

Early Music Review

BOOKS

THE MUSICA OF HERMANNUS CONTRACTUS,
EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY LEONARD
ELLINWOOD, REVISED WITH A NEW
INTRODUCTION BY JOHN L. SNYDER
University of Rochester Press, 2015
xvii + 221pp, £55.00
ISBN 978 1 58046 390 4

I tried to find a reviewer, but without success, partly because I am now out of touch with my earlier interest in the subject. Hermann was born on July 18th 1013 and died on 24 September 1054. He had a paralytic condition from an early age, but his intellect was outstanding. His languages were primarily German and Latin: later suggestions were Greek (plausible) and Arabic (unlikely), but Hebrew is more plausible. He wrote about history, the astrolabe, the dating of Easter, the length of the lunar cycle, and eclipses. This volume is concerned with music. Most of my material isn't easily accessible, but I had read (probably in the mid-1960s) the first Ellinwood edition of 1936. After a few attempts, anyone who knows Hermannus can easily master the 1000-year-old Latin with only a few difficulties. It is an essential book and anyone interested in the chant should buy a copy.

Clifford Barlett

FREDERICK AQUILINA: BENIGNO ZERAFA
(1726-1804) AND THE NEAPOLITAN GALANT
STYLE
The Boydell Press, 2016
xii + 335pp, £65.00
ISBN 978 1 78327 086 6

I wonder why Malta isn't in the title. I was there in January last year and reviewed three concerts, one being at the Co-Cathedral of St John's in Valletta. The Cathedral of St Paul is situated in Mdina, about an hour to the west. Both cathedrals must have been ideal for multi-choral works. The book is very vague about the relationship between them: did Zerafa supply music to

both? Such information is very thin. In fact, the index has little to say about St John's or St Paul's.

Zerafa's career began on 1 May 1735 when he was eight; he spent six years from 1738-44 learning his craft in Naples, before returning to Mdina. Much of the discussion of style must have come from that background. This is a thorough survey of his life and works (all ecclesiastical), with extensive comments on the scores, a bibliography and a thorough index. There is very little about his function in Mdina – I get the feeling that the author is more concerned with the galant style of Naples. Did Zerafa only compose for the church, or was his secular work left with a different organisation which hasn't survived? If Zerafa produced most of his output for Mdina, are there aspects of it which differ from "Neapolitan style"? A quick read of the first and last chapters may well be all the non-specialist requires.

Clifford Bartlett

ROBERTO PAGANO: ALESSANDRO E DOMENICO
SCARLATTI – DUE VITE IN UNA
Vol. I xxx+532pp, Vol. II (Abbreviations and Indices)
vii+119pp. LIM, 2015. ISBN: 9788870968101. € 50

What follows is a preliminary response rather than a thorough review, let alone a comparative one of the new publication respect to the previous one. The earlier editions of Roberto Pagano's greatest work, the culmination of 40 years of research, are already known to interested Italian and English readers. Sadly, Pagano passed away last July 13, only a few weeks before LIM issued his re-revised dual biography of Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti. Reviews, some polemical, of the 1985 and 2006 editions, can be found online, which induces me, instead of covering any of the same ground, to describe the new format and to translate some of Pagano's prefatory remarks.

The Bibliography and the Index, both formatted in detailed tables, now occupy a separate, smaller volume, ideal for carrying to a library, or for browsing topics, works, names, events, and subjects discussed in the text or footnotes (which are on the appropriate pages of the text). Under the author's name 17 of his publications on

the Scarlattis between 1969 and 2015 are cited. Under 'A. Scarlatti' and 'D. Scarlatti' one finds five and seven pages respectively of references to works, events, historical hypotheses, motives, opinions, and important discussions in the book.

The original dual biography, *Scarlatti: Alessandro e Domenico. Due vite in una* was published 1985. Twenty years later the first revision was made for the English translation by Frederick Hammond: *Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti – Two Lives in One* (Pendragon Press, 2006). Thanks to Hammond, a Scarlatti scholar in his own right, English readers have access to a version updated only ten years ago. To readers of either previous edition Pagano now explicitly points out new findings or new deductions that affect his original conclusions. He also answers his critics again. New readers may be somewhat distracted by these work-in-progress 'flashbacks', but they are valuable, if only because so much general Scarlatti research, still in print and circulating, has turned out to be incorrect.

In 2006 Pagano still surmised, as Kirkpatrick had done, that Antonio Soler (1729-1783), who had been apprenticed with Domenico, was possibly the main scribe of the large Venice and Parma codices of Domenico's sonatas. This hypothesis has now been modified, reluctantly, by the research (2012) of Águeda Pedrero Encabo (in favour of the copyist Joseph [José] Alaguero), though the new discussion includes convincing evidence for Soler's involvement in supervising the copying of the two collections, and also in making copies of other sonatas, possibly realized from various types of shorthand, such as keyboard tablature or continuo notation, or indeed by dictation, while hearing them improvised or played by Domenico. This information comes from Soler's testimony to that effect in his *Llave del la Modulación*, along with his reason for not writing double sharps (e.g. writing G instead of #[#]F), which he said Scarlatti did not use.

Pagano wrote the entries on both Scarlattis in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* of 2001. After the second version of his book he wrote an article for *Early Music* xxxvi/3 (2008), *The Two Scarlattis*, which began:

First of all I am surprised to find unnoticed an important element of my biographical hypothesis, openly announced in the title of my book: the complementarity of the human and artistic lives of the two Scarlattis. It is impossible to re-examine in detail here their parallel biographical trajectory, but the most recent discoveries make even clearer

Domenico's metamorphosis after the death of his father; the year of black-out and sickness following Alessandro's death is highly significant and his subsequent development arose from impulses that combined emulation with a desire for identification...

Other important contributions between the middle and final versions of the biography are found in the *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, XLI, 2006/2, in *Domenico Scarlatti: Musica e Storia* (Turchini Edizioni, 2010), in *Studi musicali* XXXVIII/I 2009, and in *Devozione e Passione: Alessandro Scarlatti nella Napoli e Roma Barocca* (Turchini Edizioni, 2014).

All the above and more is in the present posthumous edition. The twists and turns of Pagano's Italian are extremely challenging, even to Italian readers, and a distinct pleasure at the same time. A quote from his preface (p. xiv) will give not only a taste of his style and standpoint, but of the task of a biographer as he saw it:

Forty years ago, while writing Alessandro Scarlatti's biography, I happened to bring to light certain aspects of his personality that tarnish his halo as the saint at the head of the controversial Neapolitan School, a gallery of myths. It is always risky to swim against the current in the streams of tradition: the few remarks made about my efforts by generous and illustrious reviewers mainly concerned my suggested resizing of the image of a boss whom evidently all would have liked to continue to see as a long-bearded God-father, eternally intent at radiating benevolent influence on relatives and disciples.

When... Malcolm Boyd declared... that my judgment on the disparity between [A. Scarlatti's] artistic merit and human weaknesses... was in contradiction with everything I had narrated about the musician, I, in turn, was thunderstruck, because I continue to believe – and this book ought to finally make it clear – that all the elements of that biography contribute to reveal the fragility of the man: a fragility rooted in that very Sicily that I am certain to know better than others, as Boyd himself was loyally to admit [in 1986] when he saw in my new book a happy combination of "scientific accuracy" and "profound knowledge of Sicilian history and culture", judging me absolutely "without rivals" in my knowledge of the Sicilian "psyche".

It goes without saying that the new edition ought to be translated into English, an enterprise which would take quite a while to realize. For now I'd recommend a compromise for English readers: have both the 2006 Frederick Hammond version and the 2015 final version, and use the fabulous new index to update the information in the former as needed. Enjoy what you can of Pagano's interpretive dialogue with his readers, whom he invites to engage with his methods, both rigorous and imaginative.

Barbara Sachs

EDITIONS OF MUSIC

DOMENICO CAMPISI: *LILIA CAMPI* A 2, 3, 4, 5 E
6 VOCI (1627)

Critical Edition by Daniela Calcamo, Daniele Cannavò,
Maria Rosa De Luca. Introduction by Maria Rosa De Luca
Musiche Rinascimentali siciliane, vol. 26

Leo S. Olschki: 2015 xxxiv + 88 pp. €44.00

ISBN 978 88 222 6420 6

Domenico Campisi, a long forgotten early 17th-century Sicilian composer and a Dominican monk of Palermo, was rediscovered in the 19th century thanks to abbot Fortunato Santini, who found and copied parts of the 1627 Roman print (Masotti) of his fifth book of motets, *Lilia Campi*. Complete prints are found in separate part-books in the Santini-Bibliothek in Munich and in the Civico Museo Bibliografico in Bologna. The title plays on the composer's surname. We do not know for certain who he was: he may have been a Giuseppe Campisi, baptized in Regalbuto in 1588. Of his other collections of sacred motets (1615, 1618, 1622 and 1623), three of which were published in Palermo, only one, a Roman print (Robletti) of 1622, has come to light. Dominican documents show that he already had his bachelor's degree in theology by 1622, and his promotion to a master's degree was approved in 1629 in recognition of his musical accomplishments. He is listed, with others of the Barberini circle, in the bibliographical catalogue *Apes Urbanae* (in honour of Pope Urban VIII) of 1632 by Leone Allacci, which may suggest that he was also active in Rome.

