

AMOR DE LA DANZA

Ana Cervantes, Pianist

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Ana Cervantes, a Roosevelt resident, has self-produced her first CD, "Amor de la Danza" ("Love of the Dance"), recorded at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton. Primarily music based on dance, the CD begins with a Pavane by the 16th-century composer William Byrd, and moves on to a Bach Partita, which consists primarily of baroque dance patterns. Briefly, the CD slips into a serenade, a setting of the e. e. cummings poem "I carry your heart with me" by Pennington composer Olga Gorelli. Gorelli has come up with a musical interpretation of the love poem that is almost twice as long as the poetry, and evokes the mood well. The bulkiest item on the recording consists of 12 Cuban dances by Joaquin Nin-Culmell. In making the CD Cervantes worked with Nin-Culmell and found it edifying. "Working with living composers helps you know how to play dead composers," she observes.

In the best-known piece on the recording, the Bach Partita, Cervantes reveals that she can hold her own against any interpreter of the baroque composer on the piano. Her Bach combines clarity of line with a roundness of phrasing. Her sense of timing lends excitement to the music. "I see a lot of lyricism and passion in Bach," Cervantes says. "If people think he's mathematical, that's all they'll find." The Cuban dances, all of them having a tango-like rhythm set a distinctly Spanish mood, incorporating the subtle but vivid elasticity of timing that gives authentic Spanish music its tension. The total effect of the CD is that of having spent time privately with a knowledgeable musician who decides to share with the listener some of her favorite pieces.

- Elaine Strauss
US 1 News
December 23, 1998

December 9, 1998

Classical New Jersey

•Ana Cervantes, piano. "Amor de la Danza": Byrd's Pavane ("Delight"); Bach's Partita No. 2 in C minor; Sebastian de Albero y Añaños' Sonata; Olga Gorelli's *i carry your heart with me* (inspired by the e.e. cummings poem); Joaquin Nin-Culmell's 12 danza Cubanas; Piazzolla's Sunny's Game. John Baker Recordings. Recorded in the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Princeton. Order by mail: Ana Cervantes, PO Box 69, Roosevelt, NJ, 08555. By email: laquijote@hotmail.com.

Ana Cervantes (also known by her diminutive nickname Anita) is near release for "Amor de la Danza." It is mostly a studio recording of the same literature she played on a Valentine's Day recital last February. Two of the pieces, Añaños' Sonata and Olga Gorelli's *i carry your heart with me* are actually from that recital. Both with and without audience the recording was done in the Princeton Unitarian Universalist Congregation, a lovely high-ceilinged space.

Ms. Cervantes quotes both Robert Butts and Paul Somers in the insert. As a thumbnail review the quotes will suffice. "Memorably flawless" performance of "intelligence and conviction." (RB) She "brought a Hispanic sensibility to everything she played, bringing a deep passion (to the music)... the Latin American music was at a linguistic level of understanding." (PS) We'll stand by that in this recording. Purists will not care for her romantic Byrd and Bach, but Ms. Cervantes is not about purism. She is about passion, and that's what this recording delivers. Notable is the presence of New Jersey composer Olga Gorelli.

- Paul Somers

Thalia Myers could have desired and more. In these two discs we get what sounds like the entire spectrum of British music distilled to its essence. Some of these composers—Richard Rodney Bennett, Michael Finnissy, John Tavener—are familiar, others much less so. The longest pieces are five or six minutes, but many go by in seconds, often leaving a potent impression. This is minimalism in the classic sense. Each tiny work is a self-contained world that seems to stretch time. The listener is exposed to a startling variety of melodies, rhythms, and designs very rapidly.

A strong sense of contrast is established right away, in the twittering, playful 'If the Silver Bird Could Speak' by Eleanor Alberga, followed by thick layers of repeated chords in David Bedford's Toccata. And so it goes. Graham Fitkin's 'SAZZ' floats by exquisitely; Jonathan Harvey's 'ff' rumbles and screams. The harmonic language ranges from highly dissonant (Diana Burrell's 'Constellation I') to sweetly tonal (Andrew Toovey's 'Still'). Composers I don't normally enjoy—the popular John Tavener, for example, who often goes on too long—I found very pleasant here because they were forced to be concise. I was also introduced to many impressive artists I didn't know at all.

