



Bold, colourful and intimate – Berta Rojas and Popi Spatocco give electric performances of Latin American music

her recording with pianist Dreux Montegut. Much of the fare is familiar, ranging from the Gounod and Schubert settings of *Ave Maria* and pieces by Fauré, Franck, Mendelssohn and Mozart to a selection of Spirituals.

Among the works known better in church than concert contexts are *Eternal Life*, Olive Dungan's song set to the Prayer for Peace by St Francis of Assisi, Albert Hay Malotte's rapturous version of the Lord's Prayer and Stephen Adams's majestic *The Holy City*. The music in *Eternal Life* ascends as the text moves to its hopeful culmination and Pfrimmer invests phrases with increasing intensity and vibrancy. Here, as elsewhere, she makes sure every word is clear, whatever the range or language, and her bright voice, while often too generous of vibrato, sends the messages urgently into space.

Pfrimmer is at her expressive, clarion best in dramatic episodes, such as 'Hear ye, Israel!' (from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*) and Gounod's *O Divine Redeemer*. In a series of Spirituals arranged by Moses Hogan and Hall Johnson, she savours the moments of celebratory zeal and religious ecstasy in close communion with pianist Montegut. These songs require a fine balance between urgent storytelling and rhapsodic declamation. Pfrimmer delivers them with passion, lucidity and respect. **Donald Rosenberg**

## 'Felicidade'

**Bellinati Jongo Gismonti Água e vino Jobim Desafinado Jobim/Moraes Felicidade Lins Começar de novo Moraes Berimbau Nazareth Odeon Ortiz Mis noches sin ti. Recuerdos de Ypacarai Pascoal Bebê Reis Se ela perguntar Trepat Homenaje a Baden Powell Villa-Lobos Chôro típico**

**Berta Rojas** *gtr* and guests; **Paraguay National Symphony Orchestra / Popi Spatocco**  
ON Music Recordings © (60' • DDD)



Self-described as a classical guitarist who 'mostly prefers to play Latin American tunes',

multiple Latin Grammy nominee Berta Rojas puts her exquisite range of skills at the service of a musical travelogue through her personal take on the musical legacy of the Brazilian guitar and its key composers and performers. The 13 tracks are heavily suffused with tango, including the original 'savage and lascivious' Afro-Brazilian maxixe, bossa nova, big band jazz, cowboy, commercial and classical.

Listening to Rojas's simultaneously bold, colourful and intimate playing while reading Irineu Franco Perpetuo's booklet notes – about not just the giants such as Villa-Lobos and Ernesto Nazareth but also colourful

figures like the 'albino from Alagoas' Hermeto Pascoal and other virtuoso multi-instrumentalists – the effect is intoxicating. Appropriately for the title-track, Ton Jobim's *Felicidade* combines many of these elements in a kaleidoscopic celebration which Rojas concludes with a wide-ranging, three-minute cadenza against the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional del Paraguay on full display, including spectacular trombone riffs and sumptuously produced sound.

The CD is strewn casually with beauties for Rojas and smaller ensembles like the Paraguayan Demetrio Ortiz's film noir-ish *Mis noches sin ti*, with its seductive, earthy cello solos, the Brazilian Dilermando Reis's sinfully gorgeous *Se ela perguntar*, one of Nazareth's most celebrated tangos, his infectiously upbeat *Odeon*, and one of Villa-Lobos's most sublime creations, his *Cbôro típico*. The straightforward, honest and electric performances give voice to the music with a feeling of being born on the spot. Recorded in Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil, the sound throughout has fire and soul. **Laurence Vittes**



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