



Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Classical Guitarist

By Tim Smith

After the large-scale and weighty issues of Verdi's Requiem, William Kanengiser's recital for the Baltimore Classical Guitar Society provided a welcome balance Saturday night.

A member of the popular Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, Kanengiser affirmed his credentials as a soloist in an imaginative program at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

The intimacy of the classical guitar forces the ear to listen differently — and harder. The experience is akin to eavesdropping. Within the limits of volume, though, the range of expression is enormous, for composers as well as guitarists.

To begin, Kanengiser highlighted three contemporaries of Beethoven who helped

develop the instrument's potential. He articulated Fernando Sor's Elegiac Fantasy with particular sensitivity and neatly caught the rhythmic snap of a Fandango by Dionysio Aguado. There were some blurry moments in an arrangement of Rossini opera excerpts by Mauro Giuliani, but the spirit, especially in the trademark Rossini crescendos, came through vividly.

Contemporary pieces filled the second half. Brian Head's Sketches for Friends had the guitarist doing animated country and jazz riffs. And in Carlo Domeniconi's fascinating, Turkish-flavored Koyunbaba, which uses nonstandard tuning, Kanengiser captured the exotic atmosphere in subtly virtuosic fashion.

B E S E N  A R T S

Star-Telegram

Fort Worth, Texas

Friday, February 6, 2004

Guitarist Kanengiser “Just Right”

By Punch Shaw
Special to the Star-Telegram

FORT WORTH — William Kanengiser may be best known as one-fourth of the popular Los Angeles Guitar Quartet, but he proved himself to be a very whole artist in his Fort Worth Classic Guitar Society performance at PepsiCo Recital Hall on Thursday night.

To be truly successful, a classical guitar concert needs three basic elements: impressive playing (of course), an appealing program and a good rapport between the performer and the audience.

Kanengiser, who juggles his quartet work with a busy solo career and teaching at the University of Southern California, excelled on all three fronts.

His approach to his instrument was as highly virtuosic as would be expected, but it was also infused with a joy of playing and love for his material that made every piece special in some way.

The program of pieces he put together was inspired. The first half was composed of works by Spanish composers spanning three centuries. The Sonata in D minor by Santiago de Murcia, which brought Scarlatti to mind, and a trio of works by Joaquin Rodrigo were

among the standouts in the concert’s first half, which Kanengiser played on a Spanish guitar.

There hasn’t been an event with this much “just right” since Goldilocks broke into the Three Bears’ house.

After intermission, the guitarist turned to four works by 20th century American composers and one by a Slavic composer (Dusan Bogdanovic) employing American jazz styles, which he performed on an American-made guitar (talk about sticking to a theme).

All were clever and engaging, but his take on the standard *My Funny Valentine*, arranged by Gene Bertocini, was the best of the bunch.

And finally, Kanengiser’s stage demeanor added a great deal to the overall quality of the performance. His comments between numbers were witty, informative and never went on too long.

Indeed, there hasn’t been an event with this much “just right” since Goldilocks broke into the Three Bears’ house.

B E S E N  A R T S

CLASSICAL GUITAR

January 2004

Classical Cool

You do not have to be in the jazz fraternity to appreciate the expertise, which has gone into the making of this disc. The arrangements, the original compositions, the sound production, the packaging and the performance are all of a standard-setting level. This is top class stuff with an enjoyment factor of 100 per cent.

There is so much expertise gone into not only the playing of this music by Bill Kanengiser, but also the writing. Witness for instance the opening track by Andrew York, *Freelin*, which illustrates the excitement which can be achieved by a combining of classical and jazz styles. Also the sensuousness of the next track by Fred Hand, the opening chord of which sounds amazingly like the beginning of the previous composer's most famous work *Sunburst* — was that a neat bit of planning or what? And also Roland Dyens's thrilling setting of the classic *All the Things You Are* which blends Bartok, Django and a hint of baroque in an astonishing arrangement.

So much more could be said about this brilliant new release but by now you hopefully will get the picture. Using the 'Desert Island Discs' ideology, if a person could have eight guitar recordings only then this should be in that list somewhere.

Very highly recommended.

Steve Marsh

B E S E N  A R T S

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Monday, October 13, 2003

Guitarist charms audience

By SARAH BRYAN MILLER

Post-Dispatch Classical Music Critic

Guitarist William Kanengiser is a likable performer, with an easy, friendly manner on stage and an impressive facility on his instrument. On Saturday night he returned to play at the Ethical Society, under the auspices of the St. Louis Classical Guitar Society, and charmed a full house.

The first half of his program was made up of reasonably traditional works of the Spanish repertoire: "The Miller's Dance," from Manuel de Falla's "Three-Cornered Hat," was played in Kanengiser's own transcription and was a tour de force to open his concert.

From there, he moved to the "Fandango," Op. 16, of Dionisio Aguado (1784-1849), generally well-played although with a few muffled notes; and to the Sonata in D minor by Santiago de Murcia (c. 1685-1732), a delicate, lovely work performed with grace and beauty.

Kanengiser's arrangement of the Bach Chaconne, from the Partita No. 2, BWV 1004, proved most satisfying: It's a gorgeous piece, and the guitarist played it to perfection.