The introduction and critical apparatus are in Italian only, and while the first is valuable reading for the musical, historical and geographical context, it is not particularly relevant to the composer or this work, nor is there specific information about influences on Campisi. So the English

reader is really not losing essential information, as the music speaks for itself.

The 22 motets are short (25 to 50 bars of breves), easy, verging on homophonic, and with a figured continuo. They can be performed by single voices or small choirs. Those with more voices present more contrapuntal play between voices that enter and those that accompany. Five are for two voices, seven for three, five *a4*, four *a5* and one *a6*. Correct modern spelling and punctuation of the Latin texts precede the musical annotations. Their sources are given (the 1592 *Vulgate*, the Dominican 1603 *Breviarum...*, and the 1604 *Missale*), but no translations.

Three musicologists shared the editing, doing seven or eight motets each, as well as working together. As far as I can tell without seeing more than the one page provided in facsimile of the Canto part of the first motet, they are fairly faithful transcriptions, but not sufficiently well-edited. *Caveat emptor/musicus!* Original errors in the print have escaped attention; most of the editorial accidentals are convincing though a few are surely incorrect, and the need for others (for consistency or to weigh in on ambiguities) was not appreciated; some accidentals "preserved" in this, the first ever modern edition, appeared originally, as often happens in prints, in front of notes they weren't intended for (e.g. bar 20 of the Canto 1° of *Beati qui habitant* in the facsimile, the sharp on the *f'* was probably meant for the *e'* two notes later, confirming that it is no longer lowered); the original continuo figures from the organ part are supplemented in brackets, but are not always corrected, realigned, or noted where wrong, which may be misleading. It is hard to fathom why the occasional wrong notes or figures in the original did not trigger more editorial intervention, because users of a modern edition expect such a beautifully printed score to be thoroughly proofread!

I have a question for the editors. Did Masotti not use demisemiquaver (32nd note) figures? From the facsimile page one can see that his movable characters include two styles sometimes used indiscriminately for semiquavers (16th notes): the little open 2 or the tiny closed 3 hugging the note-stem, the latter of which was, in fact, a 32nd. The mixture is just curious enough to make me wonder if the dot you removed from a quaver in bar 24 of *Beati* served to make the following pair of quick notes into demisemiquavers, and if pairs of 'semiquavers' where the two note forms happen to alternate were perhaps meant to be sung unequally?

I take this occasion to encourage Olschki and other

music publishers to print more music per page, with narrower bars and staves. We do not need an inch between minims where these are syllables of a word, and it is actually harder to read the words and phrase the music if we can only see two bars of the score per line... sometimes only one! I read somewhere that the human eye can only focus in the center of the retina, and therefore we spend most of the time reading music looking up and down, right and left, in order to gather and consign to short-term memory what we have to look around to see. Of course, there's the sorry option of photocopying to reduce the size to a format more practical to perform from. At least the present edition is not too heavy for a music stand, and in *Ego flos campi* (another reference to the composer?) Olschki easily got three systems (21 staves) per page. That print size would have been better from page one.

Barbara Sachs

RECORDINGS

14th century

MACHAUT: MESSE DE NOSTRE DAME

Graindelavoix, Björn Schmelzer

72:50

Glossa GCDP32110

Well, I suppose it was just a matter of time before Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame* was given the Graindelavoix treatment. As chance would have it, I had just been re-acquainting myself with two of the leading performances on CD, by Marcel Pérès and his Ensemble Organum (HMG501590) and The Taverner Consort directed by Andrew Parrot (CDC 7479492), when the present recording arrived. Always guaranteed to stimulate thought, Björn Schmelzer's readings of early choral music are never less than controversial, and this recording is no exception. In a densely philosophical programme note, he pays passing homage to Pérès, and indeed the whole approach is very reminiscent of Ensemble Organum's 1996 account. As in their model, encrustations of ornamentation and free glissandi mean that the music is only occasionally allowed to settle on the perfect fifths that make it so distinctive, but the Graindelavoix reading also feels free to add pedal bass octaves at key cadences, and the full choir sections almost threaten to degenerate into a mob anarchy. Due to a closer acoustic, the 'solo' episodes sound

less chaotic, but still seem to me to exemplify a triumph of individualism over group thinking, surely precisely the sort of inappropriately modern mind-set Schmelzer's note is at pains to condemn. Schmelzer's reading of the mass is on a temporally epic scale, and in my opinion much of the rhythmical energy is dissipated as a result – the Kyrie for example is a full minute longer than Pérès already unhurried account, and more than five minutes longer than Parrot's rhythmically tight version! When I reveal that my listening prior to hearing the Graindelavoix recording had led me to the conclusion that Pérès had 'gone a bit far' in elaborating upon Machaut's polyphony, you will realize from my comments that Schmelzer goes much further, and that I am reluctantly less than convinced by this approach. I would have liked the programme note specifically to explain why Schmelzer believes that Machaut's singers would have sung his music like this, or whether in light of the programme note this is even his main priority. The motets and chant which sketch in a liturgical context, although not as completely and consistently as Parrot's 1984 account, are generally more plausible than the ordinary of the mass, and items like the opening account of *Inviolata genetrix* and the later *Beata viscera* are radical but intriguing. I wanted to like this recording much more than I did, but I feel it would be unfair to gloss over its ultimately very idiosyncratic and self-indulgent approach to this iconic music. Much of the account of the Mass is quite unpleasant to listen to, not because of the shock of Schmelzer's iconoclastic approach but because the voices slide around randomly and aren't always in tune when they settle; they rarely blend; and ultimately for me the recording seems to have priorities other than the pursuit of historical authenticity – indeed it seems at times to have the tiresomely adolescent aim of 'seeing what it can get away with'. On a purely practical level, I find it very hard to believe that Machaut's employers, who we know surrounded themselves with the ultimate in precise sophistication and refinement such as Machaut's own *Louange des Dames* and *Livre de Voir Dit*, would have tolerated for one moment this sort of musically permissive approach in their church music. If, like me, you are generally instinctively drawn to Graindelavoix's performances, you should probably give this recording a try, but I can't help feeling that it adds little to Pérès' account, which is as near the knuckle as I personally would care to go. However, for a 'purer', and in my opinion much more honest and convincing account of Machaut's polyphony and a substantial liturgical framework, I would thoroughly recommend Parrot's clinically precise but barn-storming

1984 recording, one of his very finest performances on CD.

D. James Ross

16th century

WESTERN WIND: MASS BY JOHN TAVERNER & COURT MUSIC FOR HENRY VIII

Taverner Choir & Players, Andrew Parrott

79:20

Avie AV2352

Music by Aston, Cornysh, Henry VIII, Anon + chant

The Taverner Western Wind was the first music of the period I had seen and heard while I was in Cambridge (1958-61). For later scores, refer to Early English Church Music 30 & 35. The Mass has a wide range (G2, C2, C3 & F4), with a range from top C to bottom F— so no justification is required for raising to a minor third, as used to be the custom. The ecclesiastical items take the main part, but there are refreshingly short secular pieces. The approach is primarily music rather than religion, often with secular breaks, such as the between the Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus, though the Kyrie & Gloria naturally follow (the former is chant and not linked to the Taverner mass). The choir comprises SATB (5433) with female sopranos and altos, which Andrew Parrott has generally favoured: the balance is excellent. The soloists in the smaller pieces are Emily Van Evera and Charles Daniels.

The Mass ends at No 11 and is followed by a series from “The Music of the Court of Henry VIII” (Musica Britannica, 18) from nos. 12 and 14-16, edited by my main teacher at Magdalene, John Stevens (whom I got to know very well), which accounts for my early enthusiasm. Subsequently, I was more interested in Andrew Parrott in Oxford. *Yow and I* (12) is a typical chorus/verse (a format familiar for modern churches using strumming guitars) by Cornysh Jr, though the verses are simple improvisations. Aston’s keyboard *Hornpipe* (13) is impressive (from Mus. Brit. lxvi no. 36) but Cornysh’s *Fa la sol* (15) is a substantial and elaborate piece (6’58”) and is followed by Henry VIII’s *Taunder naken*, one of many versions throughout Europe.

Taverner returns for *Audivi vocem* (17) and *Dum transisset sabbatum* (19). The former is for high voices (G2, C1, C2, C2), with the top part hoisted an octave above the chant. The plainsong was sung by trebles, despite the tenor pitch (EECM 30 prints it as octave treble). The latter is for C4, C4, C4, F4: the two upper parts are similar, the

third part is a cantus firmus and the lowest is a typical bass. The booklet is full of information without being too complicated. The layout is likely to refresh the mind and the performers are excellent, aided by the learned director, Andrew Parrott.

