

By: Raymond Tuttle

**SCARLATTI Sonatas: in A**, K 322; **in d**, K 1; **in f**, K 481; **in e**, K 198; **in D**, K 491. **BACH Prelude, Fugue, and Allegro in E $\flat$** , BWV 998. **Tocatta in e**, BWV 914. **HANDEL Suite No. 5 in e**, HWV 430: Air and Variations (“The Harmonious Blacksmith”). **Chaconne No. 2 in G**, HWV 435 • Smaro Gregoriadou (gtr) • DELOS DE 3419 (61:09)

The title of this CD is “Reinventing Guitar II.” Thus, it is a sequel to “Reinventing Guitar!” (Delos DE 3398), a 2009 release reviewed in *Fanfare's* first 2010 issue by the cutely named Ilya Oblomov. As the cliché goes, “Reinventing Guitar II” picks up where “Reinventing Guitar!” left off, adding Handel to Bach and Scarlatti, and thereby winning the Baroque trifecta.

Gregoriadou's “reinventions” are leaving the standard classical guitar and modern tuning behind, at least for the time being, and using either a double-course pedal guitar or a single-stringed scalloped pedal guitar, both with alternative tunings. (“Scalloped,” in this context, refers neither to seafood nor potatoes, but to the frets, which are concave. The significance is that, when the guitarist touches a string, she does not also touch the wood, as happens with a standard guitar. Gregoriadou compares this to the harpsichord, and claims that the scallops create a similarly “extra-clear, brilliant, dry and distinct coloration articulation, which are particularly relevant to the baroque timbre.”) Gregoriadou's instruments and performances are based on “Kertsopoulos aesthetics,” defined as a “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.” Oblomov's review correctly points out that “reinventing” the guitar in a similar manner hardly began with Kertsopoulos, let alone Gregoriadou. I don't think Gregoriadou is claiming absolute originality or uniqueness, however; she's just weighing and combining multiple options to create guitar performances that bring new insights to old repertory, if not strict authenticity *per se*, which in any event is unachievable. The last seven minutes of this CD are Gregoriadou's narrated demonstration of the tunings used on this CD. Also, she plays samples of the program on a standard classical guitar on this track. This is a good idea, although it will intrude upon those who are playing this CD for simple enjoyment. I would suggest that, in the future, she programs “reinvented” and standard samples side by side, so non-expert listeners can appreciate the differences more readily.

This program is not about guitars or tuning, though . . . it is about music and the enjoyment thereof. I have no doubt that Gregoriadou has a most musical mind . . . that is to say, it melds intellect with emotion and sensitivity. This is a program that can appeal to listeners' hearts or heads, or to both at the same time. Guitar programs can easily engender a cultured catnap, given the (relatively) limited repertory and the (relatively) limited dynamic, timbral, and expressive range of the instrument. Gregoriadou is tackling the former challenge through the presentation of these transcriptions – these are, without exception, her own arrangements. (“The Harmonious Blacksmith” and two of the Scarlatti sonatas are billed as recording premieres; I assume that means that they are recording premieres in any version for guitar.) Gregoriadou tackles the latter challenge not just through the judicious use of “reinvented” guitars, but also through her lively and questing musicianship. Rhythm plays a particularly important role in her performances, as does sensitivity to and clarity of texture. I have no doubt that Gregoriadou could have played this entire program on a standard guitar and made it interesting. The fact that she chose to do something else simply makes the program more interesting. In her own way, Gregoriadou evokes musicians such as Vladimir Horowitz, Glenn Gould, and Wanda Landowska in her willingness—her need, really—to find a new way to express herself and to reanimate the music, without letting innovation become an end in itself.

Any classical guitarist, professional or aspiring, could learn a lot from this CD, I think. Anyone who enjoys just listening to the guitar will get more than the usual enjoyment from Gregoriadou, even if they don't appreciate or care about her instruments, her tunings, or any other practical concerns. Highly recommended, then. **Raymond Tuttle**