

# Early Music *Review*

## EDITIONS OF MUSIC

### NEW FROM STAINER & BELL

ENGLISH THIRTEENTH-CENTURY POLYPHONY  
A Facsimile Edition by William J. Summers & Peter M. Lefferts  
Stainer & Bell, 2016. Early English Church Music, 57  
53pp+349 plates.  
ISMN 979 0 2202 2405 8; ISBN 978 0 85249 940 5  
£180

This extraordinarily opulent volume (approx. 12 inches by 17 and weighing more than seven pounds - apologies for the old school measurements!) is a marvel to behold. The publisher has had to use glossy paper in order to give the best possible colour reproductions of many valuable manuscripts. The textual part of the volume gives detailed physical descriptions of each, with individual historical and bibliographical information, followed by transcriptions of the (often fragmented) texts. Most are from British libraries, but some are from Germany, Italy, France and the United States. Though much of the material is accessible online, the publishers hope that a physical reproduction can help researchers and stimulate new interest in the repertory. It will certainly make an eye-catching centrepiece for an exhibition! In addition to giving scholars direct access to these invaluable source without having to sit, staring at a computer screen for hours. For all of these reasons, this apparent luxury will readily justify its price tag.

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY LITURGICAL MUSIC, IX  
MASS MUSIC BY BEDINGHAM AND HIS  
CONTEMPORARIES  
Transcribed by Timothy Symonds, edited by Gareth Curtis and David Fallows  
Stainer & Bell, 2017. Early English Church Music, 58  
xviii+189pp.  
ISMN 979 0 2202 2510 9; ISBN 978 0 85249 951 1  
£70

There are thirteen works in the present volume. The first two are masses by John Bedingham, while the others are anonymous mass movements (either single or somehow related). Previous titles in the series have been reviewed by Clifford Bartlett, and I confess this is the first time I have looked at repertory from this period since I studied Du Fay at university! At that time I also sang quite a lot of (slightly later) English music, so I am not completely unfamiliar with it. I was immediately struck by the rhythmic complexity and delighted to see that the editions preserve the original note values and avoids bar lines - one might expect this to complicate matters with ligatures and coloration to contend with, but actually it is laid out in such a beautiful way that everything miraculously makes perfect sense. Most of the pieces are in two or three parts (a fourth part – called “Tenor bassus” – is added to the Credo of Bedingham’s *Mass Dueil angoisseux* in only one of the sources). Each is preceded by a list of sources, a note of any previous edition(s), general remarks about the piece, specific notes on texting issues (most interestingly where the editors have chosen to include several syllables or words under long notes), and then musical discrepancies. All in all an exemplary work of scholarship, beautifully presented, and just waiting for someone to take up the challenge of recording this intriguing and beautiful music.

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### ARNE: JUDITH

Edited by Simon McVeigh and Peter Lynan  
Musica Britannica C, 2016. xviii+254.  
ISMN 979 0 2202 2488 1; ISBN 978 0 85249 947 4  
£130

Thomas Arne’s fine oratorio is deserving of so opulent an edition. The editors’ splendidly detailed introduction sets the scene and gives a wonderful account of the work’s genesis and performance history. Most peculiarly, we learn that the various original soloists took on various roles (some both male and female!). A very useful table in the closing notes (with accounts of variations in the musical sources and the libretti) suggests how modern performers might re-allocate the various airs and duets. Arne’s music looks splendid. After a commanding

overture, the opening chorus is introduced by a pair of bassoons; a pair of cellos accompany a duet towards the work's conclusion; in between, there are secco recitatives and *accompagnati*, *coloratura* arias, dramatic choruses and much besides. English sacred dramas by Handel are rarely performed; hopefully this excellent edition will inspire choirs to consider adding Arne's work to their repertoire.

#### PHILIPS AND DERING: CONSORT MUSIC

Edited by David J. Smith

Musica Britannica CI, 2016. xlv+216.

ISMN 979 0 2202 2489 8; ISBN 978 0 85249 948 1

£115

A volume devoted to these two composers is particularly sensible since, not only were both Catholic converts who lived for a time in Belgium (Philips until his death, Dering returned to England when Charles I married Henrietta Maria), but they may well have known one another. The music is organised firstly by composer (the older Philips first) then broadly in the sequence dances followed by fantasias in ascending size, and finished off by two anonymous *In nomine* settings in six parts, attributed to Dering. Smith (or the MB board?) sensibly includes the Viola da Gamba Society numbers as part of each heading. In several Dering pieces, Smith has had to provide one or more of the parts; I had a closer look (randomly!) at no. 26 and found octaves between bass and part II in Bar 12 – the rest looks perfectly likely! With 38 pages of detailed critical notes, this volume is worthy of its predecessors in the MB series.

#### KEYBOARD MUSIC FROM THE FITZWILLIAM MANUSCRIPTS

Edited by Christopher Hogwood and Alan Brown

Musica Britannica CII, 2017. xlv+202.

ISMN 979 0 2202 2512 3; ISBN 978 0 85249 952 8

£105

Containing 85 works (six consisting of a pair of movements, one of two movements each with a variation), this volume had been in Christopher Hogwood's mind for decades, and was first offered by *Musica Britannica* in 1992. By the time of his death in 2014, proofs of the musical portion of the volume had been prepared but some editorial choices remained to be made, and brief notes had been left for a preface and introduction; enter Alan Brown who, as far as I can tell, has done a

fabulous job in finishing off such a monumental task. 28 pages of critical notes follow the music, including a most useful table that lists the entire contents of the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* (which makes up the bulk of this MB volume), detailing where in *Musica Britannica* each piece can be found. I fear the editors' concern that a larger book might have been a serious damage to an early keyboard is more than justified; even this tome is far heavier than the Dover edition of *FVB* which I had at university! Additional material from "Tisdale's *Virginal Book*" is also included (though only if there is a valid reason, since a complete edition was issued in 1966). Where possible, pieces are laid out on a single page or opening, so performers as well as scholars will welcome this volume.

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#### THE WORKS OF HENRY PURCELL: VOLUME 13

*Sacred Music: Part I: Nine anthems with strings*

Edited by Margaret Laurie, Lionel Pike and Bruce Wood Stainer & Bell, 2016.

ISMN 979 0 2202 2347 1; ISBN 978 0 85249 932 0

xxxiii+253 pp.

£75

The anthems in question are:

Behold, I bring you glad tidings  
Behold, now praise the Lord  
Blessed are they that fear the Lord  
*(John Blow's organ part is in the appendix)*  
I will give thanks unto the Lord  
My beloved spake (two versions!)  
My song shall be always  
O Lord, grant the King a long life  
They that go down to the sea in ships  
Thy way, O God, is holy

This volume is the last of the revisions of the Purcell Society's early editions of Purcell's "symphony anthems", taking into account new sources and re-assessing all of the old ones. In so doing, the slightly bewildering decision to modernise all of the time signatures has been retained; are we not yet sophisticated enough to deal with the originals? If the editors concede that there is some value in them (perhaps in indicating relative tempi), why confine them

to the (added) keyboard part? Similarly contrary is the decision to place the later version of *My beloved spake* after the original. Less contentious is the lack of any means of showing which text was extrapolated from the sources' idem marks – some publishers use italics, while others bracket added text. Essentially, anyone seriously wanting to know what Purcell's manuscripts actually looked like will have to seek them out (easily enough done by using the British Library's online manuscript pages), but surely a revision of this nature ought to have addressed such issues? To be honest, I'm also slightly disappointed that the line about taking into account new sources seems not entirely to be the case, since the accompanying notes for each anthem list those that were collated and those that weren't... Nonetheless, this is a beautiful book containing much fine music (of course!), and detailed lists of editorial changes. My overall feeling, though, is similar to how I feel about many infrastructure projects in the UK - why cause so many people inconvenience by adding an extra lane to an arterial road when projections show that in 20 years another will be needed? Will the Purcell Society have to fund someone else to produce another revised version of these anthems to address issues such as I have raised? Or is everyone else happy with such unnecessary modernisation of sources?

*Brian Clark*

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI: VOGLIO DI VITA USCIR  
(SV. 337) FOR VOICE & BASSO CONTINUO

Edited by Barbara Sachs

Peacock Press / Green Man Press Mv 2

£10.50

ISMN 979-0-708105-91-6

**T**his volume contains not one but two variant settings by Monteverdi of a text which is divided into two sections; the first (set over a ground bass) makes up around two thirds of the piece while the second (marked Adagio in one source, Largo in the other) begins over a descending fourth. In triple time throughout, the principle differences are pitch (they are a tone apart and a range of an octave and a fourth from the B below middle C and the C sharp above it respectively), and the presence of additional continuo-only bars in one and substantial repeated sections in the other. Sachs intelligently includes ossia's of the two most divergent passages, allowing performers to create further versions that suit their taste.

The set includes a full score with a green cover and

realized continuo, a second score without the cover but with all of the introductory matter and just voice and bass lines, and a continuo part with loose sheets to allow all three pages to be on the stand at once, thus avoiding the issue of impossible page turns. Similar care is taken over the layout of the score, though I would have tried to get bar 25 of the Neapolitan version on the previous line, and probably taken bars 77-78 on to the next line, but these are purely for aesthetic reasons (although arguably, repeats are more easily found at the beginnings of lines).

My only difficulty was that introduction. Of course, given that there are two divergent sources meant it was always going to be a challenge, but I found it confusing, for instance, that the two sources were referred to as Florentine and Neapolitan in one paragraph and then, in the next, being identified by the RISM sigla of the holding libraries (before the sources had been thoroughly – and I mean thoroughly! – discussed). Sachs also includes a nice translation of the text (including the three lines not set by Monteverdi, for the sake of completeness).

*Brian Clark*

FRANCESCO FOGGIA: MASSES

Edited by Stephen R. Miller

A-R Editions, Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era, B193

xxiv + 2 facsimiles + 354pp, \$245.00

ISBN 978-0-89579-844-2

**O**ther than Stephen R. Miller, I must be among the only people on the planet actively publishing Foggia's music; in fact, I had already started work on an edition of one of the pieces in the present volume (his parody mass on Palestrina's *Tu es Petrus* for nine voices). I had decided to explore mid-17th-century Italian music outside Venice, since it seemed to me odd that there were huge gaps in the available music, as if there were no composers worthy of consideration between Monteverdi and Vivaldi.

Foggia held many important positions in Rome and his considerable published legacy reflects that. Miller has chosen six representative masses: the *Missa Andianne à premer latte, e coglier fiori* (ATB, continuo – based on the madrigal of that name by Pomponio Nenna), the *Missa Corrente* (SATB, continuo), the *Missa La piva* (SSATB, continuo), a *Missa sine nomine* (1663, SSATB, continuo), the *Miss Exultate Deo* (SSATB, continuo) and the aforementioned *Missa Tu es Petrus* (SSATB, SATB,

continuo). The four-voice *Missa Corrente* was reprinted as *Missa brevis* and it omits the *Benedictus*.

Foggia was a skilled contrapuntalist with a strong sense of the overall shapes of his works; juxtaposing close imitation with homophonic (often triple time) passages holds the listener's attention. Miller has done a fine job of editing these six masses, though I question his decision to treat *C* as two-minim bars in some pieces and four-minim bars in others, while retaining a uniform three-semibreve bar for triplas, and even more so his decision not to transpose the *Missa Tu es Petrus* down from its original printed *chiavette* pitch (the lowest note currently is the *C* below middle *C*...)

I hope A-R Editions will release each of the masses separately so that small groups and choirs can perform this music and enjoy it – the volume is simply too expensive and too unwieldy for use in church or concert hall.

### GIUSEPPE ANTONIO BERNABEI: ORPHEUS

#### ECCLESIASTICUS

Edited by Michael Wilhelm Nordbakke

A-R Editions, Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era, B195

xii + 6 facsimilies + 203pp, \$175.00

ISBN 978-0-89579-849-7

When this volume arrived, I expected a collection of church music. Instead, it is a set of 12 sonatas (prefaced and concluded with texted canons for six and four voices respectively), dedicated to Leopold I, the Holy Roman Emperor, dated 1698.

The 12 Symphonias (as they are called) are divided into two groups; the first six are for two violins with continuo, while the second half features a (lost) *chelys gravior* (Nordbakke calls this cello) or *pentachordum* (gamba). In producing this edition, the editor has added the missing line. Nos. 1–6 have between four and six movements and average 165 bars, while the other six range from six to eight movements and are around 240 bars. Tempo markings are in Latin (just as the instrument names are in Greek), which may reflect the composer's perception of Vienna as a seat of learning, and the Emperor as a highly educated man.

I would like to hear the music, perhaps alongside pieces by Colista and Henry Purcell; while it lacks the "perfection" of Corelli, this is precisely the kind of music that informed the latter's contributions to the genre.

### WALTER PORTER: COLLECTED WORKS

Edited by Jonathan P. Wainwright

A-R Editions, Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era, B194

xxxiii + 10 facsimilies + 256pp, \$250.00

ISBN 978-0-89579-846-6

This volume presents Porter's *Madrigales and Ayres* of 1632, his *Mottets of Two Voyces* of 1657 and four pieces of dubious attribution in an appendix, and is thus the first to contain the complete surviving music by an important but little-known composer. The comprehensive introductory material includes all that is known of Porter's life, including a table identifying the likely dedicatees of his music, and the full texts in poetic format.

The music itself is impressive. The 1632 set (for two to five voices with continuo, 22 of the 27 pieces also featuring two violins) display an array of genres. Smaller pieces have instrumental introductions followed by the vocal music which is repeat for subsequent verses, while the larger settings are through composed and alternate extended solos very much in the Italian vein (he styled himself a friend of "Monteverde") with tutti passages (violins double the sopranos) that are predominantly homophonic but often hint at imitation. The *Mottets* are similarly short and once again predominantly melody and bass, rather more reserved in style than the virtuosity of Italian duets of the 1650s – the lower voices is always a bass, mostly doubling the continuo line. The appendix has a simple strophic song for soprano and continuo, and three catches (canons) for three basses.

The edition is nicely laid out with differences between the bass viol and continuo parts shown with minimal fuss. Typically of A-R Editions, they are generously spaced but with the wide syllables of English, in this case that is a good thing. All original accidentals are retained (also on consecutive notes) and very few are added. I was struck by the choice to split Orpheus's wife-to-be's name as "Eu-rid-i-ce", and I cannot begin to describe the ugliness of the hyphens placed tight to the right of each syllable. My only musicological reservation is – once again – the inconsistency of bar lengths in non-tripla; Wainwright argues that rather than indicating a minim count per bar, the two time signatures are more like tempo markings than metrical, but he does not explain why he has chosen to divide some measures into four minims and some only two.

Brian Clark

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH: THE ITALIAN STYLE  
BWV 989-1021-1023-1033-1034-1035 for Archlute  
transcribed by Paolo Cherici  
Selected Works Transcribed for Lute  
40pp, ISMN: 979-0-2153-2357-5  
SDS 23 (Bologna: Ut Orpheus, 2016) €15.95

In his Preface, Paolo Cherici justifies the practice of transcribing music from one medium to another, something which many musicians have done in the past, and which Bach himself did with some of his own compositions. The skill of the transcriber is to adhere as much as possible to the original, but not slavishly so, because the transcription must be idiomatic on the new instrument. Inevitably compromises have to be made.

Cherici explains why he chose to transcribe Bach's music for the 14-course archlute rather than for the 11- or 13-course baroque lute commonly used for solo music at the time of Bach. It comes down to tuning: he says that the archlute's 4ths reduce technical difficulties. I agree, and would add that the first six courses of the archlute covering two octaves, usefully provides a wider range of notes than the baroque lute's octave and sixth. Peter Croton, in the liner notes to his recording *Bach on the Italian Lute* (GMCD 7321) concurs that the archlute is preferable for Bach, and suggests that sometimes it may have been used in Germany for playing solos, not only for continuo.

Cherici uses three ornament signs, but his description of them is confusing: a single cross x ("inferior mordente"); a left bracket ("inferior grace note, tierce coulée"); and a comma , ("superior grace note, superior mordent or trillo"). The first two signs sometimes appear with an open string, so they cannot always involve an ornament below the note. There is plenty of blank space on the page, where musical examples could have clarified what he means.

Bach's *Aria variata alla maniera italiana* (BWV 989) was composed for harpsichord in A minor. The theme is reproduced in staff notation in the Appendix, in a version from the *Andreas-Bach-Buch*. Cherici transposes the music down a sixth to C minor for the archlute, so the highest note (c''') appears as e'' flat comfortably at the 8th fret. That makes sense for the treble notes, but it causes problems in the bass, where many notes are too low, and have to be transcribed an octave higher, i.e. a third higher than the keyboard original. In effect one has to cram a range of four octaves on the keyboard into three on the archlute. Add to this the advantage of using the long bass strings of the archlute, which are always played unstopped, and so

free the left-hand fingers to stop higher notes, and we have bass notes transposed down an octave, at pitch, or an octave higher. In bar 1, the first bass note is sensibly transposed an octave lower to enable the smooth passage of parallel sixths above, but it was unnecessary to transpose down the seven bass notes in bar 3, which creates a sombre effect, all notes lying an octave and a sixth below Bach's original. Cherici uses upward transposition to good effect with the bass fill-in at the end of the first variation. As one would expect with Bach, the ten variations show a remarkable degree of imagination, and require considerable skill from the performer, whatever instrument is used. Cherici's transcription is playable, and much of it falls well under the hand. However, there are tricky places, e.g. bar 55, where the chord h1+d2+e6 requires a barré across two frets.

Cherici provides transcriptions of three sonatas in the Italian style composed originally for flute and continuo. The first of these, *Sonata in C major* (BWV 1033), he transposes an octave lower, and it fits surprisingly well on the archlute. In fact with a few minor adjustments it fits well on a 10-course lute too, with many repeated low Cs easy to find at the 10th course. In the first movement, *Andante/Presto*, the flowing semiquavers of the flute part together with the slow-moving bass line, are enough to clarify the harmony, without the need for extra continuo fill-in chords, which Cherici saves up for important cadences. He tastefully adds in left-hand slurs, so the music flows effortlessly like something written by Weiss.

The second movement, *Allegro*, presents the transcriber with a dilemma: the bass line moves in quavers throughout the piece, often with each pair acting as an "um-ching" – for example, bar 1 has c g e g c g. To sustain all these quavers would create all kinds of technical difficulties, and the music would not flow smoothly. Cherici wisely removes many of the off-beat quavers, so the bass of bar 1 is reduced to crotchets c e c. In bar 2 the harmony changes to G major with B g d g B g, but removing off-beat quavers would lose the g needed to clarify the harmony. Here Cherici changes the bass line to three crotchets G B G – easy to play and harmonically unambiguous. The flute part moves in semiquavers, but to maintain momentum where it pauses for breath, Cherici imaginatively adds little semiquaver fill-ins to the bass. I like what he does with this movement. The notes fall well under the hand, and rarely venture to the 8th and 9th frets.