Clifford Bartlett

Renaissance

HER HEAVENLY HARMONY: PROFANE MUSIC FROM THE ROYAL COURT

The Queen’s Six

62:19

resonus RES10164

Music by Byrd, Gibbons, Morley, Tallis, Tomkins & Weelkes

The Royal Court in question is that of England and the ‘Her’ is Elizabeth I, although the programme also takes us into the reign of her successor, James VI/I. The Queen’s Six present a varied and pleasant programme of polyphonic madrigals and more homophonic strophic songs, including several items from the iconic *Triumphs of Oriana*. The six male voices produce a mellow and nicely blended sound, and if the two altos at the upper end of their range occasionally produce a rather unrelentingly opaque tone the lower voices are splendidly rounded. I also have the feeling that the relatively narrow dynamic range might be due to the limitations of the upper voices. Notwithstanding, the articulation in rapid passages is superb and the many fa-la-las are rendered with suitable *joie de vivre*. In addition to the expected mock-bucolic fare we have the more interesting *Thule the Period of Cosmography/The Andalusian Merchant* by Thomas Weelkes and the same composer’s *Death has deprived me* as well as Tallis’ considerable hit *When shall my sorrowful sighing slake* and Tomkins’ extraordinary *Music divine*, all given passionate and moving accounts. This is The Queen’s Six’s ‘difficult second album’ – their debut album (“Music of the Realm” RES10146) establishing them as the new boys on the block – and they have passed the test with flying colours.

D. James Ross

HAEC DIES: MUSIC FOR EASTER

Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, Matthew Jorysz *organ*, Graham Ross

72:56

harmonia mundi USA HMU 907655

GIOVANNI BASSANO *Dic nobis Maria* BYRD *Haec dies, Pascha nostrum* L'HÉRITIER *Surrexit pastor bonus* LASSUS *Magnificat octavi toni super "Aurora lucis rutilat"*, *Surrexit pastor bonus* PALESTRINA *Terra tremuit* SCHEIDT *Surrexit Christus hodie* TAVERNER *Dum transisset Sabbatum* + later repertoire

This collection of choral music for Easter covers most of musical history with plainchant, music from the Renaissance, and a selection of pieces running right up to modern times. I shall focus mainly on the earlier material, which is generally beautifully sung by the mixed voices of the Clare College Choir. If the opening account of Lassus' *Aurora lucis rutilat* occasionally lacks the punch necessary to bring out its poly-choral structure, the narcotic account of Taverner's *Dum transisset* which follows is exquisite. The lively *Surrexit Christi hodie* by Samuel Scheidt demonstrates the choir's versatility, as does Byrd's jubilant setting of *Haec dies*. Giovanni Bassano's elegant *Dic nobis Maria* is given a lovely rhythmical rendition although Palestrina's *Terra tremuit* is a trifle legato for my taste. Lassus' *Surrexit Pastor bonus* is also a little bland, but the choir warms again to Byrd's *Pascha nostrum*. The disc is given a pleasing symmetry, ending with Lassus' *Magnificat octavi toni super Aurora lucis rutilat* which is sung with vigour and a rich tone. The regular insertions of plainchant, which is also well sung, provides a useful time machine between the different eras. Probably my favourite track on the CD is the dramatic account of Stanford's flamboyant *Ye choirs of new Jerusalem*. There is a great variety of musical styles represented here, and generally speaking the chorister rise to the challenge well, entering the idiom of each piece in turn.

D. James Ross

POLONICA – LUTE MUSIC WITH POLISH CONNECTIONS AROUND 1600

Michał Gondko *renaissance lute*
75:01
Ramée 1406.

In his extensive liner notes Michał Gondko defines Polonica as music with a Polish title, composed by a Pole, or which the copyist describes as Polish. He has assembled an interesting collection of lute music from the 1580s to the 1620s. There is considerable variety, from simple dance melodies to complex fantasias, taken from eight printed sources and nine manuscripts (all helpfully listed in the liner notes). Five of the dances are from Mattheus Waissel's *Tabulatura* (1591), in duple and triple

time, some jolly and some sad, sensitively played, and restful to the ears. Another five are from the manuscript known as Danzig 4022, now in Berlin. They are nice pieces, but performed here in a way which would encourage me to sit back in my armchair and listen, rather than feel inspired to get up and dance. Most attractive are three dances from Leipzig MS II.6.15 (the Dlugorai Manuscript), one of which is ascribed to Alberti Dlugorai (c.1557-after 1619). Other works by him include a curious stop-go Villanella, his well-known Finale from Besard's *Thesaurus Harmonicus* (1603) – with a surprisingly dreamy interpretation quite unlike the punchy interpretation of others – and two prelude-like fantasias. The second one (track 16) is an amalgam from two sources – Leipzig MS II.6.15 and Besard (1603) – created by Gondko to overcome problematic passages, and performed with a fair amount of rhythmic freedom. Another significant Polish composer represented here is Diomedes Cato (c.1560-after 1618) with a Galliarda from the Chilesotti lute book and a lovely Prelude with interesting harmonies from Besard (1603, recte 4 recto, not verso). Gondko includes a couple of pieces composed for the viol by Tobias Hume – A Polish Vilanell and A Polish Ayre – to which he tastefully adds ornaments and a few divisions for repeats. Hume's idiosyncratic style is unmistakable, and although the viol is limited to chords involving adjacent strings, his music works well on the lute. The CD ends with two pieces by Jacob Reys – a Galliarda which explores the higher reaches of the lute (10th fret), with Gondko's added ornaments and divisions, and a Fantasia from Besard 1603 (recte 21 verso, not recto). Gondko's lute was made by Paul Thomson. It has seven courses, and a clear, bright sound particularly in the upper register.

Stewart McCoy

17th century

BOLLIUS: JOHANNES-ORATORIUM

Johann Rosenmüller Ensemble, Arno Paduch
73:17
Christophorus CHR77389

The Johannes in question is John the Baptist and this – perhaps the first true German oratorio? – tells of his birth and destiny. Most likely written for one of his employer, Archbishop and Elector Johann Schweikhard von Kronberg' significant birthdays in the

1620s, the work has an opera-like structure: two acts, each of three scenes setting texts from St Luke's gospel, follow a prologue from Isaiah (sic) and are, in turn, followed by an epilogue (a Magnificat antiphon from the rite for St John the Baptist), each of the divisions being framed by sinfonias for a variety of instrumental combinations (two cornetti with bassoon, a pair of violins with "viola bastarda", three recorders, cornetto, violin and recorder). I found these the most satisfying parts of the whole, but there were moments to enjoy in the "drama", too, especially the choruses. The booklet is informative but I had to read the German to make complete sense of various passages. Personally, I think it was a miscalculation to follow the drama with another of Bollius's compositions; surely the fact that it ends with a sonata for the same forces as it began with is enough of a framework. Bollius is best known today for his treatise on singing "after the modern Italian art", but clearly his music deserves wider distribution!

Brian Clark

DELLA CIAIA: LAMENTATIONI (VENICE, 1650)

Roberta Invernizzi, Laboratorio '600

106:20 (2 CDs in wallet)

Glossa GCD 922903

Alessandro Della Ciaia (c1605-c1670) seems to have composed these nine Lamentations for a community of nuns in Siena, though they were published in Venice in 1650. The music is for solo soprano and continuo only – a huge challenge for the singer. I can only think of one person who might do a better job than Roberta Invernizzi though even she might ultimately be defeated by the fact that the music just isn't that great – I'm afraid I don't share the essay writer's enthusiasm. However, his writing is informative, though I find it odd that a booklet with notes in four languages only translates the sung (Latin) text into one of them.

David Hansell

MEISTER: IL GIARDINO DEL PIACERE

Ensemble Diderot, Johannes Pramsohler

66:45

Audax Records 13705

A little over five years ago (it already seems so much longer!), Musica Antiqua Köln – for so long trail-blazers of the "early music revival" – signed off with six unknown sonatas by Johann Friedrich Meister

from his *Il giardino del piacere* of 1695. In so many ways, the present recording marks a "changing of the guards"; as something of a protégé of Goebel, Johannes Pramsohler has, in a few short years, built a considerable reputation for not being afraid to tackle "new" repertoire (though never without both historical importance and real musical merit). So now he and his equally impressive colleagues from Ensemble Diderot mop up the six sonatas Goebel was unable to include in his final discographic offering as violinist (nos. 1, 3, 7, 8, 9 and 12 of the set). Apart from "La Musica Duodecima", each opens with three abstract movements (while nos. 3, 7, 8 and 9 have a *Fuga Allegro* between two *Adagios*, no. 1 has a *Canon in unisono*), then a sequence of dance movements. The final sonata opens with a *Grave*, then follow six dances. As with previous Audax recordings, the sound quality is extraordinary, capturing a wide range of dynamics – impressive as some of the virtuosity is, I especially enjoyed the slower music on this disc, where the three string players relish the sounds of their instruments so that we can, too; the violins are sufficiently different to allow us to hear the crossing lines, and Gulrim Choi relishes the moments where she can take the lead. I recall not being convinced by Goebel's sleeve-note claim for his release that MAK had truly discovered a long-last master (that being what "Meister" means in German), but on this re-acquaintance, I fear I was a little harsh – these are accomplished works that certainly deserve to be better known, and I cannot believe that this recording will not spread his reputation (and enhance those of the performers!) around the globe.

