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Interview and Review by Colin Clarke

From Bach to Buddhism via Table Hockey: An Interview with Guitarist Lou Marinoff By Colin Clarke

Guitarist Lou Marinoff's disc *Classical Journey* includes recordings that span the years 1976 to 2009. My review (at the end of this interview) is highly positive; there are, however, no notes on the music included, nor on Marinoff, a fact that affords us ample chance for exploration over the course of this interview.

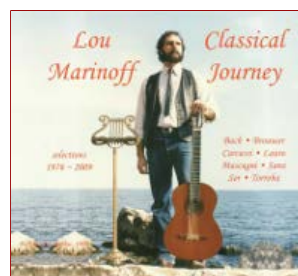
I want to start with you, yourself—just as the disc is a journey, what's your journey in life that brings you to this release?

I'm thrilled that you like the disc. This CD is really two journeys. First, it's a musical journey through three centuries of repertoire, from Baroque to the 1960s. Second, it's a personal journey through three decades of recordings, marking a lifelong fascination with music generally and guitar particularly.

Long before playing an instrument, I had the good fortune to be given gifts of recorded music from my parents and their friends on LPs, and even from my grandparents on 78-rpm discs. As a small child I was exposed to Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Harry James, Harry Belafonte, and a host of others. At five or so I sang Belafonte's Carnegie Hall album from memory during long car rides, replete with Jamaican accent.

I first picked up a bugle at age 10 or so, but my motives were far from pure. Being most fortunate in so many respects to attend Lower Canada College, our duties of privilege included service in the ranks of our beloved school's cadet corps, doing close-order drill with rifles at the mercy of "drill-sergeant" prefects. I noticed that the band had a more convivial arrangement: They marched around playing music under the baton of a congenial bandmaster, and were dismissed long before us! The instrumental choices were drums, glockenspiel, or bugle, so I picked up the latter (my middle name being Joshua). From there I progressed to trumpet, studied privately with Nick Varacalli, and performed in student ensembles.

A few years later, at the YMHA summer camp in

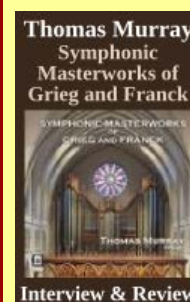
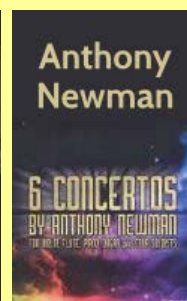


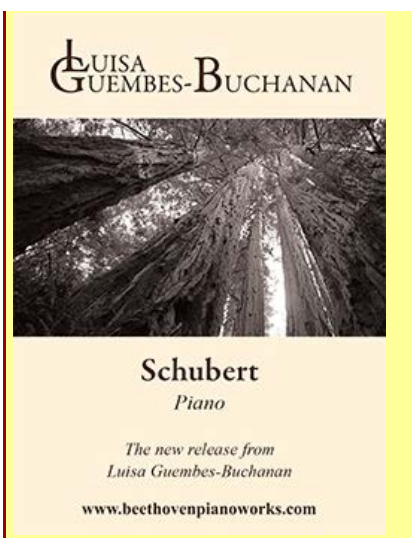
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Huberdeau, Quebec, I found myself in a bunk of eight boys, five of whom played guitars. One way or another, they all made entertaining music, mostly in the idioms of folk to rock. But one of them, Harvey Eidinger, was learning classical guitar. He played the Carcassi Study No. 3 for me, and I was immediately enchanted. I asked my parents for a guitar, and received one at age 13. The guitar shop recommended Miguel Garcia, a flamenco artist who performed and recorded (he had appeared on CBC TV in the 1950s). Miguel accepted me as a student, and with that I embarked on a life-long engagement with guitar.

Who were the major influences on you, both in terms of direct guitar teachers (or other significant teachers) and in terms of renowned guitarists?

