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BGS meeting 12th March

There must be something about Latin American guitar music - clearly, the members of the BGS enjoy playing it or we wouldn't have had such a good turnout on Sunday 12th March for our member's evening on that theme.

It was also good to say hello to Tim Blass and Petros Andreou, who had tracked us down via our web site and joined us for what I hope will be the first of many meetings.

Once we had sorted ourselves out, the efforts of SHP staff to divert us to alternative accommodation notwithstanding, we settled down to an evening of excellent entertainment which also proved to be highly instructive, as will become apparent.

George Macdonald was our first player with Antonio Lauro's La Gatica. This was preceded by a discussion as to the translation of the title, the consensus being that it referred to a cat. However folks you'll be pleased to know that I've found the answer in the sleeve notes of my Naxos CD of Lauro's music - we were almost correct, it apparently refers to "the kitten", a nickname for Lauro's wife (bet you wanted to know that). George followed this up with a Juan Serrano Rumba. Thanks to George we now know that the Rumba's origins were as a "folk sex pantomime" but such thoughts did not put George off his stride.

Next to take the performer's chair was Richard Butters with two pieces by Astor Piazzola, firstly his Milonga de la Angel, then Verano Porteno. We learned from Richard that the title of the latter piece translates as "Summer in Buenos Aires", the inhabitants of that city being known as "Los Portenos". Two challenging pieces excellently played by Richard, I thought.

We were by this time realising that Lauro was going to be a popular choice as Michelle Cole gave us Lauro's Angostura. I can reveal that this title is not a reference to the composer's ability to mix a cocktail, but (according to my Naxos sleeve notes) is the ancient name for Ciudad Bolivar, Lauro's birthplace.

Next up was Steve Tucker, continuing the Lauro theme, with the Prelude from the Suite Venezolana (the suite being written during Lauro's imprisonment in 1951-52 for political offences against the military junta then ruling Venezuela) and El Negrito (this refers to Lauro's youngest son). I hope you had permission to use your son's brand new guitar Steve

Debbie Haeck and Stephen Christmas then played two duets with their now customary panache, firstly a Brazilian piece called Terezinha de Jesus, followed by a highly percussive piece from Bolivia called Cueca.

We then had a real treat as Debbie played us all three sections of Brouwer's El Decameron Negro, a challenge which Debbie successfully met. I particularly like the third section with its repeating melody when our hero returns home and which Debbie duly delivered in some style.

After this this we needed a break and upon our re-assembling Petros Andreou gave us another chance to appreciate Lauro with La Negra (this one doesn't feature on my Naxos CD so I can't offer a translation of the title), followed by Villa Lobos Prelude no 1. Petros was followed by Allan du Feu with Tarrega's Lagrima and Bailecito, a dance by Jorge Martinez - Zarate, and then by myself with the 9th of the 14 Studies written by the Argentinian composer, Maximio Pujol.

The hot seat was then occupied by our other newcomer, Tim Blass, who gave us Lauro's El Marabino (this one is on my disc, so we learn that this refers to a native of Maracaibo, where Lauro lived for a time). Tim followed this with a very creditable Tango en Skai by Roland Dyens. After Tim, John Parr tendered his apologies for playing us a piece which did not conform to the theme of the night, but no-one was bothered about that - it was good to see John overcoming those nerves and getting to the end of the piece in good order.

Our penultimate player was Gary Jordan, with the (repeated) Evocacion and Joropo, the final two sections of Merlin's Suite del Recuerdo. It seems that Gary and I have both taken a liking to this piece having heard Jason Vieaux play it on his Naxos recording, the difference between us being that Gary can play the piece.

The evening was brought to a close with Stephen Christmas in a very expressive rendition of Villa Lobos' Mazurka Choro from the Suite Bresillienne, including a short intro not found in the usual editions.

I found this to be one of the best meetings we've had in a good while, a credit to our members and their playing, and not least to their ability to find so many pieces by Antonio Lauro without more than one person wishing to play the same piece!

BGS News

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is on Sunday April 9th, usual time and place (7.30 at South Hill Park, in case there was any doubt).

This meeting is preparation for our visit to the Spanish Circle on Friday May 27th, plus some ensemble work, and hopefully we may be able to pull some ensemble(s) together for the Spanish Circle.

For anyone not familiar with the event, the Reading Spanish Circle are a group of students of the said language whose informal approach extends to enjoying Spanish

culture, on this occasion as performed by our Society with a variety of music with a Spanish (Latin American is perfectly acceptable) flavour.

We know from experience that this requires some putting together, hence the need for the advertised "preparation" at the next meeting. So if you'd like to play something at the Spanish Circle, then bring it along on April 9th.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Hopefully by the time you read this you will have paid your subscription, but just in case that's not so, then please send your cheque to Richard Butters or this will be the last newsletter you receive!

Web site of the month

Whilst following up some links on Lauro for this newsletter, I came across the following site:

<http://skills-bills.co.uk/CG4.htm>

Now I know that although Lauro is not everyone's cup of tea, some may think this to be in bad taste - if so, my apologies but if that's the case don't follow the link to the Index page and try exploring what else is on the site!

And Finally ...

Two beggars are sitting side by side on a street in Rome. One has a cross in front of him; the other one the Star of David. Many people go by and look at both beggars, but only put money into the hat of the beggar sitting behind the cross. A priest comes by, stops and watches throngs of people giving money to the beggar behind the cross, but none give to the beggar behind the Star of David. Finally, the priest goes over to the beggar behind the Star of David and says, "My poor fellow, don't you understand?? This is a Catholic country, this city is the centre Catholicism. People aren't going to give you money if you sit there with a Star of David in front of you, especially when you're sitting beside a beggar who has a cross. In fact, they would probably give to him just out of spite."

The beggar behind the 'Star of David' listened to the priest, turned to the other beggar with the cross and said: "Moishe, look who's trying to teach the Goldstein brothers about marketing."