Despite the dramatic contrasts, many of these pieces share a nocturnal or pastoral mood, with titles like 'Moonscape', 'Clouds', 'Landscape', and 'Zodiac'. There is dissonance aplenty, but the basic orientation seems lyrical and reflective. Whether this typifies British music at the turn of the century is hard to say, but it gives these 50 pieces a surprising spiritual unity, even though the styles are markedly different.

Part of the purpose here is to generate new repertory for amateur players who lack virtuoso technique, much the way composers wrote for nonprofessionals 200 years ago. It is an admirable idea. There are too many technically challenging, near-unplayable works still pouring out, making the wall between contemporary music and an audience increasingly wide. Some of these pieces—Brian Elias's 'Moto Perpetuo', for example—still sound pretty daunting, but most, such as Gabriel Jackson's delicate 'Memorial Blues', require only modest technique. Hard or easy, these pieces are in sensitive hands with their originator, Thalia Myers, who manages to make the tiniest pieces poetic.

The piano sound is resonant and realistic. There are no program notes for the many individual pieces (that would have been quite an undertaking), just a description of the project; but the music speaks eloquently for itself: the Bagatelle is truly an all-or-nothing enterprise, and each of these will end at about the

moment the listener decides whether he comprehends or enjoys it. Specialists will certainly want this recording, but its main value lies in its potential for attracting the uninitiated. One can learn a great deal about new music here with a minimum of time and fuss.

SULLIVAN

Amor de la Danza

BYRD: *Pavana*; BACH: *Partita 2*; ALBERO: *Sonata*; GORELLI: *Serenade*; NIN-CUMELL: *Danzas Cubanas*; PIAZZOLLA: *Sunny's Game*

Ana Cervantes, p—58 minutes

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This is apparently a "vanity" production by a young Mexican-American artist whose activities seem to have been confined largely to New Jersey, where she teaches at Ryder University and elsewhere. I didn't expect much of it, but was pleasantly surprised by what I heard. It's a nicely varied program. Her Bach Partita is highly colored and romanticized, unidiomatic but rhythmically interesting, invested with real feeling, and quite lovely. The Byrd Pavane and the brief sonata by the baroque composer Sebastian de Albero y Añaños (1722-56) are in the same vein. Olga Gorelli's Serenade is based on a poem by EE Cummings (read on the disc by Dina Coe), and Cervantes plays it with a moving intensity that makes more of its rather conventional harmonies than one might expect. The 12 Cuban dances by Nin-Cumell (son of the composer Joaquin Nin) are similar in their rhythmic patterns and their mood of slightly sentimental nostalgia, but fall pleasantly on the ear. Altogether, an attractive hour of interesting music, and the sound (from a mix of studio and concert recordings) is excellent.

MORIN

True Romantic

CHOPIN: *Impromptu, op 29; Etude, op 25:7; Mazurkas, opp 15:3, 68:4; Nocturne, op 37:3; Waltzes, opp 18, 64:2*; LISZT: *Petrarch Sonnet 104; Sans Mesur; Consolation 5*; WAGNER: *Liebostod*

Byron Janis, p—EMI 56780—56:28

We haven't heard much from Byron Janis in recent years, presumably because his arthritis continues to limit his appearances and recordings. Gone are his days of blazing virtuosity; in its place is a pianist of long, singing lines, whose exceedingly romanticized interpretations are worth our attention even when they are not entirely to our taste. Reviewing an earlier all-Chopin disc (Jan/Feb 1997) I said that it contained "the most dreamily romantic Chopin I have heard in a long time". That is even more the case here; everything is enveloped in a gauzy, poetical mist of beautiful but not always satisfying sounds. His tempos are quite slow—sometimes the slowest I know. He takes

INDIANA UNIVERSITY



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Bloomington, February 19 1999

Ana Cervantes
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Dear Ms. Cervantes,

Thank you so much for sending us your CD "*Amor de la danza*". I listened to it a couple of times already and have enjoyed it very much. Your performance of this repertoire of little jewels is truly charming and conveys the perfect sense of intimacy and warmth of these dances. We are placing the CD with the recordings in the collection of the library of the Music School, and its cataloging will make the information about it available to all patrons around the world.

Thanks again for sharing your project with us!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerardo Dirie".

Gerardo Dirie
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