Antonio Manjon was born in Spain in 1866 and died in Buenos Aires in 1919. His music represented by this recording is typical salon music — quiet and intimate. The programme includes quite lengthy compositions of up to eight minutes’ duration, some short snippets of pieces and, interestingly, includes the composer’s first seven opus numbers.

Manjon’s compositions are ‘pleasant’ and that is about as much as I can stretch myself to say about them. There is nothing outstanding harmonically or lyrically and many of them begin to sound very similar to each other.

The performance by Ortiz is adequate, perhaps a little too cautious at times; he just plays the notes without much experiment with dynamics or phrasing.

To sum up: a programme of music not to get too excited about, but historically it is nice to have these pieces on disc.

Steve Marsh

GUITAR COLLECTION: SOR Complete Guitar Music Vol. 7
Jeffrey McFadden
Naxos 8 553451
From the cover painting by Goya to the excellent notes by Richard Long, Naxos has yet again offered a first rate package at a budget price. Add the stylish and brilliant playing by Canadian guitarist Jeffrey McFadden, winner of the GFA competition in 1992 and teacher at McMaster University and Royal Conservatory of Music and you have a bargain at any price!

Through the three ‘Introduction and Variations’ McFadden shows a clear, concise articulation with a virtuoso flair which adds sparkle and charm to the pieces. Slow movements are well paced, also demonstrating McFadden’s capacity for rhythmic nuance and tonal shading.

The studies, Opus 29, are some of Sor’s most demanding works. Those familiar with the Segovia ‘Twenty’ will recognise those chosen from this opus by the Spanish master. McFadden’s personal interpretation of those culled from this opus stand up well to other performances of these works. The famous B flat arpeggio study is played with a well articulated bass and attention to the inner voices that reveals the implicit polyphony of this charming piece. The C major polyphonic study (number 20 in Segovia’s edition) is refreshingly handled here, with emphasis on a graceful and balanced cantabile – rather than the somewhat ‘buffa’ style sometimes offered. The lesser known studies, including one entirely in natural harmonics, show Sor’s harmonic, melodic and guitaristic skills at their best.

The Fantasie et Variations Brillantes, Op. 30 is again handled expertly by McFadden, though I find this a less convincing work than the other pieces.

Played on modern guitar, the sound is well balanced and convincing. Highly recommended.

Peter Argondizza

20th CENTURY LATIN GUITAR WORKS
Brent Poe’

Down East
The American guitarist Brent Poe, so the cd booklet notes tell me, studied with Sharon Isbin and participated in masterclasses with Oscar Ghiglia and Hubert Kappel. The featured review quotes suggest that his playing displays sensitive lyricism, is technically flawless and that he plays with extreme delicacy, evoking rich resonances and provocative rhythms. Well, whether it’s the fault of the chosen repertoire I’m not sure, but few of these characteristics are evident in this recording. Certainly it may seem a little unwise programming the Brouwer, Albéniz, Villa-Lobos and Lauro items as however hard one tries to avoid direct comparison this is almost inevitable and I’m afraid Brent Poe does not come out of it too well.

By and large his technique is adequate although a number of buzzes, scuffly and uneven arpeg-
EL ABRAZO

Ignacio Lopez

EPSA Music

This is the eighth in the series ‘guitaras del mundo’ from EPSA Music and is quite a remarkable CD. Firstly, the playing by Ignacio Lopez is of the highest quality — musical; precise; passionate — he captures the mood of the music just about right every time.

Secondly, it has introduced (at least to me) a composer of worth in one Quique Sinesi, whose contribution to this programme is three pieces which are beautifully written for the guitar and quite enchanting.

Finally, it is so refreshing to have such a good, interesting and appealing programme of this length (22 pieces) made up of mainly ‘unknown’ pieces. Lopez proves he is also a composer who can stand easily alongside all other others on this list by including no less than five of his delightful originals. He is joined on the Gismonti, Machado and the Jobim pieces by the guitarist Francisco Gamallo, the Gismonti composition Agua e vinho being one of the many highlights of this recording.

