

# Early Music Review

## EDITIONS OF MUSIC

PALESTRINA: LE MESSE DEI GONZAGA.

MUSICHE DELLA CAPPELLA DI SANTA BARBARA  
IN MANTOVA

Ed. Ottavio Beretta (Vol. IV: *Messe di Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina*)

LIM, 2016, pp. clviii + 470.

ISBN 9788870968163 €100

These 12 polyphonic *alternatim* masses (alternating monodic with polyphonic choruses, the monodic plainchant by solo, organ, or unison chorus or soloists), commissioned by the court of Mantua between 1568 and 1579, are the only ones written for a liturgy different from Rome's by Palestrina and his only masses composed between 1575 and 1581. They are of remarkable quality and well documented, yet 'lost' and unknown until 1950. For centuries the vocal parts were unidentified, hastily catalogued, ignored and forgotten, until 10 were authenticated by Knud Jeppesen and published in 1954. Analyzed by him and others, all 12 finally appear in Volume IV of what will be Ottavio Beretta's modern 6-volume edition of all the masses from the archive of the Basilica Palatina di S. Barbara in Mantua ordered by Guglielmo Gonzaga (including several by the duke himself) and housed, since 1851, in the library of the Conservatory of Milan. Three volumes were published in 1997, 2000 and 2007 under the auspices of the American Institute of Musicology as part of the *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae* 108/I, III and II. The LIM has agreed to complete the series. The present volume contains all of those by Palestrina, and it is hard to imagine a more thoroughly discussed, enlightening, helpful, beautiful, critical edition.

This is not my field, even though I do accompany a choir that sings *alternatim* masses; unexpectedly I found the 158-page introduction fascinating, even if not easy. Non-Italian readers can access the tables with the masses' modes, structural dimensions, vocal ranges, and a list of sections reduced to four voices (and to which four), on pages cxxii-iii, and consult the up to date Bibliography on cxxxix-clvii. The complete original Mantuan plainchants in mensural notation (*Kyriale ad usum Ecclesie Sancte*

*Barbare*) for the 10 Ordinary masses are given with critical annotations xcvi-cxiv. Adding a translation to a volume already weighing 6 or 7 lbs. was not feasible, but a volume with 'only' 463 pages of music separate from another of clvii pages could have provided also in English translation the sections about Guglielmo, Palestrina and the compositional style of the masses!

Beretta opted to include the entire correspondence between Palestrina and Guglielmo in a 30-page appendix, after which he discusses what the instructions and intentions of Guglielmo were. Both respected the orders of the Council of Trent and thereby produced a type of mass that the Vatican also desired to have for occasions of the highest solemnity, where a second choir replaced the organ. Palestrina therefore asked Guglielmo for permission (willingly granted) to use the Mantuan plainchant repertory in Rome. In its variants and rewritings it respected the unity of mode in each piece, with the *finalis* and *repercussion* at the beginning and end of every verse, filled in wide skips with melismas and removed others, for a homogeneous result.

The story of these special Mantuan Masses is not recounted chronologically. The dates presented to the reader bounce from 1881 back to 1828, to 1851-1854, 1951, then 1933, 1954, and back to 1850, with citations or documents from 1963, 1900, 1947, 1950 in that order. It might have been better to start with Guglielmo Gonzaga's correspondence with Palestrina! In the minds of musical philologists, however, the obstacle-ridden research history was necessarily uppermost, and to the extent that future researches will join this adventure, this, too, makes sense – and creates the suspense that kept me reading.

Guglielmo (1538-1587), a composer and musical theorist himself, as well as a collector of art and a patron of theatrical and literary arts, second son of Federico II, husband of Eleonora of Austria, was crowned Duke of Mantua and Montferrato in 1573 having governed from 1556. Italy was divided into kingdoms, papal states and dukedoms – the latter powerful enough to resist interference, even in rituals, from Rome. The Basilica Palatina di Santa Barbara was designed in part by Guglielmo, built by 1565 in the ducal palace, enlarged between 1568 and 1572, and planned for sumptuous religious ceremonies with elaborate sacred music. Its Antegnati organ was ordered by G. Cavazzoni; its plainchant and its liturgy were exclusive

to Mantua.

Musicians in residence included Wert, Pallavicino, Gastoldi; works by Palestrina, Marenzio and others were commissioned; prints of music by them and others (among whom Gabrieli, di Lasso, da Victoria, Asola, Agazzari) as well as manuscripts were bought for the private use of the court. Guglielmo's tastes were conservative, and older figures (G. Bruschi, G. Contino, A. Bonavicino) were active before the arrival of G. de Wert. The repertory of S. Barbara was approved by Gregory XIII, and it constituted a monument to the Reformation, perhaps the only complete one manifesting all the required characteristics (declamatory clarity, pure and unified modality, simple melodies not exceeding an octave, proper accentuation of words).

The masses by Palestrina were commissioned, composed for the Basilica, and delivered, and the part books were stored in its archive along with a mass by Guglielmo and many by other composers. Guglielmo died in 1587 after which no further works were ordered. Mantua planned to sell the contents of the archive to the Conservatory of Milan in 1850, but after the Mantuans received 500 *lire* and sent them, Austrian authorities blocked the purchase and had them returned to Mantua, ordering to have this illegible music inventoried ('...old note forms... impossibility of understanding the sense...'). In less than two weeks the parts, obviously not even opened, were deemed to be 'of no interest, neither for age nor for merit', not even for the history of sacred music, 'imperfect works [incomplete?]' and 'unusable pages' by 'various authors'. The conservatory, however, realized the importance of the cache on the basis of this inventory! Instead of estimating its value, they disarmingly wrote that the Austrians 'did well' to block the sale, thereby keeping this 'monument of music' for themselves, recommending that it be conserved and made usable, and asking to be reimbursed for the previous purchase, which they were. So the Austrians ordered the entire archive to be deposited again in the Conservatory of Milan and to be sent at the expense of Mantua. It arrived in 1851, eventually becoming the Conservatory's property after a settlement for 600 *lire* was paid; it was declared to be in excellent condition, legible even where smudged, and only needing to be rebound. It was then ignored for the next 100 years. The correspondence between Guglielmo and Palestrina was discovered in 1881, so this continued neglect is still a telling chapter in the history of musicology. The entire contents of the Conservatory library were evacuated during WWII and were still inaccessible in

1949; the archive of S. Barbara was finally accessed by Knud Jeppesen in 1950.

Nine of the masses were attributed to Palestrina, a 10th is now agreed to be by him, and a unique one à 4 for a male choir, previously thought to be lost, may be the very first mass sent to Guglielmo, in 1568, before the commission to set all of them. During the centuries in which they were lost there was no evidence of Palestrina's use of *alternatim*, so the attributions in the inventories were in doubt. In 1947 Strunk surmised as much, but only one mass had found its way into Haberl's edition of 94 Palestrina masses (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1907).

The correspondence is a valuable appendix. Palestrina did many other things for Guglielmo: he advised him on hiring musicians for his court, he corrected the duke's compositions (rewriting them in score and diplomatically pointing out improvements), he wrote motets and other pieces. He almost got hired for a permanent position. Negotiations for a high salary were interrupted when Palestrina, who had taken religious orders, perhaps in the hope of returning to the Papal Chapel, suddenly married a wealthy widow in 1581. After Guglielmo's death in 1587 Palestrina had no further contacts with his successor, Vincenzo Gonzaga.

The letters contain references to compositional style, which Beretta interprets. In 1568 Palestrina, already in demand and looking for prestigious opportunities, sent Guglielmo the first mass and offered to write another: 'long or short or so that the words are heard', i.e. a *missa solemnis* for holidays or a *missa brevis* for weekdays. He promised to send unwritten '*falsobordoni antichi*' that were sung in the Papal Chapel, i.e. the improvisations sung on Gregorian chant. After putting a motet and a madrigal by Guglielmo into score, he wrote that listeners should enjoy the texts just as they do in '*musica commune* [sic]', i.e. *canzonette* and *laude*. When beginning to compose after his illness, Palestrina started a *Kyrie* and *Gloria* 'studying them on the lute', i.e. working out the vertical harmonies, as if by realizing their basso continuo. Although another reference to 'putting [compositions] on the lute' strikes me as meaning, possibly, writing them down in some form of tablature. Guglielmo wanted the masses to be '*fugate continuamente et sopra soggetto*' literally, continually fugued, i.e., different from those performed in Rome, in that even short motives were to be imitated autonomously and taken from the *cantus firmus* of the Mantuan *Kyriale*.

It would be wonderful to hear these masses. What distinguishes these is said here to be their fantasy and

severity, for which they can be considered Palestrina's 'arte della fuga'.

*Barbara Sachs*

TELEMANN: *GOTT DER HOFFNUNG ERFÜLLE EUCH*  
*Cantata for Whit Sunday, TVWV 1:634*

Edited by Maik Richter

Bärenreiter BA 5898 (Full score) v+30pp, £15

BA 5898-90 vocal score vi+22pp, £9

Winds £12, Organ £9, Strings £3.50 each

This cantata was once attributed to Bach (though there is no mention of that anywhere in the present volume), and consists of a chorus (setting a Biblical text), arias for soprano and alto separated by a recitative in which all four voices participate and rounded off with a chorale setting. The edition seems to be an extract from a volume in the on-going Telemann edition, which explains why much of the introductory material is about the cantata cycle from which this work comes, though the chronology of its history and the various authors involved and performing centres is way too complicated and might have been better expressed as a table; I'm also not sure, given that there are footnote references to two excellent monographs on such issues, why it was felt necessary to give such a wealth of detail. Conversely the discussion of this particular piece is minimal and there is no editorial commentary. I don't live within a couple of hundred miles of a library that has even the old volumes of the Telemann edition, so goodness knows where I could see the volume this piece comes from; but that is the only way I would be able to work out how the solo Tenor is supposed to start – does he sing with the Tutti and then go his own way (halfway through a word!) in Bar 18? Or is he silent up to that point? Should some marking indicate the answer? There are a couple of slips in the English introduction ("generell" for general in a footnote and "successfull"...). As you would expect, the edition is clear and attractive. I'm not sure why quavers at the opening of no. 4 are beamed in pairs at the opening but subsequently in sixes (as per modern notation); again, this is something that a paragraph on editorial methods could have shone some light on, perhaps. The music is lovely and it is always nice to have a cantata with a pair of horns that is not too taxing for the choir; the alto will need an agile throat, though. I'm fairly certain there should be some mention of a bassoon in the score...

*Brian Clark*

## NEW FROM DILETTO MUSICALE

JOHANN JOSEPH FUX: 12 SONATAS FOR ORGAN

Arranged by Erich Benedikt

DM 1447, 36pp

These are transcriptions of trio sonatas (E68\*, K90\*, K389, K341, K342, K391\*, K392\*, K393, K395\*, K398\*, L53\* and N102\*, where an asterisk indicates a transposition from the original key). They vary in length from a single page to six pages (with no particular thought given to page turns, which means a harpsichordist – given here as an alternative to organ – will need an assistant...), and the two violin lines are clearly legible. Fux's music needs no recommendation; contrapuntally ingenious, lyrical and richly harmonic, even in these sparse sonatas (there are only occasional paddings out of the harmony), these make ideal pieces for recitals and services.

JOHANN GOTTLIEB JANITSCH: SONATA DA  
CAMERA IN B-FLAT MAJOR OP. 6

Flute (or recorder), oboe (or violin), viola, Basso continuo

Edited by Klaus Hofmann

DM 1482, (Score and parts), 28pp + 4, 4, 4, 8pp

I have edited a fair bit of Janitsch in my time, so I share editor Klaus Hofmann's angst at dealing with two sources in the same library with mutually exclusive sets of errors; this is not as complex as some sonatas (as well as being obsessed by remote keys and unusual instrumental combinations, the composer had a penchant for complex rhythms like quintuplets and septuplets) so arriving at a clean version is relatively straightforward. There are three movements (Larghetto, Allegretto and Allegro assai), the first through composed and the next two in binary form. Hofmann finds the pitch of some passages in the first movement flute part suggestive of a copyist trying to accommodate them to an instrument; as far as I can see, they sit neatly on both the transverse flute (as Janitsch intended) or the suggested alternative. The repertoire for groups with three trebles and bass is not that great, so this baroque-heading-towards-rococo piece is a great addition to the catalogue.

## NICOLA FIORENZA: CONCERTO IN C MINOR

Recorder, Strings and Basso continuo

Edited by Dario Benigno

DM 1480 (Full score) 44pp

This is a lyrical work for recorder, three violins, viola and continuo in four movements (Largo amoroso, Andante, Largo and Allegro). My faith in the edition was somewhat undermined by this: “Instead of using the term ‘viola’, the original part indicates the violette. This five-string instrument, a member of the viola da gamba family, was played balanced upon the player’s knees. As it today can be used for performance only in the rarest cases we have made use of our times’ liberality and ascribed this part to the viola without any change.” The distribution of the violin parts is odd; sometimes violins 1 and 3 play together while violin 2 and viola are in unison; sometimes violins 1 and 2 join company and the lower parts are independent. In the first movement, there is a passage of seven bars where, having been in unison with violin 2, the viola suddenly joins the other two. The music looks nice and recorder concertos are always welcome. Benigno has done the good service of figuring the bass but there is no keyboard realization for inexperienced players. A qualified success, though.

## FLORIAN DELLER: CONCERTO IN B-FLAT

Oboe and strings

Edited by Paul Angerer

DM 1484, 24pp

Not a name I have ever encountered before, Deller (1729–1773) spent most of his life at Stuttgart (working with Jommelli among others) before seeking his fame and fortune (unsuccessfully) in Vienna and Munich, and died in a monastery aged only 44. There are three movements (Allegro, Andantino and Presto), in what might be called embryonic classical style – long introductions that turn out to be ritornello-like rather than the basis of greater development, and the viola alternates between *col basso* and being an independent harmonic voice. Angerer supplies cadenzas for the first two movements (where fermatas mark such things) and includes variant (more virtuosic) passages from the original material, which seems to be an autograph. The oboe part which the publisher also sent is very sensibly laid out over eight pages and looks ideal for the job. All in all, a valuable addition to any oboist’s repertoire.

## MATTHIAS SPERGER: CONCERTO NO. 16 IN D

(T 16)

Double Bass and Orchestra

Edited by Klaus Trumpf

DM 1494, 48pp

Truly a creation of Viennese Classicism, Sperger worked from 1789 until his death in 1812 at the north German court of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and it is there that the autograph score of the present concerto is housed. There is written in E-flat and the bassist would have tuned his instrument up a semitone; this has two effects – firstly the colours of the accompanying strings are muted and the oboe timbres darker, and secondly the solo instrument sounds louder. Here the editor has chosen to present the score in D with the soloist reading and playing in C, according to modern convention. I’m sure any period musicians wishing to play or record the work could ask the publisher to produce a set that prints the original version! It would certainly be worth exploring, as this is a fine (if very virtuosic – to my eyes, at least) work in three movements (the central Romance with strings only, the outer two with oboes and horns).

## IGNAZ JOSEPH PLEYEL: TRIO IN C

Violin, Cello and Piano, B. 443

Edited by John F. and Virginia F. Strauss

DM 1486 (Score and parts), 28pp + 8pp, 4pp

Brian Robins was very enthusiastic about a recording of three piano trios by Pleyel which we received a month or so ago, and judging by what I see on the page, I would have to concur. The music is dramatic, with frequent changes of dynamics, and yet all three parts look manageable by competent amateurs. After an Allegro vivace come a set of variations on a “Chanson Eccossois” (“Up a ware [or “warn”] a’ Willie”, which Haydn also set). The violin part is laid out as an 8-page booklet, so it would have made more sense to leave p. 5 blank and print the second movement on pp. 6-7 to avoid a rather tight page turn. Otherwise, as with everything in this batch, the printing and presentation are first rate. Personally I do miss some sort of critical commentary; I could have done with less information about the composers and their lives, or the section by section analysis of the Pleyel piece, and a more honest appraisal of the sources by that covered by “we have corrected the errors in the source(s)”... That said Diletto Musicale bring much new and worthwhile music to

the market which would otherwise never be available and we are forever in their debt for that.

