Argondizza, Peter (1996) Fernando Sor: Fantasies Vol. 1 and 2. Recorded by Alain Prevost. [Review],

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Linde and Ragossnig perform competently together. Their sound is attractive and appealing with some well thought out phrasing. The Giuliani aside, this is a most enjoyable recording.

Steve Marsh

FERNANDO SOR (Vol. I)
FANTASIES OPUS 4 À 16

FERNANDO SOR (Vol. II)
FANTASIES OPUS 21 À 59

Alain Prevost. Guitar romantique
De Plein Vent – PVC36 CD 9463 and CD4964

Mr Prevost does a good job of presenting an essentially archival recording of the complete Sor Fantasies on his ‘Romantic guitar’ – a copy of a René Lacôte by Carlos Gonzales Marcos. Performed in chronological order, the fantasies on this two volume set are particularly useful to the historically inclined listener who may be interested in tracing the compositional development of Fernando Sor.

Almost two hours and forty minutes of what is essentially (for Sor) a Theme and Variations form can be tough going for the listener, but discovering the fascinating, lesser known gems embedded in all this material will make it all worthwhile. The minor variation of the Opus 10 in F major (with the sixth string tuned to F), for instance, is one of Sor’s more touching moments and the unexpected chromatic language of Opus 16 is some of the strangest Sor I’ve heard. Two seldom played complete works, Opus 52 and Opus 56, will provide a substantial work for any innovative guitar programme.

Such compilation can, and ultimately will, highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the featured composer. Cantabile melodies, idiomatic and effective guitar writing (arpeggios, sixths thirds and harmonics) are some of Sors’ strengths. A lack of truly memorable original melodies.
unimaginative and predictable harmonic progressions, and relatively little compositional development from variation to variation are some of the apparent weaknesses.

These performances are very literal interpretations – all repeats are taken. The phrasing is thoughtful and well behaved, the tone is good, and Alain Prevost shows fine musicianship and a flair for the style. There is, however, a distinct unevenness in the quality of performance. Some Fantasias are technically secure and musically astute (Opus 7, 40 and 59 in particular) while others are not as successful and seem less prepared as in Opus 7 where harmonics are unclear and in Op. 10 and 12 which both have missed notes and ornaments. Generally, there is an unsteadiness of rhythm in the faster tempos. It is in the slow to medium tempos that Mr Prevost shows his best playing.

Mr Prevost provides excellent sleeve notes. The general information about Sor, the description regarding the genre ‘fantasy’ and the specific comments about each piece are scholarly and interesting. Bibliography and source material are also provided. The recording quality is questionable due to some unpleasant overtones and a distinctly boomy sound.

I admire Mr Prevost for taking on such an extensive project. I would hope that he will give us another reading of these pieces after further years of reflection and performance. Performers have done this with Bach, Mozart and Haydn, perhaps Fernando Sor deserves no less.

Peter Argondizza

LA GUITARE DE JEAN-FELIX LALANNE


Buda Records, Paris. 925732

Sub-titled ‘15 years of compositions’ this double CD features works written by Lalanne between 1977 and 1992. The music ranges from slow, introspective works in a romantic vein to funky, country and western style, energetic numbers.