In the *Adagio*, Cherici enriches the two-part texture with chords, and substitutes long notes held on the flute with semiquaver divisions to maintain semiquaver movement.

He does the same with the two Menuetti thoughtfully adding extra melodic notes where appropriate. I think he gets the balance right, removing some notes and adding notes of his own, to create a piece which is idiomatic for the archlute.

The Sonata in G minor (BWV 1034) was composed for flute and continuo originally in E minor. Cherici has transposed it down a sixth, but I looked in horror at bar 38 of the Allegro where there is a letter p for a note at the 14th fret, assuming your archlute has 14 frets, and in bar 21 there is even a letter q for the 15th fret. Should not Cherici have transposed the Sonata down an octave, when that rogue q would have been a more respectable n? It would certainly make bar 21 easier to play, but unfortunately, as I found when experimentally transcribing a few bars down an octave, it would bring the lowest flute notes down to the fifth course of the archlute, and create all sorts of problems squeezing in bass notes below. When I actually tried playing Cherici's transcription, I got that q right first time, and although there was no fret, the note sounded fine. I had similar success with the p in bar 38, and conclude that Cherici was right after all to transpose the music down a sixth.

In bars 5-6 of the Adagio ma non tanto, Cherici has found an ingenious way of transcribing a high note on the flute: b", which lasts for a semibreve tied to a quaver. Normally one would simply re-iterate such a long note, because the plucked sound would otherwise soon fade. However, that would be rather crass for such an exposed note, so instead, Cherici plucks it once at the correct pitch, and then reiterates it seven times an octave lower, before retaking it again at the correct pitch for the next b" in bar 6. In this way the note is discretely sustained. Yet not only is this a satisfying solution from the musical point of view. There is also a technical advantage, because the note at the lower octave is an open string, easy to play, and allows the player's left hand to deal unhindered with the bass notes.

Other pieces in this edition comprise two sonatas for violin and continuo (BWV 1021 and 1023), and another sonata for flute and continuo (BWV 1035). In the Appendix, Cherici gives an alternative transcription of the Adagio from Sonata BWV 1021, which includes his own diminutions. The Aria variata was composed when Bach was in Weimar (1708-17), and all the others when he was at Köthen (1717-23). In a footnote (only in Italian) Cherici suggests that BWV 1033 is probably by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach rather than Johann Sebastian. Cherici has succeeded in turning these pieces into fine

solos for the archlute. They are not easy to play, but would be rewarding with practice.

*Stewart McCoy*

TELEMANN: METHODISCHE SONATEN, BAND II

Edited by Wolfgang Kostujak

G. Henle Verlag Urtext 1466

70pp (score) + 3 parts (52, 44, 24pp)

This volume includes Urtext transcriptions (with realised continuo and extensive critical notes) of sonatas 7-12 from Telemann's *Continuation des Sonates Méthodiques* of 1732. The score is well laid out and comes with parts for Flute/Violin (melody part in large print, bass part small), Basso Continuo (staff sizes reversed) and Basso (just the figured bass in large print). One extraordinarily neat feature of the first two named parts are fold-out pages that instantly solve the perennial problem of finding places (that quite often don't exist) for convenient turns. Kostujak's continuo realisation is not the best; I've spotted consecutive fifths and there are too many examples of parallel motion for my personal taste. Still it means that people who cannot read figured bass can still enjoy playing this fine music. Full information on the sources and advice on the interpretation of ornaments used is given in English and German at the end of the score; the Preface is also translated into French. Without a doubt, this volume should be acquired by anyone wishing to play this music.

*Brian Clark*

ANDREA ZANI: SIX SONATAS, OP. 6

for Violin and Basso continuo

Edited by Brian W. Pritchard – Jill Ward

Doblinger: Diletto Musicale DM1493

ISMN 979-0-012-20427-5

56pp (including 12 of notes and one of critical commentary, the former in English and German, the latter only in English) + two parts for Violin (24pp) & Violoncello (16pp)

Zani produced three sets of violin sonatas, of which this is the last, printed in around 1743 by Hue of Paris. The six pieces (D, e, B flat, g, E, c) are all cast in the four-movement sonata da chiesa form; the slight majority are binary in design, though there are a reasonable number of through-composed pieces. They lack any of the virtuosity of Leclair's sonatas from around the same time, so they are probably an excellent stepping stone for

students with the Frenchman's music in their sights. The violin part is laid out perfectly and avoids page turns, but the more compact part for the cello does not quite manage to be totally user friendly, and there are two places where the cellist will have to make a copy of a third page. That is a small quibble with an otherwise excellent production.

Brian Clark

## BOOKS

DANIEL R. MELAMED, *HEARING BACH'S PASSIONS*

Updated edition, OUP: 2016

204pp, £14.99

ISBN 978-0-19-049012-6 (paperback)

This indispensable handbook for all interested in performing, exploring and listening to Bach's remaining Passions was first published in 2005. Now Daniel Melamed has revised and updated it in the light of recent research and some new discoveries, as well as the changing fashions in historically informed performance practice. Alongside up-to-date bibliographies and discographies, it has a set of tables in the back with the contents of the Good Friday Vespers in Leipzig in Bach's time, the Passion repertory in Bach's possession and a Calendar of all his known passion performances in Leipzig; there are lists of the vocal parts for the 1725 John, the 1736 Matthew and the anonymous Mark passion. There are lists of the various movements in the different versions of the Passion, including the Mark BWV 247 and the anonymous Luke BWV 246, and there are suggestions for further reading and a good index. All this makes this slender volume – 178 pages in all – an enormously useful guide to the issues around current research and performance.

Melamed's Preface to this 2016 edition lists the new discoveries: a printed libretto for the 'lost' St Mark Passion BWV 247 of 1731 dated 1744, confirming that this Passion entered Bach's repertoire and was not just a one-off; a Nuremberg publication of 1728 containing a number of church texts including a libretto that corresponds to the 1725 version of Bach's St John Passion; and a libretto for a Leipzig performance directed by Bach of a poetic Passion by Heinrich Stölzel, containing no direct biblical text, but only a paraphrase on the lines of the Brockes passion set by Telemann and Handel amongst others. A Passion without the actual biblical text seems to have been frowned on in Leipzig.

He lists other important published sources, including the [www.bach-digital.de](http://www.bach-digital.de) website that reproduces most of the surviving autograph scores and parts, outlines the areas where research continues – in the connection between the Cöthen Funeral Music and the Matthew Passion, for example, and draws our attention to significant recent studies – Eric Chafe's *J. S. Bach's Johannine Theology* (OUP, 2014) and John Butt's *Bach's Dialogue with Modernity: Perspectives on the Passions* (CUP 2010) among them.

His introduction is impressively comprehensive: Melamed takes us through questions of performing forces, the liturgical context and the text of Bach's Passions and then comes to the music itself and the way we hear it compared to Bach's listeners. Novel to them would have been the recent Oratorio Passions, with their operatic sounding ariosos and arias. But while we can pretty accurately reconstruct the instruments and the size of both playing and singing groups, what can we discern about the ears through which these compositions were heard and the sound of those voices through which they were realised?

Part I rehearses the evidence for *Vocal Forces in Bach's Passions*, and their numbers in relation to the instruments – still, in spite of the evidence marshalled by Joshua Rifkin and Andrew Parrott, a hotly contended issue – and follows this with a section on *Singers and their Roles in the Passions*. Melamed reminds his readers of the evidence for the size of the chorus, and of the nineteenth century origins of the tradition of performances with large choirs. He then helps his readers to step behind the modern operatic convention that one singer 'represents' a particular character and realize that Bach's singers sing all the music in their voice-part, and so – like us – find themselves exposed to contradictory demands and emotions. This is important if listeners are to feel drawn into the liturgical action of the Passions and experience the challenges they pose, and not merely observe them from their seats as concertgoers. He also rehearses the diversity of practice between different performances, and asks why subordinate roles were sometimes given to the principal singer or to a *ripienist* or even sometimes written in an entirely separate part – were these parts perhaps sung by an instrumentalist? We have no means of knowing, as each performance produced its particular revisions. Certainly my own conducting scores are littered with names of performers who took roles on different occasions, crossed or rubbed out when other singers' names were inserted. This is a useful summary of the discussion that was generated first by John Butt in *Bach's Dialogue with Modernity* (CUP 2010), who has put into practice

much of what we know about the place of the Passions in the liturgical life of the worshippers in Leipzig in the first third of the eighteenth century in his recording with his Dunedin Consort of the St John Passion in 2012/3 (LINN CKD419).

Part II is headed: *Passions in Performance*, and devotes a chapter to each of the Matthew, John and Mark Passions. The focus of that on the Matthew is: *Is Bach's St Matthew Passion really for double chorus and orchestra?* To which his answer seems to be both yes and no. In some ways I find this a less satisfactory chapter, though its fuller form published in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 2004, vol. 57, no. 1 is more persuasive. Unlike other chapters, it does not seem to me to address the essential question that those who listen to or perform the Matthew need to grapple with. For me, that question is not about the two cori and whether they have independent or merely intertwined lines: several of the motets are in two choirs, and there are those cantatas like BWV 67, *Halt im Gedächtnis*, which have a Vox Christi responding to disciples or some other form of one against three like *Eilt, eilt* in the John Passion. Nor does Melamed refer to Peter Seymour's recording with the Yorkshire Bach Soloists of the early version of the Matthew with its single continuo line (Signum SIGCD 385) as I imagine that his revised book was already with the publisher before Seymour's recording was published.

The Matthew is nowhere as dramatic as the John in its setting of the biblical narrative, but the quality of the melodic material in the ariosos and arias has an instinctive appeal. In a work where each singer covers many different roles, how does the principle, enunciated by Luther in his sermons on the Passion in 1519 and 1521, that it is wrong to blame others – the Jews or Judas – for the death of Christ as we are all we are fallen sinners so corporately responsible, work out in practice for the listeners – the congregation? The more pressing question for me about the Matthew is how Bach works with the two cori, a step beyond the single coro with the additional four ripienists of the John, to help us understand the theology of Matthew's passion narrative and develop our reflection on it. In other words, how does the dramatic interplay between the 'Daughter of Zion' (coro I) and the 'Believers' (coro II) contribute both musically and theologically to the evolving work?

The Chapter on the John Passion is called *Which St John Passion BWV 245: What do we do when a composition survives in several versions?* Here we are on ground that performers have been grappling with for some time, and where the questions of how a *ripieno* group or second coro

was used seem relatively clear: you cannot perform *Mein teurer Heiland* without a second bass singer, and ripieno parts for all four voices survive, making it clear that the St John Passion was performed by eight singers in the coro.

What is more complex is to establish with some clarity just which of the four known versions any one performance will follow. Clearest is the second, from 1725, because it is from this version that the bulk of the surviving parts date. But that is also the least typical, with a large number of substitutions of different arias, choruses and chorales steering the work in a more apocalyptic theological direction, made perhaps to distinguish the work from the previous year's performance. In the third version from around 1732, Bach restored a good deal of the material from 1724, though he substituted muted violins and a keyboard for the violas d'amore and lute of 1725 in *Betrachte and Erwege*, and in this version, *Ach, mein Sinn* and *Zerfließe* had a substitute aria and an instrumental sinfonia respectively, both of which are now lost. For the final revision in 1749, there was a more wholesale return to the earliest version musically with only slight tweaks musically, but this time the rather striking imagery in the text of a number of the arias was toned down in a more rationalistic manner, and we can only imagine what theological controversies or undercurrents may have provoked this. Again, what developing theological understanding of his own might lie behind Bach's changes? We cannot know, and can only surmise from the textual history.

The third chapter in this section is called *A St Mark Passion Makes the Rounds: What should we make of the eighteenth-century practice of reworking passion settings for performances in various times and places?* This section is on how working church musicians like Bach used and adapted other people's work to fulfil a liturgical requirement, when there was not the reverence that would now be felt for the integrity of a composer's composition. The working example is the St Mark Passion that was long thought to be by Reinhard Keiser, and first surfaces in a performance in 1707 at Hamburg. Some arias in a more Italianate style were added to this Passion – these *were* by Keiser – before this bundle reached Bach for the first of his performances of it somewhere in Weimar between 1711 and 1714. In making a set of parts, Bach seems to have added a couple of arias of his own. This was the Passion that he performed in his third year in Leipzig, in 1726, and at least again in the 1740s for which a number of further arias were added from Händel's Brockes passion, as evidenced by the very few parts that survive from that revision, prompting Melamed

to conjecture that someone somewhere is sitting on the surviving set! What these substitutions and borrowings show is that Bach was adapting other people's material, but with each revision making it closer to the theological conception behind his own setting of the Mark Passion, to which he turns next.

In *Parody and Reconstruction: The St Mark Passion BWV 247*, the question he asks is *Can the eighteenth century practice of reusing vocal music help us recover a lost Passion setting by Bach?* Here there are two examples: first the extensive parodying of the Matthew Passion and the *Trauerode* in 1729 to produce the funeral music for Prince Leopold in Cöthen. Those familiar with Andrew Parrott's 2004 reconstruction and have had the opportunity to compare that with Morgon Jourdain's more recent version by the Ensemble Pygmalion under Raphaël Pichon will have seen the 'restorer's' skills at work. The second is the St Mark Passion which we know that Bach presented on Good Friday 1731, and we can reconstruct some of it, because the libretto survives in a collected publication of Picander's – Bach's favourite librettist's – verse published in 1732. To use the rhythms of Picander's verse to recover suitable music is sometimes easier, and the *Trauerode* seems again a likely source for at least the opening and closing choruses. The chorales too can mostly be traced in Bach's extensive oeuvre. Arias can sometimes conjecturally be matched, but the ariosos and the recitative carrying the narrative never. So he concludes that all the versions – and there are several by reputable conductors – are ersatz, and at best can be no more than a modern pastiche in the eighteenth-century tradition. I think that this is right, and have never felt able to present one of these versions, as they have never seemed to me to be what it says on the tin.

Where does that leave Melamed with the Luke Passion to which the nineteenth century editors of the BG confidently assigned the number BWV 246? Clear for internal reasons and from what we can discern about the music's transmission that it cannot be genuine Bach, and uncertain as to whether it was ever performed by Bach, Melamed concludes that it will be its fate to be Bach and Not Bach forever.

While it is good to be reminded of the reception history of these imperfect works, my take on this guide is that it is those performance issues that surface in the earlier part of the book that are the most useful practically to performers and listeners alike. Other performance issues that might have deserved a mention include the use of the harpsichord, the pitch of the violone, the use of the Bassono Grosso in

the 1749 revision of the John – does it really mean what we mean by a Contra-bassoon, or was it used more as the wind equivalent of a G violone? – and the pitch and temperaments of the organ(s). Another table might have given the ranges of the voice-parts in the various Passions, including the bit-parts.

But performers and listeners alike will learn something they did not know from this brief work, and the publishers should be congratulated on this revision and reprint.

David Stancliffe

## RECORDINGS

### Medieval

#### EL CORAZÓN DE ALFONSO X EL SABIO

*Cantigas de Murcia*

[Música Antigua], Eduardo Paniagua

61:53

Pneuma PN-1560

The four volumes of the 13th-century *Cantigas de Santa Maria* by Alphonso X (the Wise) constitute the most important musical collection to survive from medieval Spain, and the present CD is part of a remarkable project by Eduardo Paniagua's *Musica Antigua* to record them all – a project which seems from the group's discography to be well underway. For this CD they have selected those *Cantigas* which have associations with Murcia, where Alphonso X's heart and entrails are buried. These provide a fascinating and engaging narrative which the programme notes both explain and illustrate, by reproducing the spectacular illustrations from the original manuscript. On the other hand, the opening pages of the booklet are unnecessarily cluttered, and an English translation of the instruments used is lacking, although the rest of the information and text appears in Spanish and English. It would have been interesting to have read a little more about the instruments, such as the chalumeaux which feature in track 4 – the chalumeau makes its first documented appearance on the musical scene in the early 1700s, although I'm sure the group are correct to assume that a single-reed clarinet-type pipe probably appeared first in the middle ages. Generally speaking, *Musica Antigua* produce a convincing sound using a mixture of appropriate instruments and singing and narrative voices. Ornamentation is effortless and natural and there is a

delightful flow to these readings. I occasionally felt that the recorded sound was a little immediate, where a little more space and resonance would have made for more comfortable listening. I was unable to find where or when the recordings had been made, but I hope that they were within the hearing of Alphonso's remains.

*D. James Ross*

## 15th century

### TINCTORIS: SECRET CONSOLATIONS

Le miroir de musique, Baptiste Romain

70:00

Ricercar RIC380

Primarily known as a musical theorist, it is perhaps unsurprising that with the increasing amount of his music available on CD Johannes Tinctoris has gradually emerged as an accomplished and prolific composer in his own right. In an intriguing and highly informative programme note David Fallows attempts to follow the composer's erratic progress across Europe and to tie this in with his various sacred and secular compositions. At one point a series of rapid 'yo-yo swings' back and fore across many miles reminded me of a similar situation I encountered with a Renaissance composer, which turned out to involve two entirely separate people! In Tinctoris' case the surprising conclusion is that the bulk of his compositions and theoretical works all date from one brief period in the 1470s when he was in Naples – an interesting lesson for those of us tempted to spread composition dates throughout the often blank canvas of a Renaissance composer's lifetime. The emerging picture of Tinctoris simply pouring out music and musical theory in one brief burst of activity must also increase the likelihood that he has something to do with the six brilliant and anonymous *L'Homme Armé* mass cycles from around this period associated with the Naples court. We are given the Kyrie of Tinctoris' own brilliant *L'Homme Armé* mass here, as well as movements from one of his three-part Masses sine nomine. There are also motets and instrumental music both by Tinctoris and composers in his creative orbit such as the English/Scottish composer Robert Morton and Alexander Agricola, from whom we have an instrumental arrangement of music by Ockeghem. Morton, who worked with Dufay and Binchois at the Burgundian court, is largely known for his simple setting of the *L'homme Armé*

(which some musicologists believe he may also have composed) but is represented here by an exquisitely lovely sung rondeau, *Le souvenir de vous me tue*. Taking their name from a lost theoretical work by Tinctoris, Le Miroir de Musique play and sing this music with enormous authority, producing a delightfully straight sound which brings out beautifully the subtleties of Tinctoris' remarkable music. The vocalists are doubled up to two-to-a-part in the mass movements to produce a wonderfully rich and compelling texture, and these for me are the highlights of this highly enjoyable CD. Highly enjoyable too are the instrumental rondeaux featuring wonderfully abrasive instruments such as the rebec and the gut-strung bray harp.

