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Another fine performance by Alberto Mesirca. I reviewed his all-Scarlatti performance (S/O 2011) as among the best I've heard and a chamber music disc (J/A 2012) as nearly as fine. Here he turns to British music, with mostly fine results.

My sole reservation concerns the works by Graham Whettam, whose music is not familiar to me. He had an impressive career (he died in 2007), and these two works are both world premieres from the last decades of his life. The music is rather thorny, with frequent repetition of motives. The language is dissonant but not atonal. The partita is an ambitious work, but after several hearings it fails to make any memorable impression. The Serenade for guitar and cello is a more attractive work, and since the repertory for that combination is thin, we can be happy for any addition. Mesirca plays these works with strong conviction and obvious devotion.

As for the rest, there are some real delights. It was a brilliant stroke to preface Britten's Nocturnal with a rather unfamiliar work by Dowland. The Britten is among the greatest works in the guitar repertory, and since it's essentially a variations and theme (the theme is not stated until the very end) on Dowland, that twist of programming works especially well. Performances of this work all end up being compared to Julian Bream's two recordings (he was the dedicatee and worked with the composer during its creation). Mesirca's is different—one gets the impression that he never heard Bream and only worked from the score; the result is quite fine, though often unexpected. Srdjan Bulat (above) is more in the mold of Bream, and I'm happy to have both performances.

I did not know Lennox Berkeley's Four Pieces for Guitar, which were published posthumously. They are delightful, and if you love his Sonatina you'll love these as well. Two other works round out the program. 'Moto Perpetuo' by Robert Fripp (yes, that Robert Fripp, the guitarist from King Crimson, that old progressive rock band from the late 60s) is transcribed from the central portion of a work called Fractures, and Mesirca gives it a blistering performance. The recital concludes with a heartfelt 'Farewell to Stromness', by Peter Maxwell Davies. The work is in memory of the people of Stromness, on Orkney, Scotland, who had to leave their homes because of deadly pollution from a uranium mine.

Despite my reservations about the Whettam, this is beautifully played and imaginatively programmed. I look forward to more from this artist.