

## FANFARE MAGAZINE – MAY/JUNE 2010 ISSUE

ESPERANZA • Rosa Antonelli (pn) • TROY 1140 (74:26)

**GUASTAVINO** *La Siesta* **G WILLIAMS** *Canción de niño. El Rancho abandonado*  
**PIAZZOLLA** *Rio Sena. Sentido único. Milonga del angel. Chau Paris* **UGARTE**  
*Romantico. Suite de mi tierra* **AGUIRRE** *Aires criollos.* **LASALA** *Romancero*  
**GINASTERA** *3 Danzas Argentinas*

One of the many things I've grown to love about Rosa Antonelli's performances of Argentinean piano music is the warmth of her expression, never forced but ever present. This is playing from the heart, always responsive to the melodic charms of these, in some cases, deceptively simple compositions. It requires a pianist of sympathetic musicality to play with such disarming ease, one whose dynamic and narrative sensitivities are always in tune with the ebb and flow of the music. This is the playing of a natural musician that, to my mind, exemplifies that often quoted category of "the art that conceals art." Nothing seems calculated or artificial and yet the supple interpretations can hardly have been arrived at without informed reflection. In addition to her instrumental mastery I admire Antonelli's flexible rubato, both in the character pieces and especially in Piazzolla's tangos, in which her choreographically inspired hesitations and accelerations—always smoothly integrated into the overall conception—are so evocative of the dance. Although some of these composers are well known in North America, I'm guessing that most of this music will be new to *Fanfare* readers. All of them studied in Europe, often blending that influence with their native idioms. Chopin's and Liszt's presence, for example, can be felt in a sublimated way, in the chromatic progressions, chord repetitions, familiar accompanying figures. The language is essentially conservative, perhaps weighted more toward the 19th century than the 20th, with the exceptions of Piazzolla and Ginastera, but even there, there's a strong folkloric strain. Melancholic minor melodies alternate with lilting major songs and harmonies, gentle "flicks" of arpeggios set off sentimental tunes, and occasional volatility takes the stage, most notably in Ginastera's *Danzas Argentinas*, which are the only pieces from the recital I had available for comparison. Martha Argerich, on EMI's *Live from the Concertgebouw 1978 & 1979*, is fabulous in her way, exciting in the outer dances and richly emotive in the central *Danza de la moza donosa*. The piano literally sounds as if it might explode in the frenzied *Danza del gaucho matrero*. In the same piece, Antonelli's dramatic climaxes are, within the context of her different reading, as satisfying as Argerich's take-no-prisoner's bravura. In general, Antonelli is more measured throughout, playing the three in 9:16 versus Argerich's 6:54, but this more deliberate pace allows her to convey a different side of the music without slighting its rhythmic zest. For example, in the *Danza del viejo boyero*, I could more easily visualize an old guacho dancing with spontaneous but somewhat halting gestures than in Argerich's version, and Antonelli's playing of the *Danza del gaucho matrero* could actually accompany a dance. Any dancer trying to match Argerich would fall to the floor, exhausted. Both pianists play the second movement beautifully, but Antonelli's slower tempo extends the underlying sadness. Based on our conversation, I'm sure that Antonelli would like me to call attention to her performance of Lasala's *Romancero*—he was one of her teachers—as

the composer felt that in her he had found his ideal interpreter. Hearing her evocative, flowing account, with its sensitive shadings, it's easy to see why. She also studied with Guastavino, met Piazzolla, and is friendly with Ginastera's daughter, who admires Antonelli's way with her father's music. This is a richly rewarding recital that conveys new depths with each hearing. Recommended. **Robert Schulslaper**