

Albéniz. No label or number, 2008.

• Tracy Anne Smith. *Lilac Star Bird*. Works by Kleynjans, Barrios, Bogdanović, Ying-Chen Kao, Rodrigo, Hétu, and Reinhardt. No label or number, 2008.

Here we have recordings by students (or by now, possibly, ex-students) at three of the nation's leading conservatories. On balance, they represent an impressive snapshot of the state of guitar in higher education.

Australian Rupert Boyd has pursued his professional "finishing" at Yale with Benjamin Verdery. He proves to be an extremely gifted guitarist. His disc begins with a fine traversal of Piazzolla's *Invierno porteño*. It is not easy to project the intensity of Piazzolla's musical ideas on one guitar, but Boyd succeeds admirably. The transcription, sadly, is uncredited. The Bach *Prelude, Fugue, and Allegro* follows. Boyd's playing is beautifully refined, with gorgeous tone, and finely-judged balance among voices in the fugue. Some players have taken the concluding *Allegro* faster, but his performance works perfectly well, especially given the absolutely clean technique. From his native land, Boyd includes Peter Sculthorpe's *From Kakadu*. Maybe it is just the power of suggestion, but the music does seem distinctly Australian, or maybe I have been reading too

many travel books. In any case he does a fine job with the work. My favorite movement is the concluding "Cantando," which is quite lovely. The title work by Granados follows in the artist's transcription. Despite the formidable difficulties, it is played very well indeed. Surely there are few melodies more beautiful than the "Melodico" movement from this piece. Boyd's phrasing and balance are exemplary, and he does not in any way disappoint in the more athletic moments such as the penultimate "Presto." This is one of the best recorded performances of this work on guitar. *Hika* is one of Leo Brouwer's most successful mid-length works, exemplifying his mature, contemporary-but-accessible sound. Boyd is musically and technically flawless. His least successful performance is the concluding *Sevilla* by Albéniz. It often sounds more dutiful than inspired. But no matter: the album is first-rate. Sound is excellent, but the liner notes are only about the artist.

Antoni Kakamakov's CD was produced as the prize in the Wesley Day Solo Classical Guitar Recording Competition at the San Francisco Conservatory. Given the difficulties in establishing a career as a guitarist, it is a most worthy prize indeed. There are fine liner notes about the music, the guitar (a Hauser II) and the artist. Kakamakov begins with the *Sonata* by Antonio José, another fresh reminder, as if any

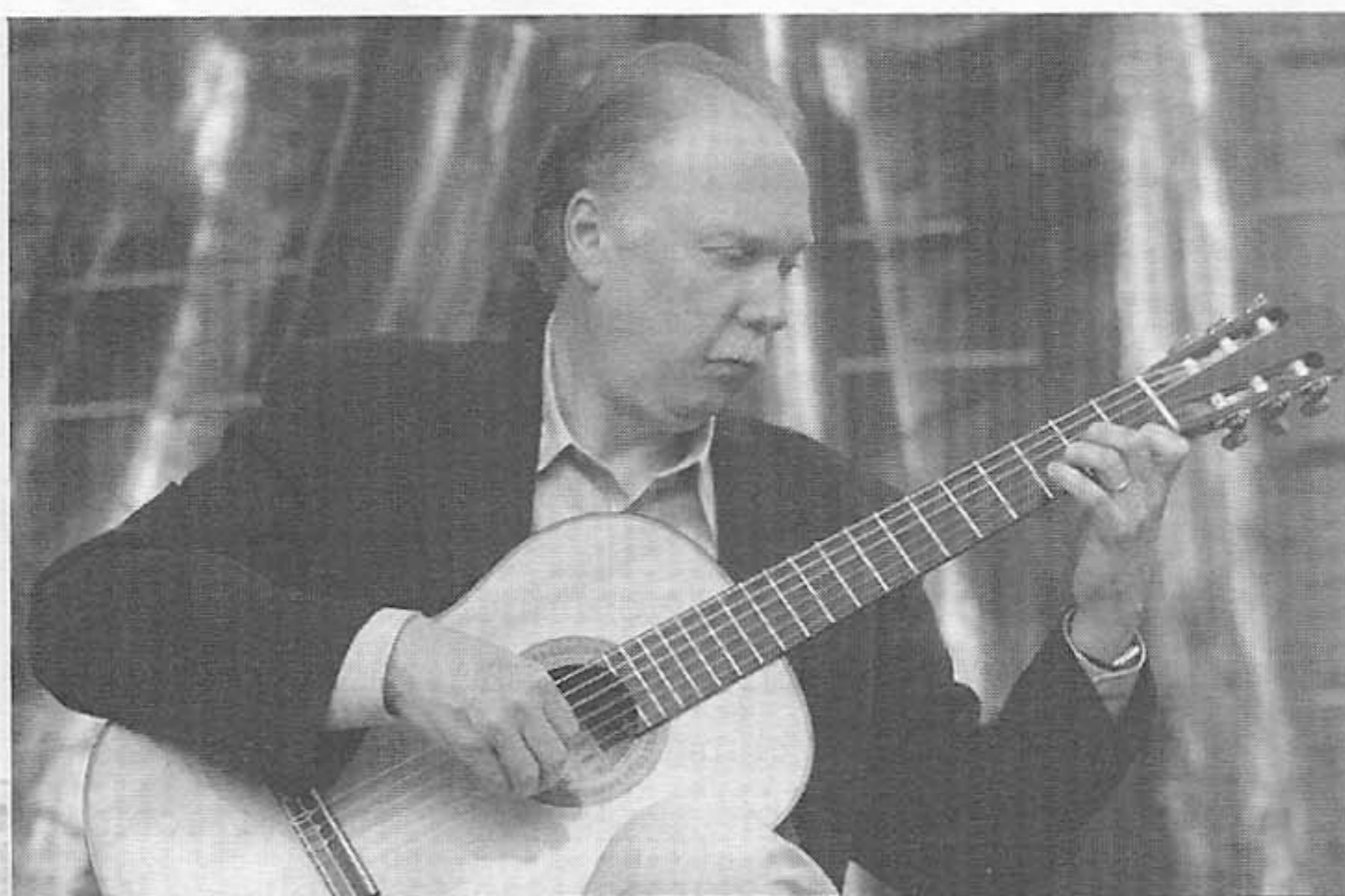
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AUDITION DATES

December 5, 2009
January 29-30, 2010
February 12-13, 2010
February 26-27, 2010