

CLASS aktuell Magazine

Swapping Strings

From 1738 onward, the Italian Domenico Scarlatti, while living in Spain, composed more than five hundred sonatas for harpsichord that are flavored by Iberian temperament. That these works can also very well be performed on the modern guitar has been shown by the American guitarist and Spanish resident Stephen Marchionda, who has now recorded these works for the first time on a Super Audio CD.

Scarlatti wrote his sonatas mainly as practice pieces for his pupil Queen Maria Barbara. In many of these works he combined his early form of writing with the influences of the flamenco and other Spanish dance forms to shape his very own and personal style. It is thus startling how Scarlatti incorporated folk elements into his sonatas that were written for aristocratic settings - integrating and imitating everyday sound experiences.

The sixth child of an Italian family of musicians, Domenico Scarlatti spent the Spanish phase of his life at the royal residences in Madrid and Seville. Three hundred years later Stephen Marchionda caught the Scarlatti bug in Granada. This classical guitarist with both Italian and American passports was actually tracing the footsteps of the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla when a harpsichord sonata by Scarlatti caught his attention. Marchionda became so fascinated by these works that he decided to arrange some of them for the guitar.

The guitar is almost unrivalled in its status as the instrument of Spain. Scarlatti's works embody the temperament of the Iberian Peninsula with an unusual intensity. When combining these two elements with the highly virtuosic and colorful playing of Stephen Marchionda, we discover a totally different side to these wonderful works which, mostly, have not been recorded on the guitar before and which, however, sound as though they were meant to be performed on this instrument.