

Ettore's Notes

The pieces chosen by Ettore Scandolera for this recording are all transcriptions except for my own composition written specifically for guitar. This begs the following question: are the transcribed/arranged pieces as legitimate as the so-called "authentic" work? Although the aura of the "authentic" has been fashionable in the classical music industry for the past few decades, my personal stance is that inspired work speaks for itself whether dressed up in the original or transformed clothing. The level of authenticity can ultimately be measured only from the inside, by the coherence and inspiration of the musical event itself and not from the outside, by matching it with a preordained written-out blueprint.

Most composers are not reluctant to arrange their own music as the aesthetic impulse or practical considerations require and sometimes the results are considered even superior to the original. The French reviewer musicologist Marc Pincherle wrote in 1930 concerning Segovia's *Chaconne* arrangement: "If insofar as certain rapid monodic passages are concerned, opinion is divided between the violin and the guitar as the better medium, the guitar always triumphs in polyphonic passages; that is to say almost throughout the entire work. The timbre of the guitar creates new and emotional resonance and unsuspected dynamic gradations in those passages which might have been created purely for the violin; as for instance the variations in arpeggi." For guitarists, an added incentive is the enrichment of the instrument's repertoire; we do not have the same luxury as do some of our luckier cousins such as violinists or pianists.

The first piece on the present recording is guitar arrangement of Astor Piazzola's *Cuatro estaciones porteñas*. A very well-known composer/bandoneon performer, Astor Piazzola does not require an elaborate introduction; he was the creator of the Argentinian *nuevo tango* which, in contrast to the venerable famous ones such as *Cumparsita* or *Jalousie*, integrates the traditional tango with jazz idiom in addition to various contemporary compositional techniques. In his younger days Piazzola studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris as well as his countryman Alberto Ginastera in Argentina; these influences, which are easily discerned in his aesthetic approach, make his treatment of the form fresh and original.

Besides the initial quintet version (bandoneon, violin, piano, electric guitar, and double bass), Piazzola's *Cuatro estaciones porteñas*, have been arranged for piano trio, violin and string orchestra as well as solo guitar, among others. Interestingly, the violin solo and string orchestra arrangement by Leonid Desyatnikov features some quotations from Piazzola's seasonal twin composition *Quattro Stagioni* by Antonio Vivaldi.

Though the composer himself often performed the movements of the music in question as one composition, the pieces were conceived separately at different time periods: *Verano Porteño* in 1965; *Invierno Porteño* in 1969; *Primavera Porteña* and *Otoño Porteño* in 1970. The arrangements of this music for solo guitar are similarly eclectic: while *Invierno Porteño* and *Otoño Porteño* are arranged by Sergio Assad and Augustin Carlevaro, *Verano Porteño* and *Primavera Porteña* are arranged by

Baltazar Benitez. Whereas the bigger ensemble versions feature more complex contrapuntal texture, the solo guitar version is leaner, but it brings forth all the essential elements of the music which fit the instrument very idiomatically.

Whereas Piazzola in his *Cuatro estaciones porteñas* uses a variety of formal devices and emotional moods, Bach's *Chaconne* and my *Lament* are both compositions that rely on a unified formal and psychological profile. If we are permitted some speculation, we should mention that musicologists have considered that *Chaconne*, if not the whole partita, might be a sort of *Tombeau* in memory of his first wife Maria Barbara Bach, who died the same year (1720) when the work was created. My own piece *Lament* was written in memory of my father Časlav Bogdanović who passed away almost two decades ago.

While my piece has a very obvious influence of the Balkan folk idiom, it is also modelled after improvisatory forms, such as *alap* of the Indian *raga* or Turkish *taksim*, especially in the introductory section. Analogous to *Chaconne*, *Lament* has a tri-partite form: while the first part introduces the material, the second develops and transforms it via tremolo section towards the psychological climax of the thematic development. If the previous sections are primarily built on Aeolian mode, the ultimate section is built on quasi-major Phrygian mode. Orchestrated with a melody in harmonics, the piece becomes increasingly transparent and ethereal before the theme's ultimate disappearance.

Two movements from J. S. Bach's *Partita No.2* for violin solo, *BWV 1004* end this recording: *Sarabande* and *Chaconne*. Though both movements are integral to the partita, *Chaconne* is by far the longest and most elaborate section of the form; it is probably one of the most famous and most appreciated of Bach's works-not only for violin solo but in general. *Chaconne* was derived from the triple meter Spanish dance of the same name, which originally came from South America. Mostly based on a short harmonic scheme, *Chaconne* became a vehicle for variation, decoration, figuration and melodic invention in the Baroque era. Bach's composition is a perfect example of this formal economy: based on only four measures, the piece allows for 64 variations.

As far as the "transformed clothing", there is a whole spectrum of diverse versions of *Chaconne*, from the original partita for violin by Bach to Brahms's left-hand version for the piano to Busoni's brilliant and opulent Romantic arrangement to Leopold Stokowski's grand arrangement for symphonic orchestra. As mentioned earlier, Segovia's pioneering transcription of the piece for guitar was once considered a great musical revelation. Today, as in the case of interpretations of Bach cello suites by the great Pablo Casals, Andres Segovia's interpretations of Bach's music in general and *Chaconne* in particular, are considered overly romantic and not faithful enough to the original. Consequently, contemporary presentations of the piece on guitar are usually much closer to the violin version, which is also the case in Ettore Scandolera's version.

Perhaps the greatest works of art speak in a language that can only be communicated by itself- Bach's *Chaconne* is certainly one of these masterpieces. Johannes Brahms expressed this thus: "The *Chaconne* is for me one of the most

wonderful, incomprehensible pieces of music. On a single staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and the most powerful feelings. If I were to imagine how I might have made, conceived the piece, I know for certain that the overwhelming excitement and awe would have driven me mad."

Dusan Bogdanovic, Geneva, March, 2019