

Early Music Review

BOOKS

CHARLES MACKERRAS

edited by The Boydell Press, 2015.

xxii + 298 pp, £25.00. ISBN 978 1 84383 966 8

For the last ten years, two sisters (one my age, the other about nine years younger) used to have a meal with me in Greenwich during the Early Music Exhibition in November. This year, the conversations happened to turn to Charles Mackerras. All three of us were entirely enthusiastic, aware of his power back in the mid-60s. Our links then were with the Dartington Summer School, and the first time I saw him close up (sometime in the mid or late '60s), I watched him conduct a students orchestra playing Beethoven's first symphony. It was a very accurate and helpful rehearsal, but when it was played in the evening concert his conducting was absolutely different: everything was at a different level. The younger sister loved music, but moved into art. Eventually, she finished up at the Coliseum, selling programmes, and heard Mackerras performances long after I'd left London. I was, however, involved with him in that he used my edition of *Alcina*, and he said that we were joint editors: did he ever used it again?

My initial awareness of him came from Sadlers Wells (the predecessor of The Coliseum) in the 1960s, and I was especially concerned with Janáček. I'd never heard of him before, and very few people outside Czechoslovakia (apart from German translations) will have heard the music. Mackerras has been the leading figure in creating Janáček's reputation. Charles wasn't trained as a musical scholar, but he needed to study the scores, restore the composer's idiosyncratic style, and make some sense when the autograph was confused. He was busy enough in normal repertoires, but his work on Janáček could fill the working life of a scholar! The advantage of Charles was his determination to read any score he conducted as well as the usual indications to the performers. The score was essential – even with pieces he knew well, he still managed during a performance to find something he didn't know. He favoured regular tempi, perhaps as he grew older, it might have varied a little more, but certainly not to excess. His concern was the music, not over-exciting the audience.

He was always concerned in checking the sources when

there were problems – especially in the case of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. He wanted it to sound like Mozart, and he spent years of research; checking the sources, filling the gaps in cadences (the closing third filling the middle note or adding a cadenza etc.) There's a nice reproduction in the book (p. 18) with markings on a score but noted at the top "Not at ROH!" In retrospect, I wonder if I'd have bothered to go to the opera if the stagings were from the wrong period! I was particularly impressed by the apparently massive room for Act III. His two-midnight-recording in 1959 for Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* used the full number of players – fortunately, Handel listed the numbers of each stave on the score!

Charles made no particular effort to encourage period instruments, the exception being The Orchestra of the Age of the Enlightenment, mostly in 19th-century repertoire – though his last performance (12 June 2010) was *Così fan tutti* at Glyndebourne. He became Chief Guest Conductor for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, which was a standard chamber orchestra but with early horns, trombones and timps. I don't think that he was particularly concerned about early strings, etc., but he always made a good sound. Of greater interest to him were in the right speeds, the shaping of the playing and the relationship with the orchestra.

He was often worried about the singers. He seemed happier with those of the 1960s than later ones. Interestingly, he wrote: "I'm always amazed at how much like a modern 'authentic' singer Isobel Baillie sounds. If you listen to her singing 'I know that my Redeemer liveth', it's uncannily reminiscent of Emma Kirkby... The trouble with 'authentic' people is that they say they are going back to an 18th-century style, but in fact they are playing in a late 20th-century style that is a reaction against the way all 18th-century composers were played between the wars." I'm not sure that all aspects of the inter-war years were particularly to be copied, but certainly there were disastrous changes in the second half of 20th-century opera. "There used to be an 'operatic' style of acting which made sense of the fact that an aria consisted of the repetition of words, or an ensemble repeated the same idea which non-musical directors find quite difficult to cope with. They either have to make everybody rush about the stage, or else make them stand still and not express anything. The older generation

found a way of doing that.” (pp. 96-97)

His last appearance was probably September. Charles was clearly at the end, but he conducted *Acis and Galatea* as an 80th birthday present to an old friend, Pam Munks (who had also worked in Australia). I think the direction was by Peter Holman as much as by Charles, but he was happy to sit in front of the stage and talk to the audience afterwards.

Clifford Bartlett

EDITIONS OF MUSIC

ENGLISH KEYBOARD MUSIC C.1600-1625

Keyboard Solos and Duets by Nicholas Carleton, John Amner and John Tomkins: six pieces from Volume XCVI of *Musica Britannica*, edited by Alan Brown.

Stainer & Bell (K48), 2015. £8.75, 32pp

Jacobean Keyboard Music: An Anthology, selected from Volume XCVI of *Musica Britannica*, edited by Alan Brown. Stainer & Bell (K49), 2015. £8.75, 32pp.

Musica Britannica 96 contains 77 items with a few extras: the two short volumes contain six and 17 items at good value. Each book has a page of comments. *Keyboard Solos and Duets* begins with a short *Prelude* (supplemented by an editorial upper part, though with space and barring enough to make it clear that it was intended to be for two players) and *A Verse* [In nomine] for two to play by Nicholas Carleton. This is certainly a vast improvement (without the *Prelude*) on what I knew from a 1949 Schott edition! The pages can be turned by the higher part. There are two other single-player pieces: *A verse of four parts* is densely polyphonic, but also has manageable page-turns; *Upon the sharp* is in three parts, with not one but all five sharps! John Amner's *O Lord, in thee is all my trust* is a metrical setting of Psalm 31 in 88.88.88 meter and eight verses. The first three have two dotted semibreves, then the other five split the bars to make reading easier. There are evidently breaks between verses, though it is odd that the end of verse one has a single minim: since there is a pause, it seems superfluous to worry about dotting it. I'm not sure whether it is too lengthy. I played it through in my library: there's enough variety for domestic playing without too much concern with registration, though a larger church organ could be more expressive. It has 218 bars, but verses 1-2, 3-4 & 5-6 can be treated independently. John Tomkins, younger half-brother of Thomas, wrote the only secular

item here: *John come kiss me now*. He imitates Byrd by also having 16 variations of eight bars. I wonder, though, if one of the volumes could have been more plausibly suitable for organ.

