



BROUWER AND SANLÚCAR PREMIÈRES AT KOBLENZ INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

A Report by THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA



PHOTOS: THÉRÈSE WASSILY SABA

Manuel Barrueco with the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, conducted by Garrett Keast.

THE 21ST Koblenz International Guitar Festival & Academy featured three important premières in its concert series: Costas Cotsiolis played the première of Leo Brouwer's third solo sonata for guitar called *Sonata del Decameron Negro*, Zoran Dukic played the première of *Sonata No. 4 (homenaje a Luis Milan)* by Carlo Domeniconi and Manuel Barrueco played the German première of Manolo Sanlúcar's flamenco concerto called *Medea* with the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, conducted by the Berlin-based American conductor Garrett Keast at the Rhein-Mosel Halle on Friday 17 May 2013.

The flamenco guitarist and composer Manolo Sanlúcar originally wrote *Medea* for the Ballet Nacional de España which they premièred in Madrid on 13 July 1984. On 2 October 2002 Manolo Sanlúcar premièred a new version of *Medea* for two guitars and orchestra at the Maestranza in Seville; he performed it with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Malaga, conducted by Leo Brouwer. For this solo guitar and orchestra

version, Manolo Sanlúcar gave Manuel Barrueco the freedom to create a suite of pieces from the full version with six movements: *Obertura, Reencuentro y Desencuentro, Seducción, Conjuro, La Venganza and Fiesta*. Apart from the flamenco style, there are influences from North African and Arabic music, particularly in the colourful use of percussion.

Manuel Barrueco's interpretation was strong and powerful – still comfortably in the classical genre, while capturing the essential beauty its the flamenco forces. The performance was part of the 'Friday Night for Guitar & Orchestra' concert, which also presented Goran Krivokapic, who gave a very musical performance of the *Concierto de*



Costas Cotsiolis and Pavel Steidl.



Roberto Aussel.



Alvaro Pierri.

Aranjuez by Joaquín Rodrigo, which received a standing ovation.

Costas Cotsiolis's première of the *Sonata del Decameron Negro* by Leo Brouwer on 18 May 2013, was preceded by a well-presented lecture about 'Leo Brouwer and his Music'. Costas Cotsiolis has known and worked with Leo Brouwer for over 30 years, so his stories and understanding of Leo Brouwer's music are invaluable. He played a number of recordings to illustrate his points, in particular the *Omaggio a Paganini*, a double concerto for guitar and violin, written for Costas Cotsiolis and the violinist Isele Rodríguez Trujillo, and the guitar concerto *Concierto de Volos* also written for Cotsiolis. Not only was the lecture and the music inspiring but it was held in the newly-refurbished Rhein-Mosel-Halle recital room, which has floor to ceiling windows, looking out on the beautiful Rhein river and its luscious green surroundings. The *Sonata del Decameron Negro* is in four movements: *Guijes y Gnomos* – with references to the music of Luis Milan, *Treno por Oya* – with an arch form building to a fast and furious in the centre, the scherzo *Burlesca del Aire* with quotes from Tárrega, and the final movement called *La Risa de los Griots*. Costas Cotsiolis said that for Brouwer, 'to compose is to

communicate' and this Sonata achieves that brilliantly.

Roberto Aussel's opening night concert began with four well-known dances from Praetorius's *Terpsichore* but with such refined interpretation, that these pieces were elevated from their simple dance status. The beauty of Aussel's tone quality was outstanding throughout the concert; he also played a *Sonata* by Zamboni, Scarlatti Sonatas. The subtle inflections in the rhythmic pulse of Piazzolla's *Cinco piezas para guitarra*, which were written for Roberto Aussel, were so appropriate, unique and masterful. Aussel's approach to the pieces by Atahualpa Yupanqui were no less captivating.

Marcin Dylla's concert on the following evening was equally inspiring but in a completely different way. He began with a very poetic performance of Ponce's *Sonata Romantica*, all played with a light touch and in a relaxed style. Marcin Dylla always has a substantial contemporary work in his programme; this year the piece is *Mano a Mano* by the Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg. It is a piece with a relentless, fast-moving flood of notes, which requires the stamina and musicianship of a player such as Marcin Dylla to sustain the thread of ideas successfully. His

playing of *Lieder* by Schubert was superb and Marcin Dylla ended with a sensitive and very musical performance of *Valses Poeticos* by Granados.