My first classical teacher, Florence Brown, exerted a decisive influence, and it was she who introduced me to Moshe Denburg, back in the mid-1970s. Our subsequent collaboration is celebrated on this CD. Florence sings mezzo and plays lovely guitar. Columbia Records wanted to sign her up back in the Pete Seeger/pre-Bob Dylan era, after her solo recital at Carnegie Hall in 1961, but she preferred not to tour, so they signed Joan Baez instead. Florence and I had lunch in Montreal last year (2015). She is energetic and still performing in her late 80s. Canada's National Film Board made a charming documentary about her and Shirley, her lifelong duet partner on mandolin, called *When Shirley Met Florence* (1984).

In the mid-1970s, Florence sent me on to her prodigy, Peter McCutcheon, who in turn had become Alexandre Lagoya's protégé—and for good reason. Lagoya and McCutcheon had worked up a concert-hall masterclass on Sor's *Mozart Variations*, in which Peter had practiced "mistakes" that Lagoya corrected for the edification of the audience. Finally, Peter performed the whole piece uninterruptedly and flawlessly, with LaGoya nodding his approval. It was unforgettable.

I played Bach in Lagoya's masterclass at the Orford Arts Center, and he encouraged me. One evening, holding my tray in the cafeteria queue, in company with other music students, I suddenly felt a fatherly hand on my shoulder. I turned around, and it was Lagoya himself, smiling. I just about jumped out of my skin! In truth, I have felt his hand on my shoulder ever since. Its impression lingers to this day.

I studied with Peter for several years, and had a retinue of students as well. I later studied with Harold Micay in



Vancouver, a wonderful guitarist and graduate of Berkeley, who had played for Segovia. Harold also organized concert series in tandem with masterclasses, attracting such greats as David Russell and Scott Tennant. When I relocated to New York, Harold sent me to David Leisner, an amazing guitarist who teaches at the Manhattan School of Music and the New England Conservatory. Anyone would be fortunate to absorb even a small fraction of what these exemplary musicians and teachers recorded, performed, and taught. Guitarists I greatly admire but never met include Andres Segovia, Julian Bream, and Alirio Diaz. My favorite lutenist is Nigel North.

That’s a fantastically detailed and fascinating answer. The disc presents selections from 1976–2009. What do you think has changed in your playing over that span, and what has remained constant?

Like many young musicians, I used to focus primarily on technique, to the point of obsession. Gradually, I came to place more emphasis on expressing the music. (Glenn Gould’s early *Goldberg Variations*, and his late *Goldberg*, are perfect models of this tendency on an epic scale.) What remains constant for most classical guitarists is having a different sound and feel every time we pick up an instrument, as our nails change daily if not hourly. The only reliable constant is love of music, and of the instrument. I would like to think that my current playing reflects a deeper understanding of various idioms, and of guitar itself.

The disc begins with a selection of Bach pieces, recorded 1976 (the Prelude from the First Cello Suite) and 2006–09 (the Bourée, the Sinfonias, and the Invention). How close is this music to your heart? And what about playing it on the guitar (not a purist’s dream!)? Am I right in thinking the first two pieces are not transcriptions but performances from the score, and what would you like to tell us about Moshe Denburg’s Bach arrangements of the Sinfonias and Inventions?

Yes, J. S. Bach is my favorite composer, and my appreciation of his music only increases over time. One can always discover something new in Bach, even in pieces played 10,000 times. Playing Bach on guitar is fraught with complications, from transcribing to tuning to interpreting to fingering. To me his music is most beautiful to hear, and most difficult to play. I am not the only guitarist to say this. If we’re talking Bach, purism is out the window. To begin with, he composed for Baroque instruments such as lute and harpsichord, not guitar and piano. But that’s of little moment, since much of his music simply transcends instrumentation. His Chaconne, for example, is played on violin, harpsichord, piano, organ, lute, guitar, and bassoon, among other instruments, plus orchestral arrangements. *[I have to say the bassoon transcription has eluded me so far, but I may not be alone among Fanfare readers in now seeking it out.]*

Every Bach piece played on guitar is necessarily a transcription. Tárrega transcribed Bach in the 19th century,

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as did Segovia (followed by many others) in the 20th. The first two pieces on *Classical Journey*, the Prelude from the First Cello Suite and the Bourrée from the Violin Partita in B Minor, are themselves adaptations of transcriptions.