Brian Clark

E. A. FÖRSTER: SIX STRING QUARTETS, OP. 16

Edited by Nancy November

*Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era*, 101

xx+306

A-R Editions, Inc. ISBN 978-0-89579-827-5 \$260

It is only a matter of months since I reviewed November's fine edition of the composer's op. 7 quartets. Five of the pieces are cast in the four movement scheme, while the sixth lacks a Minuetto. Much of the introductory material is concerned with arguing against both contemporary and more recent criticism of the quartets (the former found them too heavy for polite entertainment, while the latter essentially laments the lack of more structural control – which could, of course, apply to music by anyone other than Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven!); even the most superficial of flicks through the volume argues against her assertion that the music is not dominated by the first violin, and although closer inspection does, indeed, reveal passages where the balance is more subtly handled, it is surely by having to look for such things that the underlying truth of the accusation is confirmed. Whether or not the music is too expansive to support its own weight by its virtues will only be proven by period instrument performances and I would urge such a quartet of specialists to take up the challenge and support this venture in trying to expand the repertoire we hear in the concert hall. Since this is a reference volume, the placement of repeat signs a few bars after a page turn is not that important, but I feel it would be easier to gain an idea of the overall shape of a piece if the two things coincided and, in most cases, this would have been managed with a little typographical thought. Still, this is a fine piece of work, and I hope it will be rewarded by an up-turn in interest in Förster's output.

Brian Clark

## BOOKS

RECERCARE XXVII/1-2 2015

*Journal for the study and practice of early music*

LIM Editrice [2015]. 222 pp, €24 (€29 outside of Italy)

ISBN 978 88 7096 8125

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The current issue of *Ricerca* has six studies in English and one in Italian, all with summaries in both languages, and a list of books received, but no book reviews. The journal is dedicated to Italian musical culture, and, as usual, the articles are presented in roughly chronological order by subject matter. This time four are confined to the 17th century, the first two on earlier periods.

LUCIA MARCHI is an Italian musicologist who teaches at Northeastern Illinois University and DePaul University of Chicago. She has done critical editions of Ingegneri and Marenzio and in 'For whom the fire burns: medieval images of Saint Cecilia and music' she takes us back to the 14th- to 16th-century iconographic and literary treatment of Cecilia (a Roman of the 5th century) rather different from the familiar Baroque image of her. There are numerous surprises, from her hatred of played music to the cult figure she cut in the Trecento for surviving her brutal tortures, and the theme of fire, which her chastity protected her from. A hidden reference to her as the object of a courtier's love in a *caccia* by Nicolò da Perugia opens the door to speculation on sacred symbols in secular music, and especially in the Middle Ages.

BONNIE J. BLACKBURN, of Oxford University, writes about Nicolò Sconvelt, a German lutenist and lute maker who achieved fame in the Scuole of 15th century Venice. Blackburn discusses a great deal of documentation, about other lute makers as well, and includes plates of Gentile Bellini's 'Procession in Piazza San Marco' (1496) and Lazzaro Bastiani's 'Donation of the relic of the true cross' (1494), containing portraits of the musicians who are known to have been hired for the event. Documentation tells us that Sconvelt became a maker of lute strings late in life, and the Bastiani painting shows him in the process of putting three new strings on a lute. Details about his last years are documented by two wills he made, one in 1498, the other five years later.

The lengthy title of MARCO DI PASQUALE's study sounds more obscure than it is, and it doesn't translate readily into English. A clarifying paraphrase would be 'Giovanni Gabrieli and one union of organists, and four [unions] of

other [sorts of] musicians: unpublished documents on musical [freelance] trade union cooperation in Venice at the beginning of the 17th century'. After the *compagnia* of eight of the most famous organists, there were three unions of violinists and one of singers (priests or monks). Documents are included after this thorough discussion, but there are more questions than conclusions about other, undiscovered, such unions, and how they operated. Di Pasquale teaches history of music at the Conservatory of Vicenza, very close to Venice, but his main research is on the 19th century, so his study calls attention to the need for other scholars to delve into archives to fill out the picture.

REBECCA CYPRESS, whose new book is *Curious and Modern Inventions. Instrumental Music as Discovery in Galileo's Italy* (University of Chicago Press), contributes to this issue: 'Frescobaldi's *Toccate e partite .. libro primo* (1615; 1616) as a pedagogical text. Artisanhip, imagination, and the process of learning'. She wants to focus, also here, on the strategies of learning. Readers will find her examples of formal changes, rewritings, and substitutions that Frescobaldi made for the second printing of Book One noteworthy, but his keyboard works were already conceptually and technically advanced in their first printing. Comparison with the intabulations that Diruta included in *Il Transilvano* obviously show an enormous development. Only Diruta was writing a tutor, to be used autodidactically, and Frescobaldi was publishing his music. In addition, some of the revisions were simply necessitated by changes in the layout – he removed or shortened some pieces in order to add or lengthen others. So it just isn't a fact or logical assumption that Frescobaldi's purpose was didactic, or that his toccatas and variations constitute a method for acquiring the skills to play them, as Cypress concludes.

Diruta, in his imaginary dialogue with an emissary from the Transylvanian court, was symbolically exporting the keyboard technique he had learned from his Venetian masters. The notational limitations of movable type for printing music make even his simple examples relatively hard to read, his economical verbal instructions essential. He warned that his apparently dogmatic Good/Bad paired fingerings would even have to be reversed, sometimes, to negotiate ornaments, accidentals or particular rhythmic figures smoothly. Therefore, regarding fingering and hand movements, his avant-garde pedagogy was based on the adaptation of the body when the mind had prepared for the physical realization of difficult passages.

Frescobaldi's *Toccate...* of 1615, on the other hand, was

the first engraved keyboard print for *cimbalo*, a print visually comparable to a fair manuscript. Cypress never mentions this crucial innovation, a highly enhanced opportunity to notate simultaneous passages, *effetti* and *affetti*, in a tablature free of the constraint of voice leading, where the two staves showed which hand was to play which notes. His aim was to circulate his own challenging music, and not to write a keyboard 'method'. His remarkable prefaces about the agogics of his often spontaneous-sounding music seem to me an obligatory reminder to players of their rhetorical role, not because the pieces themselves are didactic, but because even engraved music requires creative interpretation. He was writing for consummate musicians.

Let me make one more digression: many of Bach's keyboard compendia were conceived for teaching expression, execution, and composition. So why do editions of the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias* not even respect their unique, methodical, original order, the order in which one is supposed to study them? Of Frescobaldi, Cypress says that many figurations are used repeatedly for practice in doing them! If it's far-fetched to think his music had that purpose, it is not a criticism of Frescobaldi that he neither aspired to the methodical utility of Bach's *Klavierübungen* nor stooped to the mechanical approach we associate with Czerny. Let's remember that Venice (and Rome) were full of *valent'uomini* (virtuosi), but none played as famously well as Frescobaldi. He not only engraved his works for their benefit, but hinted at essential aspects of style beyond the pale of musical notation. Yes, these were instructions, but for those who would know exactly what he meant.

CHIARA GRANATA ('"Un'arpa grande tutta intagliata e dorata". New documents on the Barberini harp') and luthier DARIO PONTIGGIA ('Barberini harp. Data sheets') give us a thorough look at the instrument itself, the Roman instrument builders of the time, and hypotheses about the most plausible makers and the probable time of manufacture, based on new documents. In fact, *Recercare*, from its very first issue in 1989, is a periodical of studies, not about studies. The title means *Research*. In this joint article one finds a wealth of historical cultural information, as well as the most detailed drawings, photographs and measurements of the instrument. It is all here, from the sizes of every hole on the soundboard, to the string spacings in tenths of a millimeter, and much more.

CORY M. GAVITO, a jazz keyboardist and musicologist at Oklahoma City University, is about to spend a year in Florence at Harvard's Villa I Tatti, the best musicological library in Italy, to dedicate his sabbatical year to the theme

of his present article: 'Oral transmission and the production of guitar tablature books in seventeenth-century Italy'. His 2006 University of Texas dissertation *The alfabeto Song in Print, 1610 – ca. 1665: Neapolitan Roots, Roman Codification, and "il Gusto Popolare"* viewable at <http://docplayer.it/7328855-Copyright-cory-michael-gavito.html> was a detailed history of this vast subject, which should generate countless studies, analyses and discoveries of interest to singers and accompanists. The present article is just one. The widespread addition of chord progressions in a popular alphabetically coded notation (translatable into 5-course guitar tablature, but indicating by single letters specific positions of strummed chords) is also a suggestive adjunct or alternative to figured *basso continuo*. Here Gavito compares some lesser-known settings from this repertory, concluding from the concordances that as they circulated they became models for other songs. Loosely referred to as 'oral practice' (actually oral and instrumental, transmitted aurally or in writing), they infused and merged with new composed pieces by prominent composers. Thanks to the autodidactic function of these guitar books, starting from Montesardo, we have a multitude of them today, a vast amount of material from which we can plausibly trace music revised and incorporated in compositions by the likes of Monteverdi, Brunelli, Marini, Landi, Saracini... perhaps an ever-growing list extending throughout the 17th century.

*Barbara Sachs*

CHARLES GANNON: JOHN S. BECKETT: THE  
MAN AND THE MUSIC.

The Lilliput Press, Dublin  
xx + 547pp, £30.00

John was an interesting man. Born and bred in Ireland but from a protestant background, for most of his life he had no interest in religion. He was primarily a musician, but in ways that were unusual. For instance, he scorned Handel and other late baroque composers. He and his colleague Michael Morrow provided certain elements in his style, but John was for many years involved in his *Musica Reservata* from 1956 (the index listed p. 107 as the earliest, though the name itself wasn't mentioned) until 1973. Many young early musicians were involved. The repertoire covered a wide range, but chiefly in the earlier stages revolving on music from the around the 13th century till the 17th. Strange that I didn't hear him until their first concert at the South Bank on 1 July 1967, with

35 players: do read Anthony Rooley's remarks from BBC Radio 3 in 1998 (p. 178). I was involved in a wide variety of concerts and meetings with small choirs. John coached a viol ensemble in Chiswick in the mid-1960s: it was much later that John learnt how to play the instrument. He had a rigorous beat – his value was ideal for some music, but there was little additional information. It took some time for him to make his right-hand offer clarify anything that might aid the performers.

John subsequently spent much of his time in Ireland, particularly for concerts of Bach cantatas – 39 between 1973 and 1983, though the catholic aspects were of little interest: it was the music that mattered. In earlier days, John produced a harpsichord for the Passions – the idea that the organ is the appropriate was unknown and the size of the forces are still unauthentic! John presented a broadcast on Radio 3 called "Early Birds" on 23 September 1988 on the revival of early music, starting with Dolmetsch, including a clavichord. Violet Gordon Woodhouse was claimed as "the first person ever to record harpsichord music". Wanda Landowska played a Scarlatti Sonata in G (how can it be identified?) on a Pleyel harpsichord. I'm puzzled that Nadia Boulanger was reluctant to play Monteverdi, though some was recorded; the item performed was *Chiome d'oro* with two tenors and a piano, Thomas Brinkley (?) led the Studio for Early Music in Munich and August Wenzinger the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis – this sentence is far more plausible than the earlier ones. Michael Tippett was primarily a composer, though he did work at Morley College in the 1940s. Alfred Deller was the first distinguished counter-tenor, not then going above top C but they now sing higher. I was at the Dartington course one year, but I couldn't stand Walter Bergman telling me how to play continuo! As far as I can remember, Thurston Dart was fine. In fact, this list needs to be updated – early music has improved enormously, though some of it may be excessive!

John's new wife bought a small house in Azof Rd, Greenwich, which often was let out, but eventually it became John's home when he moved back to London and joined the BBC Music Department in Egton House – mostly providing introductions for programmes like *Composer of the Week*. John had given up composing, but earlier on, he provided music for radio, often in a contemporary style, including music for his cousin Samuel, who lived in Paris but visited England as well. He travelled widely: to perform, to visit friends, to take holidays, which he enjoyed. As he retired, he tended to enjoy music that he had originally avoided. He died suddenly on 5th February

2007 and was cremated at Lewisham Crematorium on 16 February 2007.

As far as I can tell, the book is accurate. It is readable, though I often needed to find the year of the date. The Appendices run through A (Compositions), B (Discography), C (RTE), D (BBC), E (Musica Reservata concerts), F (Bach Cantata Series at St Ann's Church, Dublin). There are 25 pictures on 12 pages between p.268 & 269. Finally, there is a bibliography and an index. This is, however, a book about the man, but without much information on the music. It would be interesting if anyone who knew him as a musician, another book would be worth publishing – or perhaps covered by different writers, for instance between early-music events and contemporary modern bits for radio programmes.

*Clifford Bartlett*

**BRYAN PROKSCH: REVIVING HAYDN**  
*New Appreciations in the Twentieth Century*  
viii+292, 2016.  
ISBN 978-1-58046-512-0  
University of Rochester Press

This is not, by any means, a full survey of Haydn Reception History in the 20th century. To all intents and purposes the author stops with the 1959 anniversary on the reasonable grounds that the activity since then would require at least one more book. He begins with a scene-setting survey of 19th century attitudes, which could be summed up as 'audiences like Haydn, but composers/conductors don't' (with the possible exception of Brahms, who couldn't quite bring himself to admit it). This may still be true, at least with regard to conductors (see below).

The first half of the book is then a number of recycled journal articles highlighting the stances of d'Indy, Schoenberg and Schenker towards Haydn – this topic has been a prime interest of the author for 15 years. Now, there's nothing wrong with this in principle, but such articles do need a bit of a re-think and some less indulgent (or more observant) copy-editing if they are to avoid duplication of material and development of something of the narrative flow that a book needs. On p. 57, for instance, we are introduced to 'Eusebius Mandyczewski, one of Brahms's protégés' and then on p. 115 we meet him again, but as if for the first time – 'Eusebius Mandyczewski, a Romanian musicologist working in Vienna and a part of Brahms's circle'. Similarly, p. 186 tells us that 'Samuel

Barber wrote his *Fantasia for Two Pianos in the Style of Josef Haydn* (1924)' while on p. 227 'Samuel Barber wrote the *Fantasia for Two Pianos in the Style of Josef Haydn* in 1924'. In addition, references to previous or imminent chapters feel blatantly added, and could do with being page specific, where appropriate.

These might seem small points, but cumulatively this kind of thing does create a lumpy feel to the writing as a whole, interesting though much of it is. I found fascinating – perhaps in its seeming unlikeliness – the surge of Haydn performances in mid-1920s New York. The attempts of various nations (Hungary, Croatia, Germany, Austria) to claim Haydn as their own also make for lively and sometimes sobering reading and, being British, I also enjoyed the investigation of Tovey's various writings and the observations on Vaughan Williams's changing attitude towards Haydn and folksong.

But, in conclusion, I would say that the Haydn revival post-1959 (even post-2009) is still 'work in progress' in terms of regular performances. Although all the symphonies are now available on CD played on period instruments they still make a minimal impact on concert programming and not one ranks in the 'top 20 symphonies of all time' in a recent BBC Music Magazine survey (of conductors' views). However, in the South Bank 2016/17 season they outnumber Mozart by five to one (though nine to one for Wolfie when it comes to concertos) which is verging on the encouraging. I still think that Haydn is the most underrated of the canonically 'Great Composers'.

*David Hansell*

## RECORDINGS

### *Medieval*

**SAINT LOUIS: CHRONIQUES ET MUSIQUES DU XIII<sup>E</sup> SIÈCLE**

Ensemble vocal de Notre-Dame de Paris,  
Sylvain Dieudonné  
72:35  
Maîtrise Notre-Dame de Paris 006

This CD resulted from a 2014 concert programme marking in the music of his time the 800th anniversary of King Saint Louis's birth and following the course of his life and involves the vocal



ensemble of Notre-Dame de Paris, the Maitrise Notre-Dame de Paris (adult choir) and an instrumental ensemble as well as a narrator, reading in medieval French from contemporary accounts of the King-Saint's life. The musical performances are beautifully executed with the solo voices of the vocal ensemble blending well with the instruments and the adult choir providing spirited performances of chanted liturgical items. The confidence and authority of the singing, surely the result of this programme having received several concert performances before it was recorded, are impressive and it is also exciting to find the pioneering work of groups such as the Ensemble Organum incorporated effortlessly into the florid chant. This CD is a feast of 13th-century sacred and secular material vividly performed in the rich acoustic of the Chapelle Notre-Dame de Bon Secours in Paris.