Brian Clark

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI MESSA A QUATTRO

VOCI ET SALMI OF 1650, VOL. I.

The Sixteen, Harry Christophers

71:29

Coro COR16142

This is the first of two CDs, grouped to avoid repetition of texts: it is not fully presented as a service. There are two groups from the liturgy: *Dixit I* a8, *Confitebor II* a2 and *Lauda Jerusalem* a3, followed by Cavalli's *Magnificat* a6 (there was no available Monteverdi one). Then follows another group of psalms – *Laetatus sum* a5, *Nisi Dominus* a3 and *Laudate pueri* a5, followed by the *Laetaniae della Beata Virgine* a6. The disc ends with *Beatus vir* a7, for its popularity rather than being placed with other psalms; it would, however, have been better to

have just seven singers – it works much better that way, and bringing in an odd tutti bar or two sounds ludicrous. It does, however, match the one-singer-per-part of the opening item. Some of the single-choir pieces could also be sung thus. The performance style, however, works well, and my editions are up-to-date. Harry gets the right shape and tempo, and the performance is fine. I look forward to vol. 2. But when I tot up the numbers of singers, 18 rather than 16 is the normal number: isn't it the time to replace 16 by 18?

Clifford Bartlett

MONTEVERDI: IL PIANTO DELLA MADONNA

La Compagnia del Madrigale

68:34

Glossa GCD922805

This is a fascinating and sometimes thrilling recital of spiritual *contrafacta* (published in 1607 and 1609), combined with the four madrigalian motets published by Bianchi in 1620. The re-texted madrigals are mainly from Book 5 (1605). Two short organ toccatas by Frescobaldi (wrong generation?) provide contrasting punctuation. These are brilliant performers, both as individuals and collectively but I did sometimes feel that this very virtuosity tempts them into detailed nuances of micro-managed declamation - syllables, rather than words or longer musical lines - which do not always serve the repertoire to the best effect. It's that old *musica/parole* debate again. Get it, and join in. You definitely won't find the performances dull.

David Hansell

PASQUINI: LA SETE DI CHRISTO

Concerto Romano, Alessandro Quarta

66:56

Christophorus CHR 77398

Several times I have written in these pages about the different reaction one can have, purely based on the equipment one hears a recording on. I listened to this passion oratorio during a car journey and was not impressed; some of the soprano singing was so shrill there was even interference with the speakers. So I was slightly confused when a Radio 3 presenter praise the release *for the fine quality of the singing*. I am glad – as I always am – that listening to it again on a different machine altered my first impressions; while I am still not 100% convinced by some of

the “drama”, there is much to recommend the performance overall, and it is high time we had more recordings of this sort of repertoire. It is slightly disappointing that Pasquini does not take the opportunity to write choruses at the end of each half, with or without the violins. The second half is actually preceded here with a *sinfonia* from an earlier Modenese Pasquini oratorio about St Vitus. I know I am in the minority in not buying into the current aural kaleidoscopic approach to continuo; of course manuscripts of Luigi Rossi's works contain references to various instruments, but never within a section, and certainly not the diversity of sounds as has become fashionable – on I'm not sure quite *what* grounds... Overall a welcome release and something different to contemplate next Easter.

Brian Clark

SEPHARDIC JOURNEY: WANDERINGS OF THE SPANISH JEWS

Apollo's Fire Baroque Orchestra, Jeannette Sorrell

63:42

Avie AV2361

Salamone Rossi's worked as a musician in Mantua, though without regular positions. He produced nine books of madrigals between 1589 to 1628 and one sacred publication of Hebrew psalms, *Hashirim asher lish'lomo*. I first reviewed the Hebrew Psalms around 1995.

I presume that Rossi followed the normal Mantuan approach of singing one-to-a-part. It is now known that Monteverdi had only ten singers, which is fine for double-choir music. The booklet even has a paragraph from Leon Modena in 1605, recommending ten singers. The director has used her own choir, using chosen good singers (6442) and four soloists (SSTB), as well as well as 12 players, mostly playing more than one instrument. I get the feeling that Jeannette is doing her own thing. This didn't strike me as a well-explored performance, but if she wants to do exotic music, she should get people with experience. This is even more “pseudo” than her last CD – get back to doing the Baroque that you do so well!

Clifford Bartlett

THE ART OF HEINRICH SCHEIDEMANN

Le Concert Brisé

68:19

Accent ACC24302

Working in the first half of the 17th century, Scheidemann was primarily an improviser on the keyboard, so as the programme note points out what we have of his music are only fragments which he decided to write down. The present recording is a further remove as it presents mainly arrangements of Scheidemann's keyboard musings on the work of his contemporaries Hassler, Bassano, Michael Praetorius, Lasso and Dowland. After an ear-grabbing organ *Praeambulum*, organist Jean-Christophe Leclere is joined by a succession of instrumentalists from the Concert singly, in pairs and trios, for performances he originally wrote for organ or harpsichord. After overcoming the initial question of why the performers have chosen this mode of performance when Scheidemann clearly had a solo keyboard in mind, the arrangements with their scampering violin, cornet and recorder are generally pleasantly effective. The Italian Baroque organ plays very much a supporting role, remaining on pretty colourless and sometimes overly wheezy stops, while the solo instruments take the limelight. Scheidemann seems a bit of a chameleon, taking on the character of the wide range of composers he uses as models. Particularly unusual are the concluding three dance variations, but then we should bear in mind that they were devised by Scheidemann for harpsichord so part of the peculiarity undoubtedly lies in the arrangements. Nevertheless Scheidemann shines through as a musician of imagination and originality, and the CD serves as a useful reminder that organist/composers up to and including the great J. S. Bach were admired in their lifetimes chiefly for their ability to improvise, of which only scant evidence has survived.

D. James Ross

VENEZIANO: PASSIO

Cappella Neapolitana, Antonio Florio

56:04

Glossa GCD922609

This is rather good – both work and performance. Stylistically think A. Scarlatti but with a bit more dynamism. The bulk of the narrative is carried by the falsettist Evangelist (original part in C1) extremely well

after the very first consonant (which delays the focussing of both the succeeding vowel and its pitch). The other soloists have much less to do but the standard does not drop and the chorus are also on the ball for their brief interjections. In the booklet the essay (Eng/Fr/Ger/It) is informative bar one embarrassing mis-translation (p7, line 8 'sixteenth' should be seventeenth), though the Latin libretto is translated into English only. Strongly recommended, especially for seasonal listening.

David Hansell

VIALARDO: MISSA "VESTIVA I COLLI"

Musica Fiorita, Daniela Dolci

61:38

Pan Classics PC 10344

+music by Banchieri, Cima, Donati, Grancini, Rognoni & de Selma

The madrigal *Vestiva i colli* by Palestrina occasioned a flurry of interest in the years following its appearance, and its music became the subject of parody motets (including some by Palestrina himself), sets of divisions and even a Mass by Baldassare Vialardo. The present CD is a survey of these works, built around the movements of Vialardo's Mass. The four solo voices and brass and strings of Musica Fiorita produce a lovely rich ensemble sound, and the solo instruments and voices in turn provide engaging accounts of the virtuosic divisions by a variety of composers. Of Baldassare Vialardo little appears to be known – the programme note imparts little apart from the fact that he died after 1620 and even Mr Google is at something of a loss. He was a thoroughly capable composer though, and the Mass displays a thorough acquaintance with forces it is written for as well as an imaginative and inventive style. The CD also usefully dredges up composers about whom a little more is known and precious little of whose music has been recorded. Among these is the violin virtuoso Francesco Rognoni, and the rarely heard but impressively creative Giovanni Cima, Michel'Angelo Grancini and Bartolomeo de Selma. The star of the programme however is Vialardo about whom it would be fascinating to know more, such as where he worked and who influenced him in his composition.

