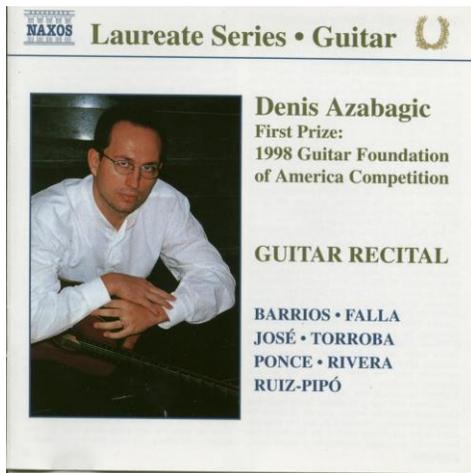


REVIEW

MW-Classical music on the web by *Andy Daly*



In extending their already impressive range of classical guitar discs Naxos has again come up trumps. The latest addition to their stable **of highly capable guitarists is the Bosnian born Denis Azabagic**, who is the winner of numerous competitions including the much coveted Guitar Foundation of America Competition in 1998. Denis Azabagic has chosen a programme of all Spanish-speaking composers, that is they are either from the Iberian peninsular itself or from central and South America. A sensible balance of works is here, from the very familiar "La catedral" of Barrios and Manuel de Falla's "Homenaje", to a new work by Carlos Rafael Rivera "Whirler of the dance".

Denis Azabagic's reading of all of the works on this disc is equal to that of any versions in the catalogue, it is **playing of the highest calibre**.

The disc opens with Torroba's "Sonatina in A", it was Torroba who first responded to Andrés Segovia's request for composers to write for the guitar during the early years of the 20th century and it is a particular favourite of mine. The sumptuous central section, framed by two lively dance movements that never fails to grab the attention, is for me at least one of the best of Torroba's many compositions for the instrument.

Although written in 1933 the four movement "Sonata" by Antonio José rarely found itself included in concerts or on recordings, that is until recently. Of late David Russell has featured the piece in his guitar recitals and Julian Bream thought the work important enough to play on his last CD, before his retirement from the recording studio. Substantial music that now at last is getting the recognition it deserves.

Manuel Ponce was always ready to exploit the rich folk music tradition of his native Mexico but with the "Sonatina meridional" Ponce transports us to a place that is very much more flavoured by Spain. This, his last of five Sonatina's for guitar written for Segovia in 1932, is cast in three relatively short movements each descriptive of Spanish village life and bears all the hallmarks of Ponce's unique musical style.

The Spanish guitarist Narciso Yepes (1927-1997), like Segovia was eager to attract composers to the guitar, the "3 Estancias" of Antonio Ruiz-Pipó is one such set of pieces. Though recorded by Yepes some years ago (DG 2530 802) they since have been rather neglected. **So it is with thanks to Denis Azabagic that they are included here for us to enjoy afresh.**

Although relatively young, he was born in 1970, Carlos Rafael Rivera has gained recognition as a composer influenced by folk based music as diverse as Tibetan chant to Afro-Caribbean. Within its three movements the "Whirler of the dance" encapsulates various traditions of folk music and though it is the "dance" section with its dynamic African tribal rhythms that ends this recital, it is the plaintive "Evocation" that is the heart and soul of the work.

Everything about this disc has a high entertainment factor; anyone buying it should not be disappointed.