



YSL T-321

American Rarities Vol. 10

Francisco Aybar, piano

“In his prime, which began in the mid-‘60s, Francisco Aybar stood out from other rising American virtuosos in two ways: he was born in the Dominican Republic, and he specialized in Latin American and Spanish music. (An LP set of Albéniz’s IBERIA was released by Connoisseur Society.) In other respects Aybar typified the ambitions of his generation, as we hear from this highly varied recital from 1971 in Alice Tully Hall. As with William Kapell, Gary Graffman, and Byron Janis, the influence of Horowitz was inescapable. The pressure to develop a powerhouse technique and to floor the audience in electrifying ways affected that generation for both good and ill.

Aybar displays both aspects here. On the second half he attacks Prokofiev’s Sonata #7, the most wrenching of his war sonatas, with reckless abandon. Storms of notes fly from his fingers, and to increase the thrill, the outer movements are taken rapidly. At the same time, however, the Sonata becomes almost shapeless in the onrush of technical prowess, and dynamics mostly range from loud to too loud. On the first half of the program, Chopin’s ‘Funeral March’ Sonata suffers from the same defects....

It must be said that the impression given on disc seems to be considerably different from what was heard in the hall. THE NEW YORK TIMES review was favorable, and Aybar was called a poet at heart....(On the positive side, the recorded sound is clean and has almost no audience noise.) One cannot reliably judge how much of what we hear is an artifact of the microphones. However, Aybar plays Schumann’s ‘Blumenstück’ more straight than a keyboard poet would, and the encore of ‘Träumerei’, although nicely done, isn’t exceptionally sensitive. The second encore, a true rarity, is Benjamin Godard’s ‘En route’, a perpetual motion machine that became a signature of Aybar’s; he plays it with infectious relish.

Where Aybar makes the most favorable impression is on home territory, in three excerpts from IBERIA. Albéniz was himself a virtuoso, and there are huge hurdles to surmount in these extracts. They are performed here with bravura and splashy colorist effects. That makes for excitement, and Aybar knows the idiom in his bones. What you shouldn’t expect is much contrast in the quieter passages or the ability to spin an atmospheric mood. The Mozart Sonata that opened the evening is also done boldly, which I prefer to daintiness....

Despite his good reviews in New York and a powerful technique, Aybar got lost in the crowd. There is a reason for St. Laurent Studio titling this as part of their American Rarities series. I actually knew the pianist socially during the Seventies when he taught in the music department of the University of Denver and was lionized locally, a fate he accepted proudly. Decades later ruin descended, due to criminal proceedings over a morals charge - the details are best left unsaid. Aybar lives in obscurity today, but this glimpse into his generation of American pianists is valuable, both for historical reasons and to awaken memories of a musician of considerable attainment.”

- Huntley Dent, FANFARE

AMERICAN RARITIES Vol. 10



Francisco Aybar, piano

Mozart Schumann Chopin Albeniz Prokofiev

Lincoln Center - November 11, 1971

