



Cristiana Porqueddu

CRISTIANO PORQUEDDU: OPENING THE DOOR TO THE SACRED

Although it is our current idea that “Art” is a domain apart from everyday life and that the idea always existed. However, “Art,” in that sense, did not enter the English language until the late 18th century - likely under the pressure that gave guidance to the creative forces of the Classical and Romantic age. Up until then, our concept of Art was bound to the idea of “the useful arts.” This was no more truer than with music, which some materialists considered nothing more than “spandrel” – merely a side-effect of language, and in the gritty reality of human existence, not necessarily essential.

In his 1955 book, *Icon and Idea*, the English art historian, Sir Herbert Read, maintained that the aesthetic activity is a fundamental rather than a peripheral activity to the development of our approach to reality. He described repetitive stages that art epochs proceed through, starting from the stone age to modernity.

The opening act of each epoch was characterized by austerity in creative displays. This austerity was revealed through what the Philosopher, Mircea Eliade, called *hierophany*, a “breakthroughs of the sacred into the world.” It was characterized by both attraction and awe as we come over and against that which is “other worldly,” yet revealing itself to be essential to our existence. Artistic epochs begin when the sacred is revealed.

Thus was the experience that Cristiano Porqueddu brought to the concert hall on the evening of October 15, in Georgetown, Texas.

REVIEW

Live in Georgetown (Texas)

October 14, 2022

As leading proponent of 21st century guitar music, Cristiano played a flawless execution of the works of new composers, **Roberto Piana, Kevin Swierkosz-Lenart, Franco Cavallone**, and the mature composers **Leo Brouwer** and the late, **Angelo Gilardino**.

The catastrophic attack of hierarchy and tradition by the 20th century avant-garde shut the door to musical meaning for many. For music to regain its priestly role in bringing meaning it required a return to the sacred through innovative language and traditional form. Porqueddu’s program revealed the opening of a new epoch that is novel, yet is supported on the shoulders of tradition.

From the first phrase of his performance, Porqueddu, engaged the audience with his sound and his focused precision. He was *Janus*, opening the door to the light of a new Sacred in 21st century musical art. The audience was immediately enthralled.

The light of each of the young composers of Cristiano’s program heralded something new, yet traditional in their compositional skill. Though challenging to hear at times, it was apparent the composers always searching for meaning and tendrils to the earth and to human perception.

Piana’s music, *Portraits of Sardinia*, was an introspective rendering of celebrated artists, painters, musicians and writers, who rose from the soil of Sardinia. The writing harkened back to the skillful writing of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

Swierkosz-Lenart's, *Omaggio a Giuseppe Biasi*, was a 3-movement suite that allowed Porqueddu to demonstrate his total ability to communicate coherent contrapuntal texture expressed on the fingerboard of the guitar.

Cavallone's *Two Jewish Songs* moved the listener from the activity of dance to song. Porqueddu's presentation of rather simple Ladino tunes within the dense accompaniment was another example of his extraordinary mastery of content and presentation of beauty in a complex homophonic texture.

The second part of the concert was the most profound. Cristiano opened the door flawlessly to this experience revealing the creativity of two master guitar composers in their full artistic maturity.

Gilardino's, *Sardegna*, a 5 movement suite, Heavenly music marked by a perfect Earthly form: the work rode from water to fire on the horses of S'Ardua to the gift of Saint Antonio. Gilardino's masterful counterpoint and his unique and inventive motivic narrative brought Gilardino's spirit into the concert hall and convincingly demonstrated that he was on the cutting edge of compositional history. Porqueddu tapped into every rhythmic nuance and tonal meaning that the music expressed, as the door to the sacred opened wider.

This particular Texas concert on Porqueddu's tour began with Angelo and this writer's

invitation. Though it was delayed by the pandemic, it was fitting that it was the final performance of Porqueddu's World tour. Despite his passing, Angelo's presence was strongly felt in this music as if he were there, celebrating the culmination of the gathering. The final pianissimo was, no doubt, a farewell as he ascended to compose for the Angels, leaving only his memory.

The last work was from the legendary Leo Brouwer. Dedicated to Cristiano Porqueddu, this work was titled, *Dialogue of the Olive Trees and the Nuraghe*. This was Brouwer at his most artistic maturity, and perhaps the greatest composition of his long life. Again, Cristiano provided a perfect rendering that transcended the guitar.

Cristiano Porqueddu brought profound technical mastery of the guitar. However, skill does not guarantee understanding of the music. Too many guitar concerts are full of skillful players who cannot communicate to the audience the meaning of the music. Porqueddu brought both: technical mastery and mature musical insight.

He opened the door to the sacred gifts by the instrument's finest 21st century composers.

- Kevin Taylor
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