The second book is most likely to be aimed at virginals, etc., though there are several items that could have been swapped with the first book – the Carlton duet in particular, but also the perhaps *Upon the sharp* on the grounds that modulating the black notes can be adjusted far more easily on strings. I won't go through the items, though it is interesting to compare the *Fortune my foe* by Byrd and Tomkins with the anonymous setting here. The final item is the anon *Pretty ways for young beginners to look on* with 16 short (to start with five) bars until no. 9. The bass is, adjusting for the mensuration, identical throughout. Try until you understand them mentally and on the keys.

Clifford Bartlett

HANDEL AGRIPPINA... HWV6

Piano reduction... based on the Urtext of the Halle Handel Edition by Andreas Köhs.

Bärenreiter (BA 4092-90) £40.00, xix + 350pp.

Agrippina is an amazing opera. Think of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. The title refers to the leading lady – Nerone is perhaps a minor character. *Agrippina* is the most powerful figure in Handel's opera, followed by the younger Poppea. All the male characters are scorned! I'm an enthusiast for the work itself. It isn't a serious opera at all. I've commented on it in various reviews, and it is becoming popular. Surtitles are essential unless it is translated into English... or German or whatever!

A major problem with the Bärenreiter vocal score is its weight. If singers are trying to learn their parts, they will find it heavy to hold. If you place it on a music stand, there are problems in taking the weight or keeping the pages open. It is ludicrous for singers learning the *secco recitatives* to have the same chords every time – much more sensible to have the bass figured. There's no need for the additional material (from p.293-350): those who are interested can get them from the score. However, HHA makes no attempt to make the editions accessible. The scores are expensive, but could easily be passed on to Bärenreiter to produce in something like A4 and sold comparatively cheaply – probably at the price of the vocal score! A further consideration is that my score (A4 format) weighs 640g with a price of £30.00: the Bärenreiter vocal score weighs 980g. We don't bother

with vocal scores, but do produce parts. Vocal scores are required for oratorios, but not for operas.

There's no point in evaluating the work itself when the new score isn't available. It takes about an hour and a half each way to get to the Music Library – but having been a librarian for several decades, I don't read in libraries but do have a substantial library at home! I have a variety of microfilms, but I'd only spend time on a full score. Incidentally, the concept of a vocal score didn't exist in Handel's time! And, why does HHA insist on printing oboe parts when most of the time all that is needed is cuing the violins, especially since it isn't clear when both oboes double the violin I or divide between I & II. But I've wandered off... Why is HHA so falsely pedantic, and why can't we get score copies for review?

Clifford Bartlett

RECORDINGS

Renaissance

LASSUS: MAGNIFICAT

die Singphoniker

64:16

cpo 777 957-2

Settings of the Magnificat along with the chanson or motet upon which they were based: *Da le belle contrade & O s'io potessi donna* (de Berchem), *Praeter rerum seriem* (Josquin), *S'io credessi per morte essere scarco* (de Reulx), *Il est jour* (Sermisy) & *Ultimi miei sospiri* (Verdelot)

The thesis of this CD is both simple and brilliant – to present six 'parody' Magnificats by the eclectic Lassus paired with their source chanson or motet. I have previously admired the Singphonikers' splendid unanimity of timbre and intonation, and both are again in evidence here. They have a clear affinity with the music of Lassus and present these alternatim settings complete with chanted episodes in flawless performances which are thoroughly convincing and beautifully crafted. The true genius of this format is that having established the unifying theme for the CD we get to hear a bewildering variety of 'stimulus material' composed by a diverse basket of European composers including Cipriano de Rore, Giachet de Berchem, Josquin, Claudin, Anselmo de Reulx and Philippe Verdelot. Sitting at the heart of Europe in Munich Lassus cast his net far and wide, and absorbed influences like a sponge. It is fascinating how he employs

his chosen 'models' at the same time stamping them firmly with the Lassus trademark. I loved this CD, and even as someone who has sung, played and listened to more than my fair share of Lassus' music I found the programme a fruitful learning experience, and a delight to listen to. Forty of Lassus' jaw-dropping 110 settings of the Magnificat are 'ad imitationem cantilenarum', so there is plenty of material left for future Singphoniker albums!

D. James Ross

EXQUISITE NOYSE

Music of the 16th century for violin consort

la voce del violino

55:07

Perfect Noise PN1501

Music by Arcadelt, Janequin, Josquin, Verdelot + anon & improvisations

There have been several attempts to explore the repertoire of the early violin consort, most notably Peter Holman with the Parley of Instruments and David Douglass with The King's Noyse. Where they played primarily instrumental music, la voce del violino explore chansons and madrigals which sometimes survive in contemporary copies without texts. Using violin, two violas (the lower of which speaks particularly freely – and I mean that in a nice way!) and bass violin, sometimes with harp accompaniment, they make a most eloquent case for this approach to such music. I especially enjoyed rediscovering an old, old favourite, Josquin's *Ave Maria... virgo serena* (which I first encountered on an epic tape recording – remember them? – by The Hilliard Ensemble). The booklet notes, as well as a stimulating essay on the early history of the violin, prints the texts with German and English translations; since the whole point is that the music does not require the words to work, I wonder how much this says about the way la voce del violino approached the project – did they, for instance, play from parts that showed the words, thereby helping them shape the lines? Or are the printed texts purely for the listeners' benefit? Either way, I hope this is the start of a voyage of discovery that brings many a revelation; let us hear more liturgical music next time?

