

From Afar

FALLA: Homenaje; SCHWANTNER: From Afar; PONCE: Folia Variations;

BRITTEN: Nocturnal; THEODORAKIS: 3 Epitafios

Nicholas Goluses, g—Albany 1379—62 minutes

Goluses is the guitar professor for the Eastman School of Music. He has a limited discography, I presume because of his devotion to teaching; but he is masterly, a musician's musician. Anyone with the technique, intellect, and heart to tackle a program like this is to be admired.

The title piece is a solo version of Schwantner's *From Afar*, originally for guitar and orchestra. The composer is unusual in that guitar was his first instrument, and his notes refer to his fond memories of his youthful work on the instrument (though the sound of the work seems to reflect struggle rather than comfortable nostalgia). Goluses plays with strength and confidence.

Indeed, strength is the adjective that comes most to mind when I've heard his performances. He has a solid sound, with a preference for assertive playing. His sound is beautiful—he never overplays and has a wide palate of colors. My only complaint, a minor one at that, is that sometimes passages could benefit from a more introspective approach.

The heart of this program is the two works generally considered the greatest guitar compositions of the 20th Century: Ponce's *La Folia Variations* and Britten's *Nocturnal*. The challenge in the Ponce is in the architecture, to make all the variations hang together and progress through the final fugue with a sense of inevitability. Goluses handles this with aplomb, without neglecting the many felicitous moments along the way. Britten's masterpiece still shines best in the recordings of Julian Bream—he was the dedicatee, and he worked with the composer while the work was taking shape. Goluses can stand beside those, and is as fine a reading as any currently available. Mikis Theodorakis's folkloric *Three Epitaphios* amounts to a triple encore, a light and enjoyable finish to a substantial recital.

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