



written in a galant style and based on the air 'One evening having lost my way', which appears in the third act of the opera.

This recording succeeds in its intention to explore the neglected repertoire of public concert life in England and in doing so brings to our attention another side to a composer who has been both tarred with the brush of *The Beggar's Opera* and maligned by the pen of Hawkins. The accompanying booklet notes, which contain many contemporary anecdotal references as well as an in-depth and well-supported account of the composer's time in England, give a more balanced account of the reception of Pepusch's works. There are but a couple of slips, such as the assertion that Pepusch's works were 'advertised in *The London Stage* in April 1704' (presumably an anachronistic reference to *The London Stage*, edited by William Van Lennep (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960–1970), which is actually a modern multi-volume calendar and compendium of source materials). In addition, Rawson is responsible for editing the parts used for the recording from the surviving manuscript sources, an endeavour that adds to this group's integrity. Here their enthusiasm and conscientiousness conjure an atmosphere that one can imagine is as spirited as that of the eighteenth-century concert rooms and theatres for which these works were composed. They present us not only with music that exemplifies Pepusch's mix of Continental styles and experimentation with a range of concerto subgenres, but also with intriguing possibilities regarding his music's influence on Handel. This first album has but scratched the surface of the neglected concert repertory of eighteenth-century England and leaves one itching for more. One can only hope that there will be further fiddling from these gentlemen (who do, incidentally, admit several ladies into their harmonious company).

ESTELLE MURPHY

<estelle.murphy@ucc.ie>



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ANTONIO ABREU (c1750–c1820), DIONISIO AGUADO (1784–1849), SALVADOR CASTRO DE GISTAU (1770–AFTER 1831), ISIDRO DE LAPORTA (fl. c1790), FEDERICO MORETTI (c1765–1838)
SPANISH MUSIC FOR 6-COURSE GUITAR AROUND 1800

Thomas Schmitt

Centaur CRC 3277, 2012; one disc, 66 minutes

The double-strung six- and seven-course guitars used in Spain and the Spanish Americas between 1760 and the 1820s were largely ignored by late twentieth-century historical performers because of an apparent lack of repertoire. Although advertisements placed by *copisterías* in the periodical press from the 1780s until the Spanish War of Independence in 1808 identify manuscript copies of six-course guitar music for sale in Spain, most of this music remains lost. Routinely overlooked in this search, however, are the pioneering nineteenth-century Parisian editions of six-course guitar music that Salvador Castro de Gistau acquired in Madrid. Thomas Schmitt's recording of some of this repertoire is much to be welcomed. On first hearing, his guitar has a powerful and lovely range, the sonority of its doubled strings and richness of its low register helping to evoke the revelation it must have been for listeners accustomed to five-course guitars. I have two questions, though: is this the sound of a six-course guitar? And how does this music fit into late eighteenth-century Spanish instrumental style?

In his second-language-English sleeve notes, Schmitt states that 'the ideal of sound [*sic*] of the six-course guitar is similar to that of the lute or the Spanish vihuela', which suggests a quiet instrument, not the 'percussive sound as we know it in modern guitars' (1). Yet a quiet, lute-like instrument is not my expectation for a guitar of this period. Double strings do not make this guitar into a kind of vihuela. Furthermore, without a reference level to correlate real-world sound levels on this recording with those on my



sound equipment it is difficult to assess the sound of Schmitt's guitar, which can be made as loud as I choose with the turn of a knob. Sound quality on compact discs is already loud, up-close and fantastic, a sort of sound 'on steroids', making it difficult to know what this instrument really sounds like. The old aesthetic of 'fidelity' – the index first used to measure recordings and equipment – made us believe we were hearing faithful recordings, but this quietly slid into the hype of a 'Hi-Fidelity' slogan and disappeared. Digital recordings became so sensitive that doubts about how true-to-life they were were abandoned in favour of a new, hyper-real, high-gloss fidelity that transcended mere reality.

