



DAVIDE FICCO, INTERVIEW
#Interview with Davide

NeuGuitars

Ficco (September 2018) on #neuguitars #blog

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<http://www.davideficco.com/>

Dear Davide, welcome to the blog NeuGuitars, we have known each other for several years and I am very happy for your renewed musical activity; in 2018 it seems that you are collecting the fruits of the work begun in the last years: two new records ... two really interesting works. Can we start talking about the cd dedicated to the works for solo guitar and guitar and voice by Mauro Giuliani?

Thank you, Andrea, for having me on NeuGuitars, which represents a fresh voice, in continuous renewal, about the world of classical guitar, which you deservedly extended to wide boundaries without veiled censorious walls. This release made by Tactus (historical Italian label that I want to thank again here) represents the physical print, with some variations, of a previous production released for download only for Amadeus Italian magazine, which two years earlier had honored us by hosting us in its pages. The project was born first of all for two reasons: the first consisted of wanting to present some works for voice and guitar, which I had prepared

many years before with Luisa Castellani, using a different voice than those present in the record versions in my possession: different under the point of interpretative and timbric sight, and for an appropriate lightness and technical brilliance, orientating more towards the baroque and Mozartian vocality, instead of that of romantic and operistic nineteenth-century style. I had known Rossana Bertini for many years as a soprano of the prestigious madrigal formations Concerto Italiano, La Venexiana and La Compagnia del Madrigale and I had identified in her the voice that, in my opinion, would have bested Giuliani's music as I thought it: bright, agile and elegant. I am so grateful for having her wanted to undertake this little adventure with me. The second motivation was more modestly personal, aimed at fixing that part of repertoire on which I had, many years before, built my guitar training and to which I owed gratitude: a part that I continued to perceive as smiling and sunny, even serious and full of content.

Then we have the work dedicated to Bruno Bettinelli, "Chamber Music", where you play three pieces ...

Bettinelli's chamber guitar pages are demanding and dense, very consistent with the rest of his production; I therefore thought to present them, rather than in a classic anthological guitar context, together with chamber music for strings and piano, ennobling the presence of the six strings through that of consolidated and emblazoned chamber instruments, and giving the opportunity to the "aficionados de la guitarra" to listen to the expression of the same compositional thought, but going beyond the six nylon strings. And of course, vice versa. I still thank Silvia Bianchera Bettinelli for her constant support and my fellow adventurers Diego Milanese, Paola Dusio, Manuela Custer, Andrea Perugini, Giambattista Pianezzola, Jacopo di Tonno, Dario and Ilaria Cusano (Trio Bettinelli)

Let's remind the readers of the blog that, already in 2011, you had made a monograph entirely dedicated to the guitar pieces composed by Bettinelli: it seems that you have

developed a real interest for this composer ...

Interest, undoubtedly: the apparent sharpness of the author at first listening soon leaves room for full immersion in a lunar and earthly context, full of colors and vitality, refined and essential, rich in nuances and preciousness. One never has the feeling that something is out of place or too much: everything must be there, played as it was written, knowing however that the expressive charge and participation will be necessary and characterizing. No alidity, therefore, if not the apparent one of the intervallic choices, but here we could speak - probably expiring in banality - of all the debtors of the Second School of Vienna and of everything that made the "discordance" expressive and organic to the discourse. Bettinelli asks a lot to his interpreter, but to get a refund that will pay for the attention required. And it is a coherent production, as I told you before, where the guitar is found to be the bearer of the same alchemy that inhabit the pages for the other instruments. An author that I see similar, in his careful and essential writing, foreign to any rhetoric, is Carlo Mosso, especially in the "modern" pages, such as Forskalia, Tre Quaderni and Preludio.

With what guitars did you played in these records and with what sounds now? I know that in the past you had to unfortunately "lighten" your beautiful collection of instruments ...