D. James Ross

## 15th century

### STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

*The Chansonnier Cordiforme*

Ensemble Leones, Marc Lewon

70:20

Naxos 8.573325

With its neatly punning title this collection of songs from the exquisite heart-shaped *Chansonnier Cordiforme* provides a fine cross-section of the 43 songs in the original plus a couple of decorated versions by Tinctoris from out with the book. Notwithstanding its elegant appearance, the *Chansonnier* is a surprisingly sloppy piece of work, with frequent errors in the Italian texts of several songs, but it is a valuable source of some very fine polyphonic songs by Dufay, van Ghizeghem, Binchois and Ockeghem, although the bulk of the songs recorded here are anonymous. The performers sensibly take a pragmatic approach to the heated debate as to precisely how these pieces were performed and use a mixture of voices and instruments, with occasional a cappella renditions. I have some slight reservations about the top female alto voice of Els Janssens-Vanmunster which has a generally fine opaque quality which suits this music, but which has a weak area lower down where it can be a little shaky. With this one tiny reservation I have to say that I loved these accounts, which are both musically expressive and eloquent in an unhurried way. Although the *Chansonnier* was probably employed in a acoustically

dead domestic setting, the acoustic of the Heilig-Kreuz-Kirche, Binningen provides just the right resonance for full enjoyment of this lovely music.

D. James Ross

### THE SUN MOST RADIANT

*Music from The Eton Choirbook Vol. 4*

The Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, Stephen Darlington

68:42

Avie AV 2359

John Browne *Salve regina* I & II Horwood *Gaude flore virginali* Stratford *Magnificat*

The fourth volume in the Avie's superb exploration of the Eton Choirbook brings us two superb *Salve Reginas* by John Browne, the *Magnificat* by William, Monk of Stratford and William Horwood's *Gaude flore virginali*. Again and again I was stuck by Stephen Darlington's affinity with this music : his instinctive choice of effective tempi, his effortless transitions from section to section and his masterly overview of these largescale works. Impressive too, as in the previous volumes, is the ability of his singers to transition effortlessly from tutti to solo singers and back again. A cathedral choir is an entity which like a vintage wine changes flavour over time, and one factor in this is the unpredictable boy treble section. Some listeners to Browne's first *Salve Regina* may feel that the solo and tutti boy treble sound is not quite as sweet as on the choir's previous recordings in the series, but to my mind this is just an aspect of the natural evolution of any choir's sound. The more familiar of the two Browne *Salve reginas* is for the standard five-part 'Eton' choir and the Oxford choristers rise well to its challenges. The other setting, remarkably receiving its premiere recording here, is set for TTTBarB and also proves to be a stunning masterpiece, muscular and dynamic. The Monk of Stratford's *Magnificat* is also for adult male voices, and it too allows the remarkable lower voices of the choir to shine. William Horwood's SATTB setting of *Gaude flore virginali*, also receiving its premiere recording, proves to be a work of profound inspiration and invention. To my ear the treble contribution here sounds more mellow too. It is remarkable to think that music of such superlative quality is still being rediscovered, and full congratulations are due to Avie and to Stephen Darlington and his choir for their ongoing project.

D. James Ross

## 16th century

### HELPER AND PROTECTOR – ITALIAN MAESTRI IN POLAND

The Sixteen, Eamonn Dougan

67:32

CORO COR16141

Music by Bertolusi, Marenzio & Pacelli

**T**he big name here is Luca Marenzio, whose recently reassembled *Missa super Iniquos odio habui* provides a spine through this interesting programme. The Sixteen's associate conductor Eamonn Dougan opens with music by less familiar composers, and specifically a powerful three-choir setting of *Gaudent in Caelis* by Asprilio Pacelli, underlining the fact that here is an unfamiliar repertoire well worth exploring. The same composer's polychoral *Beati estis* is also extremely fine. Marenzio's two-choir Mass based on his own dramatic eight-part madrigal of the same name is also no slouch. Previously known only from the Kyrie and Gloria, the recent rediscovery of the rest of the Mass is genuine cause for celebration. Clearly the court of the Kings of Poland was a true magnet for the best of European musical talent, and although Marenzio's visit to Poland was brief, he was clearly dropping in on a very lively and rich musical scene. It is always interesting to listen for changes in the sound produced by an established ensemble, and in the past I have had my doubts about some of the developments in the vocal production of the Sixteen. Under the direction of Dougan, and this is the fourth in a series of recordings he has directed, the vocal sound seems to have refocused and acquired a pleasing edge, which suits perfectly this busy polychoral repertoire.

*D. James Ross*

## Renaissance

### GALILEI: THE WELL-TEMPERED LUTE

Žak Ozmo

63:03

Hyperion CDA68017

**V**incenzo Galilei (c.1520-1591), father of the famous astronomer, was a remarkable musician. As a member of the Florentine Camerata, he contributed to the evolution of opera, and to the transition

from renaissance polyphonic compositions to the new baroque style with elaborate melodies supported by simple chords. He was also one of the first to advocate a system of equal temperament. His *Libro d'Intavolatura di Liuto* is a manuscript dated 1584, which was intended for publication, but was never published. It is kept at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, as Fondo Anteriori a Galileo 6. A facsimile edition has been published by SPES. The first part of the book contains passamezzi antichi, romanesche and saltarelli, in all twelve minor keys; the second part has passamezzi moderni and romanesche pairs in all twelve major keys, with cross references to saltarelli in the first part. Galilei is clearly making a theoretical point about equal temperament, but in practice there seems little sense playing in keys like F# major, which cause considerable difficulty for the player, with awkward barré chords, hardly any open strings at all, and consequently a difficulty in sustaining notes for uninterrupted melodic lines.

Žak Ozmo begins with a passamezzo antico, romanesca antica, and saltarello in G minor, followed by a passamezzo moderno and romanesca moderna in G major. These are followed by similar pieces in G#/A flat, A, and A#/B flat – four suites in all, and each with the same basic chord sequences. Ozmo's aim is presumably to show how Galilei has used these five grounds in different keys, and Ozmo does what he can to overcome the lack of variety: he plays the minor pieces with some rhythmic freedom, and the major ones in a stricter tempo. He has chosen not to include any of the gagliarde or other pieces from the third part of the manuscript, which might at least have added some harmonic variety for easier listening.

Ozmo plays nicely with a pleasing tone, but he does not always play exactly what is in the manuscript. For example, alterations to Passamezzo Primo, the first piece in the book, include: bar 5, a full chord of F major (f c' f') is reduced to an octave (f f'); bar 18, he omits two passing notes which look as if the scribe had added them later as an afterthought; bar 22 he omits the note e' (fret 2 on 2nd course), leaving the suspension unresolved; bars 43 and 50 he omits g (2 on 4) losing the 4 of a 4-3 suspension; bars 51 and 52 he omits the middle note of the last chord of the bar. Galilei's music can be frustratingly difficult to play, but one wonders if Ozmo's constant tweaking to make it easier can be justified. At the start of bar 74 of Saltarello Primo there is an awkward chord of C major (3 on 3, 2 on 4, 4 on 5, 5 on 6) amongst a running passage of quavers. All four left-hand fingers are needed for that

chord, so it is impossible to sustain it (ideally to the end of the bar), because two of those fingers are also needed for the following notes (2 on 2, and 4 on 2). Ozmo's solution is to replace the lowest three notes of the chord with an open string (0 on 5), which is much easier to play, and allows the bass c to ring on to the end of the bar.

After so much G minor, it is a pleasant relief to hear Passamezzo moderno in G major. (For this, think Quadro Pavan.) Ozmo chooses the second set of variations (pp. 135-7), playing three out of four of them. Perhaps unhappy with the prosaic ending to the third variation, he replaces its last four bars with the last four bars of the fourth variation, but why not play all four variations complete?

The start of Track 6 comes as a shock: A flat minor after so much G minor and G major, and bizarre chords in bars 44 and 76. In bar 111 Ozmo overlooks a quaver rhythm sign, and so plays 16 quavers as crotchets. In Track 6 he omits quavers in bars 18 and 38, and crotchets in bars 45 and 46.

In spite of my criticisms, Ozmo is to be congratulated on bringing this important manuscript to life, and finding ways to make the music attractive. There is much to enjoy, for example Passamezzo moderno in A, which bounces along gently with well-shaped phrases.

*Stewart McCoy*

GESUALDO: SACRAE CANTIONES

The Marian Consort, Rory McCleery

60:55

Delphian DCD34176

From Emma Walsh's exquisite opening phrase to *Ave Regina caelorum* which seems to descend from heaven itself this CD is an absolute delight and a masterclass in one-to-a-part singing. Gesualdo's *Sacrae Cantiones* for five voices book 1 of 1603 contains some of his most sublime compositions, quirky and original in style but without the tortured harmonic progressions and off-the-wall phrases of some of his other compositions. The effortlessly polished singing of the Marian Consort makes them the ideal advocates of this repertoire, and their perfectly contoured and beautifully balanced ensemble sound is captured in crystal-clear quality by the Delphian engineers. Anybody who is in doubt about Gesualdo's skill as a composer will be persuaded by these understated but perfect accounts, and at the same time will be impressed by the passion which the singers manage to invest in their performances without resorting to rawness or roughness of

any kind. A complete delight.

*D. James Ross*

GESUALDO: TERZO LIBRO DI MADRIGALI A

CINQUE VOCI

La Compagnia del Madrigale

63:31

Glossa GCD922806

It is interesting to compare this CD of five-part madrigals by Gesualdo sung by an Italian ensemble with the English Marian Consort's account of Gesualdo's five-part sacred music. Both ensembles sing one to a part and enjoy an impressive perfection of balance, ensemble and intonation. The Italian sound however is much more 'fronty' and brash, particularly noticeable in the tenor and soprano singing, and the individual voices much more prominent in the overall texture. Perhaps this is particularly the case as the Italians are singing secular music and the English sacred music, but the slightly edgy almost reedy sound would I think be equally effective in Gesualdo's church music. One feature which I hadn't noticed hitherto in the Compagnia del Madrigale's performances, is a slight tendency to wobble in the soprano part when there is a dramatic decrescendo, almost as if the vocal production is stalling. This is a shame, and if – as I suspect – it is an affectation, I don't like it. I am sure that singing in their native language gives the Compagnia del Madrigale an edge with this highly expressive repertoire, and of all the many ensembles recording Italian madrigals at the moment they are undoubtedly one of the most exciting.

*D. James Ross*

MORALES: THE SEVEN LAMENTATIONS

Utopia Belgian handmade polyphony

TT

Et'cetera KTC 1538

An uncommonly interesting issue; the first, as far as I am aware, to bring all Morales' surviving lamentations together on one disc.

The complex musicological issues surrounding their recent publication are discussed in Eugene Schreurs' scholarly sleeve notes; further detail can be found in *Cristobal de Morales, Sources, Influences, Reception*, edited by Owen Rees and Bernadette Nelson (Boydell Press 2007) and in Michael Noon's excellent notes to Ensemble Plus Ultra's disc *Morales en Toledo* (Glossa GCD 922001, 2005). The

story behind Nooné's discovery and reconstruction of the first Lamentation (track 9 on this recording) is particularly notable, involving the collation of a poorly preserved (and modified to suit later liturgical changes from the Toledan to the Roman rite) manuscript of Morales' time from Toledo Cathedral, a copy in Puebla Cathedral in Mexico and a contemporary lute and voice intabulation by Miguel de Fuenllana.

Performances are exemplary; Utopia perform with crystalline clarity, bringing Morales' austere and sublimely beautiful polyphony to darkly glowing life. They have taken the sensible decision to structure their programme on purely musical, rather than liturgically correct, grounds, and include a couple of appropriate pieces of Toledan plainchant, elsewhere discernable as *cantus firmus* material, which helps to place the polyphony in its musical context.

The notes are well-written, but I would have liked a little more detail on the individual pieces (e. g., vocal scoring, *cantus firmus* usage, provenance); they are sometimes also confusing in referring to the Lamentations by their liturgical placing, rather than by the order in which they are sung on the recording.

No matter – the music and the performances are what count here, and both are absolutely first class. I particularly enjoyed Morales' kaleidoscopically varied settings of the Hebrew initial letters which introduce each verse of the Lamentations. In short, this is a lovely disc.

*Alastair Harper*

ROMA ÆTERNA  
New York Polyphony  
72:07  
BIS-2203 SACD

Guerrero: *Regina caeli*; Palestrina: *Missa Papæ Marcelli*, *Tu es Petrus*, *Gaudent in caelis*, *Sicut cervus/Sitivit anima mea*; Victoria: *Missa O quam gloriosum*, *Gaudent in caelis*

What a lovely issue! New York Polyphony are an immensely polished and professional ensemble. They bring their considerable talents here to a programme of Renaissance favourites, combining Palestrina's evergreen *Missa Papæ Marcelli* with his *Tu es Petrus*, *Gaudent in caelis* and *Sicut cervus* (with its less-frequently performed *secunda pars*, *Sitivit anima mea*). The remainder of the disc is devoted to Victoria's *Missa O Quam Gloriosum*, along with his setting of *Gaudent in caelis*. Despite the title, the disc begins in Seville, with a typically mellifluous (and lesser-known) *Regina caeli* for four voices by Guerrero. Tone, blend and performance are all exemplary- try the glorious 'Amen' at the end of the

*Papæ Marcelli* Credo, for example, and wonder anew at Palestrina's absolute polyphonic mastery. The recital was recorded in the suitably resonant surroundings of Omaha's St Cecilia Cathedral – allowing the many perfectly tuned final chords to linger for one's ongoing delectation. The performance is completed and complemented by Ivan Moody's scholarly and exemplary notes.

*Alistair Harper*

## 17th century

BASSANI: GIONA, ORATORIO A 5 VOCI  
Ensemble "Les Nations", Maria Luisa Baldassari  
88:48 (2 CDs in a jewel case)  
Tactus TC 640290

Bassani's Oratorio – composed for Lent in Ferrara when operas were forbidden – is a far cry from the both the oratorios of Carissimi and the operas of Cavalli, and closer in feel to Vivaldi or even early Handel. Da capo arias interspersed with recitatives slow what pace there might have been to what in the Parte Prima is a slow-moving, moralising opera substitute rather than a moving, dramatic, Biblically based narrative. A small organ and harpsichord play continuo, with a constant 8' cello line, and the violone player also plays the lirone (an instrument that reached its heyday in the early years of the seventeenth century – is there evidence for its use in music this late?), though I could not distinguish it. The upper strings in the five-part ensemble of single strings play in a modern style, with minimal regard for any historically informed practice. Their tuning – which may just be a failure to absorb the temperament of the keyboard instruments – feels at considerable variance with what we might expect. The cello player is better: his free-ranging, melodic part in *Non si fide di brieve sereno* was a delight.

The singers – the male voices are the best – have some good moments, especially the Testa. But the female voices – there is a duet, and fine echo effects – who have the ungracious roles of Hope and Obedience – are less assured, and too wobbly for me. The narrative hots up in the *Parte Seconda*, where the storm descends and the helmsman (Atrebat) describes the ship about to founder, when Jonah wakes, rubbing sleep from his eyes. But curiously the whole effect seems bloodless and dull. Partly this is because the music isn't up to much – there is too much Vivaldian tonic/dominant in endless D major: oh for Handel's melodic

inventiveness! – but partly because there is no real drive, no real dramatic climax – Jonah is just commended for his patience and obedience – and the singers don't seem able to bring the characters they represent to life.

The recording and production doesn't help either: there is no libretto with the liner notes: you have to go on line for that; but I couldn't get through, and the Facebook page has comments from those who had the same experience. In the end, Tactus made contact with me, and provided the text (Italian only, for those who need a translation) and the liner notes. But there was nothing about the performance or style, and no information on the scoring or pitch or continuo decisions, so it is short on information that might help you evaluate the serious quality of this performance.

I don't imagine there is another recording of this oratorio, but I doubt if this production will commend it to you, unless you are an enthusiast for this particular period and style: but I cannot recommend it as a performance.

*David Stancliffe*

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#### BRUHNS: COMPLETE CANTATAS

Harmonices Mundi, Claudio Astronio  
139:06 (2 CDs in a jewel case)  
Brilliant Classics 95138

Even though 20 years have passed since I first heard these works, which were recorded as part of Ricercar's "German Baroque Cantatas" series, I have loved them. Perhaps even more than Buxtehude, Bruhns embraced both the French and Italian styles of the day and, combining them with extraordinary talents for word-painting and counterpoint, produced some utterly beguiling music. These new set has many virtues (not the least of which are the tenor singers), and at Brilliant's low price it would be a shame not to add them to your library; it would be remiss of me, however, if I did say that there are voices here that are not to my taste, and surely cannot compete with the earlier sets. The texts are printed in the original languages only (one can forgive a bargain label for this!), and there is some serious clutching at straws in the accompanying essay (and its translation – what on earth are "acute notes"?) If you do not know these works, with this release you have no excuse for not getting to know them!