And thanks for asking about Moshe Denburg's arrangements of the *Sinfonia* and *Inventio*. Being enamored of Bach's Two- and Three-Part Inventions, almost to the point of "keyboard envy," I thought that some of them sounded guitaristic enough to be attempted. So I approached Moshe, who liked the idea. He worked assiduously on this, not only studying the piano scores but also listening to Glenn Gould (at my suggestion) and Angela Hewitt (on his initiative). Denburg is also a guitarist, which certainly helped. We worked closely together in finalizing his transcriptions and my fingerings. I am absolutely thrilled to premiere the first four of these fruits, and we are preparing more. Moshe's thoughtfulness is also evident in his annotations on tempos, ornaments, and other matters, which are included in the published sheet music, available via my web site.

This is the same Denburg who arranged the Mascagni Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana and the Barcarolle from Silvano, isn't it? Aren't they the themes featured in the film Raging Bull? It's a stunningly beautiful arrangement.

Yes, the Mascagni arrangements are by the inimitable Denburg. I had been touched by the tragic beauty of Martin Scorsese's 1980 film *Raging Bull*, for which Robert de Niro deservedly won an Academy Award for his portrayal of Jake LaMotta. Scorsese also won my admiration for his tasteful choice of Mascagni's themes for the soundtrack: They were perfect! I wondered whether they could be rendered on guitar, and Denburg waxed enthusiastic at the prospect. So I commissioned him, and am happy to include the piece on this CD—a live recording at philosopher Jan Narveson's Waterloo Chamber Music Society. Denburg will be deservedly delighted by your appreciation of his arrangement, with which I concur! He also includes illuminating annotations, along with the "back story" of the piece, in the published sheet music.

I know that you met Denburg in the 1970s. Would you please elaborate on how this flowered into a longstanding collaborative relationship? [Marinoff describes on his web site these arrangements as highlights of his journey to date].

Florence Brown introduced us in the mid-1970s, expressing optimism at the prospect of some kind of collaboration. At our first encounter, Moshe pitched up with his guitar and sang *Driving Me Wild*—an inevitable Number One pop hit if produced in a studio with a rock band. It would still be a hit today! For some reason, it has yet to be recorded. Moshe came across like a Jewish John Lennon/Jim Morrison/James Taylor. I had recently released a folk-rock album of my own compositions, influenced by the likes of Bob Dylan/Paul Simon/Leonard Cohen, backed by terrific budding musicians whom Moshe and I knew in common, from the same

Montreal underground. During the 1970s, we all played together in various permutations, combinations, and genres. Moshe's path led to advanced musical studies in India, and in Japan, where he lived for some time. He then studied Western composition at the University of Victoria, and his Vancouver-based career has blossomed. Our matured collaboration was renewed there, during 1991–94, when I taught philosophy at the University of British Columbia. Moshe and I have communed every year or two since, on one coast or the other, and that's how the Bach and Mascagni evolved. This all came full circle when Florence and I reunited for lunch in Montreal, in September—after a hiatus of 40 years. I gave her the disc, and if I told you it made her day that would be a British understatement. It was a wonderful surprise for her—better late than never!—and the most fitting way for Moshe and I to thank her for having introduced us in the first place.

You have been described as a “Renaissance man”: You are also a poet, author, photographer, philosopher, speaker, and three-time Canadian table hockey champion. Inevitably, I have to ask, what on earth is table hockey, when it's at home?