Brian Clark

17th century

BIBER: HARMONIA ARTIFICIOSA-ARIOSA

La Tempesta, Patrick Bismuth

86:32 (2 CDs in a wallet)

NoMadMusic NMM024

Each of the seven suites that make up Biber's HAA has its own character, largely dictated by the composer's chosen scordatura for the two treble instruments. They are joined throughout on this new recording by theorbo and harpsichord or organ with extra contributions from cello, viola da gamba, violone and harp; sometimes there are harmonic realisations of the continuo line, sometimes these are merely played as supporting melodies. I largely enjoyed the performances, though the acoustic was a little too vast for the group, and I found some of the continuo playing slightly invasive (with Biber's already complicated multi-stopping lines dialoguing, there is no need to have the accompanists vying for attention, too.) Compared to the booklet note, though, that is as nothing; quite apart from the most awkward translations ("For everyone's listening pleasure, the ensemble offers a transfiguration of academic music without denaturing it"), I could have done entirely without Patrick Bismuth's four pages relating the seven sonatas to the Creation or his likening Biber's thought processes to the Mandala ("a sound environment, a set, made, however, of right angles, dots and circles.") It is just as well the performances are so persuasive, though I am sure to remain faithful to The Purcell Quartet's version for the time being.

Brian Clark

JOHANN CRÜGER: WACH AUFF MEIN HERTZ

UND SINGE

Musikalische Compagny, Holger Eichhorn

69:38

Querstand VKJK1527

The 21 tracks of this documentary CD are divided into five sections: hymns for "morning and evening", Christmas, Easter, Whitsun and "psalms and Gloria", separated by organ music (three pieces by Crüger's Berlin contemporary Wilhelm Karges, and a fourth anonymous work). For each hymn, Holger Eichhorn (whose comprehensive booklet notes are full of valuable information) has chosen which verses and which

versions will be performed, so different combinations of voices and instruments are heard within single tracks as well as through the sequence. While the four other sections have three hymns each (not all to texts by Paul Gerhardt, although he was Crüger's most famous collaborator), Christmas has six ("because everyone loves singing them", as Eichhorn puts it!) The CD consists of chorale tracks laid down in 1984 and others from 2015, while the organ music was recorded on an original instrument elsewhere in 2014. With solo voices (including boy sopranos) throughout, and "world premiere of the original scoring" printed everywhere, it seems Eichhorn believes that chorale singing was the reserve of professional singers and not congregations. While it is interesting to hear the music with the obbligato instruments, I am not convinced that that necessarily precludes proper choral singing, or indeed adults singing the melody in octaves while the "choir" sang the multi-voice settings; nor am I actually persuaded that this is how Crüger intended it to be performed/heard. Surely his books were printed and reprinted because they were used; at least some of the tracks should have explored other performance approaches. Perhaps a second disc is already in the making?

Brian Clark

ANDREA GABRIELI: SACRÆ CANTIONES

Music at San Marco di Venezia

ensemble officium

63:53

Christophorus CHR 77390

This varied programme of music for voices and instruments is taken from Andrea Gabrieli's *Sacrae Cantiones* of 1565, an early publication comprising works composed for the Munich Hofkapelle, which Gabrieli visited, working alongside Lassus. It is worth remembering that this music, which now sounds so distinctively 'Venetian' to us was composed for Lassus' Court 'orchestra', and bearing that in mind, we can readily hear the influence of Lassus throughout. This is particularly the case in a cappella works such as *Bonum est confiteri*, whereas in the more elaborate works incorporating cornets and sackbuts we can hear the future musical world which was to make San Marco the envy of early Baroque Europe. All of the music is taken from the 1565 publication with the exception of the 'diminution' of *Laudate Dominum* for cornet and organ, completed in period style by the group's excellent cornet soloist Friederike Otto, and the complex

10-part setting of *Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius*, published posthumously in 1587 by the composer's nephew and musical heir, Giovanni. The singing and playing are precise and expressive, and if I could occasionally have done with more panache and a slightly more generous acoustic – assuming as the CD title suggests that Gabrieli went on to use his earlier works in San Marco following his appointment there in 1566 – I liked the way the ensemble sometimes employed voices on each line, including the high top lines. Although it is widely assumed that the choral forces in San Marco were made up of adult male singers with falsetto male alto voices topped by cornets, the use of boys or even adult male sopranos cannot be ruled out. I also liked the variety of presentations, including a lovely instrumental rendition of *O sacrum convivium*. It is easy to dismiss Andrea Gabrieli as a bridge figure between Lassus and his flamboyant nephew Gabrieli, but this CD helps to reinforce the fact that he had his own distinctive and profound voice, which was already clearly in evidence in this early publication.