*Brian Clark*

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#### LE MUSICHE DI BELLEROFONTE CASTALDI

Guillemette Laurens, Le Poème Harmonique, Vincent Dumestre  
64:22  
Alpha 320

Released as part of a retrospective series from the Alpha label, this CD of the music of Bellerofonte Castaldi is in many ways entirely representative of the label's achievement. Seeking to bring the work of unfamiliar composers to wider attention in performances which are true to the values of these composers, in 1998 this recording was Alpha's first release as well as being the first recording by Le Poème Harmonique. A wandering poet/composer exiled from Modena for a revenge murder, Castaldi's life may be the ideal subject for a novel but did not lend itself to making its composer's music well known, but coming fresh to his output I found it stimulating and engaging. A major factor in this is the expressive singing of Guillemette Laurens, a singer at her absolute prime on this CD, while the fresh and inventive soundworld conjured up by instruments of Le Poème Harmonique is constantly intriguing. This recording, nearly twenty years old, stands up very well indeed with a clear true recording and a thoroughly convincing approach to the constantly shifting world of authentic vocal style and accompaniment.

*D. James Ross*

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#### DE CASTRO: TRIO SONATAS OP. I

La Real Cámara  
57:26  
Glossa GCD 920314

These ten trio sonatas from Castro's 1695 Bologna publication *Trattenimenti armonici* are delightfully inventive and unsurprisingly reminiscent of the trumpet music emanating from that city at roughly this time. The performers inventively alternate a continuo theorbo and guitar, although perhaps less imaginatively a harpsichord is also invariably present. The playing is generally tidy and musical, with appropriate degrees of passion and rhythmical whimsy. Lead violinist Emilio Moreno provides an exhaustive and very readable programme note. But now comes a considerable and unexpected BUT. Those of you who glance at the star ratings before reading the review will be surprised at my two-star rating for this Glossa recording. Glossa recording are normally of the very highest standard of clarity and

depth, but there is something very far wrong here. The recorded sound is very shallow with a very narrow dynamic spectrum and suspiciously drops away instantly when the instruments stop playing. Has it been misguidedly fed through some filter? I am at a loss to account for it, but it is clear that La Real Cámara and Castro have been very poorly served by the Glossa engineers. As a dedicated reviewer I persisted to the end of the CD to see if the sound quality improved or if I got used to it, but actually it sounded more and more ridiculous, and I am afraid there is no way round the fact that this odd shortcoming is bound to limit anyone's enjoyment of this CD.

*D. James Ross*

CAZZATI: MASS & PSALMS OP. 36

*From Bologna to Beromünster*

Voces Suaves, Francesco Saverio Pedrini

61:55

Claves Records 50-1605

+two intonations by Sebastian Anton Scherer

Ever since I became interested in 17th-century music the name of Maurizio Cazzati has been a familiar one, but I have never actually heard any; the present recording, which presents the *Kyrie*, *Gloria* and *Credo* printed in the composer's op. 36 set of 1655 as a *Messa Concertata* (without *Sanctus* or *Agnus Dei*) and two psalms (of the five printed) and the Magnificat. The original also includes a setting of *Domine ad adiuvandum*. All of the vocal music is scored for five voices (two sopranos), four instruments (rather unusually for the period a single "alto viola" joins the two violins) and three ripieno voices with continuo. Some of the other pieces in the print call for fewer voices, or no concertato instruments. A bassoon is included on the basis that some northern reprints of the publication included such a part. In order to show of the sound of the original organ in the church where the very fine recording was made (in Beromünster, which explains the CD's subtitle...), two short pieces were added by the south German composer, Sebastian Anton Scherer. The music is glorious and gracious for the voices; the singers blend well, and the violinists especially have fun ornamenting Cazzati's flowing lines, especially in triple time passages. I sincerely hope the same forces will now tackle the remainder of the print, as there is still plenty of fine music waiting to be heard!

*Brian Clark*

COMES: O PRETIOSUM

*Music for the Blessed Sacrament*

amystis, José Duce Chenoll

61:58

Brilliant Classics 95231

A workmanlike issue of some fine and little-known music, including several recording "firsts".

Juan Bautista Comes (1582-1643) spent most of his working life in Valencia, as the master of music at the Cathedral and assistant at El Patriarca, the Corpus Christi School and Chapel. His music provides a fascinating link between the Spanish late Renaissance style of Vivanco or Guerrero and the distinctive Baroque of Valls or Cabanilles.

The Blessed Sacrament was particularly venerated in Valencia at this time, and the music recorded here reflects this, with both Latin motets and vernacular villancicos celebrating the Eucharist, in double- and triple-choir music of great stateliness and splendour.

The opening (and eponymous) 'O Pretiosum', for eight voices gives a good idea of Comes' style – I particularly enjoyed the luscious rising chromatic phrases on 'Pretiosus' and the extended and satisfyingly contrapuntal final 'Verus Deus'. The next motet, 'Quid hoc Sacramento Mirabilius' also concludes in fine style with a splendidly complex final 'integer perseverat', the rigorously worked counterpoint pushing the music firmly into some daringly Baroque harmonies.

Several of the villancicos add lively rhythmic spice to the rich contrapuntal brew – with exciting calls of 'Basta, Basta Señor' in the refrain of track 10, 'A la sombra estais', for example. 'Del cielo es esta pan' (track 7) in contrast, is gentle and reflective, with its haunting concluding 'dilin, dilin dilin repican'.

Amystis are worthy exponents of this glorious music, negotiating its considerable complexity with aplomb. The motets are accompanied by dulcian, harp and organ, with some discreet wind doubling. The instrumentalists are given more independence in the villancicos, with some vocal substitutions and improvised preludes and interludes.

The acoustic (of the Royal Monastery of San Michael of Liria, Valencia) is a little dry, but allows the polyphony space to shine.

*Alastair Harper*

## DOWLAND: LACHRIMAE OR SEVEN TEARES

Phantasm, Elizabeth Kenny

57:00

Linn Records CKD 527

When in his programme note Phantasm's director Laurence Dreyfus describes Dowland's *Lachrimae* as 'the most sensuously tuneful hour of music ever written' this is no small claim, but at the same time it is hard to contradict. The organic (in another age you could say symphonic) development of motifs, the constant attention to melodic beauty, the stomach-churning harmonic volte faces make the complete publication a masterpiece, a fact of which its composer, who afterwards signed himself as 'Jo:dolandi de Lachrimae', was clearly aware. This fine new recording by Phantasm speaks of extensive experience with this repertoire, while the vital contribution of lutenist Elizabeth Kenny is also wonderfully idiomatic. The first work ever published for notated lute and viols, *Lachrimae* was the father to a whole clutch of worthy offspring. The classic recording of this music is the 1985 account for BIS by The Dowland Consort directed by legendary lutenist Jakob Lindberg, and some direct comparisons are instructive. The earlier recording adopts more measured tempi, particularly in the pavans, taking some eight minutes longer over the complete recording, and this to my ear imbues their interpretation with a timeless magnificence. The Phantasm account is more flexible, with rushes of passion, but with some passages which to my ear are simply rushed. The new recording benefits from Linn's superlative modern recording quality, although the BIS recording is both more 'toppy' and 'bottomy', emphasizing the fundamental and occasionally shocking harmonic shifts. Lastly both recordings wisely resist the temptation to enhance the lute sound, allowing it to blend beautifully with the viol textures – I would say that Lindberg's tone is marginally more prominent than Kenny's, although given BIS's pledge to reflect natural sound balance in their recordings we must assume he simply played louder. In the more animated movements later in the publication, there is definitely more definition in the Linn recording, as well as bolder and more daring playing from viols and lute. Rather randomly, Phantasm almost run some tracks together including the seven *Lachrimae* pavans, but also some of the later movements – it may be that I am too used to The Dowland Consort's spacious account, but I found myself in need of an intellectual break occasionally. There is no doubt that this new Phantasm recording is a valuable addition

to our understanding of this remarkable publication, and Dreyfus and Kenny's excellent programme notes give us further valuable players' insights into this extraordinary music.

*D. James Ross*

## FRESCOBALDI: TOCCATE, CANZONE E PARTITE DAL PRIMO E SECONDO LIBRO

Yu Yashima *harpsichord*

TT

Baryton 201401

This is a debut CD from the Japanese-born harpsichordist who trained in Milan. She has recorded a mixed Frescobaldi programme taken from across the two books of Toccatas. It includes six toccatas in which she shows both stylistic awareness and technical fluency. The playing in these can be a bit formulaic, with somewhat exaggerated contrasts between sections and quite a lot of sudden accelerandos, but the rhetorical divisions are clear. The canzonas and gagliardas get lively performances, as does the centre-piece of the programme, the Cento Partite sopra Passacagli. There are two sets of variations which are played more reflectively and perhaps too slowly in the case of the Romanesca set. It is good to have the less-commonly recorded Capriccio sopra La Battaglia which is given a suitably bellicose performance. Yashima plays on a copy by Andrea Restelli of a harpsichord by Gregori of 1726 which is closely and richly recorded. There are informative liner notes by Marco Gaggini. This is a promising debut from a player from whom we can expect more in the future.

*Noel O'Regan*

## MUFFAT: MISSA IN LABORES REQUIES BERTALI, SCHMELZER, BIBER: CHURCH SONATAS

Cappella Murensis, Les Cornets Noirs

71:36

audite 97.539

This is the third recording of Muffat's only surviving liturgical work that I know of; Cantus Cölln (the first) filled their disc with Biber's setting of the Litany for St Joseph and sonatas by Biber and Bertali, then Gunar Letzbor used boys for the upper parts and saw no need to pad out the recording. The present version has

women sopranos but is a disc of two halves – the added sonatas (by Biber, Bertali and Schmelzer) are performed in an arch-like sequence after the mass. Audite’s recordings are always of exceptional quality and the principle interest of this recording will be for audio geeks who will be thrilled by the positioning of the five “choirs” in different parts of the abbey in Muri where the sessions were held. Surround sound is available as an HD download. For me, though, the whole thing is slightly phoney since Muffat’s contemporaries can never have heard it in such perfection; quite apart from the fact that the resonance must have been affected by the presence of a congregation and the assembled clergy and royalty (although I don’t think the author quite wants to believe what he is writing, the booklet notes give convincing reasons why the piece was more likely written for Passau than Salzburg; though someone should have checked the date Haydn’s death...), the mass was never intended to be an unbroken sequence, and there would have been other music in the service. That said, these are outstanding performances with the trumpets, cornetti and sackbutts, string band and two vocal choirs resounding splendidly in the space. The sonatas – which, incidentally, illustrate perfectly that Biber’s music did not just happen in a vacuum; he learned a thing or two from both the other composers! – show Les Cornets Noirs at their glorious best.

*Brian Clark*

COME ALL YE SONGSTERS

Carolyn Sampson, Elizabeth Kenny, Jonathan Manson, Laurence Cummings

77:40

Wigmore Hall Live WHLive0083

Music by Corbetta, Draghi, Purcell, Simpson & anon

One of the problems of live recital CDs is their potential ability to inspire feelings of envy of the audience that was present when you were not. By the time an ecstatic audience comes to show its appreciation of this superb recital, given at the Wigmore Hall in March 2105, I was way into such feelings and longing to join in to express my appreciation. Instead I consoled myself with memories of an unforgettable late night recital Carolyn Sampson gave with countertenor Robin Blaze at the first Göttingen Handel Festival I attended back in 2006.

One of the most compelling features of that event was the ability of the artists to communicate strongly with their audience (and each other) to a rarely attained

level. It is that same quality that one senses with the present concert, where it is evident that Sampson and her colleagues very obviously had the audience eating out of their hands. And of course this is hugely important in the vocal items presented here, mostly songs taken from Purcell’s stage works, *The Fairy Queen* being particularly favoured. Sampson never lets us for one moment forget that the singers in such pieces were more often than not actor-singers, giving each song its own distinctive character and finding in them a gamut of passions ranging from the plaints of unrequited lovers to dramatic outbursts and wit. ‘Let the dreadful Engines of Eternal Will’, one of the two ‘mad scenes’ from *Don Quichotte* included, is a *tour de force* in this respect, including aspects of all three. The pastoral evocation in the passage commencing ‘Ah where are now those flow’ry Groves’ leaves unforgettable beguilement in its wake, before the final cynical philosophy carries the scene to its end with deliciously pointed humour, leaving the audience in laughter.

Yet for me one of the most admirable features of Sampson’s singing is that all this emanates from superb vocal acting rather than the exaggerated gestures we sometimes hear in this repertoire. It involves the employment of first-class diction, but equally as importantly a wide range of vocal colour. Just listen, as a single example from many, to the subtle colouring and inflexions on the words ‘kind’ (the line from ‘I see she flies me’, Z573 reads ‘Were she but kind, kind whom I adore’. And just in case you’ve not already succumbed (impossible, I would have thought), one of Sampson’s encores is perhaps the most tear-jerking performance of ‘Fairest isle’ (*King Arthur*) I’ve ever heard. In short, Carolyn Sampson has here provided a master class that makes the CD obligatory listening by all singers aspiring to sing this repertoire.

The accompaniments are admirably played, with each of Sampson’s distinguished companions also allowed their own spot in the limelight, Laurence Cummings providing a lovely, mellow performance of the Harpsichord Suite No. 5 in C. Jonathan Manson’s bass viol tone is richly lyrical in Draghi’s ‘An Italian Ground’ and Christopher Simpson’s ‘Divisions on a ground, while Elizabeth Kenny plays three pieces from ‘Princess Anne’s lute book’ and a fine Passacaille by Corbetta, all this music appropriate in the context and helping to complete an intelligently designed programme. A predictably exemplary note by Purcell scholar Andrew Pinnock, full documentation and printed texts complete an issue that is in every way deserving of the highest praise.

*Brian Robins*



## FIRENZE 1616

Le Poème Harmonique, Vincent Dumestre

58:43

Alpha 321

Music by Belli, Giulio Caccini & Saracini

The centerpiece of this 2007 recording, re-released as part of the Alpha retrospective series, is Domenico Belli's opera *Orfeo Dolente*, a composer and a work entirely unknown to me even by reputation. Dumestre and his Alpha label specialize in 'the alternative', and in this CD they are exploring the Florentine music and composers who came to be overshadowed by Monteverdi. As so often our focus on prime composers and works proves to be counterproductive, in this case eclipsing music of considerable merit and beauty. Like Monteverdi's account of the Orpheus story, Belli's is a court opera, modest in the resources it requires and highly refined in style. Dumestre has assembled a galaxy of superb young singers and instrumentalists who fully mine the unexpected treasures in this unknown masterpiece. To a great extent though it is the instrumental accompaniment, dark and harmonically unexpected, which is the particular strength of Belli's remarkable setting. The opera is preceded by two equally intriguing sequences of instrumental and vocal music on related themes featuring works by Saracini, Caccini and Malvezzi. I admire immensely the courage of performers who research the unfamiliar backwaters of a period to unearth neglected treasures – it is so much more difficult, time-consuming and challenging than simply producing yet another recording of already familiar material, but so much more informative and valuable.

D. James Ross

## KONGE AF DANMARK: MUSICAL EUROPE AT THE COURT OF CHRISTIAN IV

Les Witches

68:30

Alpha 323

Music by Bleyer, Borchgrevinck, Gistou, Hume, Lorenz, Maercker, Maynard, Pedersen, Robinson, Scheidt, Schop, Simpson & Vierdanck

The star of this 2008 recording of music associated with the court of Christian IV of Denmark is undoubtedly the Esaias Compenius organ of 1610, which features on several of the tracks. Originally built for the royal court, it was clearly intended to play with other instruments, and Freddy Eichelberger charms some wonderful sounds from it in solos and in consort with the

other instruments. Music by the maverick Tobias Hume and by Samuel Scheidt features as well as work by the less familiar composers, Robert Simpson, Thomas Robinson, Nicolaus Bleyer, Mogens Pederson, Johann Lorenz, Johann Schop, Johann Vierdanck, Matthäus Maerker, Melchior Borchgrevinck, John Maynard and Nicolo Gistou. Their names suggest the eclectic nature of the Danish court at the time and its close associations with England, Scotland and continental Europe. The music includes Pavans and Galliards among other dance forms and domestic sacred instrumental pieces – the two settings of the Lord's Prayer are redolent of the *Lessones on Psalms* being composed at the time in Scotland – and the range of wind and stringed instruments offered by Les Witches ensures that the ear is always thoroughly entertained. The CD creates a beguilingly colourful picture of Christian IV's court, thronged with gifted musicians and featuring the crowning glory of the characterful Compenius organ. The only disappointment with this CD is the programme note which takes the form of one of these staged conversations among the performers – heavy on impressions and light on information – which I always find maddening. Thankfully their day seems to have largely passed!