That's a great question: “What on earth is table hockey?” In a way, table hockey is out of this world. And it's undergoing a Renaissance in its own right. Most people are familiar with ping pong, also called “table tennis”—a table-top version of lawn tennis. Many are also familiar with foosball, a miniaturization of soccer. Table hockey is a miniaturization of ice hockey, and both games are members of a larger family of sports that include field hockey, ring hockey, ball hockey, roller hockey, lacrosse, and polo. Their common denominator is a shared purpose: to score goals by using a stick to propel a projectile (either a sphere or a disk) into a net. Their ‘purist’ cousins, water polo, basketball, and soccer, eschew the stick and utilize limbs instead. Plato would have said that these sports are all copies of a “pure form”: The more authentic the copy, the more beautiful the sport. Ice hockey itself is an amazing sport, requiring speed, dexterity, precision, coordination, anticipation, improvisation, and teamwork, among other attributes. Table hockey is a particularly authentic miniaturization, capturing all the essential features of ice hockey, while compressing them into a smaller chunk of space-time. Ice hockey is played on the largest viable scale; table hockey, on the smallest. Thus a five-minute table hockey game feels like a 60-minute ice hockey game. In table hockey, each competitor controls a team of six players: three forwards, two defensemen, and a goalie. Playing table hockey, like playing a musical instrument, entails choreographing a dance of fingers and hands. In addition to developing eye-hand coordination, table hockey enhances powers of concentration, and inculcates virtues of sportsmanship.

At the core, table hockey's comeback and renaissance in North America are driven by the resolve of a nucleus of

mature players not to let the game perish with us: It's far too great for that. Table hockey's greatness and comeback also serve a timely purpose: to remind our over-wired young generation that virtuality is not necessarily an improvement on reality. Playing any physical form of hockey, from ice to table hockey, is a vastly richer experience, athletically, aesthetically, and socially, than playing digital hockey on a computer.

Beyond this, I hypothesize that table hockey is a remedy for many kinds of ADHD, a scandalous epidemic of inattentiveness that is almost certainly caused by cultural dysfunctions rather than biological vectors. Unlike virtual games, which induce repetitive stress disorders, promote physical inactivity, and conduce to social disconnection, table hockey enhances fine motors skills, enlists large muscle groups, and promotes non-violent competition. At the same time—exactly as with music—table hockey does not depend on physical size or brute strength. It welcomes male and female players alike, of all ages (around five and up). Thanks to the worldwide web, a largely positive manifestation of the digital revolution, people can learn a lot about table hockey online, and watch lots of video as well. But it's played in reality!

Winning three Canadian Open titles in a row (1978–80) were certainly highlights of my life. Having been featured in a 2004 documentary film (*Table Hockey: The Movie*), I was impelled to make a comeback in 2006. Since then I've won titles in Las Vegas, Toronto, Chicago, and New York. At age 64 I am still ranked among the top 10 players of the National Table Hockey League, eighth overall this season, and as high as fifth. There are many outstanding players these days. That said, none of us can dethrone the reigning champion of today, Carlo Bossio. He plays at unprecedented levels of excellence. Safe to say, table hockey is a game and a sport for life, and apparently a "second life."

But also, and more seriously (depending on how seriously you take your sport, and from the answer above, that's very seriously indeed), you are a philosopher, lecturing at CUNY, and you have authored several books (Plato not Prozac is my favorite title). Plus, you are also a counselor. How does music fit into this? Do you see it as potentially curative as well as a means of enjoyment? A means to enlightenment, even? Is your slant particularly in any camp? (There seems to be a fair Buddhist influence, for example.)

Not more seriously, but equally passionately, I am (as you say) a philosopher, professor, and author. To my surprise, *Plato Not Prozac* (HarperCollins 1999) became an international bestseller; it has been translated into 27 languages. It has helped pioneer a movement called "Philosophical Practice," whereby philosophers render useful services to clients—be they individuals, groups, or organizations—beyond the Ivory Tower. My own "slant" is toward eclecticism. Academically trained in mathematical physics, philosophy of science, and decision theory, I am a

lifelong devotee and teacher of Indian and Chinese philosophy, and especially Buddhism. Here too, I have been fortunate to encounter wonderful teachers. Like anything else, music can lead either to Nirvana, or else to deeper entanglement in Samsara, depending on how it is approached. Undoubtedly certain genres are more highly correlated than others with reinforcement of suffering, and with attempted escapes from suffering via intoxication, but there is no universal rule. For example, while many legendary jazz artists notoriously succumbed to drug addiction and madness, other jazz giants have become even greater through devotion to Buddhist practices. Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter are two stellar examples of the latter; both are ardent practitioners of Nichiren Buddhism, as taught by Daisaku Ikeda. Herbie once told me that Buddhism not only saved him, but also activated his true musical potential. Wayne's music—like his persona—is both enlightened, and enlightening. Having had the privilege of meeting and dialoguing with Mr. Ikeda—our dialogue is published as *The Inner Philosopher*—I too can say that his Buddhist philosophy and personal influence are empowering and liberating. If you're looking for a common denominator among music, table hockey, philosophy, and Buddhism, they all entail daily practice.