*D. James Ross*

### ALTA DANZA

*15th century dance music in Italy*

les haulz et les bas

79:24

Christophorus CHE 0213-2 (c 1998)

If the sound of shawms, sackbut and bombard floats your boat, then this CD is certainly for you. You will seldom hear these loud outdoor instruments more expertly played and at the same time with enormous flamboyance and yet with pinpoint intonation and balance. Having dabbled with shawm and bombard, I know just how hard it is to play extended dance pieces such as we have here and maintain pitch and unanimity. The brilliant thing about this ensemble is that, should you tire of the 'alta' consort, there is a quiet 'bassa' ensemble of fiddle, lute and tambourine to provide textural variety. Most of the music here, taken from dance treatises, seems to be by one or other of two 15th-century Italian composers, Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro and it is presented in forms which would allow it to be danced to. This has involved arranging the music fairly heavily both as regards repeats, but also harmonizing music which survives only as melodies. Véronique Daniels, the group's dance adviser, makes a cogent case in the notes for adapting the original melodies for mainly four-part ensemble, although this begs the question if the original owners of the treatises would simply have improvised the part music. It seems to me unlikely that they would have come up with such felicitous arrangements as we find here, but that is all to the good. It is lovely to hear this music in extended performances which would have permitted the often complex dances they were written for to be executed, and we have to assume that the

advice of a specific dance expert will have ensured realistic tempi. This is a lovely CD, which cleverly and inventively sidesteps the two potential pitfalls that await projects of this sort – the danger of boredom from monochrome textures or very obvious harmonisations, and the stultifying effect of lots of tiny short dance episodes. And, as a bonus, we have some very funky bagpiping from the group's director, Ian Harrison, and Gesine Bänfer!

*D. James Ross*

### BENEATH THE NORTHERN STAR

*The rise of English polyphony 1270-1430*

The Orlando Consort

72:13

CDA68132

Alanus, Byttering, Chirbury, Damett, Dunstaple, Excetre, Gervays, Power & anon

Setting aside my objection to the 'Northern Star' reference – there was ground-breaking polyphony of superlative quality being composed at this time further north in the British Isles – this CD is a useful look at the roots of English polyphony. It throws a new spotlight on some unfamiliar and mainly anonymous English music from the period immediately prior to the Old Hall Manuscript, although the notes are vexingly vague about the sources of this earliest repertoire. I have often had reservations about the sound the Orlando Consort produces, and here too particularly with the earliest repertoire there is an annoying degree of vibrato in the inner voices, while the music seems to be divided between 'sweet' music, which receives gentle performances, and 'lively' music, which is given altogether rougher treatment. There are entire pieces here where the blend is never truly established, and I find it hard to tolerate this, let alone begin to enjoy it. Having said that, there is a general clarity of articulation and a pleasing parity of balance in more animated sections. With the slightly later repertoire from Old Hall onwards, the situation is generally happier, and the expected music of Power and Dunstaple is complemented with less familiar repertoire by Byttering, Gervays, Damett and Alanus. This is an informative survey of the roots of English polyphony, but to judge it at the highest level, I do have reservations about some of the performances. I know that the Orlando Consort has a dedicated and enthusiastic following, and their fans will not hesitate to invest in this CD, and a fair proportion of the works here are simply not available elsewhere.

*D. James Ross*

## 16th century

### IL BARBARINO: MUSICA PER LIUTO E VIOLA DA MANO NEL CINQUECENTO NAPOLETANO

Paul Kieffer *lute/viola da mano*

59:54

Arcana AD105

Paul Kieffer presents an interesting anthology of Neapolitan music, 24 pieces in all, of which 15 have not been recorded before. Eleven pieces are from the Barbarino manuscript (hence the title of the CD), Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Mus. ms. 40032, a manuscript compiled approximately from 1580 to 1611 by a castrated lutenist called Barbarino: a variety of anonymous pieces – Tenore di Napoli, Pavana de España, Volta, Folia en primer tono, Toccata, and Matachin con sus diferencias – and music by named composers – Fantasia by Luis Maymón (d. before 1601), Fuga and Canto llano y contrapunto by Francesco Cardone (d. before 1601), Fantasia by Fabrizio Dentice (c.1530-1581), and an intabulation by Giulio Severino (d. 1583) of Palestrina's "Da poi che vidi vostra falsa fede". I deduce from the Palestrina intabulation that Kieffer's lute (anhandel

8-course in F by Grant Tomlinson) is fretted in some kind of meantone temperament – maybe sixth-comma – because the chord of C major (a2 + a3 + b4 + c5) has a slight sourness arising from that temperament, a price well worth paying for the purity of intonation obtained with other chords. The Tenore di Napoli sounds similar in style to Giovanni Pacoloni (divisions over a slow-moving ground), but with a more interesting chord sequence perhaps based on an old basse danse tenor. This and the other dance pieces on the CD, contrast with the more cerebral Fantasias of Dentice, thoughtfully interpreted by Kieffer in an unhurried performance, with clear voice-leading, savoured dissonance, and nicely shaped phrases. There are four altogether, including three from the Sienna lute book; one of these (track 4) starts with a slow-moving theme which is developed in some quite surprising ways before breaking into a more homophonic passage, and finishing with faster-moving intricate polyphonic lines. Kieffer plays three Ricercars by Francesco da Milano (1497-1543), not that Francesco is thought to have visited Naples, but because some of his music was published there in 1536 in *Intavolatura de Viola o vero Lavto ... Libro Primo* [and *Libro Secondo*] *della Fortuna*. Tracks 13, 14 and 20 are Ness nos 11, 10 and 8 respectively. Kieffer's restrained

speeds allow the music to breathe, and we can enjoy all the tied notes in Ness No 8. Interestingly Kieffer's 2'33 is only four seconds slower than Paul O'Dette's 2'29 – both players clearly like to take their time with this Ricercar. The “viola” given in the title of the book as an alternative to the lute, is the viola da mano, a guitar (more or less)-shaped instrument with the same tuning as the lute. Kieffer plays the three Francesco ricercars on a 6-course viola da mano in G built by Peter Biffin. It has a bright, sweet sound, although notes on the sixth course sound a little plunky, which is inevitable with gut strings. One can tell from the final chord of Ricercar 8, that the lowest four courses are tuned in octaves: the F major chord d2+d3+e4+f5 would sound f'+c'+a+f with unison stringing, but one can clearly hear the note a' sounding as the highest note of the chord, produced by the upper octave of the fourth course. Also included in the CD are two very fine fantasias by Perino Fiorentino (1523-1552) taken from *Intabolatura de Lauto* (Rome, 1566), a reprint of an earlier edition published in 1547 in Venice. Fiorentino is described on the title page as a disciple of Francesco, and indeed these fantasias sound like good Francesco, aided and abetted by the delicate sound of the viola da mano and Kieffer's sensitive and tasteful performance.

Stewart McCoy

## WILLIAM BYRD: LATE MUSIC FOR THE VIRGINALS

Aapo Häkkinen

67:31

Alba ABCD 405

+ Gibbons Pavan & Galliard Lord Salisbury

Two decades ago, when Davitt Moroney's boxed set of Byrd's complete keyboard music was released, there was the worry that it might have the effect of stalling many or indeed any further recordings of this repertory. Thankfully it had the opposite effect, and there has been a steady succession of recordings featuring aspects of Byrd's output for harpsichord, virginals and organ. One such in 2000 was *Music for the Virginals*, a fine cross section of Byrd's *oeuvre* played by Aapo Häkkinen (Alba ABCD 148). After what does not seem like as many as seventeen years, he has followed this up with a selection of pieces identified as coming from the later period of Byrd's career.

It is another judicious combination of reassuringly familiar pieces plus others less well known, all of them of course outstanding compositions. So beside the pavan and

galliard sets dedicated to Sir William Petre, 1575-1637 (sic: the later version in *Parthenia* from 1612/13, not the version dedicated to “Mr:” Petre in My Lady Nevell's Book, 1591) and to the now currently fashionable Lord Salisbury (aka Robert Cecil, the King's Secretary at the time of the Gunpowder Plot) which is also in *Parthenia*, we have the fine pair in d from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book (BK 52), plus the arrangements, paired in one source, of Dowland's *Lachrymae* and James Harding's *Galliard*, and the delightful Galliard (BK 77) from Will Forster's Virginal Book, which could be paired with the Pavan BK 76 (not included here) though they are not placed adjacently by Forster ... who is shortly to be identified for the first time, in a forthcoming article by the arch genealogical sleuth John Harley, possibly early next year. Forster is also the source of a setting of Dowland's *If my complaints* which has now been admitted into the Byrd canon not only for its quality but also because an inferior setting in the same source is attributed to Byrd, probably in mistake for this one. Meanwhile Fitzwilliam is also the source of the usually neglected third setting of *Monsieur's Alman* which setting was recognised only relatively recently. There are major sets of variations in the great *John come kiss me now* and the less flamboyant *Go from my window* alongside the amazing ground *The bells* (the ringers at our parish church are practising as I type this) and the now famous *Fancy for My Lady Nevell*.

The disc concludes with Gibbons's pavan and galliard also dedicated to Salisbury aka Cecil; no explanation is given for their inclusion on a disc the title of which specifies Byrd. While these fine pieces are in principle always welcome, it is a shame that the opportunity was not taken to include two more pieces by Byrd himself, perhaps even from his peripheral repertory which I mention below.

All the performances are straight out of the top drawer. Häkkinen's greatest virtue is in his metrical flexibility, not adhering rigidly to the metronome, but never losing his rhythmic or structural grip when responding to the ebb and flow which Byrd builds into his music. This is an ideal recording for anyone test-driving Byrd's music for the first time, or for any aficionado of Byrd seeking some different slants on how his work is interpreted. This is supposed to be a critical review so, besides my reservation about the inclusion of music by Gibbons, I will scrape up one gripe: many of the recordings of Byrd's keyboard music since Moroney's have made for themselves a niche by including at least one piece which does not appear in Moroney's monumental and comprehensive set – usually a contemporary arrangement for keyboard of a song or

consort piece by Byrd. Hakkinen did this on his previous disc, including a contemporary arrangement of *Lulla Lullaby*. This time he commendably includes the recently accepted *If my complaints* but Moroney had already done so in his box. Nevertheless this illustrates the lengths to which this reviewer has to go in order to find anything about which to complain: if my complaints are this trivial, it confirms that Aapo Hakkinen's disc is simply outstanding.

*Richard Turbet*

CAVAZZONI: COMPLETE WORKS: ITALIAN  
RICERCARS

Glen Wilson *harpsichord*

79:34

Naxos 8.572998

Veggio & + music by Brunel, Fogliano, Merulo, Parabosco, Segni, Veggio, Willaert & anon

**G**len Wilson has been systematically exploring the early keyboard repertory for Naxos for many years. Having devoted a recording to the earliest keyboard publication, the *frottole* intabulated by Andrea Antico in 1517 (Naxos 8.572983), here he turns his attention to the next print, the *Recercari, motetti, canzoni, libro primo* of Marco Antonio Cavazzoni. Since it contained just eight pieces he has filled the disc with Cavazzoni's only other surviving piece, (a *ricercar*) as well as *ricercars* by his son Girolamo and by a series of composers including Fogliano, Brunel, Veggio, Parabosco and Merulo. This intentionally provides us with a survey of the *ricercar* from its origins up to Merulo. The disc is also designated as a celebration of the oldest surviving harpsichord, known to have been owned by Pope Leo X who employed Cavazzoni, and pictured on the cover; though not stated in the notes, this is the Vincentius instrument now in the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. It is not in playing condition and, unfortunately, the liner notes do not tell us anything about the (clearly Italian-style) harpsichord used by Wilson – odd because he stresses in the notes his strong belief that harpsichord, rather than organ, was the instrument of choice in the early sixteenth century. That apart, Wilson's notes are extremely well-researched and useful. His playing is equally well-informed and the rather esoteric character of some of the *ricercars* is well contrasted with the lighter and more virtuosic intabulations. I was particularly struck by an attractive *recercada* by Claudio Veggio which, as Wilson points out, was in advance of its time stylistically. Wilson is more than up to the technical demands of this and the elder Cavazzoni's chanson arrangements, and the

recording quality is warm and clear. This is a very useful recording of some of the earliest surviving Italian keyboard music, attractively and convincingly presented.

*Noel O'Regan*

JEAN GUYOT: TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

Cinquecento Renaissance Vokal

63:31

Hyperion CDA68180

**N**ew to me as a composer, it is perhaps unsurprising that Jean Guyot turns out to be a composer of considerable originality and genius – I have learned almost to expect this as I encounter new names from the charmed world of Renaissance Franco-Flemish composition. Known as 'Castileti' due to the fact he was born in Châtelet, after some youthful travels, Guyot seems to have spent most of his life in Liège, composing works of entrancing richness and originality such as we hear on this CD. Of the large body of work he surely composed, some chansons in four and eight parts, several motets and a mass survive. Like the eight-part chansons, many of which favour the lower voices, these motets are texturally dense and in the flowing post-Josquin style – he clearly admired Josquin, writing a twelve-part version of the master's six-part Benedictus. Like the Scottish composer of music in many parts, Robert Carver, he studied at the University of Louvain and may have known the music of Brumel, while there is definitely something of the darkness of the music of Gombert here too. I always enjoy the rich, blended sound which Cinquecento produce as well as their intelligent readings of the music they perform, and they are the ideal advocates of Guyot's wonderful music, bringing a superbly professional gleam to his densely scored motets. These are works of exquisite beauty and striking originality, while the concluding *Te Deum laudamus* is a towering masterpiece of cumulative power and expressiveness, and a work which in Cinquecento's persuasive performance I found intensely moving. Beautiful music, superb singing, a vibrantly clear recording, fascinating and beautifully written programme notes – it doesn't get much better than this!

*D. James Ross*

ISAAC: NELL TEMPO DI LORENZO DE' MEDICI & MAXIMILIAN I

I. Dalheim, K. Mulders, P. Bertin, D. Sagastume, V. Sordo, Ll. Vilamajö, D. Hernández, M. Savazza, Ch. Immler, P. Stas, La Capella Reial de Catalunya, Herspèrion XXI, Jordi Savall

76:06

AVSA9922

Find this disc tiresome. It contains fine music by one of the best composers of his day, performed by capable musicians. Yet if it were a meal, it would come over-seasoned to conceal an underlying blandness. There is too much contrived beauty or animation or suavety at the expense of the music itself – a sort of early music for airports. Bells are so ubiquitous that they become comical in their incongruity. Then to begin dolorous choral works there is the cliché of the funereal drum, beside the rather desperate jollity of some of the instrumental pieces. *Sustinuimus* is a lovely motet overlarded with an unnecessary accompaniment of assorted winds and strings, bowed and plucked. *Innsbruch* is downright slushy, with too many different arrangements crammed into the one piece. Worst of all is *Quis dabit* in which the fussy arrangement distracts from the merits of this fine if doleful work: shades of Glenn Miller from the accompanying instrumental ensemble, irritating percussion, fidgety alternating solo and full vocal passages, and tastefully exaggerated lamenting on the part of the singers. Isaac's music can stand tall without this overindulgent treatment. The two following tracks are cut from the same cloth: more bells bong in the exquisite and undeserving *Sancti spiritus*, then *Angeli, archangeli* rambles on while the sonneur has a field day. And so on, past an achingly, self-consciously beautiful *Circumdederunt me* to the final track with the full String of Pearls treatment in the accompaniment, further fidgeting between solo and full choral passages, and enough tings and dings from the sonneur to render Evelyn Glennie envious. In all reluctant humility I entirely understand that many people will find a disc of this sort most attractive, and if it is going to draw folk to Isaac's music, as presumably Sting's disc drew folk to Dowland, then well and good; there is room for this sort of presentation, so long as there are recordings of Isaac's music that let it speak, or sing, for itself, rather than as some in the 21st-century wish to attire it. Oh, noisy bells, be dumb.

*Richard Turbet*

DE MANCHICOURT: MISSA REGES TERRAE

The Choir of St Luke in the Fields

David Shuler, conductor

65:44

MSR Classics MS 1632

An entire decade ago The Brabant Ensemble released a fine recording of a mass and motets by the French composer Pierre de Manchicourt (c. 1510-64), since when there has been little more than a trickle of his music on disc. This is a shame, because he was highly regarded in his own day, and the music is of the highest quality amidst that generation of composers between Josquin and Palestrina which is coming to be recognised as conceding little in quality to those two better known bookends, besides influencing the likes of Tallis and even Byrd. Now appears another disc of another mass by Manchicourt, plus five motets, sung by a choir based at a church in Greenwich Village, New York – not their first CD, but their first focusing on this repertory. Carrying on the good work of their Brabantine predecessors, it is stunning.

For a start, the programming is sensible and illuminating, underscored by some outstanding sleeve notes. The choir begin with the motet by Manchicourt himself on which he based his mass. The motet *Reges terrae* has already been recorded by some of the usual suspects – Huelgas Ensemble, The Sixteen, Nordic Voices – but surprisingly this is the premiere recording of the mass, and it is every bit as magnificent as the motet on which it is based. There are examples of relatively dull models inspiring fine masses, and masses failing to do justice to the models on which they are based, but both these works are outstanding. The four motets that follow – *Caro mea*, *Ne reminiscaris*, *Vidi speciosum* and *Regina caeli* – all maintain that excellence as music. It is invidious to select one for particular attention, but *Caro mea* encapsulates that which is best in Franco-Flemish polyphony, within an intense five minutes.

The mixed professional choir sings two to a part. The acoustic is generous. David Shuler adjusts his tempi sensitively in relation to the number of voices in play and whether the music at a given point is polyphonic or homophonic, complicated or straightforward. The individual singers give their lines clarity but blend well. And finally, conductor and choristers perform with conviction, letting Manchicourt's heavenly music sing for itself.

The British distributor for the disc is Classic Music Distribution, and the record can easily be obtained via

Amazon – my copy arrived within a few days. This CD is one of many recent examples of American ensembles recording neglected English Renaissance repertory. My recent article “Two Invisible Songs by Byrd” in the current number of *Musical Times* features two songs uniquely recorded by the Annapolis Brass Quintet in arrangements totally true to the originals. Similarly, the American Horn Quartet is responsible for the unique recording of *A feigned friend* from Byrd’s under-recorded *Psalmes, songs and sonnets* of 1611. Blue Heron have made a splash [sic] with their five discs devoted to Englishman Nick Sandon’s reconstructions from the Peterhouse partbooks. And I hope shortly to review a CD featuring a Peterhouse mass not selected by Blue Heron but recorded by yet another American choir, as their first ever commercial recording. Meanwhile buy this disc with confidence – not least because these fine performers deserve support for recording this glorious repertory.

