whom Sergio Assad’s *Suite Brasileira* is the most beautiful and moving (forgive me, Shade of Villa-Lobos). Its three movements, based on traditional forms, are simply exquisite—alternating intense rhythmic energy with melting lyricism—and magnificently performed. The two Villa-Lobos works were originally for piano (the *Suite Floral* was arranged by Mr Callahan and the Alki Trio) and work well in this transcription. Mauricio Carrilho’s clumsily titled *Moacircsantosiana* are part of a set of 15 works in tribute to the Brazilian popular composer Moacirc Santos. Most were written for winds, but two were for guitar trio, one even written for the Alki. The obligatory Piazzolla work is *Fuga y Miserio*, which pairs an exciting fugue with a more melancholy, if rather brief, closing.

The Alki Trio plays wonderfully here—excellent ensemble, a broad range of color and dynamics, and a tight rhythm, essential in these works. I look forward to hearing more from them.

**STUDENT WORKS**

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Next, he is joined by violinist Rademacher for a lovely performance of Paganini’s *Cantabile*. This is Paganini the melodist, with--
out the excesses that mar Regondi’s music (and, to be fair, often Paganini’s).

Falla’s *Suite Popular Espanol* is an arrangement of his *Siete Canciones Populares Espanolas*, less the ‘Seguidilla Murciana’. The notes credit Rummel with the arrangement, though I presume that only means the adaptation for cello, since the guitar part is clearly the Pujol transcription. Regardless, the performance is superb—it crackles with energy when needed and melts with lyricism in the more delicate passages. It’s every bit as fine as the performance by Sonidas (M/J 2012), and I prefer the cello to Sonidas’s violin.

Boccherini’s Fandango Quintet is the most popular of his eight guitar quintets (because it’s the most interesting), and Mesirca and friends give it an excellent performance. The players are more energized, and Mesirca better balanced, than Tokos and the Danubius Quartet (also M/J 2012). I still prefer Pepe Romero and the ASMF, but this is nearly in that class.

I called Mesirca’s recording of Scarlatti sonatas “particularly wonderful” (S/O 2011). I can say much the same of this one.

**KEATON**

*Grandeur of the Baroque*

**BACH:** Toccata; 4 Sinfonias; **HANDEL:** Suite 7; **COUPERIN:** Ordre 26 (excerpts); **WEISS:** Sonata 14

David Russell, g

Telarc 33223—66 minutes

This is some of the most glorious baroque playing I’ve ever heard. That it comes from Russell is no surprise—he’s been one of the guitar’s greatest artists for several decades and shows no sign of flagging.

Back in 1984, I played in one of his master classes at the Toronto Festival. At that festival, American guitarists discovered a German player, Hubert Kappel, brought in to replace Costas Cotsiolis. He astonished us all with his performance and transcription of Bach’s sixth partita for harpsichord. Russell opens with the toccata from that transcription, a wildly complex bit of counterpoint and harmonic invention, in an even more beautiful performance than Kappel’s. He has developed an especially expressive fingering with some beautiful harp-like effects by setting passages on separate strings.

The remaining works are in Russell’s own transcription, and the four sinfonias are amazing—delicate three-part counterpoint, imbued with special lyricism in what could easily have been didactic pedantry.

Both the Handel and the Weiss end with passacaglias that are popular played on their own, so it’s nice to hear them in the context of the whole work. It’s also nice to hear subtle differences between the two composers. Handel had already started to assimilate an English lyricism even shortly after he relocated to London, while Weiss’s more distinct Germanic character shines through. And the four excerpts form Couperin’s 26th suite are just as carefully French in phrasing and tone.

One of the consistent delights of this recording is Russell’s crisp and precise ornamentation. It sparkles like inlaid jewelry—mostly executed in cross-string fingering. These performances are all more beautiful than all others.

**KEATON**

*Adios mi Amor: Duets*

Guerrero, Victoria, Valderrabano, Josquin, Morales, Mudarra, Gombert, Dalza, Narvaez, Lopez, Mendoza, Morlaye

Jesus Sanchez, Manuel Mingullon Nieto, vihuelas

Brilliant 94302—64 minutes

I had never encountered a large body of music for two vihuelas, and the notes explain why. Only Enriquez de Valderrabano published any works for the combination. We do have considerable evidence that music was performed by two vihuelas. Sanchez and Nieto follow the practices of improvisation and adaptation that were used in the era.

The *vihuela de mano* is the Spanish counterpart of the lute—it shares the same tuning as the Renaissance lute, but the body is smaller, shaped more like the modern guitar, with a flat back. *De mano* refers to it being plucked by the hand. The *vihuela de arco* was bowed—the ancestor of the *viola da gamba*. Both versions, and the gamba, were fretted and tuned in fourths.

This sound world is a delicate one. The vihuela is even softer than the lute, with a smaller range of colors. But in that range are delicacies and beauty for people willing to listen on an intimate level.

The program is balanced and varied. Along with traditional works by vihuelist composers like Narvaez and Mudarra are arrangements and improvisations based on the greatest composers of the era—Josquin, Victoria, Gombert. It was nice to hear Josquin’s ‘Mille Regretz’ just before Narvaez’s elaboration of that chanson, better known as ‘Cancion del Emperador’. The performance of Victoria’s *O Magnum Mysterium* brought back memories of singing that motet in high school choir. There are works by that most prolific of composers, Anonymous, along with works from barely-known figures (a fantasia attributed to someone named Lopez, about whom nothing else is known).

*Dellitiae Musicae* play with a convincing mastery. Their improvisations are completely idiomatic, their technical command sure, and