

HAYDN • RODE • GIULIANI • CARULLI • Agustín Maruri (gtr); Alban Beikircher (vn);
Martina Horejsi¹ (va); Michael Kevin Jones² (vc) • EMEC 131 (68:40)

HAYDN ^{1,2}Quartet in D, op. 2/2. **RODE** ¹Trio in D. **GIULIANI** ²Serenade, op. 19. **CARULLI**
^{1,2}*Deux solos*, op. 207

The present CD is an exceedingly agreeable way to spend some time. The music is gracious and warm hearted, while the performances are richly satisfying. An album of chamber music with guitar inevitably focuses on the guitarist, even when he is not always the dominant member of the ensemble. Agustín Maruri is an extremely likable guitarist. His tone is light and glowing; his finger work produces a seamless legato. He conveys joy in his music making, which assists him in making everything he does sound easy. He tours internationally with cellist Michael Kevin Jones as half of the Jones Maruri duo, performing repertoire for those two instruments. Jones is a formidable cellist. I recommend his YouTube videos of highlights from Bach's Cello Suites, filmed in 2015 in Madrid. Jones has a full, firm tone, and his attacks make his articulation highly decisive. Even when he is not in a starring role in the present program, his firm musical foundation for his colleagues always is evident. The violinist on this CD, Alban Beikircher, is an eminent German musician. I strongly recommend his CD of Gabriel Fauré's complete music for violin and piano, featuring the splendid pianist and scholar Roy Howat. Beikircher's tone is solid and quite substantial; he plays with more determination than sweetness. When he becomes the leading voice in the present compositions, there is no doubting his authority. As for violist Martina Horejsi, all I know about her is that she has been active in Germany and can play up a storm. To have a quartet of such players performing music that is meant to be entertaining is luxury casting indeed.

The guitar part in the Haydn Quartet presented here originally was written for lute. According to the custom of the time, the work might equally have been called a divertimento. The guitar in it has a taste of the Austrian zither. An early work of Haydn, it exudes his warmth and charm. Maruri plays with a melting lyricism, blending beautifully with the heartfelt string playing. Jacques Pierre Rode's Trio is a recording premiere. Rode was a violin virtuoso, and that instrument along with the viola have the majority of the melodic material. The guitar in most senses is an accompanist. Beikircher's playing is especially sprightly, displaying graceful virtuosity in the manner of the *style galant*. Horejsi's woody sound is exploited to particular advantage. In Mauro Giuliani's Serenade, the balance between the three instruments is exquisite, giving Jones an opportunity to be heard to his best advantage. Beikircher plays here with an Italianate flair. There is a good period instruments recording of the Serenade by guitarist Richard Savino, violinist Monica Huggett, and cellist William Skeen, but it is not as spirited as the present account. Ferdinando Carulli's *Deux solos* is another recording premiere. Carulli himself was a guitarist, and that instrument dominates the work. Maruri manages to negotiate its manifold technical hurdles, without losing the basic warmth of his tone.

The CD's sound engineering is full and glowing, if a little over reverberant. To guitar aficionados, the appeal of this album will be self-evident. I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys chamber music with a smile on its face. **Dave Saemann**

HAYDN Quartet in D, Hob III/8. **RODE**. Guitar Trio in D. **GIULIANI**. Serenade, op. 19. **CARULLI** Two Guitar Solos, op. 207 in • Agustin Maruri (gtr); Alban Beikircher (vn); Martina Horejsi (va); Michael Kevin Jones (vc) • EMEC E-131

I feel I must begin by correcting a misrepresentation of one of the works on this disc, which in no way reflects on the performances. The first item on the program is identified as the Quartet in D Major, Hob III/8 (aka op. 2/2) by Haydn. In actuality it's one of Haydn's early string quartets and in that guise its original key is E Major, not D Major. The uncredited liner note author further obfuscates the issue by stating, "Although originally for lute, in its version for guitar, it has reached and obtained popularity." To give the writer the benefit of the doubt, I think what he or she meant to say—and what would have been more accurate—is that a D-Major version of the original quartet in which a lute replaces the first violin does exist, and that the version for guitar on the present CD is a transcription of that "original" lute transcription. In other words, the guitar version is a transcription of a transcription. I offer this clarification so that the reader will not be misled into believing that a work he is much more likely to encounter in its original form as a standard string quartet existed in an earlier scoring for lute. The author is correct, however, in stating that the piece has gained some popularity in its guitar setting, attested to by a number of recordings.

When it comes to the Trio in D Major for Guitar, Violin, and Viola by Pierre Rode. I have to take the claim at its word that this is its first ever recording. Rode, of course, was the famous French violin virtuoso who Beethoven custom tailored the finale of his final violin sonata for, the No. 10 in G Major, op. 96, to suit the taste and playing style of Rode, who gave the first performance with Beethoven's patron, the Archduke Rudolph, in December, 1812. Most of Rode's own compositions are for his own instrument—13 violin concertos and the 24 Caprices—which added to his fame as one of the great violinists of his day. But apparently, Rode did write a few pieces here and there for guitar, including the Polonaise for Flute and Guitar, recorded by Agustin Maruri and flutist Sabine Dreier on a prior Emec release.

Rode was born in 1744, exactly 12 years equidistant between Haydn, 1732, and Mozart 1756. I realize that certain words we might use to describe a piece of music are bound to diminish its significance and make it sound trivial. Such a word is "cute," but I really can't come up with a better word to describe Rode's trio. In style and spirit it sounds closer to Mozart than to Haydn, but it's Mozart in the bassinet. It's a charming little piece, but definitely lightweight.

With Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829) and Ferdinando Carulli (1770–1841), we're on more substantial ground when it comes to music for guitar. Both composers were first and foremost famous guitar virtuosos and important composers for the instrument. Carulli, in particular, was a highly prolific composer, writing over 400 works for guitar and a teaching system, *Méthode complète pour guitare ou lyre*, op. 27, which is still in use today used by students of the guitar.

The title of Carulli's Two Solos is a bit misleading, for the pieces are not for unaccompanied guitar, as one might expect. They are presented here in a version for guitar with violin, viola, and cello accompaniment, "accompaniment" being the operative word, as the guitar here is the star of the show, with the other instruments playing strictly supporting roles.

In 37:6, in quadruple headnote entries, I had the pleasure of reviewing one single CD album and two double-CD albums for a total of five discs by Agustin Maruri performing a wide

range of works for unaccompanied guitar, guitar with cello, and guitar with voice. Without reservation, I recommended all of them for the extraordinarily beautiful music they contained and for the extraordinarily beautiful playing by this exceptionally gifted artist.

Honesty compels me to say that I find the content of the current program not as compelling—in my opinion, none of these pieces is great or important music, let alone great or important music for the guitar—but Maruri's playing of it is such that I could listen to it forever. His supporting players make the very most of their modest parts. For guitar lovers, especially, and for the general listener, too, this can be enthusiastically recommended for the best there is in guitar playing, if not necessarily the best there is in music for the instrument. **Jerry Dubins**