

terms ‘my ancient Greiff lute’ proving a subtly compelling vehicle for what emerges as a gently persuasive musical offering. Satoh has an admirable track record in seeking out worthy yet easily overlooked areas of the repertoire, his 1978 boxed set of LPs on Telefunken providing what was then a rare showcase for Gallot, Mouton and a brace of Gaultiers. And, on a more headline-grabbing note, let it never be forgotten that Satoh’s 1990 CD on Channel Classics containing the Chaconne from BWV 1004 predates Nigel North’s deservedly revered lute recordings of the complete Bach violin sonatas and partitas by several years.

In drawing a distinction between Bach as ‘an extremely gifted composer’ and Reusner as ‘just a lutenist’, Satoh is perhaps stating the obvious, but his generosity towards the more humble figure of Reusner is what brings this music to life. Despite a plentiful but never excessive dose of ornamentation, the transparency of Reusner’s language is respected and retained throughout. Perhaps the prevailing quality of Satoh’s interpretations is their ever-present sense of space. Every note is allowed to breathe, to an extent that the listener is not only conscious of where it starts, but also where it stops.

Finally, for the benefit of long-haul Reusner spotters, it’s worth mentioning Satoh’s footnote to the effect that the Suite in G minor is taken from ‘the handwritten supplement to Reusner’s *Neue Lauten-Früchte* that is kept in Berlin (Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz Mus. Ms. 18380)’, the other three suites apparently being drawn from the main body of the same work.

Paul Fowles

Dos estrellas lo siguen: 17th century xacaras and dances. Musica Ficta. Centaur CRC 3501 www.centaurrecords.com

The xacaras is perhaps the most characteristic of the dance-songs which form the basis of so much Spanish and Latin-American music of the 17th century, both secular and sacred, vocal and instrumental. Originally it seems to have been performed in the theatre between the acts of a play and often took the form of a dialogue between low-life ruffianly characters. As the devil has all the best tunes, it was soon appropriated by the Church and the more conservative musical establishment. It is based on a four-bar measure in triple time alternating a minor tonic chord with its dominant

and not surprisingly, castanets and the baroque guitar play an indispensable rôle. This CD includes Juan Hidalgo’s ‘Nobel en Tinacria naciste’ from his opera *Celos aun del aire matan*, [from which a Spanish song in the Ghent MSS, pp. 13–14 above, also comes!—Ed] the well-known Christmas xacara ‘Los que fueren de buen gusto’ by Francisco del Vidales and the anonymous ‘No hay que decirle’ and several purely instrumental versions by Sanz, Santa Cruz, Martin y Coll and of course Anon. The chacona runs the xacaras a pretty close second in popularity with two vocal versions—Arañes’ irresistible ‘Sarao de la chacona’ and the anonymous ‘Oh que bien que bail Gil’, and an instrumental version based on Sanz. The piece which gives the disc its title is actually based on the folia, as are the variations from Michel Faronel’s *Division flute* (1706) and a keyboard version by Cabanilles. Something to please everyone.

Musica Ficta are a small Colombian group comprising singer, Jairo Serrano, who also presides over the percussion section; recorder player, Carlos Serrano; Julián Navarro playing baroque guitar and jarana; and Elizabeth Wright at the harpsichord. They are joined in some of the pieces by two more singers, Andres Silva and Antonio Santos, and Daniel Zuluaga playing the theorbo. I had not come across the group before but I was quite bowled over by their vitality and very obvious enthusiasm for everything that they performed. I thought the singing throughout was superb. Jairo Serrano has just the right degree of edginess and flamboyance without ever sounding coarse and exhibits stunning virtuosity in the complex rhythms which are as much a feature of the vocal music as the instrumental pieces. He is well supported by the other singers in the ensemble pieces in which the three voices were ideally blended with perfect intonation. The recorder playing was stunning—there is no other word for it—and it was a real pleasure to hear keyboard versions of some of the pieces which tend to attract less attention. The three pluckers had less opportunity to shine personally but provided the perfect background to all of the pieces. Full marks to whoever compiled the liner notes. Details of all the sources from which the pieces are taken are meticulously cited. The elaborate arrangements are presumably the work of the group and were varied and imaginative without being too over the top. A very enjoyable disc. I hope there will be further opportunities to hear the group perform this repertoire in the not-too-distant future.

Monica Hall