*Richard Turbet*

IN NOMINE *Enfers et Paradis dans le paysage musical européen autour de 1600*

Les Harpies

65:10

Encelade ECL1502

The star of this CD is undoubtedly the Renaissance organ of Saint-Savin in Lavedan, which not only offers the aural treat of a kaleidoscopic variety of quite extreme stops and nightingale song, but also we are assured the visual treats of grotesque masks with sprung eyes and jaws all operated by the organist. I recall seeing a Baroque organ in Germany where trumpet-playing angels not only raised their trumpets to support the instrument’s trumpet stop, but also clapped their wings to thunderous effect, and this explains the loud extraneous noises during the organ items here, which I originally assumed to be rather random percussion. Built in 1557, this extraordinary instrument has now been restored to its original condition complete with the features I have mentioned as well as *trompe l’oeils* of the saints. Surely there is a message here for the church of today concerned at dramatically falling numbers of church-goers! Famous for their iconoclastic and energetic performances, Les Harpies and guest Harpie, Matthieu Boutineau, with Le Choeur des Huguenots take us on a colourful tour of music from around 1600 with often only tenuous connections with their stated themes. But who cares! This is highly entertaining stuff, presented

inventively and imaginatively, and played and sung with engaging panache and honesty. And Saint-Savin-en-Lavedan is now firmly on my holiday checklist! For organ nerds full details of the restoration projects which have brought the organ back to its current rude health as well as details of its stops are included, and for once I can begin to share in their enthusiasm.

*D. James Ross*

LUX FULGEBIT: THE MASS AT DAWN ON CHRISTMAS DAY

St Mary’s Schola Cantorum, David J. Hughes, *conductor & organist*

70:04

No label, no number.

William Byrd *Quem terra, pontus*; Alfonso Ferrabosco the Elder *Mirabile mysterium*  
Walter Lambe *Nesciens Mater*; William Rasar *Missa Christe Jesu*

The *Missa Christe Jesu* is the sole surviving work of William Rasar, who was a clerk at King’s College, Cambridge, until about 1515. This means that we know one thing about him rather than nothing. The latter is not unusual for composers whose works, like this piece, survive in the Peterhouse partbooks, where it lacks its tenor part. But in addition to actually knowing something about the composer, his single surviving work exists complete, as it is also in the Forrest-Heyther partbooks. All the more surprising that, with the current flurry of interest in Peterhouse repertory, this is the premiere recording of Rasar’s mass. It is a revelation. The choir to reveal it to the interested musical public is St Mary’s Schola Cantorum, a professional quintet which sings for services at St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church, Norwalk, Connecticut. Now, I am rather vain about my knowledge of American geography, but I have humbly to confess that I had never previously heard of Norwalk, which is situated between New York and New Haven. I am delighted to have made good my ignorance in the context of this premiere commercial recording of a unique work of the highest music quality.

The mass is sung in the context of the complete service, with bells, a celebrant and appropriate plainchant. As usual with English masses of the period there is no polyphonic Kyrie, but unusually the entire text of the Credo is set. The musical idiom is perhaps best described as Eton Choirbook meets Franco-Flemish. That said, the Gloria is almost alarmingly abrupt, seemingly over as soon as it has got going. Subsequent movements are less succinct, but overall the mass is by no means expansive in style. Nevertheless there is much fine music for the listener to enjoy and the

singer to relish. The offertory motet is what would seem to be the premiere recording of *Mirabile mysterium*, a fine work by the elder Alfonso Ferrabosco which the Schola has done well to bring into the public domain. There are two communion motets. The first is Byrd's three-part *Quem terra, pontus*. Although this is only its second complete commercial recording, the last of its five sections is a setting of *Gloria tibi trinitas* well known as an anthem in English cathedrals and similar choral foundations at men-only evensongs when the layclerks sing without the trebles. The other is Walter Lambé's five-part *Nesciens mater*, one of the most popular pieces from the Eton Choirbook.

The performances by the five voices are interesting, possessing more an intimate quality of a chamber quintet and certainly not raising the roof as some choirs can and do in this repertory. The timbre of each voice is clearly audible, but they blend well enough, and manage to differentiate the intimacy of the sections for reduced scoring with the full sections. The individual singers certainly do not have the sound of regular early music singers, but they are sensitive to the idiom of the music. In a critical review I feel I have to observe that the bass can sound a trifle plodding, though this does not impede the momentum of the music. Indeed, it is these very qualities, outside the regular early music box, that convey the aura of a real liturgical ensemble singing real liturgical music. Much as I admire the sheer professionalism of the recording by The Cardinal's Musick of Byrd's *Quem terra, pontus* I prefer on balance the three gentlemen of the Schola's more engaged, almost effortful performance. Particularly to savour is the balance of the voices in the final cadence, with its fleeting illusion of a beautifully timed and placed first inversion chord.

The notes are perfectly adequate and presented in a booklet of excellent quality. The celebrant's voice is thoroughly indifferent but this could be said to enhance the authenticity of the recording. There are also two organ improvisations which did nothing to increase this listener's enjoyment of the proceedings, but neither of these aberrations should deter any prospective purchaser from supporting this admirable initiative, and neither of them will impede the enjoyment of this glorious music and its committed and spiritual performance by the Schola.

For all its lack of a label or number, this disc can easily be obtained over the internet via CD Baby. I even received an amusing message to tell me that my copy was on its way.

*Richard Turbet*

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MUSIC FROM THE PETERHOUSE PARTBOOKS VOL 5  
Blue Heron, Scott Metcalfe  
55:34

BHCD 1007

Hunt, Mason, Sturmy, anonymous & Sarum plainchant

With this CD, Blue Heron and Scott Metcalfe reach the end of a ground-breaking collaboration with leading musicologist Nick Sandon recording 'lost' masterpieces from the Peterhouse Partbooks. As Professor Sandon has restored this unique musical treasury, notably recomposing the missing tenor parts, and published the music with Antico Edition, Blue Heron have recorded some of the finest works in performances which have consistently impressed me with their vibrant sound, poise, energy and musicality. In doing so, this highly important project, one of the most important early choral projects of our time, has unearthed a series of masterly composers hitherto virtually unknown. So it is in this latest volume with Hugh Sturmy, Robert Hunt, John Mason and perhaps most tantalizing of all the unnamed composer of the mysterious *Missa sine nomine*, which compounds its mystery by being based on a chant also not satisfactorily identified. Sharing some musical features with the earlier Eton Choirbook, the music of the Peterhouse Partbooks are of a similarly superlative standard, with a consistent richness and inventiveness unmatched anywhere else in the English choral tradition. The spotlighting of the breathtakingly beautiful music of Nicholas Ludford from this source has proved to be by no means an isolated flash in the pan, while the highly individual and superbly consistent motets recorded here are, if anything, capped by the strikingly original anonymous Mass with its string of musical surprises. Such is the authority of Scott Metcalfe and his singers with this repertoire that they negotiate even the most daringly challenging and unexpected passages with utter confidence, and, as previously, with a delicious blend of expressiveness and seemingly inexorable forward momentum. We should be very grateful both to Professor Sandon and this superb group of American singers and their director, as well as the project's far-sighted sponsors, for opening this unique window on one of the finest treasures of Renaissance English choral music. I am sure all concerned have other important work to be getting on with, but I for one would be thrilled to hear that the Peterhouse Project had been extended, even if only for one more CD – meanwhile, rush out and invest in the five that are already available!

*D. James Ross*

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## THREADS OF GOLD: MUSIC FROM THE GOLDEN AGE

York Minster Choir, Robert Sharpe

Regent REGCD488

Byrd *Ne irascaris*, O Lord, make Thy servant Elizabeth, Praise our Lord all ye gentiles, *Tribulationes civitatum*, *Vide Domine, afflictionem*; Orlando Gibbons *Glorious and powerful God*, *Great Lord of lords*, O God, the King of Glory; Mundy *Evening Service 'in medio chori'*; Tallis *In manus tuas*, *O sacrum convivium*, *O salutaris hostia*, *Videte miraculum*

This is a radiant recording of glorious music, sung by a fine provincial English cathedral choir right at the top of its game. The programme is a combination of unaccompanied works and those requiring accompaniment, is also a combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar, and is furthermore a combination of pieces intended for the Anglican liturgy, the Roman Catholic liturgy, and for domestic performance. Readers like me who prefer their performances to be historically informed will immediately wonder nowadays about a substantial Anglican male choir (17 trebles, 4 each of countertenors, tenors and basses) singing, in a generous cathedral acoustic, the three Latin pieces by Byrd, which were intended for domestic performance; but these works are sung with clarity and piercing intensity. Credit for these qualities goes to the performers for projecting their own lines while balancing and blending with their colleagues; and to the Director of Music, Robert Sharpe, for his judicious choices of tempi. I possess many (four and upwards) recordings of each of the Latin pieces by Byrd, and he and his singers do not miss or gloss over a single one of Byrd's many harmonic or melodic or rhythmic felicities. The choir sang the first track *Vide Domine, afflictionem meam* as the anthem on a recent broadcast of Choral Evensong on BBC Radio 3. It came over most impressively in that programme, and here it gets the disc off to the best possible start; the work concludes with a cadence that is stunning even by Byrd's standards, and notwithstanding a field that includes three other wonderful recordings, York's stands out, not least for their execution of that cadence. Another Byrdian moment to treasure is the fleeting prominence given by the singers to the open fifth between the two uppermost parts at the syllable "[irasca]ris" just after their respective entries near the beginning of *Ne irascaris*. Passing to works by other composers, in Tallis's *Videte miraculum* they show they can shape and sustain a work of nearly ten minutes' duration. At the opposite end of the liturgical spectrum, Mundy's *Service* is incandescent, as is Tallis's *O salutaris hostia* in a more pensive way. All three of Gibbons's works are verse anthems, with seemly solos sung appropriately to the ethos of the music and the Anglican liturgy, underpinned by

excellent accompaniments – understated but very much “there” - from David Pipe, not least throughout *Glorious and powerful God* in what must be its fastest version on disc! Byrd's searing symphonic three-movement sacred song *Tribulationes civitatum* brings the record to an impassioned but dignified conclusion. This disc is a huge credit to the boys, layclerks, conductor, organist, producer, engineers and editors, not forgetting John Lees for his fine notes in the excellent booklet.

Richard Turbet

## VAET: SACRED MUSIC

Dufay Ensemble, Eckehard Kiem

224:50 (4 CDs in a plastic box)

Brilliant Classics 95365

Jacobus Vaet had the misfortune to fall out of favour twice. A prominent composer in the middle of the 16th century, he ended up as imperial Kapellmeister in Vienna, although like all but a handful of his contemporaries he lapsed into obscurity within fifty years. Curious then that it was Vaet whom Friedrich Blume chose to feature beside the great Josquin in the opening 1929 volume of his seminal *Das Chorwerk*. Sadly where the latter went on to be completely rehabilitated, the former somewhat sank back into obscurity. This four CD set of his choral works, a drop in the ocean of his large output but a generous helping nonetheless, serves to outline his strengths and weaknesses by providing a representative cross-section of his sacred music. This proves not to be an unalloyed delight for a couple of reasons. The Roches' authoritative *Dictionary of Early Music* describes Vaet's early work as 'solidly imitative', and this is true of a fair percentage of the music recorded here, before we get into the later, more daring repertoire influenced by Lassus (and perhaps, as the programme note claims, the Venetians, although I found this harder to pin down). The polychoral repertoire is to my ear the most successful, particularly the Lassus-like setting of *Ferdnande imperio*, while the rather extravagant claims made in Peter Quantrill's programme note for his mastery of dissonance seem to me a little overblown. The other slight drawback to this set is that the singing is not quite as confidently accurate as it might be – perhaps the main reason why the project has appeared on the budget Brilliant Boxes label. A lot of the singing sounds tentative and a bit workaday, and there is some distinctly uncomfortable intonation. This is a pity, but together with the decidedly patchy quality of the music it makes this set an informative resource

rather than a listening delight. Having said that, many of the works here are receiving their premiere recordings, so anybody genuinely particularly interested in the music of Vaet or more generally in the repertoire of the Renaissance Viennese Hofkapelle will want to invest.

*D. James Ross*

## 17th century

### J. M. BACH | J. CH. BACH: COMPLETE ORGAN MUSIC

Stefano Molardi Volckland organ (Cruciskirche, Erfurt)  
211:56 (3 CDs in a box)  
Brilliant Classics 95418

**T**he indefatigable Stefano Molardi, who recorded all J. S. Bach's organ music for Brilliant Classics in 2013 and all Kuhnau in 2015, has given us the complete surviving organ music by two of the early Bach family organists, the bothers Johann Christoph and Johann Michael Bach. They worked throughout the latter half of the 17th century in Thuringia, and their works are substantially in that school of organ composition we associate with Johann Pachelbel. From J. C. there is a Prelude and Fugue and some sets of variations in the Pachelbel style, but the remainder of his work and all of J. M.'s is a variety of chorale preludes, largely with the initial voices in pre-imitation followed by the chorale melody in the *cantus firmus*. Such works, frequently improvised, were the bread and butter of a Lutheran organist's weekly liturgical performance, introducing the chorale and setting the context for the congregation's singing.

On that account alone, this would be a welcome production in the anniversary year of Luther's reformation. But it also introduces us to the sound-world in which Bach grew up. The Bach families were entwined, and Johann Sebastian's first wife was the daughter of J. M., and Arnstadt and Eisenach was where they lived and worked. This was what Bach heard in church, Sunday by Sunday.

The other significant factor is the instrument chosen for this recording: the cherished Volckland organ, built in 1732-7 for the Cruciskirche in Erfurt after its major rebuilding. Although the booklet gives the specification of the organ, reconstructed and restored by Schuke of Potsdam in 2000-03, the organ builder's website is surprisingly reticent about how much work was conservation and how much was 'reconstruction'. While it seems to me to be a

very satisfactory representative of the early 18th-century Thuringian school of organ building, the recording is not so clean as to make each combination of registers clear, and we are given the registration for none of the 131 tracks, which is a pity since there are no less than five 8' registers on the Hauptwerk besides the perky Vox Humana – the only manual reed. Choosing a registration is a significant part of the organist's interpretative skill. The instrument is just slightly anachronistic, and I wonder if one from the 1670s or 80s might not have been better.

But this is a significant and timely recording. It could have been both recorded and presented better, but I hope that all students of Bach's compositional technique will profit from the insights it delivers.

*David Stancliffe*

### CACCINI: LA LIBERAZIONE DI RUGGIERO DALL' ISOLA DI ALCINA

[Elena Biscuola *Alcina*, Mauro Borgioni *Ruggiero*, Gabriella Martellacci *Melissa*, Francesca Lombardi Mazzulli *Sirene/Una Damigella*, Emanuela Galli *La Nunzia Oreste/La dama disincantata*, Raffaele Giordani *Nettuno/Un Pastore/Una Pianta incantata*, Yiannis Vassilakis *Fiume Vistola/Astolfo*,] Allabastrina, La Pifarescha, Elena Sartori  
79:10

Glossa GCD 923902

**B**efore I write my review of the recording, a disclaimer: the edition used in the performance is my own. It never ceases to amaze me that working on a piece of music for several years (as I have with revisions and corrections of the score of Caccini's work, after performances and workshops have cast new light on it), no matter how many times one listens to it in Sibelius, and no matter how good the sound of digitally sampled instruments has become (even the wordless "singers" are quite convincing), there is no way a computer can ever compensate for human performance. Starting with the different colours instruments and voices can produce at the whim of the performers, obviously. So, hearing this short opera for the very first time has been an utter revelation. This is a lavish co-production between two ensembles with violins, recorders, viols, cornetti, sackbuts, theorboes, "arciviola lyra" (as the score requires), harpsichord and organ; sometimes the score is very specific in its demands, while at others unlabelled instrumental staves leave the choice of colours to the musicians themselves. Elena Sartori has made some judicious choices (including allocating two

voice parts to recorders in a *coro di damigelle*), and similarly shrewd alterations to the running order, as well as supplying music by other composers to accompany the balli referred to in the source. The singing – solo and ensemble – is excellent throughout with some characterful renditions of the parts, which help the listener to follow the action. Despite a relatively large number of continuo players, there is none of the kaleidoscopic approach which has dogged many a HIP production of late; each section (and often sequence of sections) maintains the same soundscape. They also relish Caccini's occasional harmonic boldness, without it becoming the centre of attention. Ultimately this is a very fine performance (and recording) of a work that really does deserve to be more widely known.

*Brian Clark*

CAPRICORNUS: LIEDER VON DEM LEYDEN UND TODE JESU

La Chapelle Rhénane, Benoît Haller  
73:07  
Christophorus 77407

When I saw this announced in the monthly bulletin from *harmonia mundi*, I was very excited; I have long been a passionate advocate of Capricornus's exceptionally fine vocal music, and the timing was great as a new recording of his *Jubilus Bernardi* is in the pipeline from an American ensemble. When it arrived, however, I realised that it is a re-release of a 2007 recording which Clifford must have passed on to someone else to review. My initial disappointment was quickly overcome when I listened to the disc and allowed myself to be moved once more by Capricornus; I cannot put my finger on precisely what it is that he does that resonates so deeply within me. For one thing, his word setting – not in the sense of “painting the meaning in music”, but rather almost imitating the natural rhythms of the spoken word – makes understanding the texts much more simple than if they were simply set to melodies that lend themselves to arcane contrapuntal ingenuity; somehow his music speaks to the listener directly. The programme intersperses three pairs of German works on the suffering and death with four pairs of Latin motets from his *Theatrum musicum*; the former requires two sopranos, four gambas and continuo, while the latter replaces the sopranos with alto, tenor and bass. Thus the language and the vocal timbre alternates throughout. Much as I enjoyed the recording (though with some reservations about the continuo realisations and

some of the frankly “worldly” singing, most evident in *O felix jucunditas*), my CD of choice for this repertoire will remain and even older one by Le Parlement de Musique with Martin Gester. The present booklet has reasonable notes, but no translations of the texts.