He opened the second half with three short works by Joaquin Rodrigo: "En los Triguales," "Tiento Antiguo" and "Fandango." Rodrigo was one of the greatest composers of all time for the Spanish guitar, and these showed his range, with the "Fandango" proving especially enjoyable.

From there, Kanengiser moved into more contemporary, jazzier works and instantly seemed a degree more engaged in what he was doing. These ranged from Fred Hand's "Missing Her," a lightweight but pleasantly melancholy tune, to "The Book of Unknown Standards" by Dusan Bodganovic, a set of five quirky pieces with dashes of humor throughout.

Gene Bertocini's impressionistic arrangement of Richard Rodgers' "My Funny Valentine" had amusingly baroque touches, while Brian Head's "Brookland Boogie" brought the recital to a happy close.

B E S E N  A R T S

SOUNDBOARD

October 2003

Classical Cool

Fans of the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet know that their “first guitarist” Bill Kanengiser is a true virtuoso, but did you know that he was “cool”? According to the title of his new CD on the GSP label, he is cool and so is classical guitar. “Classical Cool,” subtitled “Jazz Currents for Classical Guitar” puts Bill’s solo guitar virtuosity to the test with original tunes and arrangements of jazz standards. The album starts off with the first of two originals by bandmate Andy York, ‘Freelin.’ ” The other York piece was written for fellow LAGQ’er John Dearman, and is called “Blues for J.D.” Fred Hand’s gorgeous ballad, “Missing Her” was updated for this CD with an “improv solo” that is indeed cool. Three jazz standards from Gershwin, Rodgers & Hart and Jerome Kern receive nice arrangements, but I much prefer the original music on this CD, especially Dusan Bogdanovic’s “Book of the Unknown Standard.” This is a great suite of tributes to jazz pioneers like Thelonius Monk, Bill Evans and Miles Davis. Bill recorded Brian Head’s “Sketches for Friends” once before and here he revisits afresh the finale, “Brookland Boogie,” to great effect. Jazz pianist John Harmon’s “Jack-Leg” is, to quote Bill, “a countrified bluesy stomp.” This wonderful new CD concludes with Bogdanovic’s Lento movement from “Jazz Sonata,” a fitting end to an outstanding recording.

—John Clayton

B E S E N  A R T S

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Monday, January 17, 2000

The St. Louis Classical Guitar Society

By Christian C. Rix

Special To The Post-Dispatch

The St. Louis Classical Guitar Society scored another notable success Saturday night with the latest installment in its Great Artist Series. William Kanengiser showed both virtuosity and steel-fingered endurance in a concert exploring repertory that was outside the expected guitar favorites. The Ethical Society hall overflowed as an enthusiastic audience crowded in for the performance.

Kanengiser started with two of his own arrangements of other works, jumping right in with the Sonata in D by Santiago de Murcia. He used this as a showcase for a measured, translucent and restrained technique. The next selection was the guitarist's rendition of the well-known Piano Sonata in A, K. 331, by Mozart. As the artist himself noted, it is virtually impossible to make this piece entirely manageable for guitar. Throughout this virtuoso tour de force, the piano notes resound unbidden in the listener's head and the guitar is hampered by a certain lack of resonance. Still the result was surprisingly successful.

The concert then fast-forwarded about 200 years to the late 20th century for "Koyunbaba," a guitar work in the Turkish style by Domeniconi. The style here is altogether dif-

ferent from what the Western ear is accustomed to. It is cooler and less inviting yet with an air of mystic fascination.

*a relaxed playful, manner ...
controlled, intense playing.*

For many performers, the works covered in the first half (particularly the demanding K. 331 transcription) might have almost constituted a complete concert, but Kanengiser still had far more territory to cover. The contemporary "Assertions/Reflections" by Sebastian Currier was a striking piece that brought to mind how a guitar might be used in a suspense film. The concert then veered off in yet another direction — to the Caribbean — with works by Brouwer and Cordero, and then wound up in Europe with a presentation of Rossini arias by Giuliani.

Kanengiser has a relaxed, playful manner with an audience that contrasts with his controlled, intense playing. Going beyond mere virtuoso performance, his lively choice of repertory would please an audience that was indifferent or even hostile to his instrument.

B E S E N  A R T S

Los Angeles Times

Monday, September 8, 1997

Seductive Sounds Fill Night Air

MUSIC REVIEW

By **SUSAN BLISS**
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

IRVINE—It threatened to be an evening of dutiful run-throughs of timeworn favorites, but music director Carl St. Clair drew enough fresh-faced readings from the Pacific Symphony on Saturday night to leave an impression of heady sensuality and flirtations fun.

Throughout the concert, infectious rhythms of Spanish dances filled the air at Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre. Some of these were the interpretations of native composers. Others, like Chabrier's "España"—heard here in a crisp, colorful performance—were the creations of foreign admirers.

Guitarist William Kanengiser breathed steamy life into Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez," with seductive attention to pacing and shading in the work's flamenco-inspired figurations. The USC faculty member brought sophisticated technique to serve an astute sense of style and keen ability to communicate.

His sultry allure found a partner in Barbara Northcutt's English horn solo, for the Adagio. After the concerto, Kanengiser impressed with his virtuoso arrangement of "The Miller's Dance" from "The Three-Cornered Hat," by Manuel de Falla.

B E S E N  A R T S