D. James Ross

## Baroque

BACH: PEASANT CANTATA, AMORE TRADITORE,  
NON SA CHE SIA DOLORE

Mojca Erdmann, Dominik Wörner SB, Bach Collegium  
Japan, Masaaki Suzuki

63:25

BIS-2191 SACD

Vol. 7 of Suzuki's Secular cantatas explores the scoring of the *Peasant Cantata* that has soprano and bass soloists and a flute and horn in addition to strings and continuo, and so couples it with the two secular cantatas that set Italian texts, *Non sa che sia dolore* which has prominent flute *obbligati* with the soprano and *Amore traditore* for the bass.

The potpourri of folk music, tavern songs and social commentary in the 'Peasant Cantata' provide Bach with a licence to step outside his normal, serious style and let us see something of his social life and more rustic context. The music is tuneful, but rarely moving. I found Erdmann a more convincing soloist in this semi-operatic burlesque,

with her nimble voice and dramatic sense of expression, and certainly she is very at home in the anguish of leave-taking that is the core of *Non sa che sia dolore*. Wörner's background is in church music, and hitherto I have heard him most under Suzuki in the church cantatas. This suggests to my ears he is rather too 'correct' in a role where a certain amount of rustic jollity, rolling in the hay and raising a glass could do with a more plummy sound: he sounds a bit prim for his more racy lyrics! I though he was better in *Amore traditore*. The playing – specially the flute and horn (as well as the unattributed Dudelsack) – is fine, without, in the strings especially, quite capturing every dramatic innuendo. Suzuki's players don't, as far as I know, play many Mozart operas and you really need that sense of underscoring the drama that those who play in opera pits absorb over time.

But this is a worthy part of the Suzuki oeuvre, and given that there are few recordings of all the secular cantatas, will be widely welcomed.

*David Stancliffe*

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**BACH: CLAVIER-ÜBUNG III**

Stephen Farr (Metzler organ of Trinity College, Cambridge)

105:20 (2 CDs in jewel case)

Resonus RES10120

**BACH: CLAVIER-ÜBUNG III**

James Johnstone (Wagner organ 1739, Trondheim)

107:26 (2 CDs in a card folder)

Metronome MET CD 1094

**L**ike No 11 busses, no new *Clavier-Übung III* comes for ages, and now two arrive at once! Both are from English players, and both use good instruments: Stephen Farr plays on the 42 stop 1975 Metzler in Trinity Cambridge and James Johnstone uses the 30 stop 1741 Wagner organ in Trondheim Cathedral, carefully reconstituted by highly experienced Jürgen Ahrend in the 1990s.

In his Liner notes, Farr ponders – as does Johnstone – whether the 'arcane, unfamiliar and wilfully awkward musical procedures' in this volume were intended by Bach as a musical riposte to his former pupil, now critic, Scheibe, who in 1737 had accused him of writing in an antiquated mode, rather than in the more tuneful and lyrical gallant style now popular. So what kind of performance does this collection require?

Farr opts for a varied set of performances, using some

ingenious registrations. In *Jesus Christus unser Heiland* (BWV 688) for example, Farr uses the Rückpositiv 8' & 4' flutes, and then the Hauptwerk Vox Humana in the left hand to great effect, but it is drawn with both the 8' Octave and Hohlflöte as well as the 4' Spitzflöte; in the pedal are also the two 8' flues coupled to the Swell 4' Principal and 8' Trompete. Farr's articulation is excellent, but I wonder about the thickening effect of his constant use of multiple 8' ranks. By contrast, the *manualiter* preludes BWV 685 & 803 are delightfully played, each on just a 4' flute, and 804 follows on the recovered Smith 8' Principal on the Rückpositiv: the clarity of these registrations and the elegance of Farr's fingerwork is a delight. But somehow the organ doesn't really sparkle: the pedal in particular is often a bit indistinct, and although performances are excellently played, it sounds a bit dull to me – are they recorded from too far away? As well as details of the Metzler organ, Farr gives the precise registration for each piece – a bit of good practice that most recordings on historic instruments in Holland and North Germany seem to provide these days.

Johnstone is a bit more of an early music specialist, and this CD – one of what will be a (yet another!) complete Bach organ works – is presented on an instrument that is almost exactly contemporaneous with the *Clavier-Übung III*'s date of 1739. The Trondheim organ is Wagner's only instrument outside Prussia, and took two years to arrive and be assembled. Dismantled in the 1930s in favour of a large Steinmayer organ hidden behind the historic case, some two thirds of the original pipework was discovered stored in the cathedral's vault and has been carefully restored in the original case by Ahrend. Its registers have rather more individual character than the Metzler: Wagner studied with Christoph Treutmann, a pupil of Arp Schnitger, and was apprenticed to Gottfried Silbermann for several years. Johnstone promises to find and record on equally suitable historic instruments for the rest of his Bach, and having just returned myself from an organ crawl through North Germany and Holland, I look forward to seeing which instruments he chooses for what. But although the details of the Wagner organ, its pitch and temperament are given, we are left to work out his registration as best we may. I hope Johnstone will consider providing this in the future.

Though the instrument is smaller, I find Johnstone's registration more characterful than Farr's, and his liner notes have an interesting and provocative reflection on the possible liturgical and theological rationale behind the selection of works in the *Clavier-Übung III*. Try and listen to both, and the more suave performance of Farr may win

you over; but I gained more from Johnstone's vivid and sparkling performance on an excellently recorded, crystal-clear organ that was new to me. The choice of instrument, how susceptible it is to being recorded with clarity, how well the performer understands the conventions of registration on a historic instrument – all these are vital for successful interpretation, however fine the player.

*David Stancliffe*

BACH: FRENCH SUITES

Julian Perkins *clavichord*

125:37 (2 CDs in a jewel case)

Resonus RES10163

+Froberger: Partita No. 2 in d, FbWV 602, Telemann: Suite in A, TWV 32:14

Taking his cue from the fact that the clavichord was by far the most common instrument for domestic music making and personal practice in Germany, Julian Perkins' playing makes a persuasive case for recording the French Suites on the clavichord, following on from Thurston Dart's historic 1961 recording on that instrument. This is impressive clavichord playing, highly intelligent and nuanced, with singing lines and rhythmic security. Voicing and counterpoint are beautifully controlled and repeated sections are judiciously ornamented. Perkins includes the Preludes to Suites 4 and 6 found in some sources. He also frames the suites with Froberger's Partita no. 2 in D minor FbWV 602 and Telemann's Suite in A major TWV 32:14 (long erroneously attributed to Bach as BWV 824), acknowledging and adeptly illustrating those composers' influence on Bach. Perkins plays on two Peter Bavington clavichords, copies of a diatonically fretted c. 1785 instrument by Bodechtel in Nürnberg and an unfretted 18th-century German instrument, probably by Silbermann. In making this recording Perkins has done an important service to both the clavichord and to J. S. Bach. As a different take on these well-known works it can be highly recommended.

*Noel O'Regan*

BACH: FRENCH SUITES

Richard Egarr *harpsichord*

105:33 (2 CDs in a jewel case in a cardboard sleeve)

harmonia mundi HMU 907583.84

If Julian Perkins' recent recording gives us the scaled-down soundworld of the clavichord for these suites, Richard Egarr takes full advantage of a large Couchet

double-manual harpsichord copy by Joel Katzman to show that they don't just have to be treated as domestic music. On this recording they emerge very much as public pieces. These are exhilarating performances, sometimes brash (especially in the Courantes), but always convincing. Tempi can be a bit fast, but the listener is swept along by Egarr's strong sense of drive and singing lines, and by some constantly innovative ornamentation. They are very personalised readings from a performer who clearly enjoys his playing and, as in his liner notes here, likes to be a bit provocative. Egarr adds in some variant versions of the Menuet and Courante from Suite no. 2 (though unfortunately on the other CD from the Suite itself). This is very stimulating recording and is highly recommended.

*Noel O'Regan*

Christine Schornsheim

Bach: Goldberg Variations

Buxtehude: La Capricciosa

<TT> (2 CDs in a jewel case)

Capriccio C5286

Christine Schornsheim has recorded the *Goldberg Variations* before (in 1997) and more recently has become known for her complete Haydn and perhaps more as an exponent of the fortepiano and other late Baroque and Classical keyboard instruments. She is now professor of period keyboard instruments at the Munich academy, and is committed to teaching as well as playing.

She was persuaded to make a second recording say the liner notes by Christof Kern, whose workshop produced the harpsichord on which she plays in 2013. It is a double 'after' the Michael Mietke in Berlin dated to around 1710, (a maker from whom Bach is known to have secured an instrument for Köthen when he served there) and is extended to a full five octaves and strung with brass. It is a powerful instrument, and the frequent registration changes are made silently – presumably edited out.

This time Schornsheim prefaces the 32 *Goldberg* variations with Buxtehude's *La Capricciosa*, BuxWV 230, a set of 32 partitas on an Italianate-sounding *Bergamesca* as his theme. In both sets, the technical challenges increase as the works progress, and in both cases the listener is left wondering if there is going to be any other possible invention left.

I have become used to other performers' versions of the Buxtehude – notably Lars Ulrich Mortensen and

Colin Booth, and I found Schornsheim's Buxtehude less satisfying. She plays with an incredible fluency but constant registration changes and a pretty driven rhythmic style make it rather unyielding for my taste. But linking the two works is a fine idea. And I suspect she is more at home with her oft-performed *Goldbergs*. Here the rather more expansive music seems to breathe more freely, and the changes in registration more obvious: I have certainly enjoyed performances of the *Goldbergs* on the organ occasionally.

The instrument is recorded pretty close, and her fingerwork is fluent if just slightly mechanical. It certainly shows off Christof Kern's instrument splendidly. It is tuned in a meantone tuning at 415 for the Buxtehude, and then in a version of Kirnberger III based on D for the Bach. If this was close to the sound that Bach favoured, then we owe Kern a debt.

*David Stancliffe*

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#### BACH – ISOIR / TRANSCRIPTIONS

Michel Bouvard, François Espinasse *organs*

65:20

lo dolce vita LDV26

**T**he French organist André Isoir, who died recently, was noted for his J.S. Bach recordings. Two of his former students, themselves organists of renown, have recorded this disc of his solo transcriptions made from a variety of well-known Bach works including cantata and Mass movements, orchestral suites and concertos. That there seems little or no difference between the two performers here is a tribute to their acknowledged debt to their teacher. Both play with rhythmic vitality and very sympathetic registrations on an organ by Georg Westenfelder in Fère-en-Tardenois, inaugurated by Isoir in 1991. It is ideally suited to these transcriptions and expertly recorded with great clarity. Transcriptions have long been an essential part of the organist's stock in trade and these are very effective re-interpretations of works which were themselves refashioned and reimagined by the composer. As a collection it would probably be one to dip into from time to time, rather than listening right through, but it is certainly a very enjoyable disc.

*Noel O'Regan*

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#### BOISMORTIER: SIX SONATES, OP. 51

Elysium Ensemble

(Greg Dikmans *flute*, Lucinda Moon *violin*)

71:24

resonus RES10171

**T**his is the second in a series exploring 'neglected or newly discovered chamber music 1600-1800'. The first was of Quantz's Op. 2. There's certainly plenty to explore with the prolific and very capable Boismortier: has anyone heard or played all eight of his collections of flute duets? Here, however, we have Op. 51 for flute and violin and very charming they are, a most agreeable and varied listen. Much of the time the violin part is a high bass line to more ornate flute writing but there also more democratic contrapuntal movements as well as quasi-three-part writing via double stopping. The playing is very accomplished (though there is an odd-sounding moment in the middle of track 10) with clear articulation, neat ornaments and sense of space to the phrasing. The booklet is as comprehensive as one could wish (though in English only) but there is one incorrect cross reference to the track list.

*David Hansell*

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#### CAMPRA: MESSE DE REQUIEM

Salomé Haller, Sarah Gendrot, Rolf Ehlers, Benoît Haller, Philip Niederberger *SSATB*, ensemble3 vocal et instrumental, Hans Michael Beuerle

59:35

Carus 83.391

**C**arus has become quite a force in the vocal/choral music world, publishing excellent editions at sensible prices and a very useful series of companion recordings, some of epic proportions (anyone for 10 CDs of Rheinberger's sacred vocal music?). They publish both the works on this recording and I for one will be buying and performing them. Campra's *Requiem* may be mysterious in origin and have an unorthodox tonal scheme but it is nevertheless a really fine work, well served by this recording in which the forces are conspicuously all on the same side. The integration of choral, instrumental and solo elements is consistently neat. There are a few intonation issues in the *Sanctus* for the baritone soloist and solo ensembles in general do not always meet perfectly on unisons at cadences but none of this prevented my enjoying either the mass or the accompanying *De profundis*, also a very strong work.

The booklet (Ger/Eng/Fre) is not immune from minor translation oddities but is both thorough and complete (essay, biographies, Latin translated into all the modern languages used elsewhere).

*David Hansell*

CLÉRAMBAULT / MARCHAND: COMPLETE

HARPSICHORD WORKS

Luca Oberti

62:55

Stradivarius STR 37025

This 2014 recording was released in 2015 but has only just reached us. The instrument is a 1990 copy of a Goujon at A410, the resources of which are comprehensively, though tastefully, exploited and the 17th-century temperament used (the music was published in 1699 and 1702) makes a piquant contribution to the overall effect, especially in the minor key music. Luca Oberti skilfully charts a route through the many minefields of this repertoire – the realisation of the ornaments within the musical lines and the *préludes* being particular strengths. Tempos are also very well chosen and executed – the quicker movements have life though never become a scramble. His essay (Italian/English) sets the music in its socio-historical context and also offers concise and pertinent comments on each piece.

*David Hansell*

FUX: CONCENTUS MUSICO-INSTRUMENTALIS

Neue Hofkapelle Graz, Lucia Froihofer, Michael Hell

121:34 (2 CDs in a jewel case)

cpo 777 980-2

Out of interest I played this in my car recently while ferrying colleagues to a meeting just to gauge their impressions of the music. Although what one might call fans of classical music, none of them has a particular interest in the HIP approach. One thought it sounded quite French, another more Italian, one thought it sounded like Handel, the other like Purcell. In fact, that was precisely how I myself reacted to hearing these seven richly varied works from Fux's collection; with one exception (a "sinfonia" for recorder, oboe, "basso" and "cembalo"), they are primarily "orchestral", though the texture varies from a4 (purely strings), through a8 (adding a woodwind trio) to a8 (a pair of trumpets add lustre to the sound). The Neue Hofkapelle Graz further vary the sound

by using single strings for some pieces and multiples for the rest. This gives a great overall impression of the ways such music would have been performed in Fux's day. The recorded sound is excellent and – apart from the occasional superfluous use of percussion – I thoroughly enjoyed both discs. While such additions are perhaps part and parcel of a live performance (which only lives on in the memory), for a recording they are an unnecessary distraction (and not something one can "un-hear" on subsequent listenings).

*Brian Clark*

HANDEL IN ROME 1707

Maria Espada, Rachel Redmond, Marta Fumagalli SSA, Ghislieri Choir & Consort, Giulio Prandi

69:59

deutsche harmonia mundi 88985348422

*Ah che troppo ineguali, Donna che in ciel, Dixit Dominus*

A cracking compilation of three of Handel's youthful masterpieces, culled from recent live performances in Göttingen, Pavia and Ambronay.

The little-known cantata 'Donna, che in ciel' opens the disc; its unusual structure (formal French overture, three contrasting arias, with one of the intervening recitatives 'accompagnato' and a final aria with contrapuntal chorus) is convincingly suggested by Juliana Riepe as a 'calling card' marking Handel's arrival in Rome in early 1707. Handelians will recognise several old friends- the first movement of the overture was recycled in *Agrippina*, whilst the striking semiquaver "vacillation" motif which opens the first aria reappears in the sinfonia to the final scene of *Giulio Cesare*. The final chorus has some echoes in the *Birthday Ode for Queen Anne*, and the block chords and bass runs of a certain well-known Coronation anthem also make an early appearance. It is a splendid piece, and must have created a considerable stir in Roman musical circles.

Maria Espada is fully in control in the demanding vocal writing, and can throw off semiquaver runs seemingly effortlessly; she also has the beauty of tone and phrasing to make the lovely second continuo-accompanied aria glow.

She is similarly splendid in the next work, a recitative and aria possible performed by the castrato Pascalino at a 'spiritual concert' organised by Cardinal Ottoboni for the feast of the Annunciation later the same year.

The disc concludes with the well-known and dazzlingly-virtuosic 'Dixit Dominus', where the excellent Ghislieri choir get a chance to really show off. Giulio Prandi sets uncompromisingly lively speeds, to spine-tingling effect.