It was a week of unforgettable concerts and encores, each performer had a strongly individual style but all with a superior level of musicianship. Alvaro Pierri gave such an excellent performance of Sor's *Sonata*, Op. 22 that one felt that he had transformed it into a piano Sonata and had all the facilities of ten fingers at his disposal. His melodies sang with a beautiful tone quality and his playing was gentle and understated but always clear. And thus he continued with an ethereal performance of *Jazz Sonatina* by Dusan Bogdanovic. Manuel Ponce's



Marcin Dylla.



Hubert Kappel's Delos Trio.

Sonata III appeared on many programmes during the festival and each time it was played so well, that it was a pleasure to hear it repeated.

This is the first year that Judicaël Perroy gave an evening recital, although he has been a welcome regular in the 4pm concert series. He gave very good performances of *Sonata No. 3* and *Variations from 'La Folia de Espana'* both by Ponce and also introduced us to a work by Johann Dubez (1828–1891), who had been a student of Mertz. These were contrasted with fine his performances of *Saturnal*, the first movement from *Cadran Lunaire* (1981–82) by Maurice Ohana and *Equinox* (1993) by Toru Takemitsu. It was a pleasure to hear these two distinctive works together – each with their own atmosphere, written by very different composers. After a number of encores, he finally played *Prelude and Fugue* from Bach's *Prelude, Fugue and Allegro*.

A new venue used this year was the Kreuzkirche, a modern church built with a circular structure, on top of hill in Ehrenbrestein, which offers wonderful views of the city from the terrace, where wine and fine food was served between the two concerts. The first concert was given by the Delos Trio Koln, with Gudrun Hobold (violin), Dietmar Berger (cello) and Hubert Käppel on guitar, who gave an energetic and vibrant performance fine quality but rarely heard works: *Divertimento in C* by Josef Haydn, the *Adagio* from *Serenata, Op. 19* by Mauro Giuliani and *Trio in D* by Niccolò Paganini, as well as the *Trio in G* by the Spanish composer Isidro de Laporta (1750–1829). The second concert was a solo recital by David Russell. He gave a fine performance of *Rossiniana No. 3* by Giuliani, two sonatas by Scarlatti, *Valses Poeticos*

by Granados and works by Barrios; his tone quality and musical phrasing was absolutely engaging, musically technically and spiritually. With such excellent performances, it seemed appropriate to have these two concerts in front of the altar of the church.

In the series of 4pm recitals, which were held in the smaller concert room of the Rhein-Mosel Halle with views of the Rhein, the Croatian guitarist Zoran Anic performed for the first time at the Koblenz Festival. His performance was a little nervous to begin with, but he had been forced to travel without his own guitar from Croatia because of airline problems and had to play on a borrowed guitar. Goran Krivokapic was clearly having a busy week, performing both with orchestra and giving a solo 4pm recital; the change in solo programme involved reading from an unruly score, which would not remain on the music stand, but as always, he gave an excellent performance of works by Ponce and Gerard Drozd.

Zoran Dukic played works by Barrios and Albéniz very expressively as well as the première of the melancholic *Sonata No. 4 (homenaje a Luis Milan)* written for him by Carlo Domeniconi. Another contemporary piece was the one-movement *Adagio*,

Op. 44 by Gerard Drozd in homage to J. S. Bach. Zoran Dukic's concert ended with a noticeably non-British and heavy-handed approach to Malcolm Arnold's *Fantasy*.

Pavel Steidl played pieces by aristocratic Bohemian composers from the early eighteenth century and works by Mertz, Paganini and Zani de Feranti. His performance, as always, was full of dramatic expression, not only in his playing but also visually. His moving encore was dedicated to his father, who had died just days before.

There was a warm atmosphere in the public masterclasses which were well-attended by both students and audience, all eager to hear the gems of wisdom from the performers: Konrad Ragossnig, David Russell, Manuel Barrueco, Shin-ichi Fukuda, Alvaro Pierri, Marcin Dylla, Judicaël Perroy and Zoran Dukic. Goran Krivokapic gave a public masterclass with the students performing Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, accompanied by the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie, conducted by Garrett Keast. This was followed by the final examinations for the Koblenz International Guitar Academy, which has the *Concierto de Aranjuez* as a set piece for the Soloist Diploma Examination. Raul Arturo Gutierrez (Mexico), Unai Insausti Eguia (Spain) and Davide di Ienno (Italy) all took their examination and passed.