D. James Ross

LUZZASCHI: MADRIGALS, MOTETS &
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Profeti della Quinta

69:29

Pan Classics PC 10350

Luzzaschi is chiefly known as the composer of a collection of madrigals for the Dame of Ferrara, his *Madrigale per cantare et sonare a uno, doi e tre soprani*, catering for the virtuoso voices of the world's most famous vocal trio before the Three Tenors. There are a couple of items from that collection here sung very effectively by soprano and male alto, but it is the other material from Luzzaschi's other publications that interested me more. These include madrigals in five and six parts, sacred music and instrumental ricercars, and toccatas. Who knew that Luzzaschi was so versatile and so thoroughly competent in such a wide range of genres? The performances are beautifully musical, and one particular highlight is an arrangement by the group's director Elam Rotem for one of the group's counter-tenors and harpsichord of a five-part madrigal, which, taking the music for the Ladies of Ferrara as a model, he encrusts with decoration. In comparison to his sparkling secular music, his sacred music, while utterly competent lacks perhaps the sheer verve of the other repertoire. As I have suggested, variety is the keynote of

this excellent CD, and I found myself enjoying thoroughly an organ rendition of one of Luzzaschi's canzonas, and the group's polished viol consort playing his ricercars, while the finely balanced and delicately ornamented singing was a constant delight. For added variety, the viols play a couple of galliards by Luzzaschi's contemporary, Giovanni Anerio, primarily known for his sacred choral music, but clearly also a master of instrumental chamber music. I have not always been entirely complimentary about Elam Rotem's projects in the past, but this one seems to me entirely laudable and beautifully realized. Incidentally, full marks for the cover illustration, Titian's 'Venus with an organist and a dog' in which the musician gazes at the rather corpulent goddess in search, one hopes, of musical inspiration.

D. James Ross

ROSENMÜLLER: MARIENVESPER

Knabenchor Hannover, Johann Rosenmüller Ensemble,
Barockorchester L'Arco, Jörg Breiding

115:09 (2 CDs)

Rondeau Productions ROP701920

Each of the two CDs which make up this recording feature three large-scale vocal works in the Venetian style by one of the late 17th century's undoubted masters; Arno Paduch's booklet note suggests that the conversion to Catholicism of Duke Johann Friedrich von Braunschweig-Lüneburg (the dedicatee of Rosenmüller's 1667 *Sonate da camera*) might suggest that at least some of the Latin church music was written for Hanover. The combined forces of that city's modern boys' choir, four imported soloists for the upper voice obbligato parts, the Johann Rosenmüller Ensemble, and the Barockorchester L'Arco (here strings with lute, dulcian and organ) produce an absolutely glorious sound throughout. The psalms are framed by plainchant antiphons sung by a Schola (seven men from the choir), who also supply the Ingressus and the hymn (*Ave maris stella*). Veronika Winter and Maria Skiba are exemplary sopranos, while Alex Potter and Henning Voss shine as the alto soloists. Where I had expected to find the shift from the intimacy of solo voices to a large choir (25, 17, 9, 12), in fact the effect was rather impressive, and similar anxiety about an imbalance between instruments and choir was dispelled in performance; the recording engineer has clearly placed his microphones perfectly, allowing the whole soundscape to be captured without compromise. This is an impressive achievement, and includes some truly beautiful music – the *Lauda*

Jerusalem with solo trumpet is especially worthy of note. Many Rosenmüller works remain unrecorded, though, so let us hope that Breiding and co. are not finished yet!

Brian Clark

SCHEIN: CYMBALUM SIONIUM

La Capella Ducale, Musica Fiata, Roland Wilson

76:07

deutsche harmonia mundi 88875051442

J. H. Schein has often been relegated to the role of 'filler' composer, providing a pretty but musically inconsequential piece to fill up an early Baroque programme. Not so long ago this was the fate of Michael Praetorius, a composer now recognized for his major contribution to large-scale choral music, and it should probably come as no surprise Schein promises to be a similar discovery. This collection of music from his *Cymbalum Sionium* of 1615 is the work of a highly accomplished, inventive and imaginative musical mind, building on the world of Lassus, Hassler, and the Gabriellis, clearly being influenced by Praetorius and in turn influencing Heinrich Schütz. It seems extraordinary even in a country like Germany which boasts such an embarrassing wealth of superlative early Baroque music that Schein's choral music should largely have escaped attention until now, but the present CD does much to rectify this problem. The performances are energetic, beautifully sung and presenting a full range of instrumental colours including scampering cornets, recorders and splendid regal, dulcian and a great bass shawm tones which add a terrific earthy note to proceedings. The striking contemporary portrait of Schein, complete with funky coiffure and facial hair, suggests a composer as flamboyant as the vividly wonderful music recorded here. One of the chief delights of reviewing is coming across completely unanticipated treasures, and this CD certainly comes into that category.

D. James Ross

CONVERSATIONS AVEC DIEU

Motets et cantates de Hammerschmidt, Telemann, Bruhns, Scheidt...

Le Concert Etranger, Itay Jedlin

77:17

Ambronay AMY045

Bruhns: *Hemmt eure Tränenflut*

Hammerschmidt: *Ach Gott, warum hast du mein vergessen? Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott; Ergo sit nulla ratio salutis; Herr, wie lange willst du mich so gar vergessen? Inter brachio salvatoris mei; Pavane 1 à 5*

Monteverdi: Sinfonia

Rosenmüller: Sinfonia XI

Scheidemann: *Erbarm dich mein, o Herre Gott* (organ), *Præludium in D*

Scheidt: *Ist nicht Ephraim mein teurer Sohn?* (organ)

Telemann: *Ach Herr, straf mich nicht in deinem Zorn*

Many fine ensembles have cut their teeth at the Ambronay Festival, where it is almost expected that performers will step off the well-trodden path and bring their audiences new experiences and insights into familiar repertoire. This programme combines settings of texts which call upon God in one way or another (both vocal and instrumental) is beautifully performed with some outstanding singing and playing – look out especially for bass Nicolas Brooymans! The vocalists wring every last drop of feeling out of the text without allowing their emotions to affect the high quality of their singing. Although Telemann's fine *Ach Herr, straf mich nicht* sets the bar at a higher point than any of the subsequent works can quite reach, the inclusion of five works by Hammerschmidt is particularly welcome (even if the booklet notes omit any mention of the 30 Years War – surely the reason why so many such texts were set at the time!) and Bruhns' *Hemmet eure Tränenflut* is but one of that composer's many works that deserve to be better known and more widely recorded. Finely played as it is, what exactly is the justification for the inclusion of a *sinfonia* by Monteverdi?

