

## FANFARE

CUANDO ACABA DE LLOVER: Spanish and Latin American Songs • Itziar Martinez Galdos (sop); Per Arne Frantzen (pn) • LAWO 1002 (62:45 Spanish & Norwegian only)  
MONTサルVATGE 5 Canciones Negras. GURIDI 6 Canciones Castellanas. NIN Polo. Canto andaluz. El vito.  
GUASTAVINO 4 Canciones Coloniales. TURINA Poema en forma de canciones



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This is a 2007 recording of Spanish and Latin American songs by a Spanish-born soprano and Norwegian pianist who have been performing this repertoire together since at least the 1980s. That, at least, is what the liner notes state, that they met Xavier Montsalvatge in San Sebastian in the late 1980s, performed his song cycle for him, and “received inspiration from the composer on how we could ‘add some seasoning’ to our own interpretation.” If you do the math, then, this would make Itziar Martinez Galdos somewhere between 45 and 50 years old at the time of recording.

She has an extremely interesting voice, imperfectly controlled. Her timbre is of the type I’d characterize as quintessentially Spanish: a very pretty sound with some metal in it; not as round, perhaps, as de los Angeles, but far more intense and interesting in interpretation. Indeed, as the recital progressed, I became so wrapped up in her interpretive skill that, for once, I was able to overlook the occasionally loose vibrato. Martinez Galdos is quite evidently an artist first and foremost, and so it is from that perspective that I judge her, not as just another pretty voice.

For me, the unknown songs in this recital were those by Jesus Guridi, a Basque composer known as “the Spanish Respighi,” and Argentinean composer Carlos Guastavino. Both are in the melodic, tonal, popular-oriented styles of Montsalvatge and Nin, and both also share with Nin a wonderful sense of song construction that elevates their creations above the mundane.

I became so engrossed in Martinez Galdos’s singing that it was not until the third song of the Montsalvatge cycle that I really began to notice Per Arne Frantzen’s accompaniment, but in a way that was conditioned by the music itself. The first two songs of the Montsalvatge cycle call for a light, airy touch, almost subliminally accompanying the soprano, and Frantzen achieves this so perfectly that I wondered if he’d have the correct rhythmic drive for “Canto Negro,” the last song in the cycle. He did, and in fact was able to extend this wonderful drive and buoyancy into the following songs. It’s difficult to say whether or not Frantzen would be an exciting soloist, since there is not quite enough pianistically in these pieces to suggest that one way or the other, but his combination of sensitivity and excitement indicate to me that he is probably an excellent chamber-music player. Thus I am delighted to discover, in his bio, that he is “one of the most sought-after chamber musicians in Norway.” That makes perfect sense to me.

By the time this recital was finished, I was so thoroughly engrossed in their joint interpretation that I didn’t even think about their technique at all. It was just as if the composers were speaking to me through her voice and his piano—and that, ideally, is how it should be. Thus her singing is not only, for me, more interesting than de los Angeles but also more interesting than mezzo Teresa Berganza (who has also recorded the Guridi cycle). All four of the Guastavino songs were recorded by tenor Ulises Espallat on New Albion 58, but his voice is even less steady than Martinez Galdos’s and he is not as excellent an interpreter. I must also mention that, although there are no song text translations in English, Lawo at least gives you English-language synopses of the lyrics, which help a great deal. Lynn René Bayley

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