D. James Ross

THE SECRET LOVER

Tenet (Jolle Greenleaf, Molly Quinn & Virginia Warnken Kelsey *sopranos*, with gamba, harpsichord, theorbo, lute and baroque guitar)

65:08

Avie AV2326

The New York City-based ensemble perform a programme which professes to revolve around the *Concerto delle donne*, the trio of female virtuosi who graced the late Renaissance Court of Ferrara. In fact while female composers such as Barbara Strozzi are included, very little of the music here relates directly to the famous trio, and the group's main composer Luzzascho Luzzaschi is absent completely. The recorded sound is also a bit of an enigma, sounding rather uncomfortably close with a rather synthetic-sounding after-echo, so while the playing and singing is generally pleasant, the overall sound is less than satisfying and a little uncomfortable to listen to for any length of time. This is a pity, as the three singers bring a pleasing spontaneity to tracks such as the anonymous *Passacaglia della vita*, and the recorded sound seems to cramp their style. The inclusion of a contemporary piece by Caroline Shaw is also a bit of an indulgence – not long enough to establish the more adventurous sound world, but nonetheless a disruption to the Renaissance programme. All in all, I found this CD a bit of a hotch potch, and its idiosyncratic ambience was distinctly off-putting. This is a shame as the performances seem quite good and yet the captured sound is disappointing and the programme a bit unfocused.

D. James Ross

VENICE TO HAMBURG

The Bach Players

55:17

Hyphen Press Music 009

Music by Bötdecker, Froberger, Marini, Schmelzer, Valentini & Weckmann

The Bach Players take us on a fascinating tour of the back streets and byways of Baroque music in this engaging CD, although as the note points out the prevailing view of the Baroque as a period of secondary composers from whom steps now and again a giant like Handel, Vivaldi or J. S. Bach is long overdue reconsideration. In their signature uncompromising performance style combining considerable musicality

and virtuosity, the six instrumentalists give us the best of Giovanni Valentini, Froberger, Schmelzer, Weckmann and Marini, composers some of whose music I had already heard as well as Philipp Friedrich Bötdecker of whom I haven't knowingly heard at all. The performers take advantage of a crystal clear recording to pour energy and life into these works, which may be regarded as 'mainstream Baroque' but which in the hands of The Baroque Players truly spring to life. I was particularly delighted by the radiant tone of the dulcian and the cornettino, but all of the instruments are played and captured in their full radiance. It seems that like programme planners drawing on later repertoire, devisers of Baroque programmes are all too often dazzled by the big names into neglecting the Frobergers and Marinis of this world, and this CD serves as a useful antidote to this. If the overall package has a slight impression about it of being 'done on the cheap', in fact we have all we need here – excellent performances, vividly recorded, full and detailed programme notes and a bright cover to catch the eye!

D. James Ross

Baroque

BACH: "TRAUERODE"

Joanne Lunn, Carolyn Sampson, Robin Blaze, Gerd Türk, Dominik Wörner SSATB, Bach Collegium Japan chorus & orchestra, Masaaki Suzuki

78:55

BIS-2181 SACD

+ *Tilge Höchster meine Sünden* BWV1083 (after Pergolesi), *Schlage doch gewünschte Stunde* BWV53 (Hofmann?)

The chief work in Vol. 6 of Bach's Secular Cantatas by Suzuki's forces is Cantata 198, the *Trauerode*, given a poised and colourful performance, where only the string band seems a little below par. The vocal contributions are bright and focused in the choruses as well as in the solo arias, and none of Suzuki's regulars disappoints. Perhaps we are so used to hearing Peter Kooij that only Dominik Wörner doesn't seem to me quite such a natural interpreter of this extraordinary music.

The *Trauerode* was a private commission by a young, aristocratic and presumably wealthy student to commemorate the death of Christine Ebehardine, the wife of Augustus, the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland in a secular memorial event in Leipzig two months after her death, on 17th October 1727. She was revered all over Saxony for not having followed her husband in converting

to Catholicism, which he did in order to gain the crown of Poland. The university tried to intervene, and hijack the commission for their man, Görner, but Bach's rich and inventive score triumphed. It is unusual for having not only pairs of flutes and oboes d'amore, but also of violas da gamba and lutes. The concerto-like first movement displays these different groups within the score, the fourth (an alto recitativo) displays the flutes imitating the funeral bells supported by the wiry strumming of the lutes below and, after a wonderful aria for alto with an obbligato pair of violas da gamba, the choral fugue that is the seventh movement has an instrumental episode reminiscent of a trio section in the Presto of the Fourth Brandenburg in the middle. The aria for tenor that followed the oration is especially interesting as it gives us an idea (in the written-out 'improvised' part for gambas and lutes) of how Bach might have elaborated his continuo parts. In the recitative that follows the lutenists show how they improvise a free part to enrich the short organ and 'cello chords, and I find it both instructive and convincing in heightening the rather operatic nature of the recit. This a gracious and engaging performance.

The other pieces on this CD are rather loosely connected: first there is a fine performance by Robin Blaze of the single aria movement *Schlage doch*, once named as BWV53, but now believed to be by Georg Melchior Hoffmann, with its strings and campanelli; and second, the arrangement by Bach in 1746/7 of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* to words of the penitential Psalm 51, *Tilge, Höchster, meine Sünden* (BWV 1083), which is not really a cantata at all.

This performance was recorded in 2005, so predates the other recordings by ten years. The soprano then was Carolyn Sampson, singing with a younger Robin Blaze. And the very Italianate music by the young Pergolesi, who died in 1736 at the age of 26, sounds an odd accompaniment to the Lutheran *Miserere*, especially the jaunty and operatic verse 4. The contrapuntal verse 9 fares better in Bach's hands, and this and the concluding *Amen* are the only two sections that required no modifications to fit them to the new words. In the interests of completeness in Suzuki's great project, it is good to have this piece available. But there is no history of a liturgical context for the arrangement or surviving commission.

The string parts are elegantly phrased, and, as far as I can judge, the performance is all that we might wish for vocally as well. But it is a very odd piece without any known context – unlike some of Bach's adaptations of certain other Italianate mass movements – to make sense

of an arrangement in a style so foreign to his.

David Stancliffe

BACH: MATTHÄUS-PASSION

Hannah Morrison, Sophie Harmsen, Tilman Lichdi (Evangelist & arias), Peter Harvey, Christian Immler (Jesus), Kammerchor Stuttgart, Barockorchester Stuttgart, Frieder Bernius

164:28 (3 CDs in a box)

Carus 82.285 (also 82.286 SACDs in Digibook)

I do not find this a particularly vivid or colourful performance, though it is very polished. The two cori (16 voices and 14 respectively) and the two orchestras (4.3.2.1.1 strings in each) sound indistinguishable, so that our identification with coro II in *O Schmerz*, for example is weakened. The soloists are just that – they sing the arias of both cori, but sing in neither coro the rest of the time. The rather indistinct photograph on p.17 of the accompanying booklet shows the cori in a single semi-circle with no visible break, and the two orchestras equally welded together, with the Evangelist and Jesus standing out in front in what is clearly a live performance.

The booklet has been edited sloppily: at the foot of p. 22 there is no reference to a fagotto or organo, nor a liuto in orchestra I as it does in Orchestra II, all of which are clearly audible in orchestra I, where a lute plays continuo with the organ accompanying the Evangelist. Are there two violas da gamba, lutes and fagotti, or is one of each shared between the orchestras, like the solo singers? More importantly, where is the evidence that a lute was used in this (1736) version of the Matthew? This together with the heavy bass line – a 16' is present in the Evangelist's accompaniment as well as in arias like 6: *Buß und Reu* – produces a rather slow-paced narrative.

In Kuhnau's time as Cantor, the lute was a regular part of the continuo group (Laurence Dreyfus: *Bach's Continuo Group* (Harvard, 1987), pp171/2), but the *Trauerode* is the only place where Bach specifies the lute as a continuo instrument. There is the brief obbligato part in *Betrachte* in the *Johannes-Passion*, and in Raphaël Pichon's recording of the reconstructed *Funeral Music for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen* (BWV 244a) (reviewed in EMR November 2014), the lute was entrusted with the obbligato gamba part from the parodied *Komm süßes Kreuz* from the *Matthew Passion*, but I am not convinced. Is there evidence for wider use?

Worse, on p. 2 where the soloists are listed, the bass arias

are given to Peter Harvey while Jesus is sung by Christian Immler; yet on p. 22 when all the musical resources are given, Harvey is listed as Jesus, and p. 23 has Immler singing the arias. This is not the case: it is Harvey singing the arias. This kind of mistake should not have slipped through.

Tempi are pretty moderate – this performance runs to three CDs – and there is a good deal of carefully managed rubato within phrases in the arias, so there is plenty of breathing space; sometimes this leads to an actual change of tempo, as in the middle section of 8: *Blute nur* for example. Hannah Morrison, the soprano, is quite excellent – a lovely clear voice, with beautiful phrasing especially in 13: *Ich will dir mein Herze schenken* – and as always it is a joy to have Peter Harvey, the most musical of all Bach singers, though adding a 16' and a lute to the continuo line in 57: *Komm süßes Kreuz* as well as the gamba and organ makes the ensemble less flexible as well as thickening the translucent sound. The alto, Sophie Harmsen, is less of a HIP specialist with a more marked vibrato than the others, and often sings more dramatically, as in 51: *Erbarm es Gott* and 59: *Ach Golgotha*. The Evangelist is sung by Tilman Lichdi, who sings the tenor arias of both cori as well. He has a beguiling voice, and it all sounds very smooth and well articulated. I missed the jangle of the great F# major chord of a decent-sized organ tuned pretty mean in the middle of the *Blitze und Donner* that introduces the fiery furnace of hell as well as the distinctive sesquialtera with the cantus firmus, whose articulation is managed better in the slowly-paced opening chorus than in *O Mensch, beweine*.