Brian Clark

LUTHER: EIN FESTE BURG IST UNSER GOTT

Chorales, Motets and Sacred Concertos

Kammerchor der Frauenkirche Dresden, Instrumenta Musica, Matthias Grünert

69:01

Rondeau Productions ROP6074

This fine CD presents six of Luther's most important poetic texts in a variety of settings (organ and choral hymn tunes, motets, sacred concertos, amongst others): *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, Vom Himmel hoch, Gelobet seist du Jesus Christ, Christ lag in Todesbanden, Komm heiliger Geist, Vater unser in Himmelreich* and the title piece, *Ein feste Burg*. Prominent amongst the sources are the Görlitzer Tablaturbuch (organ settings by Scheidt) and *Musae Sioniae* by Michael Praetorius. Other composers include Schein, Hassler, Pachelbel, Hammerschmidt, Eccard, Franck and Schütz. Each section is rounded off by a dance from *Terpsichore*. Most of the 42 tracks are under two minutes, with only three tracks lasting longer than twice that length; many are extracts from larger works, but

the prominence of the chorale melody throughout gives the recital a satisfying overall shape. The chamber choir of the Dresden Frauenkirche sing well, and Instrumenta Musica (recorder, cornetto, strings, trumpets, trombones, and continuo) lend stylish support throughout. Two different organs based on historical models are used for the keyboard material. As we approach the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017, this CD is a fine illustration of the widespread musical influence of Luther.

Brian Clark

Baroque

VIVALDI: SACRED MUSIC 4

Claire de Sévigné *soprano*, Maria Soulis *mezzo-soprano*, Aradia Ensemble, Kevin Mallon

59:48

Naxos 8.573324

RV604, 606, 607, 627, 628, 631, 633

My first reaction to this CD was one of surprise. In a world packed with unperformed Baroque music, it is surprising to come across what I assume is yet another complete account of the sacred music of Antonio Vivaldi. So what do these Canadian performers bring to Vivaldi's music which would necessitate another complete account of his church music? Well this CD is a testimony to the healthy state of period playing and singing in Canada. Claire de Sévigné's singing in *In turbato mare irato* is spectacular – effortlessly virtuosic throughout the wide range it demands and beautifully sweet-toned. Her fellow soloist Maria Soulis has a fine warm mezzo-soprano voice, which has uncanny elements of the male alto about it. The playing and singing of the Aradia Ensemble, which turns out to embody a chorus as well as a string orchestra, is concise and delicate and under the direction of Kevin Mallon the performers demonstrate a profound understanding of Vivaldi's oeuvre. The fact is that these performances are very persuasive indeed, and if somebody is to commit the complete sacred Vivaldi to disc, these are probably the best people to choose. For Vivaldi fans these are crisp fresh accounts of familiar repertoire, for those unfamiliar with Vivaldi's vast sacred output other than the ubiquitous *Gloria* there are many delights in store, while for the parsimonious a new complete account of Vivaldi's sacred music has its own delights. If I am stretched to answer my own original question about what these performances add to the sum of human knowledge about

Vivaldi, the high standard of the singing and playing can only delight.

D. James Ross

VIVALDI: TEATRO ALLA MODA

Gli Incogniti, Amandine Beyer

73:08

harmonia mundi HMC 902221

Violin concerti RV228, 282, 313, 314a, 316, 322, 323, 372a, 391

Sinfonia to *L'Olimpiade* & *Ballo Primo* from *Arsilda Regina di Pont*

Fans of Vivaldi will welcome this disc of six three-movement concertos, with some incomplete single movement concertos or reconstructed movements of others, plus two operatic excerpts. This small ensemble of just four violins with one player on each of the lower parts shows Vivaldi's virtuosity at his best, yet it is not afraid of some real sustained pianissimo playing – a quality sometimes sadly lacking in some period ensembles today. I particularly enjoyed the different sonority of the scordatura concerto RV 391 in B minor, with the solo violin tuned to B-D-A-D, for it is often that Vivaldi shows his best compositional skills in minor mode works – and indeed four of the full concertos on this disc are in minor keys. Nevertheless the D major RV 228, with its cadenza in the third movement (here given the full 'Paganini' treatment, yet still stylistically convincing) is a fascinating work. The ensemble's title, and indeed the theme running through the disc, is taken from Benedetto Marcello's little publication satirising some of the features of the Italian opera of the day.

Ian Graham-Jones

THE YOUNG VIVALDI – RV820 AND OTHER RARE EARLY WORKS

Modo Antiquo, Federico Maria Sardelli

69:00

deutsche harmonia mundi 8-88751-27852-3

RV52, 60, 552a*, 779, 813, 820*, Anh. 107a*

The programme of this recording consists of a recorder sonata, a trio for two violins and continuo, another for violin, cello and continuo, a quartet for violin, oboe and organ with the "se piace" chalumeau, another for strings, a violin concerto and another for two violins. RV820 is the trio with obligato cello, only recently added to the Vivaldi catalogue after Sardelli, the director of Modo Antiquo, identified it among downloaded material his wife was working on; he had

already been occupied with dating the composer's works and presenting the world premiere recording of that piece (as well as those of the Leuwen version of RV Anh. 107, and the "reconstructed" RV522a) provided an opportunity to put together an entire recital of early works. Playing one-per-part, Modo Antiquo have one plucker (theorbo and guitar) and keyboardist (harpsichord and organ); in the violin concerto, I would have preferred the double bass to drop out in the solo episodes. While most of the music-making is enjoyable, the booklet lets the enterprise down – Michael Talbot's booklet note could have done with some proofreading, but the other "English" contributions are terrible; "The Young Vivaldi: a revelation"??? So ignore the book and enjoy the music.