*Brian Clark*

CAVALLI: REQUIEM

Ensemble Polyharmonique, Alexander Schneider  
56:08  
Raumklang RK3601  
+ Motets by Alessandro Grandi

On his death in 1667, Francesco Cavalli left behind an eight-part Requiem as well as instructions on how it ought to feature in his funeral service. It is like something out of the plot of *Amadeus*, but in fact it was not unusual for composers to write their own musical envoi. It certainly guaranteed that the music was generally of the highest quality, as they assembled all the skills they had accrued throughout their lives for this one last attempt at immortality. Certainly Cavalli's serene and exquisite Requiem – firmly in the *stilo antico* – has this definitive feel about it. Cavalli's instructions call upon the entire instrumental and vocal forces which could be mustered by San Marco in Venice, where he was working, a vast army including no less than three organists. By contrast, singing one to a part with minimal instrumental support in the form of *arpa doppia*, *viola da gamba* and organ, the singers of the Ensemble Polyharmonique nonetheless give a passionate and moving account of Cavalli's music, interweaving motets by his older compatriot Alessandro Grandi into a powerful programme. It would be wonderful some time to hear the work given an epic performance such as its composer envisaged. The recent spotlight that has been turned on Cavalli's church music has revealed a composer as skilled in this sphere as he was in the realm of opera, and this Requiem is every bit as fine as the *Missa concertata* and vespers music which have featured on recent CDs.

*D. James Ross*

## CAVALLI: MIRACOLO D'AMORE

Raquel Andueza *soprano*, Xavier Sabata *countertenor*,  
La Galania

67:31

Anima Corpo AEC 006

Duets & Arias from *La Calisto*, *Elena*, *L'Egisto*, *Eliogabalo*, *Erismena*, *Giasone*, *Gli amori d'Apollo di Dafne*, *LL'Ormino*, *Pompeo magno* & *La Rosinda*

Recitals devoted to extracts from Cavalli operas are comparative rarities, and I can call only one other recent example to mind, a Glossa CD with *La Venexiana*. It is significant and a measure of the rich diversity to be found in Cavalli's substantial body of operas – there are 33 – that there is no overlapping of repertoire with this new disc featuring Spanish artists. However, as we will see, there are similarities between the two in other respects.

As anyone who has seen any Cavalli opera knows full well, whatever the background story they are dominated by one topic – love, 'miracolo d'amore'. Or perhaps we might more pithily say, sex, exploited by Venetian 17th-century opera in general and by Cavalli in particular with an unashamed abandon that it would take the 20th century to emulate, but then usually in a far less subtle manner. So among these duets and arias we find love with all disparate variants: lustful desire ('O mio cor' from act 1 of *Giasone*, 1649), the lament for lost love ('Misero, così va', set over a ground bass, from the violent and never-performed *Eliogabalo*, 1667), playful love ('Amante, sperate' from *L'Egisto*, 1643) and so forth. The lion's share of extracts are taken from *Giasone*, rightly described by Lorenzo Bianconi in his notes for the complete Jacobs recording as 'the most highly acclaimed, the most reviled opera of the Italian 17th century', the most acclaimed because it was revived more often than any other Italian opera, the most reviled because it was a serious mythological story treated, as some literary scholars saw it, in a flippant manner. Long after Cavalli's death it would be used as a big stick to change the entire course of Italian opera. But that's another story. Here there are four extracts devoted to the love between Medea and Jason, though *Giasone's* 'Delizie, contenti' (act 1) is addressed to the joys of love generally rather than the mother of his twins, whose identity at that point in the opera remains unknown to him.

One reason recitals of extracts from Cavalli's operas are infrequent is that they are far more context-specific in ways that later *opera seria* is not (think 'simile aria'). This, too, is an era when words still dominated the music – *prima le parole, doppia la musica* – and while Cavalli

was a wonderful melodist, as is readily apparent here in the irresistible 'Dolcissimi baci' from *La Calisto*, 1651), this is essentially music for actor-singers. In this respect soprano Raquel Andueza is here the superior. She starts with the advantage of a lovely voice that in more intimate, sensual moments takes on that slightly darkened, husky timbre that seems unique to Spanish sopranos. You need hear only the way she sings the words 'baciata o baciante' (kissed or kissing) from Medea's 'Se dardo pungente', for example, to be utterly seduced by Andueza. Unfortunately there is a downside and it's a serious one in that she seems totally oblivious of the need to add any ornamentation. Given that a number of these pieces are in strophic form, it seems extraordinary that neither she nor anyone connected with the recording found it incongruous that she was happy to repeat each verse with no variant. In this respect the countertenor Xavier Sabata is superior, as is amply demonstrated by the final line of 'Or che l'aurora', very stylishly ornamented by Sabata, but ignored by Andueza when her turn comes. Indeed Sabata's singing is beautifully controlled throughout, but as already indicated there's a fly in the ointment with him too, his vocal acting and concern for text (or lack of it) leaving something to be desired.

The accompaniments are on the right scale, with two violins and violone plus a continuo group including arclute, theorbo and, anachronistically, double harp, though surprisingly there is no harpsichord, where one would expect two. The playing is good, though the violin playing belongs to the 18th rather than the 17th century. Curiously I've found all the reservations about the present CD correspond exactly to those on the disc mentioned above, where the soprano was Giulia Semenzato and the countertenor the excellent Raffaele Pe. A further black mark for the texts in the booklet, published over photographs that at times render them virtually illegible. Ultimately, then, both CDs provide satisfying collections that with greater care taken over stylistic matters might have been more highly recommendable.

*Brian Robins*

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CAVALLI: VESPERO DELLA BEATA VERGINE MARIA (1675), ANTIFONE MARIANE E SONATE (1656)  
Coro Claudio Monteverdi di Crema, La Pifarescha, Bruno Gini  
62:32  
Dynamic CDS7782

Any major recording of church music by Francesco Cavalli is of interest. In spite of several fine recordings over the past twenty years (including a lovely 1997 account by Seicento and the Parley of Instruments on Hyperion of his *Messa Concertata* CDA 66970), this key figure in musical history remains under-recorded, and the present performance of music for voices and instruments from two of his major collections makes a valuable contribution. On the positive side, the large vocal and instrumental forces and the opulent acoustic produce a very grand impression, and the episodes for the full forces are extremely impressive. We also have the nowadays obligatory cornetto fireworks. Things are less happy when things thin out and the spotlight falls on solo voices. Here there is some stabbing wildly at notes, and in chant episodes there are signs of nerves as voices don't quite do what the singers intended. These moments are uncomfortable, but the authority of the massed passages more than makes up for them, as does the interest of hearing such generous helpings of Cavalli's neglected church music.

D. James Ross

CESTI: L'ORONTEA

Paul Murrilhy *Oronthea*, Sebastian Geyer *Creonte*, Juanita Lascarro *Tiburio/Amore*, Guy de Mey *Aristea*, Xavier Sabata *Alidoro*, Simon Bailey *Gelone*, Matthias Rexroth *Corindo*, Louise Alder *Silandra*, Kateryna Kasper *Giacinta*, Katharina Magiera *Filosofia*, Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester, Monteverdi-Continuo-Ensemble, Ivor Bolton  
175:53 (3 CDs in a box with separate sleeve or booklet)  
Oehms Classics OC965

Fascinating to have a complete performance on CD of an opera by this composer so much more written about than performed. As one of the early advocates of opera, Cesti owes a lot to Monteverdi, but his music turns out both to be much less individual than his august predecessor, but at the same time more part of what would become the mainstream of Baroque Italian opera tradition. This is a live recording of the first performance made in Frankfurt Opera house, a house in which I spent many

fruitful hours in my youth and where even then lavish and radical productions went hand-in-hand with cutting-edge authenticity in productions of Baroque operas. From the photos in the notes it is clear that the former tradition is in good health while the confident Baroque sound is also thoroughly convincing. There is furthermore very little background noise from onstage movement or audience to make one aware this is live, although the slightly stuffy sound of the orchestra makes it clear they are playing from a pit. Having said that, this a vocally sparkling and instrumentally convincing rendition of Cesti's music full of drama and theatrical interaction. Like most opera companies in Germany, Frankfurt Opera are on a very firm financial footing – I was hugely impressed when they appeared recently at the Edinburgh Festival fielding an entire Baroque orchestra for *Dido and Aeneas* to replace it at the interval with a large modern instrument orchestra for *Bluebeard's Castle* – and all these forces on tour! This recording is of interest particularly to aficionados of early Italian opera, but I think it stands on its own as a fine performance of an operatic masterpiece.

D. James Ross

CORTELLINI: LE MESSE – EDIZIONE INTEGRALE  
198:26 (3 CDs in a wallet)  
Tactus TC 560380  
12 masses involving 11 choirs and directors

This comprehensive set of CDs recording of all the Masses by the Bolognese composer Camillo Cortellini (1561-1630) is a real community effort and, with most of the enormous cast list of choirs coming from Bologna and district, a testimony to the active choral scene in that city. Although with music of the late 16th and early 17th century it is just conceivable that all the musicians could be collaborating on some huge polychoral scores, this is not the case, and in fact each ensemble takes on individual masses. So far, so good, but sadly the quality of the singing is very variable ranging from the pretty woeful to the not bad. The fact that they each take their turn has the advantage that you are not stuck with any one choir for too long, but the disadvantage is that some of the performances are really not very easy to listen to and don't really do their composer justice. And this is another snag. In the performances presented here with voices and organ, it is not clear that Cortellini lives up to the claims made for his music in the programme notes. It is thoroughly competent and melodious, but I didn't feel he was the lost

genius that clearly the organizers of this ambitious project felt he was. Cortellini was a predecessor of Monteverdi in the employ of the Gonzagas, so I am prepared to believe that there is more to his music than is apparent here. I admire the spirit behind this ambitious project, but we miss the assurance of a single group, who would have become thoroughly conversant with Cortellini's idiom over the course of recording all this music, and would have perhaps been more persuasive advocates of his virtues as a composer. Frankly most of the singing here just isn't up to scratch.

*D. James Ross*

#### JACOB VAN EYCK : DER FLUYTEN LUST-HOF

Erik Bosgraaf *recorders*  
212:50 (3 CDs in a box)  
Brilliant Classics 93391

This generous selection of music from van Eyck's iconic *Fluyten Lust-hof* on three CDs is certainly the best account of this music I have heard and a wonderfully engaging listening experience. The some 150 compositions which van Eyck records (of which about half are performed here) are all notated for descant recorder, and in light of the blind musician's obsession with the upper partials of the carillon, on which he was also a virtuoso, he may well have specialized on this instrument as he sat on summer evenings in the Janskerkhof in Utrecht entertaining passers-by with his lyricism and skill with divisions. One of the most beguiling features about this collection is that the performer and recording engineer manage to recapture the relaxed atmosphere and acoustic bloom of the music's original context. Perhaps wisely given that the vast bulk of the music is for unaccompanied recorder, Erik Bosgraaf employs a range of more than a dozen recorders of different sizes which he plays with exquisite musicality and, where necessary, stunning virtuosity. However, unlike other performances I have heard from this publication, this is not all about technique, and is much more about the music. The *Fluyten Lust-hof* is a delight to listen to as you do not listen for long without hearing a very familiar melody, with the eclectic composer/arranger ranging far and wide for his sources of inspiration. This is a collection with almost too many virtues to mention, but one of the chief among them are the exhaustive programme notes. There is a slight fly in the ointment in that their voluminous nature means that they only appear in Dutch – I feel that this important release deserves a specific English language edition from

Brilliant Classics. However, with this one tiny reservation, I confess to being bowled over by this wonderfully entertaining package.

*D. James Ross*

#### CARLO FARINA: SONATE E CANZONI

Leila Schayegh  
64:34  
Panclassics PC 10368

This is music from the remarkable musical melting-pot of the early 17th century, where composers in a number of European countries were experimenting in a flurry of invention with the potential of the solo Baroque violin. Springing from Mantua at the period when many would still remember the premiere of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, Farina traveled Europe, working and performing in many of the great musical centers, settling in Vienna long enough to publish a set of sonatas and canzonas for various members of the violin family. A collection of this kind stands or falls on the skills of the violin soloist – fortunately Leila Schayegh has a stunning technique, a developed sense of musicality and a natural affinity with this repertoire. Opening with an unaccompanied Fantasia by Steffan Nau, Schayegh takes us on an engrossing tour of the repertoire, alternating Farina's music with pieces by his contemporaries Michelangelo Rossi, Pietro Melli, and Frantz (?). At some points, the performers move seamlessly from track to track, giving the CD a lovely organic quality, while the interweaving of works for different instrumentations among Farina's violin works provides a pleasing degree of aural variety. I wrote earlier that we are very much in the hands of the violin soloist in this sort of exploration, and I can say with confidence that Leila Schayegh is the most persuasive advocate of this repertoire that one could hope to find. In her eloquent performances the music seems to speak directly to us, as she uses all the communicative potential of the Baroque violin to bring this music vividly to life – a powerful case indeed for the use of period instruments, particularly when they are in the hands of such a consummate player. I should, however, not neglect to mention her three fellow musicians, Jörg Halubek on keyboards, Daniele Caminiti on archlute and Jonathan Pesek on cello and gamba, who provide subtle but consistently sympathetic accompaniment as well as each taking their turn in the solo spotlight.

*D. James Ross*

FASOLO: ANNUALE OPERA OTTAVA, VENEZIA 1645  
Luca Scandali, Bella Gerit  
76:35  
Tactus TC590701

Fasolo's *Annuale Opera Ottava* is essentially a handbook for organists offering music appropriate for services throughout the year. The present CD offers liturgical reconstructions, ordinary and propers, for three types of mass: the *Missa in Dominicis diebus*, the *Missa in duplicibus diebus* and the *Missa Beatae Mariae Virginis*. Fasolo's music, played by Luca Scandali on a characterful 1547 organ by Luca di Bernardino in the Chiesa di San Domenico in Cortona, alternates with appropriate chant sung by the Ensemble Bella Gerit. The main star of the CD is the venerable 16th-century organ, which offers an intriguing range of stops. It is imaginatively presented by Luca Scandali, who manages to entice the most gentle and almost strident sounds from the instrument. The chant is beautifully unanimous, and has the pleasant detachment of working clergy perhaps almost over-familiar with its phrases. The only slight fly in the ointment is the audible difference in background sound as we switch from organ solo to the voices and back again – clearly the two were recorded separately and edited together. Fasolo's publication appeared in the wake of Frescobaldi's much more famous *Fiori Musicali* of 1635, but in its subtle differences from it suggests that local liturgical traditions and musical practices were still very much respected. Rather than pick a publication like Frescobaldi's off the shelves, at least some local organists decided to compile rival publications in imitation but reflecting their own specific talents and the traditions within which they operated.

D. James Ross

AMANTE FRANZONI: VESPERS FOR THE FEAST  
OF SANTA BARBARA

Accademia degli invaghiti, Concerto Palatino, Francesco Moi  
63:04  
Brilliant Classics 95344

Amante Franzoni, a contemporary of Claudio Monteverdi, worked as a composer and musician for the Gonzaga family in Mantua, and the present recording is a reconstruction of Vespers for the Feast of Santa Barbara, using Franzoni's choral settings, instrumental inserts and relevant plainchant. The performers give a nod in the direction of Franzoni's more

illustrious contemporary by opening the proceedings with Monteverdi's familiar setting of *Domine ad adiuvandum* featuring the famous *Orfeo* toccata. This invites a comparison between Franzoni's music and Monteverdi's, and throughout the service we are treated to music for cori spezzati, smaller groups and instruments which is certainly in the same league as Monteverdi. Given the fact that Franzoni spent his whole working life in the employ of the wealthy and demanding Gonzaga family, we should hardly be surprised at the high quality of his music, and it is perhaps a result of the prominence of Monteverdi that the likes of Franzoni have been overlooked. There is some lovely singing and playing on this CD, although occasionally a little more passion would have helped things on their way. Apart from the fact that the recording was made in 2010 in Mantua, we are given no details of the recording venue, and to my ears a little bit more resonance would have given Franzoni's music more of an epic sound such as it would have had in Mantua's Basilica of Santa Barbara where Franzoni worked. I know of at least one attempt to present Monteverdi's Vespers music in the context of a service for Saint Barbara, and it is encouraging to see this Italian ensemble exploring the music of a relatively unknown master rather than just giving us yet another account of the Monteverdi.

D. James Ross

FRESCOBALDI: "INTAVOLATURA DI CIMBALO"

Yoann Moulin *harpsichord & virginal*

61:15

Encelade ECL1601

Let me immediately draw attention to the lovely instruments used for this recording, an Italian style harpsichord (2012) and a virginal made in 2009 after a 1626 Italian original now in the Leipzig instrument museum. They are not elaborate instruments, but this means that their clear voices throw emphasis on to the content of the music. And in the case of Frescobaldi (rather more admired than played, I suspect) this is no bad thing. Most of the programme is drawn from *Il primo libro di Toccate*, including the substantial (to say the least) *Folia*, *Romanesca* and *Passacagli* variations. In addition, there are two pieces from *Ricercari et Canzoni francese* and one toccata from the second book. The playing is sensitive and thoughtful, giving Frescobaldi his full status as a master – a disc for a quiet and pensive evening rather than a rabble-rouser. The booklet features some rather odd photographs

and notes in French and English – a valiant translator’s attempt to convey the essence of the flowery original.

*David Hansell*

HANS LEO HASSLER: ORGELWERKE

Joseph Kelemen Freundt-Orgel 1642, Günzer-Orgel 1609  
79:51

Oehms Classics OC 658

**H**assler’s growing reputation as a choral composer of mainly polychoral church music, madrigals and instrumental consort pieces of a grand courtly nature is now increasingly complemented by a body of work for organ, which proves to be equally inventive and musically consistent as his other work. This recital of organ pieces, mainly major showy occasional pieces but also the even more substantial and more harmonically daring *Orgelmesse* in eight movements. In this latter work, Hassler takes the instrument into some remote keys, which sound wonderfully raw in the old tuning. After Joseph Kelemen, who gives us thoroughly satisfying accounts of the music, the main stars of the CD are the two venerable organs he uses: the Freundt-Orgel of 1642 in the Stiftskirche Klosterneuburg and the Günzer-Orgel of 1609 in St Martin, Gabelbach. Both offer a stunning array of stops, comprehensively documented for each movement in the excellent programme notes. In many ways the large-scale pieces, which Kelemen plays in the first half of the CD on the Freundt organ are the more impressive part of the programme, but the combination of the more exploratory works on the older instrument, particularly the remarkable chromatic concluding *Ricercar del secondo tono* more powerfully underline Hassler revolutionary side as an organ composer. This is music which powerfully prefigures the mastery of J S Bach but written seventy-five years before Bach was born!

