

PETITS BLUES

for solo guitar by *Christopher Leu*
Les Productions D'Oz DZ861.
12pp.

Sooner or later most guitar students like to have a dabble at playing the blues and therefore books such as 'Petits Blues' are to be welcomed, aimed as it is towards the grade 3-4+ player.

The first two compositions, *Missouri Blues* and *Louisiana Blues* are very well written and entertaining pieces for the Lower Intermediate student and in a way, it is a shame that this grading could not have been maintained throughout the other four pieces which all call for a higher technical standard. However these other four are delightful to play and are sure to be winners with the student wishing to explore the fingerboard a little more using this style of music.

Steve Marsh

AIRS DE FAMILLE vol. 1

for solo guitar by *Bernard Piris*
Les Productions D'Oz DZ834.
12pp.

This is a really nice, albeit small, set of student pieces, of around the grades 3-4 standard. Without exception all six pieces are interesting and serve a pedagogic purpose.

The jewel in the crown, which coincidentally happens to be the technically hardest one, is *Rue des Lilas*, a delightfully rhythmic 'Latin' piece containing a nice key change in the middle and a sure-fire contender for the student concert.

All are very well presented with sensible fingering kept to a minimum.

Recommended.

Steve Marsh

GUITAR ACADEMY BOOK ONE

by *Richard Corr*

Academy Music Publications: 92pp
includes a CD with 83 tracks

The general consensus of opinion seems to be that music education has changed somewhat over time to include a general broader approach particularly when considering instrumental tuition. For example there is usually a huge difference between the classical guitar tutor and the pop or rock tutor, where the former concentrates on technique and the reading of notation, whilst the latter is more to do with chords, accompanying songs and

improvising in various styles. This book is trying to break down these and a number of other barriers.

So does it succeed in what it sets out to do? Well, it does include areas largely uncovered by many tutors, namely improvisation for children, ear training, plenty of ensemble opportunities, every solo having a teacher's duet part: just to name a few. Moreover there is plenty of opportunity to develop chordal techniques particularly when accompanying songs which again is singularly lacking in most classical tutors. It really is not enough in today's climate to expect players to pick this up for themselves. I know that a certain number of players can do this, especially if they have had the foresight to try a little extra curricular activity when studying classical guitar by, for example, playing along with the current records to develop such a technique as this (for I did precisely that when I was studying guitar); I know far more people that didn't and they have to be the poorer for it.

There are many more subjects covered by this tutor than I have space to mention now but suffice it to say that it really is one of the best I have ever seen and I think every serious teacher should at least give it a look-see; I don't think they will be disappointed if they do.

Chris Dumigan

SONATA NO1

by *Alberto J. Rodriguez-Ortiz*

Edition Daminus. 18pp

Here is a guitarist/composer from Puerto Rico, whose name is new to me. His credentials are impressive and therefore I opened this hefty piece with alacrity. The first movement is an *Andante Misterioso* subtitled *La Agonia en el Hospital*, which begins with harmonics tolling above a legato dissonant bassline. The speed picks up momentarily at bar 6 in line with the dynamics, as the bassline thunders in an ominous fashion (*Marcato*). However, the opening returns, altered somewhat, before an *accelerando molto* takes the piece into its first *fff* dynamic. After a pause, *Tempo Primo* returns once again beginning in two voices until a sudden set of chords punctuated by stabbing staccato bass notes takes us into new territory, an

extended *molto ritmico* with several contrasting ideas occurring in quick succession. Gradually an uneasy peace takes over and the opening tempo and the tolling harmonics return only to be swept away again by another *ritmico* idea, at its heart being a run of 2-octave-apart notes: first *pianissimo* and then *fortissimo*. The tolling harmonics return in between until the opening line of the movement becomes its coda. Although the preface gives us no clues as to the meaning behind the first movement's subtitle, it is obvious that the agony suffered at the hospital results in the second movement's *Marcha Funebre: El Entierro* title. In the unusual key of G# minor it begins its *Largo Pesante* with doom laden chords against a deliberately out-of-key melody above it. This changes subsequently into an arpeggio section marked *Arpa*, as all the notes are to be played as if ringing on over each other, whilst a sad melody plays overhead. The chordal section returns to be replaced by a sextuplet semiquaver arpeggio idea which continues underneath a melody in long notes. This dies away and the movement closes with more tolling harmonics. The *Finale* titled *La Lucha del bien y el mal por su alma* starts in similar fashion to become an *Allegro Vivace* low E at the hair-raising speed of 320-crotchets-a-minute, above which a dissonant leaping crotchet line ensues. Then some clashing minor seconds hold sway, before the intervals gradually widen out into major seconds, then thirds, before crashing accentuated six-note chords alternate with a climbing staccato figure. This in turn becomes a long rolling triplet crotchet idea which is quite extensive until a *ritard* leads into repeated chords marked to be played for an actual number of seconds. The opening repeated E idea comes back relatively unchanged, leading to a new *Allegro piu Tranquillo* chordal idea, which subsequently turns into the minor 2nds again. A final sojourn into the repeated Es leads to a bar of low E Bartok Pizzicati ending on a dolce but indefinite chord.

The Sonata's intent is no doubt a serious one and its content is to all intents and purposes atonal for the greater part, with harsh gritty