On the Saturday, Monika Dawidek (oboe) and Russell Poyner (guitar) gave a lunchtime at the Liebfrauenkirche in central Koblenz. Monika Dawidek has a beautiful tone and the duo worked well together, performing a *Sonata* by Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752), a *Sonata* by Arcangelo Corelli and, for a lighter contrast, some Piazzolla and the tango *La Cumparsita*.



The jury of the Koblenz International Guitar Competition.



Gunter Schillings and the Junior Academy at the Kurfürstliches Schloss.



David Russell with Georg Schmitz.

The Finals of the Koblenz International Guitar Competition 'Hubert Käppel' 2013 were held at the Kurfürstliches Schloß on Sunday 19 May 2013. There were five finalists: Anton Baranov (Russia), Thomas Csaba (France), Xavier Jara (USA), Chia-Wei Lin (Taiwan) and Gen Matsuda (Japan). The winners were: First Prize: Chia-Wei Li; Second Prize: was not awarded and Third Prize: Anton Baranov. The Premio Joaquín Rodrigo for the best interpretation of a work by Joaquín Rodrigo was awarded to Ken Inoi (Japan). The international jury was headed by Univ.-Prof. Konrad Ragossnig, with Hubert Käppel, Shin-ichi Fukuda, Alfred Eickholt, Martha Masters, Alexander Ramirez, Lucio Matarazzo, Ansgar Krause, Max Op den Camp, Russell Poyner and Thérèse Wassily Saba.

The flamenco guitarist Rafael Cortés presented *Parando el Tiempo*, with his sextet in the fortress in Ehrenbreitstein, perched high on a cliff-face, alongside the Rhein river. The performance featured a flamenco dancer, Rafaela Escoz, who was remarkably stiff and rigid, as well as his son, Rafael Cortés jr. and Juane Luengo on guitars, the percussionist David Huerta and the singer Gonzalo Cortes.

The Junior Guitar Academy – a children's course, which ran over the

long Pentecost holiday weekend taught by Günter Schillings, Russell Poyner and Ivar Ibanez – made up the 30-member-ensemble, which was conducted by Günter Schillings. They gave an excellent performance of Albinoni's *Adagio*, arranged for guitar orchestra, both at the final student concert on the Monday evening and also during the special Pentecost Mass on Sunday.

A special Catholic Mass, organised in collaboration with the Arnstener Patres, was held at the City-Kirche, the Jesuit church in the cobblestoned Jesuiten Platz. The parts of the Mass were sung by a four-voice ensemble with soprano (Kirsten Maxeiner), alto (Almut Nieratschker), tenor (Thomas Kaiser) and bass (Willi Nieratschker), and guitar music was played by Martha Masters, Sabrina Vlaskavic, Alexander Ramirez, David Russell, and in duo Russell Poyner with Monika Dawidek (oboe). Willi Nieratschker gave a fine performance of a Bach *Prelude and Fugue* on pipe organ. The money collected from this Mass service will go to the 'ONGD David Russell y María Jesús' to build water wells in Africa.

There was capacity attendance at so many of the concerts during the week; the attendance and audience enthusiasm seemed to *crescendo* to *fortissimo* for the final concert on the Monday evening – the prize-winners concert. The prize-giving ceremony for the Competition was also held at this final concert. The three prize winners: Chia-Wei Lin, Anton Baranov and Ken Inoi gave excellent performances, confirming their abilities and they also received great encouragement from the audience. The orchestra of the Junior Academy performed again and were applauded so much by the audience, that they repeated their performance. It was a satisfying end to a week of excellent music.

Many guitar makers exhibited their instruments in the bright and airy foyer of the Rhein-Mosel-Halle, including: Antonius Müller, Gert Petersen, Kazuo Sato, Mario Gropp, the Canadian guitar maker Daryl Perry, Michael Wichmann, Jens Towet, Friedericke Linscheid, Stephan Schlemper and the guitar case maker Zlatko Parlov. During the summer months, Michael Macmeeken, who recently sold both his publishing company (to Zimmermann Verlag) and his Chanterelle guitar festival shop (to Octavian Badea of Guitarrissimo) is travelling to the festivals with Octavian Badea to make the transfer of ownership smoother. Other special exhibitors at the festival were Bernard Maillot of Savarez and Prof. Thomas Offermann of D'Addario Strings; both companies support the festival and the competition. Next year's festival will be held from 2–9 June 2014 in Koblenz, Germany.



Guitar makers and Bernard Maillot of Savarez Strings.



Festival & Academy website is at:

www.koblenzguitarfestival.de

Festival Blog: <http://Koblenzguitarfestival.wordpress.com>

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