*D. James Ross*

LONATI: SONATE DA CAMERA (1701)

Gunar Letzbor, Ars Antiqua Austria

61:42

Pan Classics PC 10363

**T**his recording features four (of six) sonate da camera from Lonati’s *XII Sonate a violino solo e basso*, printed in Salzburg in 1701. As the booklet notes suggest, they were probably written earlier in the virtuoso violinist’s career, and at least some of them look

north of the Alps for their inspiration. The first three (nos. 1-3 of the second part of the publication) use a variety of scordatura (a retuning of the strings of the violin to give a different timbre to the sound and allow a different range of chordal possibilities). The final work from the set is simply labelled “Ciaccone” and goodness, what a beast of a movement it is! Variation after variation before the style switches completely for a couple of short movements then off the chaconne goes again, ever more intricate, ever more demanding – either the violinist had a page-turning assistant or his part must have been written out on enormous paper. Letzbor’s lightness of touch and deft bow work bring out all the subtleties in the music, far and away the very best playing I have ever heard from him. The continuo line-up of keyboard, lute and 8’ violone provide an unfussy aural backdrop that throws the always interesting solo line into relief. The scores are readily available online – following them merely underlines Letzbor’s equalling Lonati’s wizardry.

*Brian Clark*

BIAGIO MARINI: MADRIGALI ET SYMFONIE, OP. II

I Musicali Affetti, RossoPorpora

73:33

Tactus TC 591304

**B**iagio Marini’s is one of those names most fans of 17th-century know, but only for a handful of chamber works. This recording of an entire publication (only now possible because the missing continuo part has been reconstructed) is extraordinarily rare, and this all the more welcome. Widely travelled and sought after, Marini’s vocal music (as the brief but informative notes tell us) accounts for by far the majority of his output.

His opus II broadly alternates instrumental and vocal pieces. I find his music for more than one melody part vastly superior to that for solo voice or instrument. The duets for tenors stand out on this recording and would have been worthy companions for similar pieces by his boss in Venice, Monteverdi. For the most part, the singing is good to very good, sometimes (Track 7, *Perché fuggi na’ salti*, or Track 17, *Deh non coglier più fiori*, for example) much more than that – the soprano’s *passaggi* and *gorgie* are fabulous (it’s a pity the sleeve notes don’t identify individual singers to allow me to give full credit).

The set also includes a DVD which has a short documentary on Marini and the history and contents of the publication with nice literary insight, as well as some

musical extracts and demonstrations.

*Brian Clark*

TOBIAS MICHAEL: MUSICALISCHE SEELENLUST

Weser-Renaissance, Manfred Cordes

63:35

cpo 777 935-2

It is only 18 months since another recording with this title appeared. Fortunately, where Ensemble Polyphonique chose works from both of the composer's sets (1634 for five voices and continuo, and 1637 for different combinations of voices with and without instruments), Weser-Renaissance's survey focuses on the earlier set, and, of the 17 pieces on the disk (of a total of 30), only eight are duplicated. They have chosen 10 of 12 settings of psalm texts, and no fewer than four from Isaiah. Where the earlier recording had gamba and theorbo with organ continuo, Cordes has opted for harp and chitarrone. As regular readers know, I am highly sceptical of harp continuo, and I cannot help but wonder if cash-strapped musicians during the 30 Years War could afford to string such an instrument. That said, the absence of stringed instrument on the bass line does mean that the singer's words in the depths are much clearer than they might be. Where EP interspersed the five-voice madrigals with smaller-scale solos and duets, there is no relief from the soundscape here; even though three sopranos are listed for only two vocal lines, the voices are similar enough for me not to be able to distinguish who is singing (very fine though most of the singing is!), and I cried out for some variety. That is certainly not to suggest that Michael's music lacks quality – quite the reverse. On several machines, the recorded sound lacks the roundness and warmth of the Raumklang disk, which may have drawn me into the intimacy of those performances. The good news is that there are four more pieces from the first set and 43 (!) from the second set (which features printed ornamented alternatives) that remain for *another* recording.

*Brian Clark*

MONTEVERDI: L'ORFEO

Mirko Guadagnini *Orfeo*, Emanuela Galli *La Musica/Euridice*, Marina De Liso *Messaggiera*, Cristina Calzolari *Proserpina*, Matteo Bellotto *Plutone*, José Maria Lo Monaco *Speranza*, Salvo Vitale *Caronte*, Vincenzo Di Donato *Apollo*, Francesca Cassinari *Ninfa*, Giovanni Caccamo *Pastore I*, Makoto Sakurada *Pastore II/Spirito I*, Claudio Cavina *Pastore III*, Tony Corradini *Pastore IV/Spirito II*,

La Venexiana, Claudio Cavina

114:52 (2 CDs in a cardboard box)

Glossa GCD 920941

Originally recorded in 2006, but out of the catalogue for some time, this reissue of La Venexiana's *Orfeo* has obviously been timed to contribute to the celebrations for the 250 anniversary of the composer's birth. Claudio Cavina came to it on the back of a cycle of the composer's madrigals, an *intégrale* that in my view served the earlier books better than the later ones. In any event *Orfeo* is a rather different undertaking, though of course it contains madrigalian choruses, so it is interesting to discover – I missed the set first time round – that my principal reservations are much in line with those I had about some of the madrigals.

These reservations can be summed up in one word: portentousness. As he did with the later books of madrigals, Cavina has sought to impose a layering of flexible expressiveness that is surely foreign to the music. This makes itself manifest in some curious rhythmic decisions, but above all in tempos that result in what may be the longest performance of the opera on CD. If one takes as just a single example 'Possente spirito', *Orfeo's* appeal to Charon (the boatman of the Styx) and the most famous set piece in the opera, is much the slowest performance I've ever heard. Not only does this undermine the whole point of the song, which becomes tedious rather than seductive, but it also causes problems for the singer Mirko Guadagnini, who is at times unable to sustain accurate pitch. Guadagnini is in any event a rather average *Orfeo*, missing much of the passion of the role and coping only moderately well with the florid ornamentation that is such an integral part of 'Possente spirito'. While on the subject of ornamentation, there is throughout the set a disappointing lack of it, the topic going un-remarked in a long and somewhat pretentious essay on the subject of the performance practice adopted.

The remainder of the cast is variable. Emanuela Galli sings both *La Musica* and *Euridice*. The instrumental introduction to the former is introduced in heavily mannered style, but I like the way Galli varies each of the five strophic verses and she is very good indeed with dramatising the text. Her *Euridice* is fine, if not especially remarkable and her sad return to Hades after the fatal glance is nothing like as moving as that of the young British soprano Rachel Ambrose Evans in the performance by I Fagiolini I'd seen just a couple of weeks earlier. The large

cast of supporting singers varies in accomplishment from a poor Speranza to the excellent Plutone of Matteo Bellotto, but is in general terms more than serviceable, although again some of Cavina's tempos are most likely responsible for the odd pitch problem experienced by some of them. Given that Cavina would surely not dream of employing multiple voices to a part in Monteverdi's madrigals, it seems curious (and unconvincing) that he has expanded the chorus here. The overall excellence of the instrumental playing is one of the unreserved pluses, but in sum this is not a performance I would feature in a recommended list of *Orfeo* recordings.

*Brian Robins*

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MONTEVERDI: VESPERS 1610

Dunedin Consort, His Majestys Sagbutts & Cornetts,

John Butt

94:00

Linn Records CKD569

*We were fortunate enough to receive two copies of this recording, so asked Brian Robins and David Stancliffe to share their impressions. They are given below in the order we received them.*

As an admirer of John Butt's performances of Bach's choral works, I approached his new recording of Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers settings with considerable interest and anticipation. That the results seem to me less satisfying than his Bach is probably down to my conclusions falling mostly into the realms of subjective observations rather than outright criticism.

Readers familiar with Butt's one-per-part Bach will not be surprised to learn that he adopts a similar policy with Vespers. That is to say a single voice is allotted to each of Monteverdi's two 5-part vocal choirs, making a total of ten singers, all of whom are employed in the works marked for voices and substantial instrument forces such as the opening 6-part 'Deus in adiutorium' or all ten voices like 'Nisi Dominus', scored for two 5-part choirs and continuo. Given the outstandingly tuned singing and ensemble, the result is to expose Monteverdi's often dazzling counterpoint in rare detail and clarity, especially given some slower than usual tempos, a topic to which I'll return. There are, however, some unconvincing solutions, in particular Butt's odd decision to allot both his sopranos (Joanne Lunn and Esther Brazil) to the 'Sonata sopra Sancta Maria', which is clearly marked Cantus in the King's Music score he employs

and obviously intended for a solo soprano. It doesn't work with two singers, especially given that the diction is poor.

Other practical points. Given that there is no record of a complete performance in Monteverdi's time Butt has not attempted to place the Monteverdi's psalm settings in a liturgical context. Although considerable controversy surrounds questions of performance practice in relation to the 1610 Vespers, it now seems generally accepted that the pitch should be something in excess of standard modern pitch A=440, Butt choosing A=466, a semi-tone above. That works well with the high clefs ('chiavette') of 'Lauda Jerusalem' and Magnificat, their 4th downward transposition now accepted by most scholars. Perhaps more controversial will be Butt's use of proportional tempos within the larger two-part tactus beat, especially as it appears to account for some of the slow tempos mentioned above. I felt especially aware of this in 'Audi coelum' (over which Butt takes 9:17 as against the 7:30 of Andrew Parrott in his path-breaking 1984 EMI recording) and hymn setting 'Ave Maris Stella', which to my mind drags. Elsewhere Butt's use of tactus allows a flexibility that can work extremely well, as in 'Nigra sum', splendidly sung by Nicholas Mulroy with great intensity, and 'Duo Seraphim' for three tenors (Matthew Long, Joshua Ellicott and Mulroy), where the sense of wonder in the Trinity is most effectively evoked. It is in fact in the vocal concertos featuring male voices that the performance is for me at its most effective, since while the pure voices of sopranos in, say, 'Pulchra es' are beautifully produced, it is a virginal purity lacking any hint of the erotic that seems too Anglo-Saxon for this colourful Mediterranean music. This applies, too, to the larger-scale pieces, which sound just that touch too polite, too lacking that feeling of being on the edge that should be conveyed by this at times outrageously experimental music. The singing itself is invariably good, with ornamentation mostly capably executed, while the instrumental playing, which features the excellent His Majesties Sagbutts and Cornetts in addition to the Dunedin Consort is first rate. Although this is music that allows for considerable choice when it comes to continuo instruments, I'm not at all convinced by the harp in 'Laetatus sum'.

To summarize it would be fair to say that I admire the performance more than I am excited by it. Others will surely disagree and no one should be in any doubt that it is a finely conceived and splendidly executed achievement.

*Brian Robins*

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This is a first rate recording, and I should say at the start that the questions I raise have nothing to do with the quality of the performers or their fine musicianship. This recording joins the groundbreaking one of Andrew Parrott and the Taverner Consort in 1983, the burstingly, zingy one of Christine Pluhar and L'Arpeggiata from 2010 and the utterly different recent version by La Compagnia del Madrigale under Giuseppe Maletto released this year by Glossa as those in the superlative bracket.

The first thing you need to come to grips with in preparing a performance of the Monteverdi Vespers is to decide what sort of a work it is; and despite there being no evidence of any performance of the complete 'Vespers' in Monteverdi's lifetime, the series of movements that make up what we are nowadays used to hearing, with its extraordinary variety of treatment of the Gregorian psalm chants interspersed with the concerti for a growing number of voices, makes compelling hearing in its own right. I first heard the Vespers live in a performance in Westminster Abbey in October 1959, given by Walter Goehr with a large choir and modern 'orchestra' of substantial proportions, and was bowled over. But I have gradually – partly as a result of Parrott's 1983 recording – changed my own performance practice towards single voices and now find myself in almost complete agreement with what John Butt writes in his perceptive and illuminating notes – especially about using a full complement of ten singers in different combinations, rather than tying each one to a particular part-book.

Interestingly, and unlike his liturgical reconstructions of the Bach *Johannespassion* or the Christmas Vespers, Butt eschews others' attempts to make the movements in Monteverdi's publication fit some kind of historically reconstructed liturgical frame, and is content to explore the musical inventiveness of the publication as it stands, but without either the *In illo tempore Mass* or the six-part *Magnificat*. His concern for the sonorities means that he never doubles the voices unless Monteverdi's parts specifically call for it, so, for example, he relies entirely on the colours of each voice to articulate the contrasts between odd and even numbered verses in *Dixit Dominus* and *Laetatus sum*. As a related issue, I am not sure on what principles he has decided to deploy his bassus generalis players. I sometimes detect a discrete 16' when I wouldn't expect it, but there is no doubt that the principale chorus of the Hauptwerk-generated Italian/Dalmatian organ (and there's a useful reference to their website in the notes)

helps keep the singers' sound open and clean. When they play, the sounds of the Dunedin's strings and His Majestys Sagbuts and Cornetts are exceptionally well-blended and beautifully captured in this intelligent and well-produced recording.

So with an instrumental sound formed in the manner of Giovanni Gabrieli's basic church band in Venice, what kind of sound is John Butt asking for from his singers? In spite of owing a lot in its simplicity of scoring to Parrott's 1983 recording, Butt's performance is hugely focussed on the individuality of his singers. They are recorded pretty close up, so we are never allowed to forget that these singers are soloists; however well they are balanced and sing together, the sense of friendly competition frequently seems to trump absolute clarity, as in *Lauda Jerusalem*, so rich and exciting at (properly) down a fourth but at A=466Hz. This style of singing may be justified by the ecstatic, volatile and highly charged nature of much of the music – it is Italian, after all – but these are singers at the top of their game who can do anything. For example, I was disappointed that the two sopranos didn't hold their notes entirely still in the opening bars of their *Et Misericordia*: they 'improved' vastly later on and were almost perfect in the sustained Gloria as a foil to Nicholas Mulroy's (properly here) dramatic roudades. Per contra, Amy Lyddon and Rory McCleery seemed to judge it exactly right in *Esurientes*, and the sustained lines of chant all through the *Magnificat* are splendidly controlled.

Could more have been done to give the concerti a greater sense of intimacy in contrast to the Psalm settings? I listened hard to see if the singers were consciously changing their style to match the difference in these pieces and I thought that Nicholas Mulroy did that splendidly in *Nigra sum*; the tenors Matthew Long and Joshua Ellicot gave us a wonderfully nuanced and controlled start to *Duo Seraphim*, and all three sustained *Et hi tres unum sunt* without a breath. The chamber style was certainly helped by the absence in these movements (till *Audi coelum*) of the Italian organ and the discrete sustaining of a string bass along with the pluckers in *Duo Seraphim*.

Some small points: I like the relaxed tripla Butt goes for – it makes sense of the proportions and time changes in the Sonata in particular, but in the Gloria of *Laudate pueri*, each choir in the tripla section fails to sing bars 3 and 4 of the six bar phrase as a hemiola, producing an unmusical accent on 'et'. The decision to follow some existing organs of the period and voice tessiturae and play at A=466hz is confirmed by the more relaxed sonorities in *Lauda* and the *Magnificat*, the movements where almost everyone

now accepts the scholarly arguments for downward transposition. And ornaments. We know that cornetto players as well as violinists can turn every passage into a display of personal virtuosity, but is it right to do it so constantly? It seemed to affect the singers too in the verses of the hymn as well as in every ritornello. In big acoustics I find it confusing as well as distracting.

The double page photo of the Dunedin Consort on pages 54/55 of the booklet doesn't belong here: it an earlier picture of players gathered for some Baroque concert – so no singers are visible, and it's all the wrong instruments. If we need an overall photo with everyone there, it does need to relate to this recording, and could be part – like understanding the way the singers and players stand in relation to each other – of our appreciating the performance practice decisions. As always, there is good information about the pitch and tuning, but except for the keyboard instruments, little information about the instruments themselves.

What I like most about this performance is that John Butt thinks long and hard about the music and how it works as a whole, chooses his singers and players with care, but then trusts them to deliver the music and so doesn't feel the need to micro-manage them. This is what delivers committed and gracious music-making of the kind that is captured here. 6555

*David Stancliffe*

#### ETERNAL MONTEVERDI

Vespro della Beata Vergine 1650

La Capella Ducale, Musica Fiata, Roland Wilson  
82:02

deutsche harmonia mundi 8-89853 75132-7

+Grandi, Neri & Rigatti

**T**hese experienced performers present a fascinating reconstruction of Marian Vespers using the posthumous Vincenti 1650 publication of Monteverdi's late motets. As they assert in the notes, this music deserves to be as well known as the 1610 vespers music, and perhaps by drawing it together into a putative Vespers service and juxtaposing it with music by Monteverdi's less famous but equally sparkling successors Rigatti, Neri and Grandi they have gone some considerable way to increase its popularity. If we could have wished for a very slightly more resonant acoustic, these are beautiful performances sung and played with the assurance that comes from specializing in this type of repertoire for

several decades. I am sure I have heard most of the Monteverdi pieces before, but hearing them in this new context added to their impact, and the works by Giovanni Rigatti, beautifully sung by Georg Poplutz and Dominik Wörner, further added to the already high estimation in which I hold this sadly overshadowed composer. A work I had certainly never heard was Monteverdi's remarkable six-part *Laetania della beatae Vergine* which concludes the recording. It's wonderfully looping phraseology and inventive setting were an entirely suitable way to conclude this ground-breaking and very generously filled CD.

*D. James Ross*

#### MONTEVERDI: MADRIGALS BOOK 8 'MADRIGALI GUERRIERI ET AMOROSI'

Delitiae Musicae, Marco Longhini

221:41 (4 CDs in a crystal box)

Naxos 8.573755-58 (Recorded 2005)

**T**his lavish release, presumably timed to mark Monteverdi 450, includes the complete Book 8 Madrigals as well as other interpolated music. I went first to the very familiar *Combattimento de Tancredi e Clorinda*, hoping to gauge the general approach with a work which I know extremely well and I wasn't disappointed. In fact, the opening music I heard wasn't by Monteverdi at all but by Biagio Marini, a *Sinfonia* which Longhini had interpolated. This was an indication of the radical approach taken to the music here, an impression soon born out by a male alto Clorinda and dramatic changes in tempo. I have to say that I was pretty well convinced by all of this, while Marco Scavazza's account of the testo part complete with blizzards of ornaments and a stunning 'patter' section swept all before it. Longhini employs a veritable army of thirty musicians for these CDs, providing a wonderful choice of textures. He has a complete consort of viols as well as a quartet of Baroque strings to choose between, while his continuo instruments include harpsichords, organs, theorbo, lirone, harp, guitar and trombone. This allows him to vary the accompanying textures in a work such as the *Combattimento* in a way which we know Monteverdi favoured in his operas. The result is a much more operatic and suitably epic account of the work than I have ever heard before. I found Clorinda's falsetto representation trickier to take seriously. The account of the *Ballo delle Ingrate* is on an equally epic scale, and preceded by some excellent tamburi discordati and another *Sinfonia* by Marini – it is entirely plausible that Monteverdi intended these works

to be introduced by sinfonias in this way, either composed by himself or by a contemporary composer. The part of Cupid is taken appropriately by an excellent boy soprano Beniamino Borciani, although I found that the falsetto account of Venus grated. Notwithstanding, this expansive account of these proto-operas brings them firmly into the orbit of the great operatic masterpieces, and I found the approach utterly convincing. Elsewhere the madrigals for eight-part voices and instruments were wonderfully expressive and atmospheric, although I found the recorded sound made the louder sections rather too immediate and competitive. The use of all male voices worked very well, although surely there is ample evidence that the upper lines (like the part of Clorinda) would have been taken by women. This is an ambitious project, and while I have not always been entirely convinced by Marco Longhini's previous engagements with the music of Monteverdi, I have to say I found these CDs stimulating and for the most part very convincing. To be able to buy the complete Book 8 Madrigals on four budget CDs is remarkable enough, and while these performances have their quirky aspects they are generally an excellent investment.

