer Abel Ehrlich, who seemed renowned for his odd-titled pieces. An internet search reveals gems such as *My Friend Had a Vineyard*, *Forewarned of Madness* and *Sounds of 5758*, all for symphony orchestra. This piece has yet to grow on me, but it's early days so far and this disc will certainly receive many more playings.

A quick search on the internet will reveal Mr. Lev's website and from there one can make contact to presumably obtain the CD.

Steve Marsh

## LOS ANGELES ELECTRIC 8

BRADDOCK: *Ill Tempered Lanceran*. SHOSTAKOVICH: *Prelude and Scherzo for String Octet Op.11*. KOHL: *Balinesca*. MENDELSSOHN: *Prelude (from Organ Sonata in F minor)*. SEIGEL: *Domino Figures*.

## Los Angeles Electric 8

My sceptical views on large battalions of classical guitars have made regular appearances in the pages of CG for more than two decades. But the possibilities of an octet of electric guitarists, who proudly proclaim their 'classical' training, might just be another matter. I say this in the light of having recently been invited to sit in with a youth guitar ensemble comprising at least 40 players of varying abilities. Despite the

presence of an experienced conductor/director, the whole performance was effectively held together by a highly able sixth former on electric bass. Without his tidy and audible lines, each item could easily have imploded after the first few bars with no realistic chance of recovery. So does the electric guitar have the capacity to succeed where its classical counterpart so demonstrably fails?

At the risk of being branded a bottomless pit of educational anecdotes, I once listened with great admiration to a Year 7 girl who, grappling with the age-old problem of finding words to describe a musical sound, informed her guitar teacher that the term *legato* means 'sort of not pingy'. I recall this charmingly onomatopoeic definition because I can think of no better word than 'pingy' to sum up the sound emanating from this clearly accomplished team from the West Coast. Think first of the original Pat Metheny recording of *Electric Counterpoint*. OK, now cast your mind back to John Williams' electric guitar sound on that long forgotten *Rhapsody* by Patrick Gowens. Are we getting somewhere? In the interest of balance and perhaps even in mitigation, I should emphasise that my own response to the release of *Rhapsody* was considerably more charitable than that of many who were present at the time, but a whole side of an LP with JW pingy away remains a stern test of listener endurance to this day.

I also concede that a compact 5'13" of Nathaniel Braddock's gamelan-inspired opener successfully whetted the appetite as to what might be coming next. But the novelty was wearing very thin after the first couple of minutes of the Shostakovich transcription, and any remaining hopes of a happy ending were finally crushed beneath an eye-watering 21'23" of Wayne Siegel's minimalist-driven finale.

Much as I'd like to welcome this release as a vital new direction for the guitar ensemble, I can only report with much regret that the concept simply doesn't work.

Paul Fowles