Your first recording was in 1973 on Sonogram (Marinoff Ex Machina). How did your career develop from there? And is Classical Journey part of a planned series of discs? If not, what are your recording plans going forward?

In the 1970s I was part of an “underground” that included a nucleus of young musicians from Montreal's West End, most of whom were classically trained and many of whom went on to enjoy successful careers in Canada, including Steven Corber, Abbey Sholzberg, and Sonny Stone. *Marinoff Ex Machina*, recorded in Studio Six, was our first opportunity in a professional studio. We laid the whole album down in two nights, at a cost of 5K, and the studio people were astounded. Those were the days when major labels routinely squandered 50K–100K on a single 45-rpm, with seasoned professionals (and inebriated stars) in the house. We were a bunch of young, unknown, ambitious, driven musicians, and the studio people thought *Ex Machina* would make a big splash. In retrospect, it hardly raised a ripple. But yes, like the rest of the Universe it too has been digitally remastered, and sounds as fresh as ever.

In any case, we knew we had the “right stuff,” so we persisted. I had a second album written and ready to record with the *Ex Machina* band. Some of those players plus others had made a promising jazz-rock demo for Warner Brothers, with a band called *Fire Hazard*. At the same time I was playing lead guitar in a rock power-trio called *Dog Brothers*, with Shel Lessingham on bass and Jean “Skippy” Regimbald on drums—all this in tandem with classical studies. A friend later remarked that if *Dog Brothers* had ever recorded the trilogy of albums it had written, I would not have survived

my 20s. That's probably true. The lifestyle typically associated with this frenetically high-energy genre did not augur particularly well for rock stars. Many succumbed at an early age.

In terms of recording plans going forward, I have two more classical discs in the works. One is Baroque music exclusively, featuring Bach, de Visée, Scarlatti, and Weiss, and including more Bach transcriptions by Denburg. The other is music by Fernando Sor, about which more below. In addition, I have accumulated enough bits and pieces from the 1970s Montreal underground—folk, folk-blues, folk-rock, jazz-rock, hard rock—to produce a retrospective disc called *Bytes from the Underground*. Think of it as a musical parallel to Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*.

In terms of the music on your CD Classical Journey, I wonder what Bach means to you?

You enjoy fishing in deep waters. In brief, the music is intended to reflect that Bach means everything to me.

There's a journey here from Bach to Brouwer, the latter of which is itself a homage to Stravinsky. [I took this opportunity to check that the second movement really is entitled "obstinato."] How would you introduce the Brouwer to an audience if you had to describe it?

Leo Brouwer (b. 1939) is an incredible Cuban guitarist-composer, celebrated for his Afro-Cuban influences, numerous film scores, and knowledge of Baroque ornamentation. I attended his masterclass at McGill University in the 1970s, where he focused almost entirely on the Baroque. I adore his fiery Cuban temperament and unique syncopations, amply displayed in his *Elogio de la Danza*. The first movement is a meditative *lento*, punctuated by an *allegro* interlude. The second movement is indeed "obstinato," with jazz-like motifs, percussive effects, and rock-like riffs. It's great fun to play, and audiences love it.

En route, we encounter some famous guitar composers who need little introduction: Sor and Moreno Torroba, for example. But I wonder if we could have more, perhaps, about Gaspar Sanz, Matteo Carcassi, and Antonio Lauro? And why excerpt just the Rondo from Sor's Grand Sonata?