*D. James Ross*

MONTEVERDI: MADRIGALI, VOL. 3 VENEZIA

Les Arts Florissants, Paul Agnew

74:44

Les Arts Florissants HAF 8905278

In the past couple of years I've twice experienced – the right word in this case, I think – the vocal ensemble from Les Arts Florissants performing selections of Monteverdi madrigals at the Ambronay Festival, the review of the 2015 concert being on this website. Remarkable above all for their sheer intensity and compelling commitment, I would count these among the very finest musical events I've attended in recent years. The Ambronay concerts were a spin-off from a complete cycle of the madrigals given in Paris, where a selection was recorded for release across three CDs. It can only be regretted that the whole cycle was not recorded, but we must be eternally grateful for what we do have.

This final volume is devoted to extracts from the culmination of Monteverdi's path-breaking madrigal output. Nowhere of course does that description apply more than in these last books, Seven and Eight, the latter bearing the title *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi*, published respectively in 1619 and 1638. In both, but above all in Book

8, we find Monteverdi breaking through any boundaries still remaining after the radical developments initially introduced in Book 4. Thus from Book 7 we have 'Con che soavità' and the famous 'Lettera amorosa', both solos rather than concerted madrigals, the first sung by Miriam Allan with perfect technique – *gorgie* are splendidly articulated – and a mesmerizing, rapt sensuality that employs *messa di voce* to stunning effect. The long love letter in the *stile rappresentazione* is equally compelling, delivered by alto Lucile Richardot with absorbed and absorbing attention, the lines sustained by beautiful tone and insightful vocal acting. There are two lighter pieces here, too, the infectious 'Chiome d'oro', given a deliciously light touch by Allen and Mhairi Lawson, while in the hands of Allan and Paul Agnew the irresistible *Ballo: Tirsi e Clori* exudes sweet pastoral charm in the early verses before the 6-part ensemble enters to carry the madrigal to an exuberant conclusion.

The madrigals of Book 8 are divided between those devoted to war and to those that concern love, the selection here starting off with the introductory 'Altri canti d'Amor' (Let others sing the sweet charms). The opening, sung with languorous flow, is harshly challenged by the superb bass Lisandro Abadie, his announcement that he will sing of 'harsh encounters and daring battles' introducing a fiercely virtuoso account of the remainder of the madrigal, in which Monteverdi employs the new *concitato* style. The war part of the book is in fact as much metaphor for the war of love as literal, but in the final piece the two are combined in *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*, effectually a chamber opera based on an episode from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* that here comes to compelling dramatic life. The major weight of the work falls on the narrator (Testo), sung by Agnew. If his vibrato is occasionally a problem and I have heard the role more strongly projected, there is no doubting the interpretative insight and superbly rhetorical delivery Agnew brings to the role. He is excellently supported by Hannah Morrison and Sean Clayton in the relatively minor contributions given the protagonists, the former being intensely moving in her final dying words, delivered with a heartbreaking diminuendo. Other extracts from Book 8 include the ravishingly lovely 'Dolcissimo usignola' and 'Lamento de la ninfa', a performance by Morrison, Agnew, Clayton and Cyril Costano of touching simplicity that goes straight to the heart, the inexorable ground bass relentlessly underpinning the misery of the abandoned nymph. A marvellous, life-enhancing CD of some of the greatest music the 17th century has to offer.

*Brian Robins*

## MONTEVERDI: MADRIGALI LIBRI I & II

Le Nuove Musiche, Krijn Koetsveld

96:40 (2 CDs in a jewel case)

Brilliant Classics 94977

These CDs are part of a projected complete recording of all the Monteverdi madrigals – the ensemble has already released books III, VI, VII and VIII – and for this recording Le Nuove Musiche go back to Monteverdi's *prima prattica* roots in Cremona. Although perhaps less immediately recognizable than his later madrigals, these are extremely accomplished compositions, which must have raised a few musical eyebrows when they appeared in 1587 and 1590 respectively. In the slow sustained madrigals, Le Nuove Musiche produce a polished and well-balanced sound, although in some of the more hectic passages the intonation is not always all it might be and the upper voices in particular occasionally sound less than comfortable. Having said that, the recorded sound is very vivid and captures perfectly the warm acoustic of the Kapucijnenkloster in Velp, while the performances are consistently musical and intelligent. One of the fruits of Monteverdi 450 has been a plethora of performances and recordings of the master's music, but Monteverdi is perhaps unusual in that, nowadays, there is very little of his music which has not regularly seen the light of day, and perhaps David Munrow already pointed an alternative way to celebrate his remarkable music by juxtaposing it with the less familiar music of his Italian contemporaries.

*D. James Ross*

## M. PRAETORIUS: GLORIA SEI DIR GESUNGEN

Choral concerts after hymns by Luther, Nicolai and others  
Gli Scarlattisti, [Capella Principale,] Jochen Arnold

71:41

Carus 83.482

This CD is a product of the Reformation anniversary, and is devoted to elaborate settings of chorales, with texts mainly by Luther, by Michael Praetorius. His German Magnificat is the centerpiece, and the collection begins and ends with settings of well-known chorales *Wie schön leuchtet die Morgenstern* and *Wachet auf* by Nicolai. The order of the pieces chosen seems somewhat arbitrary rather than following a scheme like the Liturgical Year, for example; Arnold gives us a rationale in his liner notes, but I am not convinced.

The singing is frequently charming – listen to the two

sopranos with the pair of violins in the opening of *Nun freuet euch* (5), though this number is pitched slightly higher than is comfortable for one of them, and the male alto in *Halleluja Christ ist erstanden* is below par – but not up to the clarity and blend we expect these days for music of this period from such groups as Vox Luminis or the Gesualdo Consort. Gli Scarlattisti (6.6.5.4) was founded by Jochen Arnold in 1995, and from the photo in the booklet I imagine that many of them are the founder members. And while perfectly competent in this music, the sound of the full choir sometimes overbalances the instrumental group, who are miked as if placed in a strictly 'accompanimental' role instead of being treated as equal partners. This treatment gives us a stylistically slightly old-fashioned feel of soloists, choir and accompaniment instead of being at the forefront of today's HIP.

That said, I found much to enjoy – not least being the value of hearing a whole recital of these rich and inventive polychoral settings. I would have been helped by some more detailed notes on pitch and tuning – I suspect that the pieces were being performed at A=465, which is why the sopranos sounded occasionally beyond their comfort zone – as well as the instrumental scoring of each verse. And the single organ was a small box organ, I think. I hope we may get more Praetorius this Reformation year, and it would be good if Vox Luminis did a companion CD to their fine *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott: Luther and the Music of the Reformation* which in performance terms is in a different class to this worthy but rather dull performance.

*David Stancliffe*

## PURCELL: AYRES & SONGS FROM ORPHEUS

BRITANNICUS; HARMONIA SACRA & COMPLETE

ORGAN MUSIC

Jill Feldman, Nigel North, Sarah Cunningham, Davitt Moroney

140:00 (2 CDs in a card sleeve)

Arcana A430 (c) 1992/93

This major collection of music by Henry Purcell features one CD of music for soprano, lute and viol drawn from the publication of the composer's songs, posthumously compiled and brought to print by his brother Daniel. The second CD consists of music for soprano and organ from Purcell's *Harmonia Sacra* and includes all the composer's music for solo organ. One way or another we spend a long time in the company of soprano Jill Feldman, and, while she is a very experienced and

respected early music soprano, I have some reservations about her voice production which I found laid bare in these performances. She is capable of a beautifully pure sound – as, for example, at the beginning of *Music for a while* – but more often produces a more opaque sound, which I find less attractive. Although never less than expressive in her singing, I also find that she can sometimes undercut notes. Having said that, if you don't share my reservations, there is much to enjoy in these recordings, where Ms Feldman is very ably supported by three of the leading instrumentalists in their fields. The performances can certainly never be accused of lacking energy and vitality, and it is good to hear some unfamiliar numbers as well as the established Purcell favourites. In the second CD of the set Davitt Moroney plays a late 17th-century organ by Thomas Dallam in the parish church of Saint-Miliau in Guimiliau in Finistère, which produces a wonderfully authentic range of sounds in the voluntaries as well as in the accompaniments to the various hymns from *Harmonia Sacra*. I think, too, that Ms Feldman sounds more convincing in this repertoire and this acoustic. It was while listening to this second CD that I found myself yet again wondering at the remarkable contribution made to English music by Henry Purcell.

*D. James Ross*

### SCHÜTZ: JOHANNESPASSION

Jan Kobow *Evangelist*, Harry van der Kamp *Christus*,  
Dresdner Kammerchor, Hans-Christoph Rademann

56:16

Carus 83.270

+*Ach Herr, du Sohn Davids* SWV-Anhang 2, *Litania*, *Unser Herr Jesus Christus* SWV496

This excellent projected edition of the complete works of Schütz reaches volume 13 and the composer's *St John Passion*. A superb line-up of soloists and exquisitely accurate and idiomatic singing by this first-class German chamber choir have produced authoritative accounts of some of the composer's lesser-known masterpieces, and the series has grown in authority as it has progressed. The CD opens with Schütz's lovely setting of the *Litania 'Kyrie eleison'*, an unfamiliar gem of the highest order of invention, beautifully sung by the soloists and choir and unbelievably receiving its premiere recording here. It concludes with two haunting motets, *Unser Herr Jesus Christus in der Nacht* and *Ach Herr, du Sohn Davids*, another gem receiving its premiere recording. The Passion itself, of course, consists for liturgical reasons largely of unaccompanied recitative, which for those

expecting Schütz's evocative polyphony throughout may sound a little bare. In fact, the excellent Jan Kobow as the Evangelist and Harry van der Kamp as a compellingly expressive Jesus keep the momentum going, and the *Johannespassion* is at least interspersed with a number of choral interjections. If this liturgical peculiarity prevents Schütz's Passion settings from numbering among his most admired works, as for example those of J. S. Bach do, it is important to understand their role in the composer's output, and the stunning effect when the choir chimes in with polyphony after an extended monophonic episode is truly powerful. Besides which there is more than enough stunning polyphony to enjoy on this CD. Brief mention should be made, beside the excellent soloists and choir, of the continuo team, who, of course, play no part in the Passion, but have made a consistently valuable contribution to the project.

*D. James Ross*

### VECCHI: REQUIEM

Graindelavoix, Björn Schmelzer

67:00

Glossa GCD P32113

+*de La Hèle Kyrie, Sanctus & Agnus Dei (Missa Praeter rerum seriem)*, Duarte Lobo *Agnus Dei (Missa Dum aurora)* & Ruimonte *Agnus Dei (Missa Ave Virgo Sanctissima)*

If you like your early 17th-century music sung as a certain hard core of aficionados believe 15th-century music was sung, then this is for you. By this I mean the earthy delivery, swooping pitching, constant wobbling ornaments familiar from Graindelavoix's previous recordings of music such as the *Messe de Notre Dame*, applied to the music of the late Renaissance. Well actually it is not as simple as that. The sections for solo voices seem to inhabit a much more Renaissance world, although they still use the *glissandi* and wobbly ornaments, which had they ever been widely employed, seem to me upsettingly out of place in High Renaissance vocal lines. Meanwhile the sections for full choir are something of an evolutionary throw-back. The best I can say about the group's approach to this music is that it is challengingly unconventional and provides a strikingly alternative view of late Renaissance polyphony. Even in their own controversial terms these performances seem to me to have technical shortcomings, in that the singers are sometimes far from unified in their movements and there are occasional scatterings of concluding consonants for which even an amateur choir would be rebuked. As the musical and philosophical offspring of groups such as the Ensemble Organum whose groundbreaking work I

admired, I want to like Graindelavoix's recent recordings more, but there is an intellectual fuzziness and a musical slap-dash quality about them which runs quite contrary to their rigorous predecessors.

*D. James Ross*

THE CARLO G MANUSCRIPT

*Virtuoso liturgical music from the early 17th century*

Profeti della Quinta, Elam Rotem

66:29

Glossa GCD922516

It is immediately obvious that this recording, much to its advantage, features a fine church (rather than a chamber) organ and further investigation reveals this to be a 17th-century original by Antegnati, no less. Six of the 23 tracks are, in fact, organ solos so we hear not only the accompanying stops and the rich chorus sound but also two delicious and very characteristic solo effects: head straight for tracks 16 and 22. If I'm honest, the vocal music, though sung with exquisite taste and impressive agility, is of less intrinsic interest, though the manuscript and its context are fascinating. Essay and translations are in Eng/Fre/Ger and the source is available on IMSLP.

*David Hansell*

EXILED: MUSIC BY PHILIPS AND DERING

Rose Consort of Viols; Choir of King's College, Aberdeen;

David J. Smith *harpsichord*

Vox Regis VXR0004

66'32

This outstanding disc derives from David Smith's edition of the consort music of Peter Philips and Richard Dering (2016) for the series *Musica Britannica*, in which it is number CI. As part of the volume's launch in 2016 the Rose Consort visited Aberdeen and gave a recital from the contents, and also recorded their contribution to this disc. Additionally, David Smith provides a few pieces for keyboard by Philips, and yet another Choir of King's College, besides those from Cambridge and London, this time Aberdeen, sings two motets by Philips. The consort works by Dering are particularly striking, not only for their unfamiliarity, but also for their sheer quality. Stylistically midway between Byrd and Jenkins, audibly parallel with, but distinctive from, Gibbons, the two fantasias in six parts, numbers 1 and 3, are well-wrought, substantial works with their own

unique narrative rhetoric; those in five parts, numbers 2 and 5, are less philosophical but have more in the way of striking themes. Best of all is the second of Dering's six-part *In Nomines*, which has a singular take on this briefly fecund form. Both the keyboard and consort versions of Philips's *Paget pavan and galliard* are included, as are both of his settings for keyboard of Dowland's *Piper's galliard*, one version quite plain and true to the original, the other more varied right from the off. There are also Philips's settings for keyboard and consort of dances by Morley and Holborne. The programme is bookended by two motets in eight parts by Philips: *Hodie in monte* and *Beata Dei genetrix*; both works are for double choir, and in either case one choir consists of voices in four parts, while the other choir consists of respectively one and two soloists and viols. Although it is known that instruments participated in the performances at the court in Brussels where Philips, a pupil of Byrd, worked in exile, the precise nature of this participation is not certain, so this distribution of forces is one hypothetical reconstruction of how such works might have been performed. One other uncertainty on this disc surrounds the authorship of Dering's third fantasia in six parts: it is anonymous in both of its sources, but is within a sequence of four such fantasias, one of which is attributed to Dering in another source. It certainly sounds convincingly like the work of the other six-part fantasia on the disc, which is the one attributed to Dering.

With the Rose Consort listeners know that they will be hearing consummate performances. David Smith is not only the world expert on Philips now, but is also himself a fine harpsichordist. The Choir of King's College lives up to its illustrious name, with the Canadian soprano Frauke Jürgensen in fine solo voice. The selection of material for this programme is excellent, and judiciously organized. The more familiar music by Philips is its own recommendation, but the disc is worth buying for Dering's music alone.

*Richard Turbet*

IN DULCI JUBILO

*Music for the Christmas season by Buxtehude and friends*

Theatre of Voices, Paul Hillier

77:43

DACAPO 6.220661

I am surprised that I have not encountered a programme like this before; it narrates the Christmas story using musical settings of familiar texts by Buxtehude and other north-German composers. For me personally, the

inclusion of two pieces by Christian Geist is a bonus. As well as the opening *Praeludium* by Scheidemann, each of the four sections of the story ends with organ music, finely played on both chamber and church organs by the inimitable Allan Rasmussen. The vocal repertoire ranges from solo voice with strings (Geist, Tunder and Weckmann) to Johann Christoph Bach's eight-part motet, *Merk auf, mein Herz*. Throughout the singing and playing is beautiful, nicely paced, and impeccably captured in a bright acoustic. This is not the first time this repertoire has been recorded, but having a story-telling structure is a novel approach, and this could be the ideal soundtrack to last-minute present wrapping! I know I have enjoyed it.

*Brian Clark*

### I VIAGGI DI CARAVAGGIO

Jessica Gould *soprano*, Diego Cantalupi *lute/chitarrone*  
54:49

Cremona MVC 017-043

Ferrari, Kapsberger, Laurencini, Mazzocchi, Merula, Rigatti & Sances

The unifying principle of this CD eludes me, partly because I think the link between the famous painter and any of the music is tenuous to say the least, but also because the English translation, by the soprano soloist herself, is not a little impenetrable. However, suffice perhaps that the painter and the mainly Italian composers of the early 17th century represented here demonstrate the same impassioned sense of drama in their creative enterprises. This is technically challenging music for the singer, and I'm afraid Jessica Gould rarely sounds completely comfortable or in control and occasionally suffers from fairly eye-watering lapses in intonation and tone. This is unfortunate as her partner on the lute, Diego Cantalupi, displays a consistent mastery of the music, and Gould herself has a fine sense of drama. However, track after track she undercuts notes and elsewhere wanders from the pitch frequently enough to make this programme very difficult to listen to. I was hoping to find something to enthuse about in the packaging of the CD, but finding the programme notes perverse, I then discovered that the package has nowhere to store the booklet – kind of symptomatic.