Try the superb final chorus- the Gloria Patri begins with two contrasting thematic tags, which thrillingly combine with the proper psalm tone in long notes (appropriately 'as it was in the beginning'). The final 'Amen' is an exhilarating repeated-note fugue, which takes the sopranos to high B flats, and has everyone singing their shirts off; the repeated strettos and the seemingly-endless pedal point at the end bring the work (and disc) to a gloriously contrapuntally-satisfying conclusion. The lovely tone and precise passagework of the Glaswegian soprano Rachel Redmond, in her aria 'Tecum principium', is also worth watching out for.

The sleeve note is interesting factually, though perhaps a little wayward in translation from time to time.

*Alastair Harper*

HANDEL: *APOLLO E DAFNE*, HWV 122

Ensemble Marysas, Peter Whelan

69:00

Linn Records CKD 543

+ *Il pastor fido* (Overture)

*A sparkling new recording of Handel's lovely pastoral cantata*

The composition of *Apollo e Dafne* was probably begun towards the end of Handel's extended youthful Italian tour, but it was completed (and presumably first performed) in Hanover, after he had become Kapellemeister to the Elector, in 1710.

It is a work of considerable dramatic force and subtlety. Dafne's well-known physical metamorphosis into a laurel tree, just as she is on the point of being ravished by Apollo, is matched by Apollo's mental transformation, from self-satisfied confidence to humility; the music, as so often with Handel, characterises both with unerring skill. Try, e. g., either of Apollo's first two arias – both are in major keys, with triadic and wide-ranging melodic lines and much showy coloratura. Then compare these with his (and the cantata's) final movement – a deeply felt minor-key tribute to the newly-created laurel tree, with a sublimely simple, syllabically set, melody of few notes and narrow compass. Lest we should think Apollo's change of heart too abrupt, Handel prepares the ground for us with his deeply lyrical 'Come rosa' in the midst of the cantata, with its luscious cello obbligato.

Dafne, too, is drawn with much care. Her delicious opening 'Felicissima quest'alma' is the essence of pastoral innocence, the upper strings pizzicato, the bass 'arco', a

wondrous oboe obbligato and a vocal line of seemingly-endless melody. Her energetic next aria, after Apollo declares his passion, is in complete contrast – her repeated 'sola' makes her angry rejection of his advances abundantly clear.

Their two duets are also extremely cleverly contrasted; the first is a virtuoso slanging-match, with both voices hurling similar phrases back and forth. The next, however, pits Apollo's slow, flute-laden lovesick yearnings against Dafne's rapid rejections, with no shared musical material whatever. The lady is clearly not for turning...

The final chase is vividly portrayed – rapid solo violin figuration is pursued by slower solo bassoon, and all comes to an abrupt stop, just when one's ear expects a da capo, in tumultuous *accompagnato*, as Apollo is thwarted.

Mhairi Lawson, as Dafne, and Callum Thorpe, as Apollo, are in complete command of all this glorious music, and bring it to life with enormous dramatic energy, ably partnered by Ensemble Marsyas's superb playing (particular plaudits to all the splendid 'obbligatisti'!) Peter Whelan shows equal virtuosity as bassoon soloist and as overall director.

The orchestra (and solo instrumentalists) shine further in the extended overture to Handel's second London opera, *Il Pastor Fido*, (which may well have originated in Hanover as a separate orchestral work). I particularly enjoyed Peter Whelan's bassoon solo in the Largo 5th movement, and Cecilia Bernardini's sparkling passagework in the finale (Handelians might recognise the latter's later reincarnation in the Organ Concerto, op. 7 no. 4)

The disc is completed musically by a couple of rarely heard movements for wind band (with energetically improvised percussion from Alan Emslie) which may have been written for Handel's opera orchestra in the 1720s.

David Vickers provides characteristically scholarly and informative booklet notes.

*Alastair Harper*

PERGOLESI: *STABAT MATER*

Silvia Frigato *soprano*, Sara Mingardo *alto*, Accademia degli Astrusi, Federico Ferri

63:53

Concerto Classics The Magic Of Live 05

+ Vivaldi: *Nisi Dominus* RV608, *Concerto* RV169

These live concert recordings of two great vocal works by Pergolesi and Vivaldi separated by the latter's brief Sinfonia 'Al Santo Sepulcro' are

showcases for the two eminent Italian vocalists Silvia Frigato and Sara Mingardo, whose powerful performances carry the day. They are ably supported by one of the increasing number of excellent Italian period instrument ensembles, the Accademia degli Astrusi, whose neat and sympathetic playing avoids the voices being swamped in the cavernous acoustic of Santa Maria della Vita in Bologna. The CD opens with a generous burst of applause which usefully intimates that this is a concert, and indeed there are various rustlings, coughings and shufflings throughout, which however didn't distract me too much from these fine performances. The tortured faces of statues from the concert venue which adorn the packaging are in perfect concord with the visceral music of the programme, and there is a helpful programme note by Francesco Lora, which only suffers a little from the latest fashion of skimping on professional translation fees. To my mind these recordings capture how these works might very well have sounded in their composers' lifetimes, full of the drama of live performance and playing out to large and less than reverentially silent public gatherings.

*D. James Ross*

RAMEAU: PIÈCES DE CLAVECIN EN CONCERTS

Korneel Beriolet, Apotheosis

<TT>

Et'cetera KTC 1523

It may not bother others, but for my taste these performances tinker too much with Rameau's instrumentation to earn a recommendation. Yes, I know that alternatives are offered by the composer but I find it ineffective and fussy to change instrumentation between the movements of a *concert*, let alone within them. And while there's no reason not to transcribe other Rameau movements for these forces please present these movements as a discrete suite. Had J-P wanted the second *concert* to start with an overture he'd have written one. There are some nice touches in the interpretations but I'm afraid I may have been too irritated to notice them all. The booklet does not include a track list.

*David Hansell*

CAMILLA DE ROSSI: SANT' ALESSIO

Musica Fiorita, Daniela Dolci

64:47

Pan Classics PC 10347

Originally recorded some fifteen years ago, this sparkling performance of Camilla de Rossi's fine oratorio is a welcome reissue. The work was composed in 1710 for Vienna, and follows standard oratorio practice of the time, with two acts, an ensemble of soloists who come together to form the single final chorus, and an Italian libretto. The plot is simple – Alessio is about to be wed; his parents and bride-to-be celebrate, but the call of holy asceticism is too great; Alessio renounces bride and family (to the chagrin of both) and leaves. He is eventually found some years later, after his death, having lived incognito as a beggar, and the story ends with the lamentation over his newly recognised body. Camilla de Rossi clothes this rather sad tale with some stirring and dramatic music, though (as is often the case) the best tunes seem to go to the laypeople, rather than to the saint! Alessio's father has a particularly splendid aria with trumpets and timpani ("Sonori concetti"), calling for celebrations about the forthcoming nuptials, which Rossi cleverly additionally uses as a dramatic awakening call for the meditating Alessio's first appearance. The saint's jilted bride gets the most dramatic aria ("Cielo, pietoso Cielo") which brings the first act to a breathtaking close, alternating between *adagio* lament and *concitato* rage. In the second act Alessio at last has his chance to shine in his ecstatic final "A guerra mi sfida." The performance is all one could wish for – Graham Pushee is a sublime Alessio, Rosa Dominguez a suitably spurned Sposa, Agnieizka Kowalczyk a fine Madre and William Lombardi a sonorous Padre. Musica Fiorita play like angels under Daniela Dolci's expert and dramatically finely judged baton. Most enjoyable!

*Alastair Harper*

STEFFANI – CRUDO AMOR

Eugenia Boix, Carlos Mena, Forma Antiqua, Aarón Zapico

57:59

Winter & Winter 910 231-2

+ Corbetta, J. C. F. Fischer & Kapsperger

The colourful and active life of Agostino Steffani was founded on his early promise as a singer, a talent resulting in him being employed by the Bavarian Elector Ferdinand Maria in 1667, around the

time of his 13th birthday. He would remain in Munich for 21 years, composing a number of operas for the electoral court, the last of which, *Niobe* (1688), has been successfully revived (and recorded). The same year that saw the production of *Niobe* also found Steffani moving to take up an appointment in Hanover in the service of Duke Ernst August, service that would include not only musical, but also diplomatic activity. Later his career would focus on ecclesiastical duties as Bishop of Spiga and, of particular importance, Apostolic Vicar in northern Germany.

Steffani's surviving output consists wholly of vocal music, a crucial role being played by the chamber duets for two voices and continuo. For the most part composed before 1702, they incorporate a variety of forms, ranging from the up-to-date alternation of recitative and da capo aria to sectional through-composed works reminiscent of madrigal form. Among the six duets recorded here, the present CD includes two examples of the latter, of which, *Occhi, perché piangete* is especially striking for its opening Lento section featuring long, painful chromatic legato lines. Indeed, one of the striking aspects of these settings of Arcadian poetry dealing principally with the pain of love is Steffani's acute response to text, which does not exclude mimetic treatment of such lines as 'Jove's flash between your eyes'. The duets are characterized musically by their easy mastery of counterpoint and gracious melodies, the exquisitely interwoven lines of the opening aria of *Dimmi, dimmi, Cupido* providing a particularly felicitous example. They are, moreover, of considerable historical importance, the influence on the chamber duets the young Handel composed in Italy readily apparent.

The performances are commendable, though not ideal, not least because the rather close acoustic does few favours to the voices; I certainly associate alto Carlos Mena's always musical singing with having more bloom on the voice than is the case here. His soprano partner Eugenia Boix is a less finished singer – one need only compare the many imitative exchanges between the two – but it is an attractive voice, though liable to become undisciplined under pressure at times. Both singers are largely successful in expressing the texts with greater insight than is sometimes the case. I have ambivalent feelings about the continuo group of cello, theorbo, harpsichord and an anachronistic Baroque guitar. There is at times a stilted feel to their contribution, which only truly comes to life in the interspersed solo items allotted to the theorbo, harpsichord and guitar in works by Kapsberger, Fischer and Corbetta respectively.

*Brian Robins*

## TARTINI'S VIOLIN

*Sonatas for violin and b. c.*

Črtomir Šiškovič *violin*, Luca Ferrini *harpsichord & organ*  
50:29

Dynamic CDS 7744

Although everyone thinks of Tartini as Italian, he was born in what is now geographically Slovenia, and this recording of four named sonatas is a collaboration between one musician from each of the two countries. They start with "Didone abbandonata" which, like the others, is in three movements (two are slow-fast-fast, the other two slow-fast-alternating). Then comes arguably the composer's most famous piece, "Il Trillo del Diavolo", followed by two less well-known pieces; a sonata in A entitled "Pastorale" (unique in the composer's output in requiring the bottom two strings to be tuned a tone higher than usual, and accompanied on organ where Ferrari plays harpsichord in the others) and "Staggion bella" in B flat. My enjoyment of the recital was hampered by the sound quality – the acoustic lacked warmth, the violin was not really projecting into the space and the harpsichord lacks any resonance; the performances are fine, if they too slightly lack vitality – clean readings, but no real oomph.

*Brian Clark*

## TELEMANN: COMPLETE VIOLIN CONCERTOS

VOL. 6

Elizabeth Wallfisch, The Wallfisch Band

62:18

cpo 777 701-2

TWV 51:a1, 55: F13, h4, 40:200

This disc of two concertos proper and two "ouvertures in concerto style" was actually recorded way back in 2011; such is cpo's extensive backlog that even fine performances – which form part of a very impressive series – must still wait five years for public consumption. The first work is essentially a concerto for four-part strings out of which a solo violin grows (TWV 40:200); the second (TWV 51:a1) also survives as an oboe concerto (and has appeared thus on a previous cpo disk), but is here given a very persuasive performance. For me, though, the most interesting music were the two overture-concertos (essentially, think the Bach "orchestral suites" with a solo violin part), both lasting over 20 minutes. The second is unfortunately referred to as a Concerto in B major on the cover (it's actually in the minor), but the



typo is the only thing wrong with it; Libby Wallfisch effortlessly emerges from the full band sound then blends marvellously back into it. This is all the more impressive when in concert (at least those I found online) she (and her fellow soloists) take the “modern” approach to concert giving by standing out front, but clearly she firmly believes in the *primus inter pares* approach to what is still essentially chamber music. I wonder how many more installments of this fabulous survey of Telemann’s concerted music with violin(s) remain in the cpo vaults for future release – I’m sure every single one of them will hold some new delight!

*Brian Clark*

TELEMANN: THE OBOE ALBUM

Marcel Ponsele, Il Gardellino

133:29 (2 CDs in a darboard wallet)

Accent ACC 24314

TWV 41:g2, g6, a3; 42:c4, d4, Es3, g5; 43:D7; 51:e1, f2, A12; 53:E1

This is a compilation of recordings dating from 1995–2005 and covering the whole gamut of Telemann’s works for solo oboe; sonatas with continuo from various of his published sets, trio sonatas with violin or flute or even obbligato harpsichord, and concertos (including oboe d’more, too). This, of course, is not just any old oboist playing – Ponsele has been recognized as one of *the* performers on the instrument for many years and these recordings are like a compendium of masterclasses in each of the works involved. Nor are his companions unkown; one the “concerto” disc he is joined by Il Gardellino, while the second disc has Richte van der Meer on cello and Pierre Hantaï on harpsichord, with contributions from Fred Jacobs (in the sonata with obbligato harpsichord *and* continuo), and Taka Kitazako (oboe) and Per-Olov Lindeke (trumpet) in the rarely heard TWV 43:D7. This is a thoroughly enjoyable set which I have no hesitation in recommending.

*Brian Clark*

WORGAN: COMPLETE ORGAN MUSIC

Timothy Roberts (St Botolph’s without Aldgate)

65:26

Toccatà Classics TOCC 0332

My first introduction to this interesting composer was (rather indirectly) from an organ improvisation in his style on a recent disc of music from Vauxhall Gardens by David Moul

and London Early Opera. Now here he is himself, played on the beautifully restored contemporary Rénatus Harris organ of St Botolph without Aldgate, an instrument well known to him and his family.

John Worgan was probably first taught by his elder brother James, but later also had lessons from Thomas Roseingrave and Francisco Geminiani, and the influence of both of the latter, as well as that of Handel (whose organ concerti he is known to have played at Vauxhall Gardens) is to be heard in his music.

The pieces recorded here are (according to Timothy Roberts’ fine sleevenote) a ‘mixed bag’ and he has done an excellent job in linking them into satisfying musical groups. The three opening Pieces, for example, begin in French Overture-like dotted rhythm, and move, via a charming fugato with almost Mozartean episodes (echoes of the last movement of one of the Piano Concerto finales!) to a stately triple time with bassoon-like drones. The final three tracks also link well – another grand triple time melody is followed by an allegro with much harmonic and rhythmic quirkiness, and the set (and disc) concludes with a virtuoso allegro with more rustic drones in the middle section.

Timothy Roberts plays with style and taste; he is fortunate in having chosen such a fine and appropriate instrument, which helps bring these works to colourful life.

*Alastair Harper*

ZELENKA: SEI SONATE

Zefiro

104:10 (2 CDs in a cardboard sleeve)

Arcana A394

These two CDs were originally recorded and released by naïve in the mid 1990s; recorded out of numerical order, sonatas 5, 6 and 2 are on the first disk, while 1, 3 (in which a violin replaces one of the oboes) and 4 are on the other. Both sets involve a theorbo and deep string bass (contrabbasso on CD1 and violone on CD2), all played by different players. The wind soloists are constant (and what a stellar line-up – Paolo Grazzi and Alfredo Bernardini on oboe and Alberto Grazzi on bassoon); Manfredo Kraemer is the violinist. Where for most composers six trio sonatas would comfortably fit on a single disc, Zelenka’s expansive contrapuntal themes mean that it is not unusual for individual movements to exceed six minutes, and there is even one which lasts more than eight minutes! In these performers’ hands, though, the music unfolds organically and simply fills the space; it

certainly never feels too long, and in some sense (at least as far as this listener is concerned) Zelenka could easily have sustained movements of even greater length, had he chosen to do so. Bravo to all concerned!

*Brian Clark*

BRAVURA

Vivaldi | Handel

Gabriella Di Laccio *soprano*, Musica Antiqua Clio,  
Fernando Cordella

<TT>

drama musica DRAMA001

Music from Handel's *Giulio Cesare & Rinaldo*, Vivaldi's *Griselda, Juditha Triumphans & L'Olimpiade*

**A** well-performed, though musicologically slightly unadventurous, recital. Gabriella di Laccio is a fine dramatic soprano, with a formidable technique, ably displayed in the three Vivaldi arias recorded here. Fernando Cordella sets cracking tempi, to which di Laccio fully responds – the well-known 'Agitata da due venti' (track 2) is particularly scintillating, with the da capo suitably embellished. The three Handel war-horses are also creditably performed.