Small 'character parts' are excellently sung by members of the cori (but sometimes singing in the wrong choir!), though sounding a little distant. The choral sound is smooth and singerly, but it doesn't have the slightly rawer edge that you might expect of a choir that is influenced by the sound of the period instruments, as Bernius claims to be after in the booklet. This may partly be due to the rather boomy acoustics of the church where this was recorded last March (clearly a different venue than the more concert-hall set-up where the photo of the live performance was taken.) But then this choir sings music from the 17th to the 21st centuries and is not in that sense a specialist HIP coro. What does come out clearly is the attention given to projecting the words with clarity and intelligence, and this is a hall-mark of this performance.

As far as the new (2012) Carus edition is concerned, there is insufficient detail in the (shortened) version of Andreas Glöckner's note on Bach's 'great passion' to be clear about the differences from the NBA. My own experience

of using the Carus parts for the cantatas is that some of the phrasing seems to be taken directly from the old Bach-Gesellschaft and has not been informed by recent scholarship. When a music publisher sponsors a recording using a new edition, it would be good practice to know what major editorial decisions have been taken and why, as was the case with Hans-Christoph Rademann's B minor Mass with the Freiburger Barockorchester, using the new Carus edition, reviewed in August 2015. With reference to the layout, there is a tantalising reference in Glöckner's note to the putting in order of the 'swallow's nest' organ in 1727, the instrument in the gallery high at the east end of the nave, and he suggests that Bach may have put his ripieno soprano line there, while the two main choirs and orchestras performed side by side in the west gallery.

This is a luxuriant performance, with the text clearly understood and well-presented. The sound is beautifully produced and it is difficult to fault the overall conception. There are some matters that will not pass muster judged on the strictest HIP criteria, including the lute, and I find the whole sound a bit too smooth. But it is a powerful presentation and would woo anyone unsure as to whether they might like period instruments, but likes their Bach caressed reverentially yet with fervour.

David Stancliffe

BACH: BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS

Neumeyer Consort, Felix Koch

92:06 (2 CDs in a wallet)

Christophorus CHR77400

Besides being a professional baroque orchestra (or part of being one in the 21st century?), The Neumeyer Consort is involved in a number of educational initiatives, one of which is offering students the chance to join such an ensemble while still studying. Their take on the Brandenburgs is directed by the cellist, Felix Koch (though he is only listed as playing in the sixth concerto). The playing is very good, and there are nice moments of spontaneous ornamentation. As always, I am puzzled by the fact that the gap in the third concerto is filled by the harpsichordist, and with a not entirely convincing segue into the "Phrygian half-cadence", either. The booklet note re-visits the possibly links between these six concertos with mythology – not that it really matters, but I remain unconvinced.

Brian Clark

BADINERIE

Ensemble Dreiklang Berlin

57:59

hänssler CD HC15052

Since the default sound for organ in Sibelius is not very pleasant I often substitute a treble recorder for the right-hand staves when I am typesetting music that requires a baroque organ sound. The present recording is obviously far more musical than that, yet essentially these are transcriptions for recorder trio (they use a variety of instruments but there are no details in the booklet note) of music that works extremely well. Eight of the arrangements are published by Universal Editions, and another two by Edition Tre Fontane. The recorded sound is excellent, allowing each of the three voices to carry beautifully, even the ultra-slow speaking deep basses, without picking up too much interference between the various instruments (which can dog even the best recorder ensembles!), but also without robbing us of the chuffs that make them so characterful. Although all three players make use of vibrato, it is never allowed to upset the inner tuning. While there is not much “interpretation” (and I mean this in a very positive way!), Ensemble Dreiklang are not above having fun with Bach – there are all sorts of raucous noises in the Polonaise from Anna Magdalena’s book, and the title piece is given a lively rendition, showing that it can be done à3 and without going OTT...

Brian Clark

FISCHER: URANIE

Elisabeth Joyé harpsichord & organ

66:00

Encelade ECL1402

J. S. Bach’s liking for the works of Fischer was attested to by his son C. P. E. Bach. The long-lived Fischer died aged 90 just four years before J. S. Bach. Born in Bohemia he spent most of his life in the service of the Margrave of Baden in Rastatt. This collection of suites and pieces for harpsichord, as well as preludes, fugues and ricercars for organ, shows his mastery of the various styles prevalent between the publication of his *Pièces de Clavessin* in 1696 and his *Musikalischer Parnassus* in 1636. The harpsichord suites are very French in style, with the usual collection of dance movements; there is also an impressive passacaglia, a couple of chaconnes and a set of variations. The organ preludes and fugues are short and undeveloped

but there is a more extended and satisfying chaconne played on the organ, as well as a festive Ricercar for Easter. Joyé plays on a copy of a Fleisher 1720 harpsichord by Philippe Humeau and a baroque German-style organ made by Quentin Blumenroeder, both full-bodied instruments which fit the music very well and are sympathetically recorded. She manages the contrast between the stricter and more improvised forms very well and proves an excellent advocate for Fischer’s music.

Noel O’Regan

HANDEL: TRIO SONATAS FOR TWO VIOLINS AND BASSO CONTINUO

The Brook Street Band

76:10

Avie AV2357

HWV339, 386a, 392–394, 403 + “Esther”

An absolute cracker of a disc! The Brook Street Band have here assembled a selection of ‘additional’ trio sonatas, unpublished in Handel’s lifetime, ranging in date from his early years in Hamburg to the late 1730’s in London. They give a fascinating picture of the development of his musical style, from his tremendously energetic and harmonically adventurous youth, to the suave and seemingly effortless structures of his maturity. I particularly enjoyed the opening ‘Sinfonia’ (only published in 1979), with its echoes of *Almira* in the extended hectic first movement, followed by a noble Adagio, with the violins dissonantly duetting over an ostinato bass, and finishing with a lively gigue-like Allegro. Turning then to the closing *Saul* sonata, one hears how the early harmonic and rhythmic angularities are smoothed into pithy, closely argued and yet crystal-clear formal perfection. On the way, there are (as often with Handel) glimpses of many other works – the cadential figure of the opening movement of HWV 392 has an uncanny resemblance to that of ‘Where’er you walk’, for example. The Brook Street Band have the full measure of this splendid music. Their tuning is spot-on, allowing searing dissonance to resolve into honeyed thirds, they enjoy to the full Handel’s rhythmic exuberance (e. g., the playful fugal second movement of HWV 392), and they provide an immense range of appropriate tonal colour. Additionally, and crucially, they understand perfectly Handel’s unique sense of dramatic rhetoric, which suffuses the entire disc. The recording is completed and complemented by cellist Tatty Theo’s excellent and scholarly notes.

Alastair Harper

MARINO: CONCERTO E SONATE PER ARCHI E
CONTINUO

Stefano Montanari, Ensemble Barocco "Carlo Antonio
Marino", Natale Arnoldi
53:12
Tactus TC671302

Marino's most likely claim to fame is that he was probably Locatelli's violin teacher; a proclaimed virtuoso, sometimes based at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, Marino published at least eight volumes of music, including a set of cantatas for solo voice, but primarily sonatas and concertos for strings, including three that survive in Manchester. As galant an effort this is to promote Marino's output, I am afraid to say that neither the performances nor the recorded sound are quite up to the highest levels – some of the (undoubtedly challenging) solo music is fudged and there are some awkward moments of ensemble that really ought either to have been edited out or re-recorded. I am sorry to be so unkind to a world premiere recording, but I am compelled to give my honest opinion. Without doubt, Marino deserves to be heard and I hope that the fact that the performers have named their group after him means they will continue to explore it and bring it to a wider audience.

Brian Clark

MONDONVILLE: GRANDS MOTETS

Chantal Santon-Jeffrey & Daniela Skorka *dessus*, Mathias Vidal & Jeffrey Thompson *haute-contre*, Alain Buet *basse-taille*, Purcell Choir, Orfeo Orchestra, György Vashegyi
96:07 (2 CDs in a wallet)
Glossa GCD 923508
Cantate Domino, De Profundis, Magnus Dominus, Nisi Dominus

Mondonville's *grands motets* are just wonderful – core repertoire at the *Concert Spirituel* in his day and steadily gaining ground in ours. *Cantate Domino* is here recorded for the first time. It begins with a well-crafted chorus of which Handel would have been proud and continues with a duet and a series of solo *récits* before a fine sequence of ensembles and choruses conclude matters. These performers have a strong record in French Baroque repertoire and maintain their standard here. The chorus is a little larger and therefore less focussed than would have been ideal but almost everything else is as good as one might hope for. I just long for the day when lady soloists don't feel they have to try so hard.