Brian Clark

ZAMBONI: MADRIGALI E SONATE

Faenza, Marco Horvat

68:07

agogique AGO021

I confess to never having encountered the name of Giovanni Zamboni, although on reading Marco Horvat's excellent programme note I began to realize why. Zamboni (possibly two men with the same surname, though probably not) – responsible for lute sonatas of 1715 and a manuscript set of madrigals of 1755 – lurked at the very fringes of the musical scene and was even in his own lifetime obscure and out of tune with the latest developments in music. Both sets of music sound for all the world like the music composed a century before Zamboni was writing, and it seems likely that he was engaged in a type of nostalgic recreation of what was already in his day 'early music'. This all makes his output sound like something of an arid antiquarian exercise, but quite to the contrary; this is great music, inventively animated and beautifully structured. The performances, by a group who have clearly gradually fallen in love with this distinctive repertoire, are tremendously persuasive, beautifully characterised and powerfully expressive. Horvat's choice of an archlute for the sonatas is inspired, and entirely justified historically – Silvius Weiss had visited Rome with his large Baroque lute shortly before the publication of Zamboni's sonatas. It is ironic that of the two bodies of repertoire the 1715 publication sounds far more up to the minute than the 1755 manuscript, but it does seem likely that Horvat is correct in conflating the composers. Horvat and Faenza have done us a great favour in finding this charming repertoire, the

result no doubt of years of exploration in the archives, and bringing it so delightfully to the light of day.

D. James Ross

DESPERATE DOORS

Christopher Wilke *13 course lute*

J. S. Bach, Falckenhagen, Weiss

Barcode: 6 90474 54098 2

Christopher Wilke's CD begins with variations by Adam Falckenhagen on the German chorale "Wernur den lieben Gott". The melody begins with simple chords, but it is soon decorated with fast flourishes. There follow passages of broken chords in quavers, semiquavers, triplets, sextuplets, and the piece ends with a dramatic triple suspension. This is the florid world of galanterie, where simple musical ideas are subsumed in excessive decoration.

Next comes J. S. Bach's Lute Suite BWV995. In the Präludium Wilke adds much ornamentation, and in the Presto he keeps the semiquaver movement going with notes séparées and the addition of appoggiaturas from above and below. His speed is a modest 152, about the same as Axel Wolf, slower than Andreas Martin and Joachim Held at about 166, and faster than Peter Croton at about 142. A restful Allemande with neatly played ornamentation has Wilke's own tasteful doubles for the repeats. The Courante is played with distinctly uneven quavers and a few lightly strummed chords. The slowly-played Sarabande is enhanced by Wilke's doubles for the repeats. In Gavotte 1 there are a few um-chings and a demisemiquaver flourish for the repeat; he takes a steady speed, so that Gavotte 2 has the same pulse with quaver triplets; extra notes are added to the return of Gavotte 1. The Gigue could be crisper if he didn't clip some of the dotted quavers, but all in all I do like the way he puts his own gloss on this oft-played suite.

There follow Falckenhagen's extravagant variations on "Nun danket alle Gott", the well-known hymn "Now thank we all our God". Ponderous bass notes underpin the melody first with rich chords, and then with variations which become more and more elaborate, until the effect is almost reminiscent of flamenco guitar. It is curious stuff, and certainly takes us a long way from the simplicity of the original Protestant hymn.

The rest of the CD is devoted to music by Silvius Leopold Weiss based on "L'Amant Malheureux", an allemande by the 17th-century French lutenist, Jacques Gallot. From the Rohrau manuscript is Gallot's original

composition together with a double by Weiss, a Courante, a Fantaisie, and a Gigue variation on “L’Amant Malheureux”. There is an extraordinary wealth of musical ideas here, and the music requires considerable virtuosity from Wilke. From the Paris manuscript (Pn Res Vmc Ms 61) are pieces in G minor: variations by Weiss on “L’Amant Malheureux”, a Courante, and a Gavotte. Finally, from the London manuscript (Lbl Add. Ms 30387), another variation by Weiss on Gallot’s allemande. In his liner notes Wilke suggests that Gallot’s piece must have been important for Weiss, for him to have used it so much as a basis for his own compositions. Wilke confesses that Weiss’s gloss on Gallot helped him through a difficult time in his own life.

Stewart McCoy

VIOLON SOLO | PATRICK COHËN-AKENINE

Biber, Baltzar, Telemann, Bach

59:58

NoMadMusic NMM018

This recital begins and ends with descending tetrachords; Biber’s “Passacaille”, which Cohën-Akenine says, “served as the benchmark before Bach composed his Chaconne”, opens proceedings in fine style, if slightly too closely miked for my tastes – it is one thing to be aware of the performer’s presence, quite another to hear his every inhalation. I do wonder, though, for whom it was a benchmark? A quick check of the RISM online catalogue reveals not a single manuscript source of the work at all, which would suggest that only those wealthy enough to own a copy of the print or fortunate enough to encounter Biber himself would have known of its existence; the suggestion that this solo repertoire was widely available, known and played is surely untenable. Be that as it may, it is clear that virtuoso players with financial means (or contacts) did produce a wealth of music for their instrument and the two pieces by Thomas Baltzar are particularly welcome. Likewise, unmannered renditions of two of Telemann’s fantasias (no. 1 in B flat major, and no. 3 in F minor) confirm his rightful place among the masters of the medium. There is no arguing, though, that the Bach D minor Partita is one of the masterpieces of Western music, and Cohën-Akenine shifts up a gear for the immense challenges. It is particularly impressive that, in spite of all the extraneous noises, the bow strokes all come off without harshness, and the open strings ring pure throughout. I’m not going to say that I stopped hearing the breathing, but the musician’s communion with Bach was so intense that everything else was transcended. Next time,

though, please do move the mikes!