Musica Antiqua Clio are a new name for me; they come into their own in sinfonias to *L'Olimpiade* (Vivaldi) and *Rinaldo* (Handel), which are played with much energy and accuracy (with repeats in the latter meticulously observed).

One looks forward to hearing more from all concerned – perhaps a complete opera, or some Brazilian baroque rarities, done with similar verve?

*Alastair Harper*

CONCERTI ROMANI

*Corelli's Heritage and the Roman School*

I Musici

54:51

Dynamic CDS7752

Castrucci op 3/10, Corelli op 6/4, Geminiani op 5/7 (after Corelli), Locatelli op 1/11, Valentini op 7/11

**T**his group was among the pioneers of the re-discovery of baroque music, if not quite what we now call HIP. Their recordings of complete sets of Vivaldi's publications brought him back into the mainstream. Given that attitudes to performance practice have moved on a great deal since those days, I was a little wary of even listening to this CD, even though the performances are from as recently as last year. In actual fact, however, although there are some hints of yesteryear (the

trills, for example), these are lively and enjoyable accounts of some lovely music. I don't mean to sound condescending or disparaging, but this would make an ideal gift for someone who likes less frequently recorded baroque music but does not have any special interest in how it is performed – this is bound to make them smile. Lots.

*Brian Clark*

FUNERAL MUSIC FROM GOTTORF

Weser-Renaissance, Manfred Cordes

68:26

cpo 555 010-2

Förtsch: *Ich vergesse was dahinten ist, Unser Leben währet siebenzig Jahr*

Michael Österreich: *Ich habe einen guten Kampf gekämpft*

Georg Österreich: *Plötzlich müssen die Leute sterben, Unser keiner lebet ihn selber*

**T**his is the fourth CD that Manfred Cordes and his excellent team has devoted to music in Gottorf. Alongside music by two of the composers already featured there is a very fine work by the more famous Georg Österreich's older brother, Michael. The opening piece is Förtsch's lavish "Unser Leben währet siebenzig Jahr" with seven voice parts, four violins, two violas, four gambas, bassoon and continuo! The fact that it survives only in a copy might explain the rather odd passages in some verses of the central aria where the duetting alto and bass occasionally sing in octaves (a fact that the otherwise informative booklet notes fail to mention). It is followed by the older Österreich's setting for more modest forces of one of "the standard" funeral texts, "I have fought a good fight", which reveals the former Thomaner's considerable skill. The final work – the longest on the disc at over 19 minutes! – adds a pair of oboes to the ensemble. It ends with a "tremolo"-accompanied setting of a verse from "Herzlich tut mich Verlangen" (known to English speakers as "the Passion chorale"). Throughout the singing and playing as excellent, the balance between individual voices and vocal and instrumental groups is well managed, and the sound quality is very high. All in all, another success for this typically enterprising cpo series.

*Brian Clark*

## THE PLEASURES OF THE IMAGINATION

*English 18th-century music for the harpsichord*

Sophie Yates

75:20

Chandos Chaconne CHAN0814

Music by Thomas Arne, J. C. Bach, Blow, Clarke, Croft, Greene & Jones

**A**t a time when recordings incline towards 'the complete' this or that it is a pleasure to come across a themed but more varied recital. Sophie Yates's survey of English keyboard music in the long 18th century is pretty much constant joy from start to finish. And the lack of Purcell and Handel is a real bonus. They are already well represented on disc anyway and their absence here makes space for the delights of others too often overshadowed. So let's hear it for Blow, Clarke, Croft, Greene, Jones, Arne (especially Arne) and J. C. Bach. The booklet is an example of how to do it, the playing high-class and the instruments beautifully prepared, recorded and exploited. My only regret is that they are after French rather than English originals.

*David Hansell*

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## LES SAUVAGES

Béatrice Martin *harpsichord*

61:02

Cypres CYP1672

Music by d'Anglebert, F Couperin, Forqueray, Rameau & Royer

**T**his selection of unusual, exotic and frankly weird items from the colourful output of the French school is played on an absolute beast of an instrument (Couchet 1645/Blanchet 1720) of which Béatrice Martin makes full and stylish use. She plays with great care and attention to detail – ornaments and *inégalité* are always convincing – though sometimes a little more overt flamboyance might not have come amiss. Even the programme order is more thoughtful than impactful – track 3 would surely make a more arresting start. But it is a really good recital. The booklet is well laid out and the notes are informative though the 'general music lover' might find the literary style heavy going in places. At least it's legible.

*David Hansell*

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## SONS AND PUPILS OF JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Hans Fagius (Močnik organ in Höör, Sweden)

79:19

Daphne 1052

Music by C P E Bach, W F Bach, G A Homilius, J L Krebs, J C Kittel & J G Mützel

**T**his is a thoughtfully devised recital played on a modern instrument that draws on the characteristics of the instruments by Silbermann and Hildebrandt so admired by JSB. The booklet (English/Swedish) includes both a stop list and the registrations used which will delight those who regularly complain at the absence of these things (me, for instance). There are some minor mis-translations and unidiomatic turns of phrase but nothing positively misleading. It's still a shame that these things get through, though. The playing is always convincing whatever the style, with tempos and registrations always made to sound appropriate. I have to say, though, that most of the music is merely 'interesting' and only gets played because of the JSB connection. A conspicuous exception to this is the splendid CPEB Fantasy and Fugue Wq 119/7 which I shall add to my own repertoire at the earliest opportunity.

*David Hansell*

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## LE VOYAGE D'ALLEMAGNE

Emmanuelle Guigues *viola da gamba*

63:00

L'Encelade ECL1404

Schenck, Telemann and J. S. Bach

**M**usic for unaccompanied bass viol by Schenck, Telemann, and J. S. Bach is played on a 6-string bass viol, dating from the end of the 17th century, attributed to Edward Lewis, of London. It apparently travelled to America early in its life, and was recently restored in New York by William Monical. It's worth mentioning all this because the instrument itself has a gorgeous sound, very mellow, and even across its registers. It is played at  $a=405$ , and recorded in an ancient church in the Dordogne. The recording sounds close-miked, albeit in a generous acoustic, but her technique is so clean and her articulation so secure that no extraneous sounds of shifting or too-fast bow-stroke is heard at all.

Further, the repertoire she chooses is particularly demanding – the unaccompanied bass viol is an unforgiving instrument in that any false stroke, any fudged fingering is immediately apparent. As for the music, that of Schenck requires a virtuoso technique, of that there is no doubt, but

it needs a care-free approach as well. The two delightful sonatas for unaccompanied viol, Opus IX, *L'Echo du Danube*, published in his native Amsterdam around 1700, are Italianate in their construction, perhaps owing something to Corelli, but the chordal technique is very similar to that of Christopher Simpson and Marin Marais. Their melodic charm allied to the possibilities offered by the bass viol make them compelling listening, particularly when played as beautifully as she does.

Telemann's sonata in D major (TWV40:1) is well known and widely recorded, but nowhere better than here. The sonorous acoustic is generous, but the close-miking means that her playing has to be completely clean – there is no concealment in the texture, and it is a superb performance of a very charming and ingenious work.

The Bach 5th suite, transposed to D minor, and played without its prelude, is the final work. She plays it with great insight, and although her approach is literal, she gives a particular flavour to each movement, none more so than the dreamy quality of the final gigue.

This is the third recording of hers that I have heard, and she is undoubtedly an outstanding artist, with a commanding technique, and no need to resort to gimmicky mannerism. Her own excellent notes in the booklet, somewhat awkwardly translated into English, give an enlightening historical context for this repertoire. Highly recommended.

*Robert Oliver*

'WHERE'ER YOU WALK' – ARIAS FOR HANDEL'S

FAVOURITE TENOR

Allan Clayton, Classical Opera, Ian Page  
68:59

Signum Records SIGCD457  
Music by Arne, Boyce, Handel & J. C. Smith

An interesting recital disc – as far as I am aware the first one devoted to music sung by one of Handel's most favoured English performers, rather than one of his Italian stars.

John Beard was probably born around 1715, and David Vicker's exemplary notes suggest that he may have sung as a treble in the famous Coronation service of 1727, when Handel's great set of Anthems were first heard. His adult career began with the part of Silvio in the 1734 revival of *Il Pastor Fido*; he was to be Handel's principal tenor for the rest of the latter's life, creating the eponymous roles of Samson, Judas Maccabaeus and Jephtha, as well as a host

of others. He was clearly a singer of much distinction and dramatic ability, as Allan Clayton ably demonstrates here, equally at home in the smooth bel canto of 'Tune Your Harps' from *Esther* and the Italianate coloratura of 'Vedi l'ape' from *Berenice*, as well as the deeply moving 'Thus when the sun' from *Samson* or Jephtha's bleakly tragic 'Hide thou thy hated beams' and sublime 'Waft her angels'.

He is joined by the mellifluous Mary Bevan in the lovely 'As steals the morn' from *L'Allegro*, and by the fine Choir of Classical Opera in 'Happy pair' from *Alexander's Feast*.

As well as singing for Handel, Beard was employed by many of his musical contemporaries – we are treated to some lovely Boyce (his exquisite bassoon-tinted 'Softly rise, O Southern breeze' from *Solomon*), rousing J.C. Smith ('Hark how the hounds and horn' from *The Fairies*) and galant Arne ('Thou, like the glorious sun' from *Artaxerxes*) The Orchestra of Classical Opera, under the able baton of Ian Page, provide lively and colourful accompaniments; they shine especially in the magically-hushed 'moonrise' *sinfonia* from Act 2 of *Ariodante*.

No reason to hesitate, really!

*Alastair Harper*

Classical

C. P. E. BACH: CELLO CONCERTOS

Nicolas Altstaedt, Arcangelo, Jonathan Cohen  
64:37

Hyperion CDA68112  
H432, 436, 439 (Wq 170-172)

C. P. E. Bach's three concertos for cello and strings date from the early 1750s, existing also in versions for harpsichord and flute. Between them they represent fine examples of the variants to be found in Bach's highly distinctive style, the A minor dominated by the nervous intensity and fragmentary writing typical of *Sturm und Drang*, the B flat a more relaxed work that comes closer to Rococo sentiment. The most original of the trio is the A major, with its central *Largo con sordini, mesto* (sad) that, as Richard Wigmore observes in an excellent note, might be seen as the epitome of the impassioned *Empfindsamkeit* style associated with Bach and North German colleagues such as the Benda brothers.

Nicolas Altstaedt is a German-French cellist who has come very much to the fore in recent years both as a modern and period instrument performer. The first thing to say about his performances here is that they are as technically

near-flawless as it is possible to come and that the solo playing throughout owns to a rich tonal beauty evoking a bewitching sensuality. If that sounds like sufficient to entice you, then you probably need read no further.

The overriding objectives of both *Sturm und Drang* and *Empfindsamkeit* – in both their literary and music forms – was to stir the deepest of passions and, in the case of the latter, profoundly touch the heart. Both are open to sentimentality of the modern variety and it is here that my own reservations about the present performances have their roots. Too often I have an uncomfortable impression that they are skating too close to the surface. Yes, Arcangelo's strings dig into the notes with trenchant vigour and, yes, yearning themes yearn, but awakening the passions or potentially inducing the tears of ladies? Perhaps not. We can take that remarkable central movement of the A-major Concerto to provide a clear example that illustrates the point. Here the sighing, longing unison theme sets out too slowly for an 18th-century Largo, tempting Altstaedt and Cohen into a self-conscious interpretation that in its overuse of such imposed effects as portamento loses much of its spontaneity. Interestingly, an earlier version of this concerto I have to hand by Alison McGillivray and the English Concert (*harmonia mundi*, 2006) takes the movement only marginally faster, but achieves an inner intensity that is for me lacking in the present performance.

A further example of Altstaedt's self-indulgence that might be cited is his heavily-underscored direct quote of 'Es ist vollbracht' (from the St John Passion) in the cadenza of opening movement of the A minor Concerto on the grounds that it bears a resemblance to the cello's opening theme. Well, so it might, but it's not that close and the equally vague resemblance of the opening theme of the B-flat Concerto to 'Where'er you walk' does not receive similar treatment. As suggested above, many will be unconcerned by these caveats, choosing instead simply to relish the ravishing beauty of the playing. There are certainly many passages and moments when I can do that, but overall the CD left me less engaged than I felt I should have been.

*Brian Robins*

## BERTONI: ORFEO ED EURIDICE

Vivica Genaux *Orfeo*, Francesca Lonbardi-Mazzulli *Euridice*, Jan Petryka *Imeneo*, Accademia di Santo Spirito di Ferrara, Ensemble Lorenzo da Ponte, Roberto Zarpellon 70:00

Fra Bernardo fb 1601729

In an era when pastiche had few of the dubious undertones it has today, the emulation of popularity was widespread. As one of the most successful operas of its day, the *Orfeo ed Euridice* of Gluck and Calzabigi received widespread attention from other composers, including J. C. Bach, whose pasticcio version was given when the opera was performed in London in 1770. The castrato Gaetano Guadagni, the creator of the role of Orfeo, himself composed several replacements, including 'Che puro ciel'. New operas set to Calzabigi's famous 'reform' libretto include those by Antonio Tozzi, whose version was given in Munich in 1775 and Ferdinando Bertoni, whose *Orfeo ed Euridice* for Teatro S Bernadino in Venice received its premiere in January the following year. The Orfeo in both was none other than Guadagni, who would subsequently enjoy considerable success in the Bertoni role in various European centres.

In the preface to his edition, which unusually for this period was published before the first performance, Bertoni acknowledges the daunting task he has taken on. His answer was to emulate closely the setting of Gluck, as any listener familiar with Gluck's masterpiece will immediately recognise. Indeed there are times – the chorus in act 2's infernal scene is an example – where Bertoni comes dangerously close to plagiarism. With the exception of a change in name of the *deus ex machina* from Amore to Imeneo and a few cosmetic textural changes, Calzabigi's libretto is that as set by Gluck, as is the 'reform' structure of the piece, with its closely linked alternation of accompanied recitative, aria and dance. The result is an opera that has validity in its own right – much of Bertoni's music owns to a felicitous melodic grace – but that ultimately lacks the overwhelming tragic intensity and classical nobility of its model. It is interesting that despite the success of his *Orfeo*, Bertoni never again experimented with 'reform' opera.

The present issue is taken from a live performance given in February 2014 at the Teatro Comunale in Ferrara. In general it is highly commendable, with strongly delineated direction and playing by the period instrument band, which if not the most polished of ensembles plays with verve and style. Vivica Genaux is an excellent Orfeo, singing

throughout with conviction and power, her chest notes richly burnished. Genaux's vocal acting is outstanding too, and she not only makes much of the dramatic recitatives, but is also touchingly vulnerable in the exchanges with her Euridice. That role is also sung with real authority by soprano Francesca Lombardi-Mazzulli, though the tone becomes undisciplined at times in her *aria di furia* 'Che fiero', a rare example of conventional coloratura. Tenor Jan Petryka is a good Imeneo, singing his single (and rather conventional) aria 'Gli sguardi trattieni' with pleasing style.

Not for the first time in my experience with Fra Bernadino, the presentation is poor. The note is good, but only the Italian libretto is printed and that in a way in which the text often does not make syntactical sense; indeed there are places where it is downright misleading. For example, before listening I compared the text with that of the Gluck, coming to the conclusion that Bertoni had not set Orfeo's anguished cries of 'Euridice!' that punctuate the opening chorus. In fact they are there, but FB have been too lazy to ensure the libretto is correctly printed. If you have a version the Gluck, use the libretto for that. Notwithstanding caveats, the interest of this 'other *Orfeo*' and a very good performance make the CD well worth exploring.

*Brian Robins*

#### THE HAYDN ALBUM

Daniel Yeadon *cello*, Erin Helyard *harpsichord*, Australian Haydn Ensemble, Skye McIntosh (dir).

ABC Classics 481 206

69:25

Cello Concerto in C, Symphony No 6 in D 'Le matin', Harpsichord Concerto in D

**B**ehind the prosaic title lie vital, perceptive period instrument performances of three of Haydn's most popular orchestral works. Both the C-major Cello Concerto and the Symphony No. 6, part of a trilogy devoted to the times of the day, date from the mid-1760s, a period when the young Haydn was settling into his new post at Esterházy.