David Hansell

JOHANN ERNST PRINZ VON SACHSEN-WEIMAR:
THE COMPLETE VIOLIN CONCERTOS / BACH:
HARPSICHORD TRANSCRIPTIONS

Anne Schumann *violin*, Sebastian Knebel *harpsichord*,
Ensemble "Fürsten-Musik"
77:41

cpo 777 998-2

op. 1 & two concertos in G from manuscript + BWV 592a, 982, 987

Music formed part of most German princes' education in the 18th century, but little of their music drew wider attention than that of their respective courts. The very fact that no less than J. S. Bach saw fit to transcribe at least four of Johann Ernst's concertos for keyboards has given the latter's music some sort of kudos, and these lively performances by Anne Schumann and the Ensemble "Fürsten-Musik" were the perfect way to mark the 300th anniversary of the prince's death (2015). Manfred Fechner's detailed booklet essay tells us that the arrangements were actually made at the young prince's own request – Bach was then employed as organist in Weimar; Walther, who also made arrangements of concertos for organ, was the prince's harpsichord teacher! If the opening piece on the programme could have been written by any one of a dozen German imitators of Vivaldi, the second (the fourth of six concertos from the prince's op. 1 set - engraved by Telemann! how well connected was this ill-fated prince, who would die aged 18, only a few months later...) is in a different league, with a bold, ear-catching opening and plenty of virtuosic display to follow (all of it comfortably despatched by Schumann, of course!), so it is no surprise that it is one of the concertos Bach transcribed (as BWV987). Two other Bach transcriptions (BWV592a and 982) are included on the disc, and a fourth (BWV984, based on another concerto by the prince, whose original version has not survived) is available on the internet. Having heard the music played so stylishly on strings, though, I found the keyboard versions less satisfying. Following the example of one of the manuscript sources, the solo violin is accompanied by two "violini principali" and two "violini ripieni", who only play in tutti sections. For those who like to know such things, the bottom string parts are played on basse de violon (concertos 1, 4 and 6) or violoncello (the rest) and violone in D (1, 2, 4 and 6) or violone in G (the remainder). The balance is beautifully managed throughout. Yet again, cpo and these enterprising and wonderfully talented musicians fill in another vital gap in our knowledge!

Brian Clark

ZELENKA: MISSA DIVI XAVERII ZWV12,

LITANIAE DE SANCTO XAVERIO ZWV156

Hana Blažiková, Lucile Richardot, Kamila Mazalová,
Václav Čížek, Stephan MacLeod SAATB, Collegium
Vocale 1704, Collegium 1704, Václav Luks

71:45

Accent ACC24301

St. Francis Xavier held a special place in the liturgy of the Dresden court on account of his being the “Holy Patron” of Maria Josepha (Austrian-born wife of August II, “the Strong”). The two works on this magnificent recording date from 1729 and most likely represent Zelenka laying out his wares in the hope of being officially appointed as successor to the recently deceased *Kapellmeister*, Johann David Heinichen. As Jan Stockigt’s typically detailed notes explain, even without a Credo setting, the mass rivals anything else he wrote in terms of sheer scale, and his setting of the litany is similarly expansive; whether Heinichen’s demise was seen by the court accountants as a financial blessing, or whether musical fashion was changing around him, Zelenka did not secure promotion... Be that as it may, both of these pieces are most welcome to the catalogue, in stunning performances from soloists, choir and orchestra alike; I have to concur entirely with Stockigt’s highlighting the “Quoniam” of the mass as an absolutely outstanding piece of writing – three instrumental groups alternating with the four solo voices and added (4!) trumpets and drums for the ritornelli. The edition is now available from Bärenreiter Praha, so I hope there will be a spate of performances around the world!

Brian Clark

COMÉDIE ET TRAGÉDIE: CHARPENTIER,

LECLAIR, RAMEAU

Orchestral music for the theatre

Tempesta di Mare

73:29

Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0810

Charpentier: Suite from *Le Malade Imaginaire*; Leclair: Suite from *Scylla et Glaucus*;
Rameau: Suite from *Les fêtes de Polymnie*

Top repertoire here in stylish performances (bar the 16’ foot string sound in the Charpentier and some silly percussion elsewhere). The Leclair (from his only surviving – perhaps, indeed, his only – opera) is absolutely scintillating stuff – well up to Rameau’s heady standard in both musical interest and colourful use of the

orchestra. J-PR, however always raises the stakes in one way or another. I’d forgotten about the harmony at the start of *Les Fêtes...* until it shocked me yet again. What a composer! The booklet tells us what we need to know although it slightly irritates that it does not deal with the music in the order in which we hear it. It’s a shame that there are no plans for Volume 3.

David Hansell

HERZENS-LIEDER – GRAUPNER, J. S. BACH,

KUHNAU

Miriam Feuersinger *soprano*, Capricornus Consort Basel
64:57

Christophorus CHR77399

J. S. Bach: *Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut*

Graupner: *Mein Herz schwimmt in Blut*

Kuhnau: *Weicht, ihr Sorgen, aus dem Herzen*

Telemann: Quartet in G, TWV 43:G5

You might think that pairing settings of the same text by Bach and Graupner might be a little one-sided, not to say foolhardy, but that is – despite the formidable reputation of Bach’s setting – to underrate early Graupner; what it might lack in intensity (and, of course, he uses only strings so the magnificent Xenia Löffler isn’t able to charm us!), his version has its own qualities, and there are none of the oddities that put most listeners off his later cantatas. Miriam Feuersinger (whose praises I have sung many times before) clearly enjoys Graupner’s sweeping lines and graceful melodies; she has a beautiful modulated voice that allows her to add colour to individual notes without altering their pitch. Her rendition of the Kuhnau cantata (how nice to see Robert King credited as publisher – would that more record companies would do the same!) is glorious but not quite enough to topple Carolyn Sampson off my pedestal, but it’s a close thing. After bringing in a second viola player for that piece, I’m surprised that the group decided to record a quartet by Telemann rather than one of the many unrecorded quintets; in fact, without being too greedy, they could have done both. A very enjoyable disc, though.

Brian Clark

MINIATUREN

Ricardo Magnus *harpsichord*

ambitus am 96 958

Agrell, J. Chr. Fr. & J. S. Bach, La Barre, De Bury, Buxtehude, F. & L. Couperin, Dandrieu, Fischer, Graupner, Handel, Kirnberger, Kuhnau, Mattheson, Mozart, Purcell, Rameau, Ritter, Le Roux, Scarlatti & Telemann

On this recording Ricardo Magnus celebrates the miniature with 39 pieces, some lasting barely a minute. Drawing the analogy with miniature paintings, he is keen to showcase what shorter baroque pieces have to offer, providing a broad selection of music by composers from every tradition, ranging from Louis Couperin to Mozart. The elder Couperin is the most heavily featured, with six tracks, including some unmeasured preludes. Many of the other pieces on the recording were also designed as preludes, written in an improvisatory style and setting up an expectation of something more structured to follow, an expectancy which is often frustrated here. On the other hand Magnus and his producers have risen well to the challenge of providing continuity over so many tracks and the result is not at all as fragmented as might be expected. Playing on a Taskin copy by Thomas Schüller, Magnus is respectful of different styles, playing with flexibility and adding appropriate ornamentation. This is a different approach to programme building, but one which works very well in giving listeners a chance to hear some less familiar music in an unusual context.

Noel O'Regan

Classical

G. A. BENDA: SINFONIAS

Prague Sinfonia Orchestra, Christian Benda

47:20

Sony Classics 888751861923

Symphonies 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 & 10

This is not the first recording I have heard of these Benda sinfonias directed by Christian Benda, and I am pretty certain that my reaction was the same on first acquaintance; with the "perfection" of modern wind instruments, much of the real charm of these works is lost. Lacking the rasp of hunting horns, and the piercing nature of period oboes, not to mention string playing where the bow and the strings are inseparable companions, the sound here is (to my ears at least) anodyne and, I am afraid, unlikely to inspire me to listen to Benda again. All

of this I know to be unnecessary, as previous recordings of his music (both vocal and instrumental) have shown him to be a composer of considerable merit. The conductor's discography reveals where his interests really lie, and if this is what he does with his forebear's symphonies, I would respectfully suggest he sticks to what he knows best and let others champion the Bendas of yesteryear.

Brian Clark

HAYDN: STRING QUARTETS, OPUS 50

Quatuor Zaïde

101:06 (2 CDs in a wallet)

NoMadMusic NMM027

While the Quatuor Zaïde are not HIP specialists, their approach to Haydn's music is utterly "authentic"; they do not "tone down their normal style" to fit the music, they simply get under Papa Haydn's skin and throw caution to the wind in getting all his energy and wit, as well as the depth and pathos, and conveying it all beautifully to their audience. The balance between the four instruments – which is one of the many joys of this quartet – is perfectly captured by the recording team. If you do not know these six fabulous quartets, I cannot think of a finer introduction.