This CD is an enchanting one from start to finish and will remain a rather special one for me for a long time. Highly recommended.

Steve Marsh

MESTRO ANTONIO J. MANJON
POR J. FRANCISCO ORTIZ

MANJON: Canto Andaluz, Recuerdos de mi patria, Aire Vasco, Por que, Serenata, La Mariposa, Une flor, Mazurka lirica, Gavotte Mathilde, Tu y yo, Balada, Lola, Capricho Criollo.
J. Francisco Ortiz
Grabado en Plectrum, Madrid. PLCD 012

Antonio Manjon was born in Spain in 1866 and died in Buenos Aires in 1919. His music represented by this recording is typical salon music — quiet and intimate. The programme includes quite lengthy compositions of up to eight minutes’ duration, some short snippets of pieces and, interestingly, includes the composer’s first opus numbers.

Manjon’s compositions are ‘pleasant’ and that is about as much as I can stretch myself to say about them. There is nothing outstanding harmonically or lyrically and many of them begin to sound very similar to each other.

The performance by Ortiz is adequate, perhaps a little too cautious at times; he just plays the notes without much experiment with dynamics or phrasing.

To sum up: a programme of music not to get too excited about, but historically it is nice to have these pieces on disc.

Steve Marsh

GUITAR COLLECTION: SOR

Complete Guitar Music (Vol. 7)


Jeffrey McFadden

Naxos 8 553451

From the cover painting by Goya to the excellent notes by Richard Long, Naxos has yet again offered a first rate package at a budget price. Add the stylish and brilliant playing by Canadian guitarist Jeffrey McFadden, winner of the GFA competition in 1992 and teacher at McMaster University and Royal Conservatory of Music and you have a bargain at any price!

Through the three ‘Introduction and Variations’ McFadden shows a clear, concise articulation with a virtuoso flair which adds sparkle and charm to the pieces. Slow movements are well paced, also demonstrating McFadden’s capacity for rhythmic nuance and tonal shading.

The studies, Opus 29, are some of Sor’s most demanding works. Those familiar with the Segovia ‘Twenty’ will recognise those chosen from this opus by the Spanish master. McFadden’s personal interpretation of those culled from

this opus stand up well to other performances of these works. The famous B flat arpeggio study is played with a well articulated bass and attention to the inner voices that reveals the implicit polyphony of this charming piece. The C major polyphonic study (number 20 in Segovia’s edition) is refreshingly handled here, with emphasis on a graceful and balanced cantabile — rather than the somewhat ‘buffa’ style sometimes offered. The lesser known studies, including one entirely in natural harmonics, show Sor’s harmonic, melodic and guitaristic skills at their best.

The Fantasie et Variations Brillantes, Op. 30 is again handled expertly by McFadden, though I find this a less convincing work than the other pieces.

Played on modern guitar, the sound is well balanced and convincing. Highly recommended.

Peter Argondizza

20th CENTURY LATIN GUITAR WORKS


Brent Poe

Down East

The American guitarist Brent Poe, so the the CD booklet notes tell me, studied with Sharon Isbin and participated in masterclasses with Oscar Ghiglia and Hubert Kappel. The featured review quotes suggest that his playing displays sensitive lyricism, is technically flawless and that he plays with extreme delicacy, evoking rich resonances and provocative rhythms. Well, whether it’s the fault of the chosen repertoire I’m not sure, but few of these characteristics are evident in this recording. Certainly it may seem a little unwise programming the Brouwer, Albeniz, Villa-Lobos and Lauro items as however hard one tries to avoid direct comparison this is almost inevitable and I’m afraid Brent Poe does not come out of it too well.

By and large his technique is adequate although a number of buzzes, scuffly and uneven arpeg-