With its many concertante elements, 'Le matin' gives a strong sense of the composer delighting in assessing the strength of his newly acquired orchestra. The fine evocation of dawn is here given a real sense of expectancy, though the keyboard continuo flourishes seem to me out of place. When day breaks the main allegro is given a bright-eyed, sharply observed focus, the concertante wind playing full of character and technically outstanding. The

improvisatory second movement features a splendidly played violin solo from Skye McIntosh, but the rhythm of the central andante section sounds a little mannered and I'm unconvinced by Erin Helyard's note arguing justification for the use of organ continuo in this movement. The peaceful suspensions of the final pages sound truly lovely. The Minuet is finely rhythmically sprung, the central trio section again given real character by the bassoonist, while the concertante element is again to the fore in the zestful Finale.

The Cello Concerto opens at an agreeably comfortable tempo allowing full reign to its lyricism, while at the same time not neglecting rhythmic impetus. Daniel Yeadon's solo playing is technically accomplished and tonally secure across the register, with some particularly sensitive playing in the development. The central Adagio is felicitously phrased, with some subtle use of portamento and rubato along the way, while the final movement carries real nervous intensity in its strong forward momentum. Is the cello a little too forwardly recorded? Maybe, but it's only in the busy activity of the finale that such thoughts really comes to mind. Erin Helyard's performance of the well-known D-major Keyboard Concerto (1784) is given on a copy of a Goujon of 1749 by Andrew Garlick. It's a mellifluous instrument with an especially attractive silvery upper register, played here by Helyard with firm-fingered accomplishment. If I'm marginally less taken with the performance than the other two, it is because some of the tempo fluctuations made in cause of dramatic effect in the opening Vivace seem to me to come dangerously close to mannerism. But the cantabile of the operatic central Adagio is compellingly laid out, while the famous Hungarian rondo finale is given with all the unbridled élan that anyone could want.

This is a disc that serves as an eloquent reminder that there are few more rewarding experiences than an hour or so spent in Haydn's company.

*Brian Robins*

#### HAYDN: 'SUN' QUARTETS OP. 20 NOS. 1-3

Chiaroscuro Quartet

74:34

BIS-2158 SACD

**I**f the six string quartets completed by Haydn in 1772 and subsequently published as his opus 20 were not quite as radical a development as is sometimes suggested, they do none the less mark a notable moment in the history of the genre. The name, incidentally, is taken

from an early publication featuring an ornate title page headed by a motif of the sun god Apollo.

Among many striking features of the group is the sense of experimentation, not experimentation in the sense of groping one's way forward trying to work things out, but in a bolder way that for perhaps the first time shows Haydn revelling in the control of the difficult genre he had already done so much to develop. Thus we find him playing with form, perhaps most strikingly in the Adagio of the C-major Quartet (no.2), which is nothing less than a full blown accompanied recitative and seria aria in which the vocal part is taken by the first violin. Or what of the Affettuoso of the first of group, in E flat? Here is one of those sublime cantabile movements that Haydn made so much his own, much of it in stepwise movement redolent of hymn or chant. Yet no hymn or chant ever employed modulation to such magical effect! Or we might turn to the opening Moderato of No. 1, with its first notes suggestive of 'Where e're you walk', but more importantly one of many passages in these quartets where the composer contrasts high against low sonorities, sombreness against brilliance. Many more examples – contrapuntal mastery, for instance - could easily be cited in these quartets in which Haydn constantly surprises, challenges and delights the listener in, to quote the words of the great Haydn scholar H C Robbins Landon, 'a barely suppressed state of excitement'.

Much the same might be said of these performances by the Chiaroscuro Quartet. I suspect there are no wound strings employed by members of the ensemble, which is not afraid of the nutty rasp of bow on pure gut, something that needs the outstanding technique at the command of these players. Special praise must go to first violinist Alina Ibragimova not only for her negotiation of the at-times high-flying part, but the expressive beauty of her playing in such passages as the second half of the Poco adagio of the G-minor Quartet (No. 3), here matched fully by cellist Claire Thirion. Throughout the Chiaroscuros are equally unafraid of tempo fluctuation, unmarked ritardandi and some daring extremes of dynamic contrast. These may bother some, although to my mind such licence is rarely taken other than for expressive purpose, rather than drawing self-serving attention to the performers. In sum, for me these performances complement the marvellous invention of Haydn in their ability to make the listener hear these quartets in a fresh light. I very much hope the Chiaroscuro Quartet and BIS will bring us the remaining three quartets before too long.

*Brian Robins*

## MOZART: PIANO CONCERTOS

*Nos 1– 4 Pasticcio Concertos*

Ronald Brautigam *fortepiano*, Die Kölner Akademie,  
Michael Alexander Willens

58:34

BIS-2094 SACD

Once taken as early evidence of the 11-year-old Mozart's prodigious compositional genius, these first four piano concertos are now recognised as cunning pastiches pieced together from chamber works by Hermann Friedrich Raupach, Leontzi Honauer, Johann Gottfried Eckard, C. P. E. Bach and Johann Schobert. To what extent this music was recycled into piano concertos by Mozart himself, or more likely substantially assisted by his father, is unclear but the results are very pleasing indeed. Orchestrated for the sort of generous band the Mozarts encountered on tour at this time which included flutes, oboes, horns and trumpets, these are important works in what used to be called the 'pre-classical' style – essentially the charming vocabulary of the Mannheim school. Playing a beautiful cherry-wood fortepiano by Paul McNulty after Stein 1788, Ronald Brautigam gives stunningly precise and expressive accounts of these works, ably supported by the Kölner Akademie directed by Michael Alexander Willens. In crystal clear recordings by the BIS engineers, this music comes vividly to life, and one can just picture the young Mozart, bewigged and liveried, raising gasps of wonderment and admiration for his aristocratic audiences. I was struck by the imaginative richness of composers who have largely fallen from public attention and who we can definitely say influenced Mozart's compositional style. I was also impressed by the smooth recycling process which produced four very fine concertos, which you would never guess were anything other than original compositions. The fact that until recently they were believed to be such is a great testimony to the work of the Mozarts.

*D. James Ross*

## PLEYEL: 3 SONATAS FOR KEYBOARD, VIOLIN & CELLO, B 437-9

IPG Pleyel Klaviertrio

ARS 38 203

TT

Today it is hard to imagine that in 1790s London (and indeed in Europe) the music of Ignaz Pleyel enjoyed a reputation nearly the equal of that of

Haydn, although efforts to pit them as rivals in England foundered on the friendship between Haydn and his one-time pupil. Incidentally, the generally poor notes for the present disc garble the story of Haydn's unfortunate 'appropriation' of two of Pleyel's trios; it is surely absurd to suggest that Haydn did so because he recognised that the latter's fame had 'eclipsed' his own.

There were certainly a sufficient number of Pleyel piano trios to choose from. Between 1784 and 1803 he composed no fewer than 49 trios for keyboard, 'with accompaniment for violin (or flute) and violoncello' as such works were invariably designated during the 18th century. The present group dates from 1790 and was published in various European centres across Europe. All three are poised, highly agreeable works that display their composer's craftsmanship in spades; if not the masterpieces the notes would claim them to be, neither do they measure up to H. C. Robbins Landon's dismissive verdict that the mature Pleyel 'debased the whole Haydn style' when he started to ape the latter's 'popular style'. On the present disc both B 438 in G and B 439 in E flat conclude with the kind of 'catchy rondo' to which HCRL objects and while that of the G-major is not especially distinguished, among the many felicitous moments in the E flat-major's Rondo is an episode with a delicious counter-melody for the violin. It is in fact the two-movement B 439 that is probably the pick of this group. The opening Allegro con fuoco of the same work is unusually dramatic by Pleyel's standards, with some gruff Beethovenian exchanges between the piano's lower register and the violin. Both the other works are in the expected three movements, the secondary subject of the opening Allegro molto adding spice to the proceedings with touches of chromaticism.

I have little but praise for the period instrument performances of the Austrian-based IPG Pleyel Klaviertrio, which are not only technically highly impressive, but also exceptionally musical. The fluency of fortepianist Varvara Manukyan's playing of an 1830 Pleyel is especially admirable, the passagework absolutely even, beautifully phrased and cleanly articulated. This is one of an extensive series issued under the auspices of the Internationale Ignaz Pleyel Gesellschaft (IPG), based in the composer's birthplace, Ruppersthal. I'm rather ashamed to say I haven't previously come across it, but will now certainly look out for future additions.

*Brian Robins*

SCHUMANN: PIANO QUINTET,  
MÄRCHENBILDER, FÜNF STÜCKE IM VOLKSTON  
Benvenue Fortepiano Trio with Carla Moore *violin* and  
Jodi Levitz *viola*  
59:48  
Avie AV 2365

I really wanted to like this recording of some of my favourite Schumann chamber music – indeed I have been looking for a fine period instrument recording of the piano quintet. This recording has much to recommend it. The *Märchenbilder* for viola and piano are given passionate and lyrical accounts by Jodi Levitz and Eric Zivian while the less familiar *Fünf Stücke im Volkston* are revealed by Zivian and Tanya Tomkins to be works of colourful and evocative imagination. However in both these works I was aware of the rather uncomfortably close and slightly dead recording, and this proved to be more of an issue with the piano quintet, perhaps simply because of the involvement of more players. However there also seemed to me to be a slight lack of lustre to the actual playing, and it perhaps due to this that I was also aware of some slightly uncomfortable intonation. I am at a loss to account for these shortcomings in a CD from Avie, a company usually at the forefront of recorded quality, although I note that the recording was made in the USA by an independent recording company. This is a pity, as I feel that in a more supported recording environment this would have been a recording I would have felt very differently about.

*D. James Ross*

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN – GUITAR WORKS

INSPIRED BY SCOTLAND

James Akers *romantic guitar*

61:00

resonus RES10165

Music by Giuliani, Legnani, Mertz & Sor

As lecturer in early plucked strings at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, James Akers has put together an intriguing programme of romantic guitar music inspired by the traditional music and landscapes of Scotland. In the wake of the vogue for all things Scottish which followed the publication of James MacPherson's Ossian material, composers throughout Europe tried their hands at Scottish (or perhaps Scot-'ish')



music, and Akers' programme includes music by the Italian-born guitarist Mauro Giuliani, Italian opera devotee and guitar virtuoso Luigi Legnani, Spaniard Fernando Sor, and the German guitar virtuoso Johann Mertz. While the latter attempted like his compatriot Mendelssohn to recreate the Scottish landscape, and more specifically Fingal's Cave, in music, the others wrote pieces in imitation of or variations upon Scottish airs. Employing a period guitar and two modern reconstructions, Akers employs his own considerable virtuosity to bring this neglected seam of music to vivid life, and he certainly captures the enthusiasm these composer's poured into their subjects as well as hinting at the stunning techniques they must all have demonstrated as players. The warm tone of the authentic instruments is a further factor in the success of this CD. Just occasionally I feel that Akers doesn't fully trust the resonance of his instruments, moving on too soon from some chords in the slower pieces when I would have liked him to linger just a little, but generally speaking this is a revelatory and engaging CD of music which is nowadays almost entirely unfamiliar. Akers' erudite and wide-ranging programme notes are a real bonus.

*D. James Ross*

### Various

RITUS ORPHEOS - IL CANTORE AL LIUTO

Simone Sorini  
Baryton SO/11

I really did approach this with an 'innocent ear' and thoroughly enjoyed it. We are offered an anthology of (mainly) Italian songs from the medieval and renaissance periods in which the singer accompanies himself on an impressive array of period-specific plucked instruments, played with an equally impressive array of period-specific techniques (various plectra and fingers) and textures (drones to polyphony). Doubtless specialists will criticise points of detail in the performance practice but it convinced me. The singing is an interesting mix of Sting (in his Dowland mode), Nigel Rogers (a willingness to experiment with technique) and Emma Kirkby (a strong engagement with the texts) and becomes increasingly 'orthodox' as the music becomes more modern. By our normal standards the booklet is a graphic disaster. Small and densely packed print is on a patterned background and the English 'translation' features regular mistakes as well as

unidiomatic turns of phrase and the song texts are online only. But it's worth persevering for the amazing amount of interesting information in there. Overall, the impression is of a performer passionately committed to what he does and I recommend this very strongly for slightly off-piste Summer listening.

*David Hansell*

SWEET MELANCHOLY

*Works for viol consort from Byrd to Purcell*  
cellini consort

59:13

Coviello Classics COV 91604

For an apparently restricted genre, the English viol consort enjoyed a surprisingly long life. From its first stirrings in the 1520s until Purcell's final homage to this highly refined and cultivated genre in his great 3 and 4-part Fantazias, the viol consort remained at both court and country the chamber music-form par excellence in England.

The present disc gives a survey of this repertoire for two- and three-part consort across most of the period it was at its highest point. Superficially music for viol consort developed relatively little throughout its long history. We find the same equality of parts exploring an often dense labyrinth of counterpoint that obviously owes its genesis to the great tradition of vocal polyphony. Yet as the two opening and cleverly juxtaposed items on the CD clearly demonstrate there is world of difference between the gravely dignified Fantasia of Thomas Lupo (1571-1627) – a piece that might well qualify under the disc's 'Sweet Melancholy' rubric – and the first of Purcell's 3-part Fantazias. There, although the emphasis on contrapuntal complexity remains fundamentally unchanged, the textures are more open, with contrasted sections that owe their place to 17th century Italian influences on the form.

Although the disc's title might serve as a catchy handle, it also implies a restriction of mood that is not borne out by the repertoire included. Take, for example, the first of three fantasias by Orlando Gibbons, a piece that employs brief, almost fragmentary motifs to create a dynamic thrust that hints at the restless impetuosity of William Lawes. Consider, too, the music of Matthew Locke, given a more generous share than anyone. The first of a pair of 2-part Fantasias finds Locke exploiting chromaticism to disquieting effect, while the second owns to the new expressivity imported from Italy.

The performances by the Swiss-based Cellini Consort are exceptionally accomplished, give or take the occasional rough edge, with richly expressive and musical playing from its three members, all of whom apparently play both treble and bass viol on the disc. The disc might indeed well qualify as a fine introduction to the repertoire, though it should be remembered that much its greatest music was composed for larger consorts.

*Brian Robins*

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## RE-RELEASES FROM GLOSSA

We have had another batch of “previously loved” recordings from the extensive Glossa catalogue. The first, *Concerti, Sinfonie [and] Ouverture* by Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello (GCD C82506, 64:33) features La Cetra Barockorchester Basel in two sinfonias for four-part strings, concertos for violin & oboe, violin solo and violin & bassoon, as well as a G minor overture with oboes and a gorgeous chaconne in A for five-part strings. I was thrilled by the recording when it first came out and have absolutely no hesitation in recommending this reincarnation.

*Pièces de viole avec la basse continuë* by Forqueray père & fils (GCD C80412, 146:36, two CDs in a cardboard wallet) features the fabulous playing of Paolo Pandolfo with an impressive continuo line-up (a second gamba, two pluckers and harpsichord). The recordings from 1994/5 sound fresh and lively. I had never explored much of the solo viol repertoire, and I thoroughly enjoyed listening to these discs.

The featured musician in *Chamber music with flute* by Telemann is Wilbert Hazelzet; he is partnered in an interesting array of the composer’s smaller-scaled music by Jaap ter Linden, Konrad Junghänel and Jacques Ogg (GCD C80803, 63:45). The works range from two of the solo Fantasias to two “concertos” for all four members of the ensemble. Again, this was a pleasant hour’s listening.

Two Mozart releases follow. The first, *Music for basset horn trio* (GCD C80603, 58:23) by Wolfgang and his contemporaries (Druschetzky, Martín y Soler, the little-known – to me, at least – Vojtech Nudera, the much-maligned Salieri, and Stadler) explores something of a niche market from the turn of the 19th century, and I must confess it did not overstay its welcome, as I had feared (with the best of intentions!) it might. Frans Brügger directs the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century and the Netherlands Chamber Choir (with soloists Mona Julsrud, Wilke te Brummelstroete, Zeger Vandersteene and Jelle

Draijer) in Mozart’s Requiem, paired with the Mauerische Trauermusik KV 477 and an adagio for single reeds KV 411 (GCD C81111, 65:01). This is a live recording from 1998, and always has something interesting to say.

The final CD in the set *Duets for violin & viola* by Alessandro Rolla (GCD C80011, 64:42) was another unexpected treat. His is a name to string players around the world, but – like me? – most will never have played a note of his music. Famed in his own lifetime as a viola player, the five duets (from four different sets – anyone interested should check out the extensive lists on imslp!) on the disc reflect that; while many duets for this line-up tend to favour the more agile violin, Rolla makes no concessions to those who dare to play his instrument... That said, technical difficulty is not what this music is all about; if it had been, I would never have been able to listen to the whole disc once, let alone several times!

*Brian Clark*

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