

Baden Powell The Musician

It's very difficult to talk about a musician which is also a friend, because one takes the risk to be criticized as biased. However, the following facts are completely objective.

When the small Baden Powell - because the first feeling with him is that of fragility- arrived in Paris in late December, he was ill and was suffering. I had to make the arrangements (orchestrations) of a movie and a LP (part of the "Le Monde Musical" series) of which he had written most of the music: we then met for a working session in his hotel room where doctors and Brazilian friends were going in and out. I had previously worked with him three years before, for a LP with Billy Nencioli and for a Lelouch movie "Une fille et des fusils" [THE DECADENT INFLUENCE / TO BE A CROOK, 1965]; he was already playing beautifully, but I could see that he had again improved a lot during that time. Because Baden, ill or not, works **all the time**, either the guitar, either his compositions, either thinking.

I had taken a recorder, to record what he said, though I don't speak Portuguese, and him speaking a very bad French, and especially **what he played**. He was listening the takes again, and sung over some patterns that he was *suggesting*, while in fact he let me do what I felt and let me choose the instruments, which is infrequent with most artists.

However, I must admit that most of the time, I would keep his suggestions because they were elaborate and beautiful, and because I'd hardly have done better. This to say that if he's as precise in his art as a jeweler could be, he's always open minded to other suggestions, if they comply with what he likes. Better: if he doesn't understand them right away, he will have them explained to him again, adapts himself, and sometimes will say that it's better than the idea he had in the first place! This exquisite kindness makes him appreciated by everyone, and creates a very favorable atmosphere for the music and work. Every single note is important; never anything useless neither gross. Everything for the beauty, but not the cold beauty of some stones: he keeps only what makes his heart naked.

This is how we worked during several afternoons, without ever getting bored. The following nights, I made the arrangements, and I called in the musicians for the recording sessions that took place without him, much to his regret. He couldn't stand up, so he had to use rerecording, which consists to record the orchestral bases apart, and then later adding over the voice or the instrument.

Baden was really very ill, and we were very worried, as much for his health as for the recordings that he was supposed to do. Then some he'd feel better and decided to go to the studio during the whole night. His artistic director for France, Jacques Lubin (who is also his recording engineer) and myself arrived at about 9.30PM. Baden and some friends were already here, and he wanted to start recording right away. He had some very hard pieces to play, apart from his famous Bossas, as a Chopin's Nocturne which was written as everybody knows for the piano, with runs which may be easily performed by a good pianist, but definitely not by a guitarist, whatever gifted he may be. However, he had exhausted all of us when at 7AM, he had achieved the 3/4Th of the recordings, and still being in amazing shape, without taking any break. Especially when considering him still being in recovery, where was this fragility I was talking about?

Baden is for me a strong musician. One can be anxious, when for instance a piece that has always been played on piano is arranged for guitar and orchestra; this is the case for this Nocturne: he put such warmth and good taste in it that I think that Chopin himself wouldn't have deny it, on the contrary.

But words aren't enough to talk about him, you should rather listen to him. He went back to his country with the promise to be back very soon. I've been longing since to work again in this untroubled atmosphere with this friend who is one of the most important musicians that I had the luck to meet. **Ivan Jullien**