Sanz epitomizes Spanish Baroque. His beloved *Pavane* and *Canarios* are dances: sombre and stately in the first case; joyful and unrestrained in the second. Lauro is a musical poet, a quintessential South American composer. His haunting Venezuelan waltzes capture the region's exotic ambience. And why just Sor's Rondo? Allow me to reveal a secret: I am currently writing a historical fiction about Sor—*Fernando*—a novel based squarely on his fascinating life and turbulent times (1778–1839). I plan to record an entire disc of Sor's music, ideally to accompany the book.

Dave Saemann, who reviewed *Classical Journey* for *Fanfare*, has a deeply intuitive ear. He wrote: "Marinoff

demonstrates a grasp of Fernando Sor's grandeur of expression unusual for a performer then in his mid-20s." Dave had of no way of knowing that Florence Brown had also noticed this many years ago, based on my playing of Sor's studies: "You have an affinity for Sor," she declared to me one day. But I never made sense of it until fairly recently, when I began researching Sor's life. It turns out that our biographies share some uncanny parallels, not only in terms of our childhoods but also in terms of where music took him and philosophy took me. This does not exactly explain, but nevertheless reinforces, my connection with him. If I can manage to write his life as beautifully as my mind envisages it, then the book *Fernando* will undoubtedly be made into a movie, which in turn will boost public appreciation of Sor, much as the movie *Amadeus* did for Mozart. And given Mozart's considerable influence on Sor, this would be aesthetic justice too.

It's time for me to admit complete ignorance regarding Matteo Carcassi: I ask for enlightenment (Buddhist puns are the worst, aren't they?).

Carcassi (1792–1853) was a famous Italian guitarist and composer, a contemporary of Carulli, Giuliani, Paganini, Agudo, and Sor. His studies are very sonorous, and No. 3 in particular was utilized by Lagoya to illustrate the simultaneous voicing of melody, accompaniment, and bass line. As mentioned, hearing this piece at a summer camp first drew me to classical guitar.

What was the determining factor for the pieces that made it into this particular program? Have you lived with them all for a long time?

The "determining factor" had nothing to do with music. In late January 2015 I returned home from New Zealand's spectacular South Island, where I had been hiking and photographing in Fiordland National Park. While I was away the oil company neglected delivery, and my tank ran dry. The house froze, a water pipe burst in the basement, and the entire lower level was inundated. The whole upstairs then became cluttered with flotsam and jetsam salvaged from downstairs. I found myself inhabiting an indoor disaster area, and soon a chaotic construction site, which took many months to restore to habitability. To counteract all this destruction and displacement, I felt compelled to do something creative. My computer systems and digital storage media were fortunately uncompromised, so I decided to produce a retrospective CD of accumulated classical recordings. I enlisted my friend, neighbor, and multi-talented engineer, Phil Bulla of Platinum Productions, and we remastered everything in his studio—which also got me out of my messy house, and into an orderly environment, for some delightfully well-spent hours. When we got to the Bach Bourrée, Phil nonchalantly recalled that he used to play it on tuba! I told him that he must have leather lungs. At another moment we were talking jazz, and I mentioned to Phil that my father had seen Buddy Rich live in a New York club.

Like a conjurer, Phil reached into a drawer and pulled out an 8x10 black-and-white of him playing tuba in Buddy Rich's big band! The world gets smaller every day.

The recordings themselves span 33 years. Denburg's arrangements of Bach are the newest to me (recorded 2006–09), but irrespective of actual recording dates I have lived with this music—either personally or vicariously through other players—for decades, if not lifetimes. *[Although not unique to Buddhism, of course, reincarnation is a key concept in Buddhist thought.]*

To move more generally for the final question, in terms of the guitar repertoire in general, what would you say makes it special? What aspect of it is closest to your heart?

The guitar itself is a special instrument, incredibly versatile and portable across so many idioms and genres. And so it has attracted composers, players, and audiences in every generation and incarnation. The guitar is seductive. What it lacks in range, amplitude, sustain, and sonority, it makes up for in warmth, allure, intimacy, and sensuality. The guitar has often been likened to a woman's body. Sor wrote a seguidilla that begins "Women and guitar strings: you need talent to tune them." (*Las mujeres y cuerdas / De la guitarra / Es menester talento / Para templarlas.*) Perhaps for this reason, many women are irresistibly attracted to guitarists. Likewise, immortal pianists and composers, from Chopin to Schubert, have sung the guitar's praises. Beethoven called the guitar "an orchestra in itself." How's that for special? Yet even he could not have imagined that the Shiba Guitar Club would one day perform his Fifth Symphony, with *éclat* and *élan*, on an orchestra of guitars—that is, an orchestra of orchestras. Now that's beyond special.