This raises the question of the style and vitality of the performance itself. The Sonata in F major, c1790, by Isidro de Laporta (Biblioteca Municipal de Madrid; Schmitt cites no shelf number) and the Sonata in E major, c1788, by Antonio Abreu (Biblioteca Municipal de Madrid, MS 721–9) are wonderful works that each constitute a significant discovery. They share an aesthetic context with the keyboard works of Manuel Blasco de Nebra (1750–1784) and Antonio Soler (1720–1783), in a tradition stretching back to Domenico Scarlatti. In his readings of these works, Schmitt might have looked to Soler's keyboard sonatas for tempos and style. The Allegro comodo of the Laporta sonata, for example, seems plodding and rhythmically unstable, while the Poco andante is far too slow (compare Maggie Cole's approach on her recording of keyboard sonatas by Soler, Veritas 91172 (1991)). A South American perspective on this style can be heard on Javier Echocopar Mongilardi's disc *La Guitarra en el Barroco del Perú* (JEM-2004-13, 2013), of six-course guitar music from a 1786 Peruvian manuscript by Mathias José Maestro and from a manuscript entitled 'Libro de Zifra' containing a collection of anonymous sonatas and other works from the same period.

The title of Schmitt's disc, while appropriate for the Castro Fandango and the two sonatas from the late 1790s to early 1800s, is not so suitable for Federico Moretti's six-string fantasia on 'Non più mesta' from Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, which was composed in 1820 and seems too late for this recording. Moretti wrote this for a six-stringed guitar in the romantic style that developed after Paganini and Rossini, and the piece demands a more bravura virtuosity of a kind that Schmitt does not command here. The composer was influenced by the fantasias of Fernando Sor (1778–1839), who never used introductions and codas in his Spanish-period variation sets; these were turned into fantasias by adding such framing devices only after he arrived in Paris in 1813. Also very late for inclusion here is Dionisio Aguado's 1836 *Le Fandango varié*, recalling Miguel García's playing of a fandango, now lost, that he must have composed before 1785, and which Boccherini made so universally famous (as described below). If I understand his sleeve notes, Schmitt bizarrely removes five strings from his guitar, a copy of a 1797 Lorenzo Alonso instrument, to play this much-recorded work on 'single strings'. I would rather have heard this work on a six-course guitar, as buyers of *copistería* copies of García's fandango might have played it.

A better model for the sound of the late eighteenth-century repertoire would be the music of the five-course Spanish guitar, with its mystique of exciting and robust playing which is said to have inspired Domenico Scarlatti. Less intangible are the imitations of the guitar that we hear in the extravagant keyboard fandango by Antonio Soler (ignoring, for the present purposes, the authorship question, and viewing the work as an example of late eighteenth-century Spanish keyboard style). The virility of this style is even more pronounced in Luigi Boccherini's imitation of the guitar in the Grave assai and Fandango movements of his String Quintet Op. 40 No. 2, G341, the autograph score of which has a note specifically acknowledging Miguel García, also known as Padre Basilio: 'Month of April 1788. Quintettino imitating the fandango played at the guitar by Father Basilio, for His Royal Highness Don Luigi [*sic* Luis] Infant of Spain, by Luigi Boccherini chamber virtuoso and composer of music to His Royal Highness' (as translated (but with corrections) in Jaime Tortella, *Luigi Boccherini: Dictionary of Persons, Places, and Terms* (Los Angeles: UCLA Department of Musicology, 2010), 169, <<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1p0ow6bd>> (6 June 2014)).

Boccherini places García in or before 1785 in a chamber in Las Arenas de San Pedro, in the residence of Don Luis, the younger brother of Carlos III; Soriano Fuentes, writing in 1856, places him before the king and queen at El Escorial (Dionisio Aguado, *The Complete Works for Guitar in Reprints of the Original Editions*, with Biography by José Romanillos and Preface by Brian Jeffery, volume 1 (Heidelberg: Chanterelle, 1994), xiii). This must have been a repeat performance unless Fuentes mistook the venue and they were all in



Ávila before 1785, when Don Luis died. Boccherini paid close attention to the music around him, composing descriptive and evocative works, like the string quintet 'La musica notturna delle strade di Madrid', Op. 30 No. 6 (G324), composed in Arenas de San Pedro in 1780, or Op. 40 No. 1 (G340) with its Minuetto and Trio marked 'Follia', of February 1788 (see Tortella, 'Folia', *Luigi Boccherini*, 177). No historical account equals the descriptive power of Boccherini's imitation of a guitar fandango and all its elements of form, style and rhetoric. It also conjures up García's virtuosity and the capacities of his guitar, which – unlike both the seven-course guitar and the six-course guitar of the kind Schmitt plays here, with their doubled strings – had seven single strings. This is a hard act for Schmitt to follow, but it does set stylistic objectives for playing the fandango.

