

Moussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition;*
STEVENSON: *Don Quixote*
Kontaxakis-Ivanovich Guitar Duo
Da Vinci 1041—58 minutes

The guitar's range is limited to about 4 octaves, and this presents a significant challenge when transcribing. Their photo shows them holding 2 standard, 6-string guitars, but some movements, such as 'Bydlo', have a definitely bass-enhanced scordatura.

The Duo has done its homework—harmonies are clearly preserved, as in 'Il Vecchio Castillo' with its throbbing bass pulsations.

Midway through the 'Promenade I', well-recorded crystalline harmonics are played with pristine clarity, making excellent use of the guitar's extended high range. Immaculate ensemble playing brings 'Gnomus' to life, and the delicate arrangement and unified performance of 'Tuilleries' is spot on. The 'Ballet of the Chicks in their Eggshells' offers a welcome contrast to the heavy 'Bydlo' movement and makes effective use of antiphonal writing. The musical contrast between the busy 'Market in Limoges' and the succeeding, very dark 'Catacombs' is musically stunning. The concluding movement sounds like 4 guitars with its thick, high-energy textures. All in all, this is an excellent arrangement. One comes away with a sense that they have been treated to this exhibition by first-rate musicians.

The other major work on this recording, this one expressly composed for guitar duo, is Scottish composer Ronald Stevenson's (1928-2015) *Don Quixote and Sancho Panza*, written in 1983. Its 17 movements are grouped into 3 large sections, each written for virtuosic performers using a variety of guitar techniques. One hears moments of contemporary writing that are not too far "out-there" mingled with beautifully touching moments where the duo plays as one.

Recording quality is excellent, as are the liner notes.

MCCUTCHEON

ERROR

In a book review in the last issue, Stokowski's death got listed as 2007. He died in 1977; it was Rostropovich who died in 2007. These were the two major subjects in the book, but somehow we connected the date to the wrong one.

MOZART: *Arias & Songs*

Andre Schuen, bar; Nikola Hillebrand, s; Avi Avital, mandolin; Daniel Heide, p; Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg/ Roberto Gonzalez-Monjas—DG 4867186—66 minutes

The title of this album is simply Andre Schuen—Mozart. The baritone designed the program as a synopsis of his "personal journey with Mozart's music". The album celebrates Schuen's deep and enduring relationship with the music of Mozart and Salzburg, where Schuen's career began. His selections are ordered smartly in a way that reflects his career of singing Mozart: excerpts from *Marriage of Figaro*, *Magic Flute*, and *Don Giovanni*, the concert aria 'Mentre ti Lascio', 3 works for voice and piano, and another with mandolin accompaniment. Everything flows well from one piece to the next.

The program begins with 3 excerpts from *Figaro*. Figaro was Schuen's first major operatic role, and the album begins with his aria 'Non piu Andrai' as he chastises Cherubino for being an "amorous butterfly". The recitative, 'Tutto e Disposto', offers a smooth and helpful transition from that to Figaro's aria 'Aprite un po' Quegl' Occhi' as he launches into a rant about the fickleness of love. That leads into 'Abendempfindung' with Schuen's longstanding partner Daniel Heide as pianist. It sounds like it was written to go there and serves as a commentary on the challenges of love. As Heide points out, it has to be sung "very soulfully", which Schuen achieves sublimely with tender shaping of the text.

That great song flows elegantly into the concert aria 'Mentre ti Lascio, O Figlia' where a father bids a sad farewell to his daughter. Next comes a short cantata intended for Masonic use, 'Die ihr des Unermesslichen Weltalls Schöpfer Ehrt'. It has no direct connection to *Magic Flute*, but its Masonic theme serves as a fitting transition to the duet with soprano Nikola Hillebrand, 'Bei Männern Welche Liebe Fühlen', and Papageno's aria 'Der Vogelfänger bin Ich Ja'. Schuen sounds wonderful in whatever he sings, but Papageno is not a role that fits him as well.

Schuen sings Leporello's aria from *Don Giovanni*, 'Madamina, il Catalogo e Questo', and has great fun coloring his voice suggestively at the end. There is a similar boastful