Eh, yes: two Simplicio (which are instruments that everyone should try at least once in their life to understand different things ...), the first known Fleta (1921) and a Friederich of the first spruce series have left, with others with a less blazon, but always from the early 1900s. I still have an Arias of the first period (1874) that amazes every time for the clarity and timbre linearity that it possesses: you could play anything on it! But I've always been a convinced mono-guitar player: after a youth training on Ramirez 664 and many years on a Locatto, first cedar and then always spruce, from 2010 I play on a Fleta in fir. For the Bettinelli released in 2011, however, I had still used a Locatto spruce / 650, while for Giuliani I used a Luis Panormo lent me for the occasion (put in place and "minded" by the patient Fabio Zontini while recording, because the instrument the humidity of the churches we worked in was quite high). Finally, for the Bettinelli chamber music I and Diego Milanese had a lucky as rare opportunity

to choose: play on two Fleta in spruce made in 2007 and 2010, or two Friederich in spruce (!) made in 1959 and 1961: for the greater malleability of the tone and of the vibrato we decided for the two French guitars. And so this was the instrument also adopted for the other three pieces. I recorded all the other later things with a Fleta.

I was very impressed by your words, in the libretto of the CD dedicated to Giuliani: “The vocal part, on the contrary, contains embellishments that belong to a performance practice that by then was well-established in the performers’ customary repertoire. The choice of varying the reprises tends to free these pieces from an excessive, rigid fidelity to the text and from the effort (albeit a justified one) of achieving an “objective” reading. This had determined, with time, the loss of a free, flexible interpretation, both in the listener’s ear and in the taste and capability of the performers. Improvisation, in other words: in Giuliani’s times the need to vary what had just been stated was still felt, although the seriousness and completeness of many authorial works severely limited the performer’s contribution. So we decided, this way, to imagine that the generous Mauro Giuliani was indulging in some fanciful passages in order, once again, to astonish his devoted public.” So I ask you what is the meaning of improvisation in your musical research? Your definition of “improvisation as a need to vary” reminds me a lot about Baroque music ...

I have never credited to myself, in any measure, improvisational skills, and this beyond any potential or experiments. If I allow myself the freedom to do it (let’s talk about improvisation tout court, acontextual), I do it my way and with a language not related to jazz or rock because these are genres that I have not dealt with enough; and the same is true about ancient music, which however is closer to me. Since I was a kid I only dedicated myself to decoding and memorizing / playing pieces for classical guitar and this was a choice that led to limits, it’s a direction. But, from music to songwriting, I heard so much and everything, provided it was qualitative: to tell you ... I was still a teenager that sometimes I fell asleep with Pierrot Lunaire Schönberg or with Webern or something similar (or with the metronome at the minimum (but this is another matter, hahaha!) I was pretty weird, I know ... but I assimilated (in the sense of acceptance and “resonance”), parallel to the others, extra-tonal languages rather soon. And,

about improvisation, I often attended more “educated” improvisers than classical musicians. Another thing, however, is the “improvisation concept”, to hear a language and the variations that would be possible in it, remaining coherent and contextual. Coming to Giuliani, therefore, I assumed the total responsibility of achieving something that I had been thinking for a long time. And even Rossana Bertini, at times, has left space for this kind of approach, even though it is that of the belcanto field historically and technically much more accepted and consolidated. Above all in the solo pages I wrote down different versions with different variations and then, at the last, I decided to record this or that (sometimes even leaving me the option). I can't exclude that today some things could be changed, moved or deleted, but this is another matter. With the choice of recording variations, which I neither consider nor exemplary, nor necessarily shared, I wanted first of all to have fun (in the highest sense, of course), but in essence to open a path and launch a challenge: tonal improvisation (to understand each other, forcing this definition also towards the Renaissance-Baroque period) existed and was practiced; there are even roller recordings by pianists who perform classics with blatant variations: do we want to talk about it, study, extend the boundaries of our knowledge and the practice we use? Are we sure that Giuliani performed his pages leaving them totally unchanged over time? Not an improvised cadence? Not a surprise changeover? Not a new melody, maybe born there to amaze the bystanders? Perhaps, but ... I would like to mention one more episode: at the beginning of the 80s I listened to Elisio Gualdi, who was already very old, pianist, composer and conductor of a serious training in Turin, who brought the Italian opera to China in the post-war period. That morning he had entertained all of us, before Christmas lunch, playing authors that I, a young man, placed on average between classicism and some romantic and sometimes twentieth century episodes. Before sitting down at the table I asked him in a low voice, a little embarrassed, what he had played and he, amused and with eyes full of spirit, told me that he had improvised everything, because he liked to wander among the stylistic reminiscences of the authors that he more loved (we talk about two and a half hours of music ...). If we want to extend the concept of variation to the field of interpretation and timbre, it inhabits my musical thought in its slightest nuances: the pedestrian repetition is something I force and which I execute when necessary, with respect and conviction, but my instinct – every return is something that brings with it a difference, an accumulation or a loss of energy, a change of color (in a chromatic, almost synesthetic, sense).

