



## Reviews of *Expresivo*

CACD77022: Jacob Cordover guitar



Australian guitarist Jacob Cordover discusses his family's Sephardic Jewish ancestry in the notes for his latest Cala disc, and ascribes its programme to his younger self and to the musical journey on which that self-embarked. He now lives in Barcelona and has compiled a sequence of mostly much-loved pieces - in his words 'lyrical, beautiful, passionate and evocative'. Modestly –but, to a critic, disarmingly—he eschews comparison to the many great guitarists who have recorded this repertoire. It helps this cause somewhat, therefore, that he has been responsible for six arrangements thus making direct comparison with other performances less pressing a matter.

That said, a sterner critic than I would have wanted to know more about the music and the composers. Coming across contemporary French guitarist-composer Roland Dyens isn't an everyday event, even for a guitar recital and though Barrios (or Barrios Mangoré, depending on preference) is much better-known, a popular disc such as this might have helped the listener coming fresh to this repertoire.

Barrios Mangoré's *Vals* is a supple and rhythmic opus full of deft colour in this agile performance whilst Dyens' piece is a flavoursome tango. The Albéniz quartet is very much a Greatest Hits selection but Cordover performs them all in his own arrangements so they stand somewhat apart from the mainstream of performances on disc. That said, Cordover stresses the lyricism and clement side of the pieces. Turning to the standard performances of Segovia and Bream reveals an absorption in colouristic voicings, conversational palette, and vivid characterisation. Cordover's approach is certainly sensitively shaped but he prioritises the intimate and languorous over the evocative.

It's good to encounter Villa-Lobos' inventive *Prélude No.1* over which Cordover doesn't linger unnecessarily but to which he devotes a rhythmically persuasive nuance. That said, the almost tragic implications explored by Segovia, with his vibrato at its most extraordinary, are not part of the young Australian's conception. In the middle of the recital, he throws in the buskers' favourite, Stanley Myers' *Cavatina* which was used in *The Deer Hunter*, which he plays in his own arrangement. Granados, Tárrega and Leo Brouwer are also part of the musical landscape of this album—the last named in particular is idiomatically performed. To end, Cordover mines popular song. Takemitsu's famous arrangement of the Lennon and McCartney *Here, There and Everywhere* is pleurably done, and Cordover kicks back with arrangements of *Georgia on My Mind* and *Summertime* to dilute the largely Iberian nature of the disc.

This is a well recorded disc, then, of autobiographical resonance, and a musical manifesto of the allure of (mainly) Spanish and Latin American music. And some fun extras.

Jonathan Woolf, *Musicweb-International*

Jacob Cordover's latest Cala collection finds the Australian classical guitarist applying his impeccable instrumental technique to a series of evocative pieces penned by many of the leading lights of the genre, including Albéniz, Tarrega and Heitor Villa-Lobos. This wide-ranging exercise in technical artistry closes with arrangements for solo guitar of three classic popular songs: Gershwin's *Summertime*, Hoagy Carmichael's *Georgia on my Mind* and the bitterweet melody which Paul McCartney penned for his then girlfriend Jane Asher half a century ago, *Here, There and Everywhere*.

Kevin Bryan, *UK Regional Newspapers*

I first encountered Mr Cordover in his release *Blackwattle Caprices* (CACD77017). I was deeply impressed. He has it all—technique, musicianship, inventive programming. In this release he confirms that impression.

This program is different. The selections are mostly familiar works from the Segovia repertory—the very pieces that first caused him (and me) to fall in love with the guitar. There's always a risk in such a program. Do we really need another *Asturias* or *Recuerdos*? Does he have anything different to say that we haven't heard before?

The answer, I'm happy to say, is yes. Nothing is dramatically reinterpreted in a self-indulgent fashion, but nothing sounds just like it always does. More or less consistently, the performances are slower—not because he lacks the technique (he doesn't) but because he wants to allow more time for the music to emerge. That means that Barrios isn't rushed, and the Dyens can catch the spirit of the tango without seeming eccentrically nervous.

The center section of the Villa-Lobos *Prelude* is clear and precise—that passage that most guitarists just strum is played as written, as a clear arpeggio. Most delightfully, he starts *Asturias* pianissimo and builds a steady crescendo to the biggest chords. That's how Alicia de Larrocha does it on piano, to a glorious effect, but this is the first time I've heard a guitarist even try. He does his own transcriptions of the Albeniz and Granados—again, nothing radically different, and closer to Tarrega than Barrueco. But there are a few special touches, especially octave displacement, that brought a smile to my face.

Even if you already have these pieces in other performances, Cordover's have such a distinct and attractive personality that it will be worth finding.

Keaton, *American Record Guide*