CLASSICAL JOURNEY • Lou Marinoff (gtr) •
PHOENIX 700261420936 (57:08) Live: ¹ Waterloo
Chamber Music Society, Ontario 2000

BACH Suite No. 1 for Unaccompanied Cello:
Prelude. **Partita No. 1** for Unaccompanied Violin:
Bourrée. **Sinfonias Nos. 3–5** (arr. Denburg). **Invention**
No. 14 (arr. Denburg). **SANZ** Pavane. **Canarios.**
CARCASSI Studies Nos. 3 and 7. **SOR** Fantasy, op.
7. **Grand Sonata**, op. 22: Rondo. **LAURO** Vals
Criollo Nos. 1 and 3. ¹ **Vals Venezolano** No. 2.
TORROBA Torija **MASCAGNI** (arr. Denburg) ¹ **Sicilian**
Dreams. **BROUWER** ¹ **Elogio de la Danza**

There is a huge variety of repertoire here in Lou Marinoff's *Classical Journey*. It begins with Bach, and one of Bach's most famous offerings, the Prelude from the Solo Cello Suite No. 1. The sense of intimacy is present from the very first note; Marinoff's evenness of delivery and his sensitivity to



voice-leading points to his innate musicality. This is a 1976 recording from Montreal; the Bourée that follows was taken down 30 years later, in New York in 2006, and while the recording might be more immediate, the level of illumination is just as involving. The three Sinfonias (recorded around the same time as the Bourée), heard in arrangements by Moshe Denburg, are no less impressive (see above for the relationship between Marinoff and Denburg). The gentle flow of the Invention is particularly impressive.

The following music by Aragonese composer Gaspar Sanz (c. 1640–1710) is delivered with the utmost concentration: The Pavane flows beautifully, while the piece *Canarios* is joyfully playful. Marinoff injects the latter with a lovely sense of rhythmic bounce. If the first offering by Carcassi, the Third Study, continues in a gentle mode, the Seventh Study is altogether more lively. Both the Sanz and the Carcassi recordings date from 1996, and are heard in splendidly present sound. Perhaps it is the Sor, however, that offers the most meat in terms of substantive musical statement. The *Fantasy*, op. 7, is a terrifically touching piece, and unfolds with an aching sense of questing here, while the Rondo from the *Grand Sonata* is more focused of structure, its charming main theme continually returning with an aura of innocence.

The acoustic to the live Lauro *Vals Venezolano* No. 2 seems a little unfocused, but the intimacy of the *Vals Criollo* No. 1 is absolutely honored; even better is the shifting, enigmatic rhythm of the *Vals Criollo* No. 3 (these two were recorded in CCNY Sonic Arts Center, New York in 1996). Moreno Torroba's *Torija* (Montreal, 1976) holds a serenity that makes it the perfect interlude between the Lauro and the beautiful Mascagni/Denburg *Sicilian Dreams*. This latter piece takes as its material the famous Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana* and the Barcarolle from *Silvano*. Its whispered intimacy, coupled with the way it truly captures the atmosphere of Mascagni's world, makes it by a considerable margin the most memorable offering on the disc, at least for the present reviewer. The Brouwer (the piece with that "obstinato" marking mentioned in the interview) is remarkable, the most progressive piece on the disc, even including some knocks on the instrument itself as a percussive device. The rhythmic play of the second part is most involving, the whole enhanced by Brouwer's piquant harmonies. The live element certainly comes through in the performance's drive; applause is retained, and rightly so.

This is a lovely collection, and a most rewarding one. The repertoire chosen spans a variety of styles, but is so carefully programmed that the end result is most satisfying. **Colin Clarke**