But it would talk a lot about this...

What is the role of error in your musical vision?

If you understand the executive error, I consider it both as the result of a study that has left perhaps some gap, which as an impertinent but human manifestation of mine (or others) limitations. You can study in depth, both technically and mentally and mnemonically, to avoid too obvious errors (including those of memorization, in fact), but the “svirgola”, the “fried” note or other nice amenities of the poltergeist that accompanies us when we play, I am always lurking, maybe even just for tiredness, sweaty or cold hands. I think, that there are people with an enviable technical and mental, neuro-motor and emotional balance, like John Williams or a few others, but ... not everyone has a control of this level. Of course there are errors and errors: all (audience and performers) we have become accustomed neurotically to the perfection of very rare performers or tons of inaudible record editing, and we tend to refer to it; but there are small shortcomings that, especially at a distance, count very little. Accepting with ever greater difficulty the imperfection (which is perhaps still different, precisely, from the error of the brand) has too much focus on the containing (the sound emitted) rather than on the content (interpretation and music), while the second may not necessarily be always affected by the first. It's a long and complex thought, perhaps it would take an epochal change. We could reread Benjamin and start this thing again ... without leaving it, however. And we could talk about audio editing, of distinction between concert and recorded product, of “democracy” record, selection of artists, what the public is buying at that time, the awareness of real and false ... It would be interesting, for five minutes, to be able to go back in time and listen to Giuliani, Kapsberger, Regondi or Bach, Buxtehude or Mozart to understand if the public is perceiving and accepting their eventual little *défaillances* with serenity and without judgment; probably, but it's my presumption, we would find the people “kidnapped” by something else and, in any case, listening to excellences that surely are playing very well regardless. I, tendentially rather precise from when I was a boy, I maltolated the error (or, better, the the big error) at

first, understandably, for the sudden “nudity” that it generated in front of the audience; later, I did not particularly love it because it was unexpected and often silly, “disfiguring” the discourse, distracting me (above all) and the public. But over time I had to accept it as a somewhat unforeseeable traveling companion (and shit), but a child of my humanity, of the control possible at that moment; as, on the other hand, every emotional aspect facing the public, including functional and positive ones.

On the other hand, if we extend the concept of error to a wrong technical thing or to an interpretive approach, to the out-and-out vision of a composition, to an eccentric way of taking ourselves towards a commitment or a goal, well ... it's an extraordinary opportunity to understand and understand each other: mistakes, all our mistakes, they tell us about us, right?

I agree with you. What are your next projects? What are you working on?

Currently I would have two projects underway: a master of romances for voice and guitar (already recorded, but waiting to finish the post-production) and an extensive project concerning electronics, on which I would prefer not to go into details as it's being developed by almost two years and it's expected that it will take several months to get to the end. It's a very challenging idea that is detached, by extension and typology, from everything I have found so far in the guitar discography. In the meantime I am following with interest the work of a friend guitarist dedicated to my solo guitar music.

Last question really, .. a few years ago I read a nice book by Bill Milkowski entitled “Rockers, Jazzbos and Visionaries”. At one point Carlos Santana replied that: “Some people have talent, some people have vision” ... after all these years spent playing, always looking for new boundaries and to widen the precedents ... what is your vision?

Vision is fundamental, but must be accompanied by a talent and a preparation that is

proportionate to it. It's however true that a strong and clear vision has the power to shape the musician over time, bringing it closer to the technical and ideal-necessary boundaries. Perhaps one thing feeds the other. Certainly, at least for me, every important project comes from a dream, from something I've seen and heard inside before I start working on it: the same thing that, in the end, I hope to be able to project on the screen of every person of the audience that will listen, small or big.

Davide Ficco

interview

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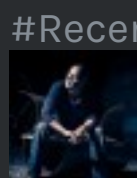
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Pianezzola, Custer, Dusio,
Ficco), Naxos, 2018 on



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di Davide Ficco, Naxos,
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Rourke in concert
Andrea Dieci (...
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Electrified...
Neil on David
Fiuczynski #playlist
on...

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September 2018

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