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Recordings

musicality than virtuosity—a welcome approach, I might add. In the Etudes, his playing is also convincing. This is a must-have disc for anyone interested in Villa-Lobos' music. I hope we can look forward to a timely publication of the 1928 manuscript!

James Reid

Falckenhagen: Six Sonatas, Op. 1

John Schneiderman, baroque lute
Titanic Records Ti-237 © 1998

The 18th-century German lutenist and composer Adam Falckenhagen (1697-1761) now has a CD devoted entirely to his music. His earliest published works are these six sonatas that show some of the ingenuity and maturity of style of his more famous contemporaries Johann Sebastian Bach and Sylvius Leopold Weiss.

Falckenhagen studied the lute with one of Weiss's students and later with Weiss himself during a visit to Dresden. His musical career was spent mainly in Bayreuth, where his patron was the Margravine Sophia Wilhelmine, sister of Frederick the Great (her portrait graces the CD's cover).

As for the music here, these sonatas are mainly two-voice, mostly homophonic works, written in the gallant style—a light, elegant sound as opposed to the more serious and stiff style of the high baroque. These sonatas are all in three movements, beginning with a Largo, then two shorter, but faster, movements. Falckenhagen uses a Lombard rhythm—a snappy, dotted rhythm—to give a sense of drive and impulse to the music. Overall, his writing is fully idiomatic, with pull-offs, slurs, and trills that show off his instrument to good effect.

Schneiderman negotiates all this with steady aplomb and supple technique. His ornamentation is never overdone and always in good taste. Tempos are judicious and never ostentatious. He plays a 13-course lute built by John Rollins of Bellingham, WA, beautifully recorded in ambient sound. The notes are by *Soundboard's* Peter Danner. Schneiderman's tone is clear as a bell, and it turns all these homophonic, delicate textures into sparkling jewels.

Terry Joy

Highland King:

The Scottish Lute, Volume II

Ronn McFarlane, lute

[44 pieces from the Wemyss, Rowallan, and Balcarres lute books]

The lute had a special place in Renaissance Scotland. Court records and iconography show that this noble instrument was essential to musical life at the Scottish

court. Some courts employed at least four lutenists, and even among the lower and middle classes the lute was very popular, especially in the larger private households.

During the so-called "Golden Age of the Scottish Lute" (ca.1590-1650), the repertoire absorbed foreign influences from such countries as England and France. Much of this music was characterized by simple plucked melodies with very few accompanying chords or bass notes. It was also modal and used pentatonic and hexatonic, rather than diatonic, scales.

McFarlane is right at home in this genre, playing a 10-course lute with standard Renaissance tuning. His penchant for melody particularly turns the lute into a vocal instrument in this, his second recording of Scottish lute music. Even though most of these pieces barely last a minute, phrasing is tastefully executed, with drones and fiddle effects that add to the folk flavor.

Terry Joy

L'Esprit du Baroque

Tom Leisek, guitar

• Baron: Partita • Denis Gaultier: Suite 1 "La Rhétorique des Deux" • Mouton: Allemande, Chaconne, Le Tombeau de Gogo • Weiss: Overture, Plainte, Fugue, Tombeau de Logy, Presto

VGo Recordings VG1002 © 2000

Tom Leisek studied with David Tanenbaum and now heads the guitar program at Sonoma State University in California. In this, his debut recording, he displays a keen understanding of 18th lute music.

If you hate Keith Jarrett playing Bach or Handel, you probably won't like this record, but if lute music played on the guitar doesn't offend, there is much to applaud here. The playing is clean throughout and the voicings nicely articulated. It is particularly laudable that Leisek is willing to tackle the often enigmatic rhetoric of the French repertoire. He is clearly aware of the concept of *notes inégales* and the ornamentation nicely varied. His timing in the Gaultier Sarabande is just about perfect. Also admirable is the famous Weiss *Tombeau*, which Leisek plays slowly, but without sentimentality. The Baron suite seems weaker fare in the context of this well-considered program. The Courant is a bit on the fast side and the Bourée too slow.

The transcriptions are all by the performer himself. The results are highly satisfactory, even if baroque lute music doesn't always adopt easily to the six-string guitar. This recording may not be easily found, but is obtainable through Guitar Solo in San Francisco, or by accessing the label's website:

vgorecordings@hotmail.com

Peter Danner