

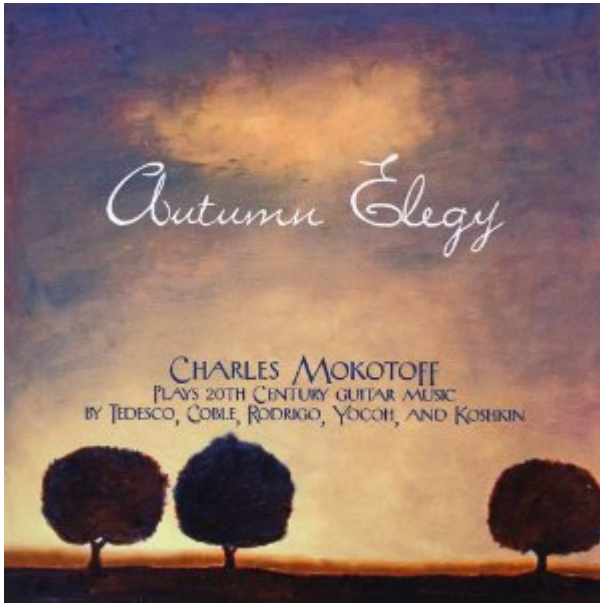
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Review: Autumn Elegy by Charles Mokotoff

by [admin](#) on 4:18 pm in [Reviews](#)



Autumn Elegy by Charles Mokotoff

Artist Website: www.charlesmokotoff.com

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Repertoire

The album has a nice mix of repertoire spanning from twentieth century classics to premiere works

such as Autumn Elegy written for Mokotoff by William Coble. There's no fluffy classical guitar fare here, all these composer's produce solid musical work. The mix of repertoire chosen by Mokotoff gives the album a mood and unity beyond the usual grab-bag of composers. The repertoire all has the a feel of mystery and darkness or, at times, a meditative mood. The Coble fits right in with darker mysterious feel of the Rodrigo and Koshkin. Variations On Sakura by Yocoh offer some relief in the middle.

Track list:

Capriccio Diabolico by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Autumn Elegy by William Coble

Elogio De La Guitarra by Joaquín Rodrigo

Variations On Sakura by Yuquijiro Yocoh

Fall of Birds by Nikita Koshkin

En los trigales by Joaquín Rodrigo

Highlights

Autumn Elegy by Coble is definitely one of the highlights of the album. This is partly because I've heard most of the other repertoire before so new works catch my attention more readily. Mokotoff has an excellent sense of forward movement and controls the long phrases with musical maturity. This track also highlights Mokotoff's virtuosity. His ability to control the texture in the difficult passages while simultaneously adding musical phrasing and dynamics is what really drew me into the work.

I'm not a huge fan of Tedesco's Capriccio Diabolico but Mokotoff's legato scale passages are excellent. In fact his legato scale work on the entire album is beautiful. This is also very apparent in the Rodrigo.

Variations On Sakura by Yuquijiro Yocoh is a very accessible work which really catches the flavor and mood of the traditional folk song but also adds some compositional variety and rhythmic vitality needed for a longer work. Some of you may be familiar with it from John William's performance of the work a few years back on the Seville Concert from the Royal Alcázar Palace. There are some very special moments created by Mokotoff which really made me re-listen to the track a few times.

The Koshkin has some very intense moments and, like many of his other works, really delivers a type of repertoire that is otherwise lacking in the classical guitar. I'm not overly praising the work from personal preference but instead it offers what pianists and other instruments have readily available in their repertoire. It really gets "rockin" near the end but within a compositional style that is complex and programmatic. However, the work is easy to understand with its motivic unity and development. Mokotoff pulls it off with style and some risk!

Just a small mention of the Rodrigo. What I liked in this recording is the directness of Mokotoff's presentation of the music. I felt the music just made a great deal of sense and was not turned into a showcase of technique, but rather, a very musical performance with clear sections emphasized.

Sound

These days it's hard to tell if recordings are in a hall or reverb is added digitally but to tell you the truth I don't really care either way. I'm more concerned about whether I notice something about the recording that takes away from the music. The nylon strings on this recording sound very

good, particularly legato slurs as in the Tedesco; they are very lush and silky. The basses might lack body, however, they are nice and clear which is maybe more important. Overall I like the sound of both player and recording.

Criticisms?

There are a few buzzes and near misses on the trebles here and there but it sounds like Mokotoff was taking some risks which I really like. I'd rather hear a player take risk and 'go for it' than record something bar by bar and lack performance spontaneity. From a programmatic standpoint I might have removed the Tedesco which I felt wasn't as in line with the mood of the album. Again, that's just personal preference. I really enjoy rock albums partly because of the unity in compositions. Classical albums sometimes lack that unity. However, overall I really like the collection of repertoire here.

Conclusion

Mokotoff has recorded an album filled with mystery, virtuosity, musical maturity, and mood that really hits the spot. His playing is a mix of strong tone, pianistic at times, but also capable of beautiful legato phrasing and a natural feel for forward movement.



From: www.charlesmokotoff.com/cd.html

The Story Behind this CD:

In the summer of 1986, near the end of a very busy concert season, I spent a full week of nights with an audio engineer and producer in a church in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the campus of Harvard University. We wanted to capture the beautiful ambient sound of this religious space without the typical traffic noise that unfortunately accompanies it during daylight hours.

The result was this recording, done back then on large reels of tape. Later that year I began touring overseas and preparing for my New York City solo recital debut, which occurred in Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall in May of 1987. Somehow the master recording was never pressed into a CD and the reels languished in my closet for 22 years.

During that time, I took an extended sabbatical away from guitar while pursuing other life interests. Then one day in 2008, I took these reels out and had a listen. I was very pleased with the interesting repertoire but concerned about the possibly eroded quality of the sound. I sent them out to be re-mastered by Bernie Grundman in Hollywood, California. He brought these sessions to life in such a fantastic restoration that I was pleased to press this CD, Autumn Elegy, affectionately titled after the work written for me

by William Coble that is second on the disk.

Coble's work is perhaps the most adventurous work on this collection, while tonal, its character is decidedly modern in flavor. The music that I now perform is much more traditional and appeals to the typically eclectic audience that frequents the recitals I perform today.



From: www.charlesmokotoff.com/bio.html

CHARLES MOKOTOFF holds both Bachelors and Masters degrees in guitar performance from Syracuse University and Ithaca College, respectively. He has served on the faculties of numerous colleges and universities in the New York and New England area as a lecturer in classical guitar and lute.

Prior to settling in the Washington, DC area in 1991, Mr. Mokotoff made his home in New England where he was widely recognized as an active guitarist and Renaissance lute player during the 1980s. During that period his career culminated with two Far East tours and a well-received New York City debut at Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall in 1987, featuring the Premier of Autumn Elegy by William Coble, written and dedicated to him.

Mr. Mokotoff has been hard of hearing for a good deal of his life and is an outspoken proponent of making music with hearing loss.

Please see this [Hearing Loss Magazine](#) article for further details on Charles Mokotoff.

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