García was an organist at home in thoroughbass, a tradition that was codified on the guitar in Santiago de Murcia's *Resumen de acompañar la parte con la guitarra* (Madrid, 1717). The guitar in Spain suffered a setback when Murcia gave away his manuscripts in 1732 to avoid creditors. This deprived guitarists on the peninsula of his *passacalles*, suites, arrangements and Spanish dance settings, which ended up in Mexico. A dark period followed in which there is no trace of the guitar at all until the appearance of a seven-course guitar by Francisco Sanguino, dated 1759, which could have been played by García's teacher. In 1760, a six-course Sanguino guitar was advertised, an example of which is in the private collection of José Romanillos in the village of Guijosa, Guadalajara. These guitars, however, were probably used for accompaniment only. Schmitt uses a Carlos Gass Castañeda copy of a 1797 Lorenzo Alonso guitar made almost forty years later, which is much better suited to solo performance.

Schmitt's own prelude to the Castro Fandango, while stylistically appropriate, fails to build tension in the way that Boccherini does in his 'Grave assai', or Soler and Aguado do in the introductions to their fandangos. The 'Fandango' in Castro's *Journal de Musique Étrangère pour la Guitare ou Lyre* (Paris, c1808), which is cited by Schmitt, is not used by him. Castro recycled the 1805 plates of his *Mélange d'Airs ou Pot-pourri pour la Guitare ou Lyre*, Op. 12 (Bibliothèque Nationale, shelf number Vm⁹ 3526), to make this later edition. The earlier edition is available in facsimile as *Salvador Castro de Gistau: oeuvres choisies pour guitare seule op. 7, 9, 10, 12, 17, 18* (Florence: Studio Per Edizioni Scelte, 1981). The *Journal de Musique Étrangère* plates were altered by Castro, for example by adding 'Arrangé pour la Guitare ou Lyre, par CASTRO' to the title, correcting the bass in bars 2, 3, 4 and 5 (adding rests on each third beat) and by deleting the awkward bass line at bar 25²⁻³. Schmitt clearly plays from the uncorrected edition, however.

This becomes problematic in relation to the crucial repeats that Castro added to the plates in the later issue. These he used to create a series of regular sixteen-bar phrases from the existing, irregular units of the earlier print, by indicating the necessary repetitions of passages from two to six bars in length. Since the early omission of these repeats makes nonsense of the original text, it is clear that Schmitt has simply chosen to play from the wrong edition. He also neglects Castro's slurring and implied accents, thereby undermining the rhythmic vitality of the work. On his webpage, Schmitt dates the Castro Fandango to around 1783 (<<http://thomasschmitt.wordpress.com/cds-discography>> (1 February 2014)), which seems very unlikely: Castro was born in Madrid only in 1770, and it was he who took the Spanish guitar to Paris, where he published *copistería* music in modern notation (Brian Jeffery, *Fernando Sor: Composer and Guitarist*, second edition (London: Tecla, 1994), 25). Castro was not a pale imitator creating a Frenchified fandango, as Schmitt suggests online.

Schmitt's use of rubato at points of high tension and frequent lapses in rhythmic control undermine the momentum characteristic of the late eighteenth-century Spanish piano-sonata style. The proximity of this style to that of the guitar sonatas performed here by Schmitt – and indeed of those discovered in Peru by Echeopar – is exciting. To be convincing, however, such a style demands more energy, drive and vitality than Schmitt exhibits in the present recording.

KENNETH A. HARTDEGEN

<ken@hartdegen.co.nz>