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Alberto Mesirca, "Scarlatti Sonatas," Paladino Music 2011



Alberto Mesirca, in the liner notes of his newly released classical guitar CD "Scarlatti," fondly recalls being presented as a child with a vinyl collection of Domenico Scarlatti's Harpsichord Sonatas performed by Wanda Landowska. That recorded music could so leap generations is testament to the timeless endurance of this music -- originating from the 1700s when Scarlatti composed these Sonatas, to the early 1900s when Landowska made some of the first sound recordings, and on to the 21st century with Mesirca now having transcribed several for classical guitar. It's tempting to reflect on how the zeitgeist and technology of each respective epoch may have differently influenced the interpretation of the Scarlatti Sonatas by artists throughout the years, though the notes always remain essentially the same. It's further tempting, after hearing Mesirca's masterful playing on this recording, to draw the conclusion that the years have somehow refined and elevated Scarlatti's music to the highest artistic plane to date. That's no easy feat, but 27 year-old Mesirca has created that aura, having earned the distinction of so doing by way of virtuosity and credentials. He is a summa-cum-laude graduate of the Conservatory of Castelfranco Veneto and twice the winner of the "Golden Guitar" awards at the Alessandria Convention in 2007 and 2009. Of the 555 sonatas which Scarlatti composed, Mesirca has chosen 16 to include in this CD collection, and has juxtaposed each of them brilliantly to offer a full palette of emotion and virtuosity -- pitting Allegro against Adagio and Largetto almost as though mimicking a recapitulation of life's peaks and valleys. These are the most enjoyable solo classical guitar transcriptions and recordings I've heard in years.

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Michael Fix, "Two Timing," 2011



Michael Fix, Australian composer and guitarist extraordinaire, is known for his solo recordings of grace and technical brilliance that feature his contemporary acoustic compositions, many of which have received major awards. Here, on his 10th recording, he teams up with 13 other guitarists in "dialogues" that go "back and forth like two people chatting." And what a conversation it is -- like attending a brilliant dinner party with sparkling dialogue, witty exchanges, and soulful glances. Included are Fix originals as well as pieces by Chet Atkins, Lennon and McCartney, Sting, Doc Watson -- even a gorgeous rendition of "Danny Boy" paired with "Ashokan Farewell." Every song is a standout. There's the exquisite "Guanches," written by his duo partner guitarist/composer Andrea Valeri; its riveting eerie opening and chiming descending run shifts into a fast-paced romp with guitar thumping and chordal percussive effects. There's "Martina," a composition Fix wrote for his sister, where he duets with Tony Emmanuel, rich in melody, countermelody, and deep feeling. "Demolition Derby" is a witty act of bluegrass virtuosic one-upmanship with Brendan Radford. Throughout, following the instruments as they trade foreground and background, as on "Two Guitars" with Justin McCoy, is a delicious pleasure. Fix plays with passion and authenticity; "Two Timing" is a