

Cleveland Classical Guitar Society: Judicaël Perroy at Plymouth (Apr. 27)

by David Kulma



The final concert of the Cleveland Classical Guitar Society's International Series at Plymouth Church on Saturday, April 27 kept the audience on its toes in the best way possible. The fantastic guitar virtuoso Judicaël Perroy chose an unexpected route through his repertoire, nevermind the printed program.

Listed first was the Prelude and Fugue from J.S. Bach's *Lute Suite No. 2*,

BWV 997, arranged by Tilman Hoppstock. But after Perroy easily managed this complex music with smooth poise, he immediately launched into its gorgeous Sarabande and its Gigue with virtuosic Double. His Bach was breathtakingly calm and clear.

Next on the program was to have been a work by Fernando Sor, but instead Perroy moved directly into Johann Kaspar Mertz's *Fantaisie Hongroise*, Op. 65, No. 1. He played this flashy mid-19th-century Romantic showpiece with great virtuosity and precision, emphasizing its drama and songfulness.

Finally speaking from the stage, Perroy informed everyone about his program reordering. Ending the first half with Sor's *Fantaisie élégiaque*, Op. 59, he gave an immaculate reading of this upright, yet mournful work written after the death of Sor's former student and friend, Madame Beslay, née Levasseur. The funeral march was powerful with its restrained repeated chords under the slow yearning melody.

After intermission, Perroy confirmed which movements he was about to perform from Villa-Lobos's *Suite populaire brésilienne*. The delightfully Chopinesque "Mazurka-Choro" and "Valsa-Choro" were rhythmically supple in just the right way to make these dance forms sing.

The landmark work of the evening was by Antonio José, who died an early death by firing squad in fascist Spain. His *Guitar Sonata* is one of his most well-known works. Outstanding among the four movements are the beautiful “Pavana triste” and the perpetual motion “Final.” Perroy masterfully shaped the whole work as an artist fully in tune with its aesthetic.

Albéniz’s “Sevilla,” transcribed by Manuel Barrueco, was to bring the concert to a close, but Perroy announced he would play transcriptions of two piano preludes in its place: Scriabin’s Prelude for the left hand, Op. 9 and Sergei Rachmanninoff’s famous g-minor Prelude, Op. 23, No. 5. The Scriabin was fittingly yearning, while the pounding Rachmaninoff was delightfully amusing while remaining imposingly virtuosic.

In a concert of enjoyable twists and turns, Perroy’s first encore was an amazing reading of “Sevilla.” He came back for a second one: the third of Antonio Lauro’s *4 Valses venezolanos*. Perroy might not have stuck with his program, but each change made an already wonderful concert better.

As an opening act for the concert, guitar student Kadirah McJunkins gave an assured take on Leo Brouwer’s “Etude No. 1” from his *Estudios Sencillos*. Giving students short performance opportunities on this series is one of the Guitar Society’s best ideas.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com May 7, 2019.

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