



ART UNDER PRESSURE



Concert Review

by William Gooch

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Peter Fletcher

Live at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall
on March 27

The mark of a true artist is the ability to create art under pressure, in spite of unusual circumstances. Peter Fletcher is just that type of artist. On March 27, at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Peter Fletcher was able to continue to display his incredible virtuosic dexterity in spite of having to play on two borrowed guitars after his instrument broke during the first half of his performance. With just a small delay, Mr. Fletcher continued without a hitch to delight audiences with not only his virtuosic acuity, but also the depth and variety of a repertoire that ranged from cerebral, complex Baroque melodies to transcribed Satie and Grieg selections. With the exception of Silvius Leopold Weiss' "Passacaille," surprisingly, there were no Spanish-themed compositions on the program. But there didn't need to be. Fletcher ingeniously inserted richly textured, bravura selections by modern composers Nikita Koshkin and Carlo Domeniconi.

Peter Fletcher handled Bach's difficult presto from "Lute Suite BWV 996 in E Minor" with adroit authority. Based on patterned Baroque court dances, this seminal work flows from the rapidly paced presto and concludes with the buoyant gigue.

Fletcher also included in the first part of his program Elias Reusner's "Paduana" (from Suite No. 4) and Silvius Leopold Weiss' "Passacaille." Although these two works appear on the *Peter Fletcher Plays Baroque Guitar* CD, the relatively unknown Reusner and Weiss had not been recorded since the mid-1960s. Fletcher brings a soft, lyrical quality to Reusner's almost devotional-sounding "Paduana." Weiss' "Passacaille," which follows the varied freer upper melodic pattern sustained by a repetitive harmonic bass anchor characteristic of passacaglias, is accentuated by Fletcher's passionate approach to this rarely heard work.

Of the pieces in the second half of the program, Erik Satie's "Rêverie du pauvre (Gnossienne)" was perhaps the most well-known because of its association with the movie *Chocolat*. By transcribing this music to the guitar, Fletcher is able to shade this work with a totally different patina. The Greek-sounding harmonies are stronger and more obvious, and the contrapuntal qualities more vibrant.

Nikita Koshkin's "Usher Waltz, Op. 29" (after Edgar Allan Poe) is reminiscent of Maurice Ravel's "La Valse." Koshkin's lush, sweeping waltz melodies flow into intricate, pyrotechnical flourishes that show off Fletcher's incredible gift of making the difficult become dramatically exciting. Carlo Domeniconi's technically complicated "Koyumbaba, Op. 19 evokes images of Middle Eastern pastoral scenes. In this polyrhythmic, bravura composition, Fletcher serenades the ear with various melodies happening at the same time, creating the aural illusion of two instruments.

Although Peter Fletcher's appearance at Weill Recital Hall was a one-night affair, New York audiences gladly anticipate his return. Only an artist of his integrity and commitment would continue to perform brilliantly with a borrowed instrument on one of the world's premier concert stages, after a mishap. Bravo Peter!!

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