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## **KERTSOPOULOS AESTHETICS: A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS RESOLVING SERIOUS INTERPRETIVE DILEMMAS**

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There is a substantial dilemma in the performance of early music. On one hand we have musicians who express the necessity for authenticity and original sonorities<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand are the benefits of modern instrument construction: mainly accurate intonation and powerful volume<sup>2</sup>. So do we use outmoded, awkward or to some degree deficient antique instruments or replicas for the sake of authenticity, or do we enjoy the acoustical advantages of advanced instruments available today that provide historically uninformed performances? Both sides are right, and both have exhibited interpretations with a wide range in quality, from the slight and insignificant to the magnificent and highly artistic. Think of Casals' Six Cello Suites or Segovia's Chaconne by Bach. These legendary interpretations radiate from the first to the last notes, yet the tonal qualities of Segovia's guitar or Casals' cello – as well as the interpretive universe of both maestros – are quite far-removed from the baroque ideals for sound as generally acknowledged nowadays.

In the particular case of the classical guitar, there is a highly debatable area concerning early music interpretation, due to a strong historical paradox inherent in its tradition. Modern classical guitar has passionately embodied in its repertoire music from several major composers who never wrote for guitar and only obliquely affected it. Transcriptions of Dowland, Scarlatti or Bach form a major part of the instrument's literature; and since Tarrega's time, everybody has played, recorded and enjoyed such transcriptions. But at the same time, the instrument has been almost entirely removed from its own rich heritage of forms, constructional philosophy, tuning ranges and playing techniques that flourished in the same historical periods in Europe, but are now obsolete. The contemporary guitar that is used to play transcriptions from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries sounds totally unrelated to the original sonorities of that time.

This historical paradox can be resolved with approaches that seek to achieve a faithful rendering of the sound of the renaissance, baroque and classic periods, while remaining within the advanced instrument building standards of today. *Kertsopoulos Aesthetics*<sup>3</sup> is just such an approach. It is an internationally acclaimed platform of original inventions in guitar and string construction, from which are drawn all of the instruments as well as the stringing, trebling and tuning options that are used in this recording. Its contribution extends not only to the revival of older performance practices with a remarkable variety of string materials and working tensions for historical tunings, but also to the improvement of the contemporary guitar's sound, for which it proposes new and exciting ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> The argument of authenticity –that in truth has been present since the mid-1800s– is based on a philosophy of investigation into long-neglected techniques of playing, instrument construction, string materials and diameters, ensemble sizes, choice of tempos and a variety of other textual and interpretive issues (tunings, temperament, timbre, etc) that can illuminate often-heard compositions anew by using instruments similar to those in use at the time the music was first composed.

<sup>2</sup> According to this argument, the field of instrument construction nowadays is too advanced to be ignored, and additionally all conditions concerned with musical praxis have been so radically changed that the search for authenticity is no more than a utopian notion. This side consciously sacrifices authenticity for the fuller (in terms of volume) and more accurate (in terms of intonation) sonorities of the modern concert instruments.

<sup>3</sup> [www.kertsopoulosaesthetics.blogspot.com](http://www.kertsopoulosaesthetics.blogspot.com)