Brian Clark

Classical

C. P. E. BACH: CONCERTOS & SYMPHONIES II
[Jacques Zoon *flute*, Bruno Delepelaire *cello*], Berliner
Barock Solisten, Reinhard Goebel

73:29

deutsche harmonia mundi 888750839725

Sinfonias in E flat Wq179, & in G H 667

Concertos for flute in G Wq169 & cello in B flat Wq171

Full marks to the Berlin Philharmonic for continuing to explore early repertoire with scaled-down forces and specialist conductors. Here Reinhard Goebel guides them through four excellent pieces by a composer whose music is suited to many different modes of performance. That is not to say that technical improvements in the instruments and playing techniques does not deprive the music of some of its essential characteristics – the absolute evenness of tone across the solo flute’s range, for example, means that there is not audible sense of strong and weak notes, and likewise the orchestral string playing is so well regulated (with not quite enough air between bow and string for my personal tastes) that – with only a very few exceptions (when Goebel coaxes out some long notes at cadences, for example) – the natural variety of HIP sound is replaced by terraced dynamics and bowings/phrasings that sound artificial. Both soloists clearly enjoy playing C. P. E. Bach’s music, and the orchestra is similarly enthusiastic. Personally, though, period instruments and a little more HIP magic would have lifted what is good into a different category.

Brian Clark

HAYDN: DIE SCHÖPFUNG

Christina Landshamer, Maximilian Schmitt, Rudolf Rosen
STB, Collegium Vocale Gent, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées. Philippe Herreweghe

97:00 (2 CDs in a wallet)

Phi LPH018

The reliable Archiv Music retail website currently lists no fewer than 61 versions of Haydn’s supremely uplifting oratorio. I’m certainly not going to claim to have heard all 61 (you probably wouldn’t

believe me if I did), but I have heard a fair few and also reviewed quite a number over the years. Most recently, back in our November pages, I gave high praise to a new recording sung in English from the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston under their current music director Harry Christophers. Now here is a further contender from another doyen among early music choral directors.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about the newcomer is that it has taken Philippe Herreweghe so long to record *Die Schöpfung* (as one would expect his recording is sung in the original German, although in this review I'll use the familiar English titles for arias and choruses), given that it is now 45 years since he founded the Collegium Vocale Gent. Yet it is perhaps an advantage that only now has Herreweghe decided to record Haydn's choral masterpiece, for it is a performance that combines the assets of his many years experience with a perhaps less predictable freshness of approach that constantly delights the ear as well as the senses. The experience can be heard right from the outset, where the Representation of Chaos unfolds with a true sense of mystery, yet one that remains under total musical control. Listen for example to the beautifully articulated ascending quaver triplets that ripple through the strings and bassoons like some primeval awaking. Or move on some 15 bars or so to the exquisitely balanced wind writing for flutes, oboes and clarinets. And so it goes on throughout the performance. Time and again the ear is drawn to some solo or concertante passage, invariably beautifully played. The start of Part 3 (where we meet Adam and Eve) opens with playing of the rarest beauty, playing that somehow manages to encompass both delicacy and nobility.

Herreweghe's soloists are not well known names, at least in Britain, yet they form a more satisfying team overall than did that of Christophers, not least because the vibrato that I noted among his soloists is not a problem here. The men are outstanding, being especially satisfying in Haydn's wonderfully pictorial accompanied recitatives. There both Schmitt and Rosen positively relish the language and mimetic effects, declaiming the text with vividness and communicating a total involvement that draws the listener in. Both are also excellent with ornaments and passagework. If I find soprano Christina Landshamer marginally less satisfying it is simply that her admirably fresh-sounding singing conveys less character than that of her male colleagues. She is also uninclined to provide ornamentation, most noticeably at cadential fermatas, which sound bald when completely unadorned. But there

are times when the voice opens out splendidly and her legato singing, especially in the duet 'By thee with bliss' (Part 3), is lovely. The chorus that Herreweghe has worked with for so long is predictably superb, splendidly incisive and inspired by the conductor to build the big choral climaxes to thrilling effect. Among less obvious examples of its excellence, the pinpoint rhythmic articulation of the choral and orchestral basses in 'Achieved is the glorious work' reminds us that the foundations of *The Creation* lie firmly rooted in the Baroque.

There is no doubt in my mind that this elevated performance stands among the very best to have been committed to record. There is about it a joyous quality of the kind that has perhaps not always been associated with the somewhat sober Herreweghe, an intoxicating combination of supreme but never rigid control and true freedom of spirit. Nearly five stars all round, the one subtracted from Presentation being on account of the absurdly small print in the booklet!