Brian Clark

HAYDN: VIOLIN CONCERTOS

Isabelle Faust, Münchener Kammerorchester, Christoph Poppen

61:41

Pan Classics PC 10353

This is a re-release of a 1997 recording and, if Isabelle Faust's playing is meticulous (who would expect anything else from one of the world's best?), the Münchener Kammerorchester are a trifle leaden-footed in their role of accompanist; essentially it comes back to the old question of articulating by different bow strokes rather than giving notes a little breathing space, especially in the bass department. The rather pathetic distant harpsichord would have been better left out altogether. So hats off to Ms. Faust for genuinely impressive renditions of these three fine pieces, but wouldn't it be nice if she would revisit them with a classical orchestra as her partner...

Brian Clark

MOZART KURFÜRSTIN-SONATEN KV301-306

David Grimal *violin*, Mathieu Dupouy *fortepiano*

77:56

Hérissou LH13

The first five of these six sonatas consist of only two movements; the sixth adds a central *andantino cantabile* to the mix. As well as the fine performances, one of the principle attractions of this CD is the booklet note, which not only paints the background to the sonatas superbly, but also gives details of the Gräbner fortepiano used. When I played these works, it was never quite clear to me whether the violin was accompanying the keyboard, or vice versa, or whether in fact the whole thing was in a state of flux. For the most part, I find the balance between the two works well, and the recorded sound is fabulous. Maybe the pair can go on to record some Hummel sonatas, now?

Brian Clark

SPERGER: SYMPHONIES

l'arte del mondo, Werner Ehrhardt

62:35

deutsche harmonia mundi 88875056172

Symphonies 21 in g, 26 in c, 34 in D

The three symphonies which receive world premieres on this fabulous recording were written between 1786 and 1789, during which the time the composer – who is perhaps best known nowadays for his virtuoso works for double bass – endured unsettling times professionally; by 1789, he had settled into his final position in the court orchestra of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. They all follow the same pattern; after a lively opening comes an Andante, a Menuetto and a Finale. That is where an predictability ends, however; indeed, if these three works are typical of the composer's symphonic output, I am very surprised that they are not featured on concert programmes more regularly; cast very much in the Viennese classical style (like Beethoven and Hummel, he was a pupil of Albrechtsberger), the violins carry the majority of the melodic interest, with colour supplied by the woodwinds. Of course, we live in an age when Haydn struggles for public performances, indeed, even Mozart does! Still, l'arte del mondo and Werner Ehrhardt deserve our thanks for bringing new repertoire to our attention, especially in such beautifully crafted performances.

Brian Clark

Romantic

BEETHOVEN: SINFONIA "EROICA", CORIOLAN

OUVERTURE

Le Concert des Nations, Jordi Savall

52:14

Alia Vox AVSA9916

I was shocked when opened the booklet for this CD – after, I should point out, having been blown away by the drama and energy of the opening movement of one of my favourite Beethoven symphonies! – to discover that this is actually a recording from 1994. 22 years later, as I say, it still has the ability to make one sit up and take note, whether it be the brilliance of the woodwind tone, the shimmering tremolo strings with cutting cross-accents driving the music forward like some sort of life-bringing juggernaut that refuses to be ignored; perhaps for the first time, I heard what my university lecturers meant by the shock value of "Eroica", and Savall does all of this without milking each of the many dramatic moments. Of course he does more than just let Beethoven's genie out of the bottle, but perhaps I also appreciated for the first time what a conductor does in terms of "interpreting" a symphony and, I confess I loved it – and you'll hear no complaints from me about the short duration of the CD as a whole; by the end, I was mentally exhausted!

Brian Clark

HANDEL/MENDELSSOHN: ISRAEL IN ÄGYPTEN

Lydia Teuscher, Julia Doyle, Hilary Summers, Benjamin Hulett, Roderick Williams, Choir of The King's Consort, The King's Consort, Robert King

82:03 (2 CDs for the price of 1)

Vivat 111

None of our regular Handel reviewers felt able to write about this release, which I think is rather a shame, as they would have found much to enjoy in Robert King's take on Mendelssohn's take on Handel. I should start by explaining that last sentence... Basically, it is known that Mendelssohn's produced performances of what all that he could find of the remains of Handel's oratorio, filled out the texture by adding new wind parts and re-casting the continuo part (as he would later for other baroque works) for two chord-playing cellos and bass, and adding his own overture. It will surely surprise

no-one to hear that in piecing together Mendelssohn's own fragments, Robert King has done a fabulous job of filling in the gaps and, as usual, bringing together a star-encrusted ensemble to perform and record it. The entire enterprise oozes class, from the packaging and booklet (with a typically informative essay detailing the history I have sketched above), to the outstanding instrumental playing, choral singing (always a stand-out element of any Robert King recording), finely-cast soloists (Lydia Teuscher's was a new voice to me, but one – like the others! – I look forward to hearing more of very much) and (another bright star in the Vivat sky) the glorious recorded sound. So, yes, perhaps this is not Handel as we know it, but it is Handel as he was heard at the beginning of the early music revival (if you want to think of it like that) and a version of Handel that is very deserving of re-discovery.

Brian Clark

BERNHARD ROMBERG: CELLO CONCERTOS I & 5
Davit Melkonyan *cello*, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens
58:36
cpo 777 969-2

Romberg is a name one reads over and over again in histories of music – of course, Bernhard of that ilk was but one of many – but this is the first time I have knowingly heard music by any of them; and what an experience! These are two beautiful cello concertos, both in three movements (one in B flat major, the other in the even less cello-friendly key of F sharp minor) and both oozing gorgeous melodies and virtuoso writing in buckets for the soloist, which Davit Melkonyan despatches with apparent ease. This is, of course, just the latest in a long line of hits from Willens & Co., with their signature approach to discovering great music off the beaten track; it takes a leap of faith to thinking that there must be a reason why someone's name keeps popping up to actually performing and recording the music, but cpo and especially this orchestra have shown time and again that there are many absolute jewels awaiting re-discovery, among them these two gems. More strength to their elbow!

Brian Clark

Various

THE EVENING HOUR : BRITISH CHORAL MUSIC FROM THE 16TH AND 20TH CENTURIES
Choir of Jesus College, Cambridge, Bertie Baigent
77:58
Signum SIGCD446

The mixed voices of Jesus College Choir and the male voices of the Chapel Choir produce a gorgeous blended sound in their home chapel, captured vividly by the Signum engineers. The early works are particularly idiomatically sung, with lovely accounts of Sheppard's exquisite *In manus tuas* and Byrd's diaphanous *Miserere*. Robert Whyte's *Christe qui lux es* is also given a delicious reading although notwithstanding some very fine solo singing from tenor Jaliya Senanayake, Orlando Gibbons' beautiful *Behold thou has made my days* sounds rather more hesitant, perhaps due to the lay-out of the forces. It is a pleasure to hear a substantial choral work, *In pace*, by William Blitheman, a composer better known to me as a writer of music for organ. The College Choir even manages to make real music out of the rather formulaic and unpromising setting of *Miserere* by Thomas Tallis. This is generally a rather melancholy programme of music for the end of the day but also for the end of life, but the atmospheric singing of the choristers is of a high standard, and Jesus College is to be congratulated in supporting two such fine choral groups. It is fascinating to hear the very different sounds produced by the respective choirs as well as the combined sound of both singing together.

D. James Ross

TREVOR PINNOCK: JOURNEY
Two hundred years of harpsichord music
68:00
Linn Records CKD570
Bull, Byrd, Cabezón, Frescobaldi, Handel, D. Scarlatti, Sweelinck & Tallis

This recording represents more than one journey: there is Pinnock's own musical odyssey of over forty years, played on a harpsichord which has accompanied him for all of that time (a Hensch copy made by David Jacques Way); there is the journey implied in the CD's subtitle: 'two hundred years of harpsichord music'. In his lucid liner notes John Butt points to other journeys too: the emergence of keyboard music as a genre in its own right and the parallel development of distinct instruments

on which to play it. Pinnock has chosen a programme ranging from variations by Cabezón, Byrd, Tallis, Bull and Sweelinck, through some Frescobaldi to Bach's 6th French Suite and Handel's extended Chaconne in G, and finishing with Scarlatti's K490-92 Sonatas. He includes pieces which would be on many harpsichordists' desert island list, though oddly enough nothing from France. Stylistic distinctions inevitably get a bit smoothed out in this grand sweep on a single instrument, but what we get in return is a real sense of how the harpsichord's potential has been harnessed by successive generations. Pinnock's strongest suite is his rhythmic precision and impeccable sense of timing which brings out the relentless logic of the Bach and Handel, or of Scarlatti's K490 Sonata. Pinnock's contribution to our understanding of baroque music has been immense; I can still remember my own shock and awe moment on first hearing his English Concert playing Purcell back in 1982. The youthful sparkle might not be so visible in Matthias Tarn's recent photo of Pinnock in the CD booklet, but there is no dimming in the exuberance of his playing.

Noel O'Regan