Brian Robins

REICHA: WIND QUINTETS

Thalia Ensemble

67:00

Linn Records CKD471

The name Antoine Reicha is one which has fairly comprehensively slipped between the floorboards of musical history, except for within one select circle of musicians, wind players. With them Reicha's wind music, and in particular his wind quintets, has remained current and provides a useful and engaging programme filler. The present CD, part of the Thalia Ensemble's prize for winning the 2013 York Early Music International Young Artists' Competition, brings us two wind quintets and an Adagio for wind quartet and obligato cor anglais all played on period instruments of the early 19th century. This final detail may seem relatively unimportant in these days of the ubiquity of period performances, but in this case it was a major factor in my enjoyment of the CD. While tuneful and accessible, Reicha's music is occasionally accused of blandness, but when the Thalia Ensemble moved into the more chromatic passages of these works the remarkable range of characteristics occasioned by fork fingerings and lippings up and down imbued the music with considerable individuality. Occasionally the tuning is a little bit uncomfortable, but as this is the direct result of playing the instruments Reicha knew and was

writing for we can assume that these sour moments were part of his original intentions. Perhaps any 'blandness' in performances of Reicha's music nowadays should be put down to the regularising effect of modern woodwind instruments rather than any lack of imagination on the part of the composer. This tonal variety is further enhanced by the use of clarinets in C, Bb and A, standard practice at the time, but an issue which modern players tend to gloss over. Although details of the instruments the players use is sparse, I am guessing that Diederik Orné is using the bright C clarinet in the opening quintet and the mellower Bb in the second – the difference in tonal character is certainly considerable. And by the 1820s the mechanism of the Müller system clarinet was relatively advanced allowing for much improved intonation. As a flute player himself, Reicha writes beautifully for the flute, but what is perhaps most striking is his mastery of the wind quintet as an entity – perhaps not since Mozart and not until Nielsen did anyone write such accomplished chamber music for winds.

D. James Ross

Romantic

CHERUBINI/CAMBINI: STRING TRIOS

Trio Hegel

64:30

Tactus TC740001

These two composers' music could scarcely be more different; Giuseppe Maria Cambini's three trios, op. 2, are easy-going pieces, the first pair consisting of two movements while the third adds a slow movement to the pattern, while Cherubini's "string trios" are, in fact, nothing of the sort – rather they are instrumental performances of *solfeggi* written for the composer's singing students at the Paris Conservatoire! While the former are aimed at amateur performers (and audiences), the latter must have filled Cherubini's pupils with dread, such are the demands, in terms of both range and contrapuntal complexity. The present performers are, let us say, more comfortable in the Cambini than the Cherubini – the String Trio is an unforgiving medium, with even the slightest slip instantly brought to note, and regretfully there are quite a few to endure; these really are extremely virtuoso chamber concertos with the technical demands spread across the board.

Brian Clark

PARRY: TWELVE SETS OF ENGLISH LYRICS – VOLUME I

Susan Gritton *soprano*, James Gilchrist *tenor*, Roderick Williams *baritone*, Andrew West *piano*

71:00

Somm Recordings SOMMCD 257

This may not be a release that you would expect to see reviewed here, but it is not that long ago that Robert King's landmark recording of the fabulous full orchestrations of music by Parry, Stanford and Elgar showed that the legacy of Victorian and Edwardian Britain is fully deserving of rediscovery. With three singers with fine HIP track records, and wonderfully crisp diction, accompanied by one of the finest players in the business, this really is a gem, and surely the first instalment of what will undoubtedly become an award-winning series. Like that of his contemporaries, Parry's music was taken more seriously on the continent than at home and these songs would scarcely pale alongside the best *Lieder* of the period – a rich variety of easily memorable melodies and imaginative piano writing make for an entertaining and rewarding recital, which I heartily recommend.

Brian Clark

Miscellaneous

BARTHOLD KUIJKEN – FRENCH FLUTE MUSIC: THE ACCENT RECORDINGS 1979-2003

With Robert Cohen, Wieland Kuijken, Marc Hantai, Frank Theuns, Serge Saitta, Sigiswald Kuijken, Ryo Terakado, Sara Kuijken

642' (11 CDs in a box)

Accent ACC 24312

In my review of *The Artistry of Barthold Kuijken*, an anthology of highlights from his recordings on the Accent label released in 2008, I said that listening to it made me want to hear the complete CDs from which the tracks were taken. That wish certainly came home to roost when I was given the rather daunting task of reviewing this boxed set of eleven CDs which brings together Kuijken's recordings of French music made on the Accent label between 1979 and 2003. In fact listening to them has been a most pleasurable experience. The first CD, issued in 1979 and also entitled *French Flute Music*, gives an overview of music from the reign of Louis XV with one

piece each by Montéclair, Blavet, Guignon, Boismortier and Leclair. Each of the other ten CDs is devoted to a single composer. Hotteterre's *Premier et Deuxième Livre de Pièces pour la Flûte Traversière avec la Basse* occupy two CDs, as do François Couperin's *Les Nations* and Leclair's *Complete Flute Sonatas*, originally for violin. The single CDs are of Couperin's *Concerts Royaux*, Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concerts*, Boismortier's *Concertos for Five Flutes Op. 15* and Devienne's *Flute quartets*. I really enjoyed this last CD when I reviewed it when it first appeared, but French musical style had certainly changed by 1784 and after ten CDs of baroque music it sounded strangely out of place. I'd certainly recommend listening to it on a different day if you buy this set. Two of my surprise favourites were the Boismortier concertos for five flutes without continuo which are interspersed with pieces for one, two or three flutes, and the Hotteterre *Pièces*. Hotteterre supplied detailed instructions for ornamentation which can make them sound rather laboured in performance but Kuijken really brings them to life on a copy of a Hotteterre flute of about 1710, five years before this elegant music was published. This splendid set works out at less than £3 a CD if you buy it online.

Victoria Helby