*D. James Ross*

### MERAVIGLIA D'AMORE : LOVE SONGS FROM 17TH-CENTURY ITALY

Marco Beasley, Private Musicke, Pierre Pitzl  
79:24

Christophorus CHE 0213-2

Music by Bartolotti, Carbonchi, Calvi, Corbetta, Foscarini, Frescobaldi, Galilei, d'India, Kapsberger, Biagio Marini & Pelligini

This delightful CD presents a series of instrumental pieces by the likes of Cario Calvi, Antonio Carbonchi and a whole plethora of largely unfamiliar composers interspersed with songs by the more familiar Kapsberger, d'India and Marini. The original slant comes from the fact that Private Musicke can call upon two baroque guitars, theorbo, cello and gamba, producing a wonderfully rich and lively sound in the instrumental pieces and a full and imaginative accompaniment to Marco Beasley's singing. Clearly letting their instruments lead them, the instrumentalists play with a winning mercurial quality, strumming and thrumming their way through the repertoire, with inspired cross-rhythms and exploratory introductory sections which set this music in a very believable context. My one reservation is about the recorded quality, which is very close, and in the case of the singer a little edgy, giving his voice a brittleness which a more generous recorded acoustic would have alleviated. One advantage of the close recording, however, is the placing of the various instruments, which allows very clear give and take back and forth between the various players. These are passionate and musically imaginative interpretations of this repertoire, which in the likes of the masterly *O del ciel d'Amor* by Sigismondo D'India reach remarkable heights of expression and drama. It is easy to hear in these performances the theatricality of music which was being composed just as the medium of opera was taking shape.

*D. James Ross*

### MUSIC FOR TROUBLED TIMES

The English Civil War & Siege of York  
The Ebor Singers, Paul Gameson  
76:47

resonus RES10194

Music by Byrd, Child, Hutchinson, H. & W. Lawes, Locke, Tomkins & Wilson

This is a thoughtfully compiled programme of little-known but interesting repertoire, some of which has specific York connections. The booklet essay (English only) is thorough and clear and the sung texts are given in full. The choir sing with unanimity and

a good blend though the phrasing is occasionally a little clipped. In the solo passages intonation is not always completely centred and I did wonder whether or not all the performances would have benefited from a richer and more supportive organ sound. Above all though, I'm grateful to have been reminded what a brilliant piece George Jeffrey's *How wretched is the state* is, and to have been introduced to Locke's profound *How doth the city sit solitary*.

*David Hansell*

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#### SCHABERNACK: A TREASURE TROVE OF MUSICAL JOKES

Les passions de l'ame, Meret Lüthi

56:46

deutsche harmonia mundi 88985415492

Music by Biber, Fux, Schmelzer & Walther

On the back cover of this recording we read: "Characters from the commedia dell'arte, playful birds, an astonishing virtuosity and a colourful instrumentation – the vivid imagination in late 17th century Austrian-German instrumental music loves to surprise". Whilst this is true, and the lively performances certainly do the astonishing virtuosity proud, the colourful instrumentation might surprise you a little more than you expect: alongside the strings there are keyboards, guitar or theorbo, dulcimer and a wide selection of percussion. While I am sure the effect of this show live must be extremely entertaining, and I could imagine all sorts of "scene changes" as the scoring changed from trio sonata to ever larger ensemble, as a purely listening experience I think the atmospheric glissando scales on dulcimer, or rat-a-tat of some sort of drum might soon become a little tedious. That said, the playing is full of verve and vitality, with Fux's reputation for being something of a dry peddler of strict counterpoint shot down in flames by this spirited rendition of his partita a tre, "Les Combattans". The other three composers' contributions are similarly exuberant, in a beautifully clear recording. The original approach to presenting the trilingual notes in the richly illustrated booklet also reflects the group's attempts to shake up our expectations of the music they play; on balance, they are persuasive, even if I must stick to my opening gambit – I'd rather see the production live!

*Brian Clark*

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#### SON OF ENGLAND: HERNY PURCELL | JEREMIAH CLARKE

Les Cris de Paris, Le Poème Harmonique, Vincent Dumestre

55:44

Alpha Classics Alpha 285

Though the repertoire is not without interest (Clarke) and even from the top drawer (Purcell), I was left feeling rather underwhelmed by this. The programme opens with Clarke's rather short-breathed *Ode on the death of Henry Purcell*. Though they are quite grand in conception, Clarke cannot sustain the more elaborate sections: the recitatives are much more effective, helped by sympathetic performers. Purcell is represented by the *Funeral Music* and *Welcome to all the pleasures*. In the former, the March is introduced by a solo drum passage which to me sounds too elaborate and is also a bit fast. The vocal music needs a more focussed sound from the alto and less soprano vibrato in the solo sections and a bit more refined discipline all round in the choral singing. But what music! In *Welcome...* a few performance practice decisions will raise many eyebrows: the addition of oboes to the strings; the use of a falsettist for *Here the deities* (especially one who isn't quite good enough); the scoring of this number (a consort of recorders takes the symphony) and several other details. The booklet essay is in three languages (Eng/Fr/Ger) but the sung English texts are translated into French only and there are no artist biographies.

*David Hansell*

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#### SPLENDOUR

Organ music & vocal works by Buxtehude, Hassler, Praetorius & Scheidemann

Kei Koito, Il canto d'Orfeo, Gianluca Capuano

73:15

deutsche harmonia mundi 889854 376727

+Böhm, Decius, Decker, Goudimel, J. Praetorius the younger, Joh. Praetorius?, M. Praetorius, Stadlmayr, Tunder, Weckmann & anon

This splendid and beautifully recorded CD is a tribute to its engineers as well as to the artists who chose and performed such interesting and well-researched music. This is the best tribute to this year's Lutheran celebrations that I have heard, and it captures the richness of the interplay between the outstanding Hans Scherer organ of St Stephanskirche in Tangermünde and the chorales, motets and Gregorian chant sung by the Italian group, Il Canto di Orfeo, whose contributions were

recorded in a sacristy in Milan. Try the amazing *organum* on track 17 as a taster!

As in her Bach Vol. 5, recorded equally well on the Volkland organ in the Cruciskirche in Erfurt, the choice of instrument seems exactly right for this music. Like the Erfurt organ, this remarkable survival of the 1624 Hans Scherer organ was reconstituted by Alexander Schuke of Potsdam and is tuned pretty mean at 486hz. She draws attention to the remarkable 8' Pedal Octavenbaß and we hear it used on its own, where it has the clarity and dignity of a G violone at the bottom of an early Baroque instrumental ensemble as well as providing a rich fullness to the pedal organ in combination with the Untersatz or the Bassunenbaß. The manual reeds on the Oberpositiff are colourful, the OberWerke is based on the 16' principal, and its mixtures are related to that pitch. It seems possible to combine ranks in almost any combination, and her choice of registration lets us hear the variety as well as the depth of this almost unique survival of its period and place.

As her helpful notes – you need to check the English version with the German when it seems peculiar – disclose, the connections between the composers represented and the socio-cultural as well as musical worlds that they inhabited is remarkably complex. She lists which composers' works are found in which libraries, and the relatively brief notes (nine pages) are full of detailed information and further references. As in her other recent recordings, only the specification is given in the booklet, but the detailed registration is provided in full on her website, to which the booklet refers.

I enjoyed the artistry, the planning of the programme, the collaboration with the Italian OVPP group, the beautifully recorded organ and its colourful registers in equal measure. This is a well-thought-out, and very musical programme, performed with great skill. The sounds are exciting, and the overall concept is excellent. I cannot commend it too highly.

*David Stancliffe*

There are two stars on this recording, the player and the instrument. Right from the first bars of the opening Tunder Praeludium the full sound of this stunning organ, expertly recorded here, shines through with the splendour of the disc's title. The instrument is the early 17th-century Hans Scherer organ in the Stephanskirche in Tangermünde, restored in 1994 by Alexander Schuke. Koito follows the Tunder with Buxtehude's *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland* played on flutes which immediately shows

the quieter side of the organ. The rest of the programme is chosen to showcase it in music by Hieronymous and Jacob Praetorius, Scheidemann, Weckmann and Böhm. There is lots of antiphonal playing which contrasts various stop combinations, while the meantone tuning and beautifully-even voicing make it a joy to listen to. Koito's playing matches the brilliance of the organ with fluent and unforced phrasing, enhanced by intelligently-applied ornamentation. The organ music is interspersed with chorale settings by earlier German composers like Hassler and Michael Praetorius and with some plainchant. As on Koito's other recordings, the gaps between tracks are minimised which helps the flow between them. Continuity is also helped by particular groupings of tracks around successive verses of the *Magnificat* (though unfortunately only one verset from Weckmann's organ set is included) and the German *Vater unser*. The vocal tracks are sung by Il Canto di Orfeo and are mostly of a suitable brightness to match the organ. There is some anomalous *Solesmes*-style plainchant, and parallel-fifth *organum*, but generally the match between organ and singing works well. Koito has written her own very helpful liner notes and there is more comprehensive information about registrations, texts and translations, biographies on her website at <http://www.kei-koito.com/>. This is a most impressive recording indeed which makes a compelling case for the importance of the North German organ and its repertoire.

*Noel O'Regan*

## Baroque

### BACH: ST MATTHEW PASSION

James Gilchrist *Evangelista*, Stephan Loges *Jesus*, Hannah Morrison, Zoë Brookshaw, Charlotte Ashley, Reginald Mobley, Eleanor Minney, Hugo Hymas, Ashley Riches, Alex Ashworth, Jonathan Sells SSSASTBBB, Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists, Trinity Boys Choir, Sir John Eliot Gardiner

161:04 (2 CDs in a hardcovered booklet)  
SDG725

This recording was made at a live performance in the Duomo at Pisa last September, at which I happened to be present, and has been splendidly edited. Gardiner was saying to his musicians that this was going to be his last ever St Matthew, and certainly this was the last performance of a whole series that they had given over the previous months. In some ways this is vintage

Gardiner; there are two choirs of 6.3.3.3 – so 30 singers plus the cantus firmus from the Trinity Boys Choir and bands with 3.3.2.2.1 strings – but what makes it such a good performance is that all the singers sang off copy, so the absolute unanimity of the words projected into the space is telling, as was the hieratic way that singers from the different cori moved into position to sing with the different instrumental ensembles.

Apart from the peerless James Gilchrist and the commanding Stephan Loges, all other solo roles were sung by members of the choir, revealing what a talented group of singers Gardiner commands. Among the six sopranos, Hannah Morrison is outstanding for her liquid, floating tone, and Eleanor Minney sings one of the best performances of *Erbarme dich* I have heard. The clear-voiced tenor of Hugo Hymas seems effortless in the high tessitura of his arias, and Gardiner can choose a more bass bass (Alex Ashworth) for *Gebt mir* while giving *Gerne will ich mich* and *Komm, süßes Kreuz* to the lighter-voiced Ashley Riches, reserving the dark-toned Jonathan Sells for Judas and *Am Abend* and *Mache dich*. Singers like this are much better than the old ‘soloists’ at getting inside the music, and understanding the instruments with which they are singing, and Gardiner at least has this right in not dividing his ‘soloists’ from his choir: in Bach, the soloists are the choir, boosted by groups of ripienists, and this unanimity of choral and solo sound make this Matthew especially well integrated.

In a performance like this, in a substantial space, it would be churlish to criticise such a coherent presentation for what it doesn’t claim to be, but I missed hearing the bass voice in coro I who has sung the part of Jesus also singing *Komm, süßes Kreuz*, and wonder about the constant criss-crossing of singers to sing with the other band that disregards Bach’s division between the cori.

In his notes – substantially drawn from his 2013 book, *Music in the Castle of Heaven* – Gardiner writes interestingly on Bach’s purpose, drawing on the deeply felt Lutheranism he brought to his writing, and how he sought to convey the drama by gathering his hearers into the sound-world of the liturgical event rather than performing at them, as if in an opera house. In modern performances with large forces, where the audience do not have the chorale melodies in their bones, it is difficult to recapture the electric atmosphere of such a liturgical event. But if you want a large-scale performance that avoids the monumental ‘oratorio-style’ of the past while giving due weight to the music, this would be a good choice.

In over-all terms, this is the best of Gardiner’s Matthew Passions. The balance between voices and instruments, not always perfect in that big acoustic in the flesh, has been beautifully captured by the recording editor. The tempi are ideal, with no racing through ‘just because we can’. This is a strong and mature performance, and – should it indeed be the last – will be a fine testimony to Gardiner’s style and intentions in the Matthew Passion.

*David Stancliffe*

## BACH: ST JOHN PASSION

Nicholas Phan *Evangelist*, Jesse Blumberg *Jesus*, Jeffrey Strauss *Pilate*, Amanda Forsythe, Terry Wey, Christian Immler *ScTBar*, Apollo’s Singers, Apollo’s Fire, Jeannette Sorrell

107:42 (2 CDs)

AV2369

Jeannette Sorrell performed the John Passion repeatedly in Passiontide 2016 in the Cleveland area of the USA, and this recording captures her style. Described as a dramatic presentation in the notes, some videos are being released on the Apollo’s Fire website which help this reviewer at least understand where Sorrell is coming from.

She conducts the performance, plays the continuo (with the narrative at least) and directs the staged dialogue, which took place on a well-lit platform among the players in the live performances. All members of the ‘cast’ seem to be drawn from the excellently prepared coro; but this is emphatically not a SATB quartet plus ripienists, but chorus of some twenty-something voices, who apparently stepped – or some of them – into the audience to perform some of the *turba* interjections. All the ‘characters’ sing off-copy with gesture, and the dialogue is so fast and furious that it sometimes seems a bit of a scramble. It also has the curious effect of making the Evangelist – at his best I think in the more reflective arias, which he also sings – overdramatize some pretty unimportant passages like, Pilate said unto him, which should surely be delivered pretty sotto voce. It also has the downside of not really valuing the subtle pacing and changes in tonality in Bach’s setting of the text of John 18 & 19 when you follow the text pretty deliberately.

The chorus here in the *turba* sections is wonderful: crisp and bright, while able to give a subtly different character to the changing emotions of the crowd. But I am less sure about the imposed dramatic performance in the outer choruses and the chorales. In the opening chorus,

there are substantial *rallentandi* at the end of each section, and the heavy accentuation of the four beats in a bar make for a plodding start. In the chorales, each line tends to be shaped as a unit on its own, so there is a loss of the liturgical quality of the whole, and the dynamic shading too is often exaggerated. In the final chorus the momentum almost grinds to a halt at the end of each section, and in the last chorale, the 'dramatic' *pianissimo* start – are the instruments playing at all? – builds to a huge *fortissimo*.

Despite these reservations, the arias are beautifully done, and apparently were performed with singers out front to engage the audience in reflection. Amanda Forsythe has a clear, bell-like voice ideal for this music: her *Zerfließe* is sublime; and Terry Wey is an experienced singer who makes the most of his rich timbre in the middle section of *Es ist vollbracht* – every note is beautifully articulated, though I could have done without his Handel-like *cadenza* in *Von den Stricken*. Christian Immler is a wonderful bass (as is Jesse Blumberg, the Jesus), and his *Eilt, eilt* is perfect – as is the (?semi) SAT chorus. They are joined by excellent *obbligato* instrumentalists, and the balance and *tempi* in these arias are as good as it gets.

But Bach's theological drama is somewhat masked by Sorrell. Her 'visionary concept of a dramatic production' divides the work into five 'scenes', and this division cuts across Bach's own palindromic central section, which places the chorale *Durch dein Gefängnis* at the centre. And the imposition of her own characterization of the voice parts, means that she misses the theological point that it is the same leading bass voice who sings the words of Jesus who immediately after his death also sings the lilting 12/8 *Mein teurer Heiland* in the key of D major – a key associated with the trumpets of resurrection!

I am sure that the live performances were thrilling, and certainly the musicians – both instrumental and vocal – are really well prepared, and were carefully chosen; but people hoping that this performance will give them greater insights into how Bach understood the Passion according to St John might do better to stick with John Butt's Dunedin performance or Pierre Pierlot's with *Ricercar*.

But the quality of the recording is superb, and for those who need a modern dramatic take to get into Bach, this performance would be a serious contender.

David Stancliffe

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BACH: ACTUS TRAGICUS  
Vox Luminis, Lionel Meunier  
84:55

Alpha Classics Alpha 258  
BWV 12, 106, 131, 150

I had known the Belgium-based group Vox Luminis as a very carefully balanced small choral group who specialised primarily in the repertoire of the seventeenth century. And now, following CDs of Schütz and Scheidt, the older Bachs, Fux, Kerll and Scarlatti, they are tackling Bach Cantatas. This CD is of four early cantatas with a graduated increase in scoring from the two recorders and viola da gambas of BWV 106, with four single voices and organ, through to the more recognisably 'Italian' style of BWV 12, with its distinct choruses, recitatives and arias that uses a full complement of strings with two viola parts, and has not only an oboe and bassoon, but a trumpet as well. With a more substantial score goes an increase in the number of singers from four in 106 to eight in parts of 150, and divided into solo and tutti very sensitively and effectively in 131 and using that full complement again in the distinct opening chorus and concluding chorale of 12.

With the increase in vocal scoring goes a fuller registration on the quite substantial organ, built for the church in Bornem in Belgium (where the recording took place in 2013) by Dominique Thomas after the style of Gottfried Silbermann. The organ continuo is based on a Principal chorus rather than a stopped flute, and this gives a clarity and firmness to the bass line. In 106 no 8' string bass is employed, let alone a 16'. If a 16' was used by Bach in the pre-Leipzig cantatas, I suspect it was most likely supplied by the organ, as here – rather sparingly but effectively – in the closing bars of 131, for example. The sound of the final chorale in 12, *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan*, where the descant line is entrusted to the slide trumpet and the first violin and a full chorus to mixture with a 16' pedal are employed on the organ provides a thrilling climax to the recording. This organ is a fine instrument by an excellent builder (I have played a number of his instruments and rate him highly) and plays at 440 rather than the 460+ of the Chorton in Weimar, so there are some complexities in matching wind instruments to the pitch of the organ and strings. For example, the recorders of 106 must be playing in F on A=392hz instruments, and the oboe and bassoon in 131 must play in A at 392 as well. But how does the bassoon play so beautifully in 150? Bach wrote the fagotto part in D, but the strings play in B at 440; does the bassoonist play a 415 French-style instrument in C – it

certainly sounds a fine bottom B! And what do they do in 12? There is no information on the instruments and pitches other than the (full) documentation of the organ, and liner-notes really should give us these basic and important – to practitioners – details. There are full texts and French and English translations, and the essay by Gilles Cantagrel, like for the *A Nocte Temporis* CD reviewed in December, is engaging for its insights on the interplay between theology, musicology and performance practice.

But it is the firm, robust and yet flexible sound of the singers, especially when singing together, that characterises these performances. For once, singers are approaching Bach cantatas with a sense of understanding where they have come from, what is the hinterland behind the cantatas and the performance style required. Often we hear Bach cantatas performed by singers who have reached back behind their 21st century formation as singers and have more or less learned to discard some of their singing teachers' conception of what solo singers ought to sound like. When this happens, the results are more or less successful as singers try to make a living and adapt to singing in a historically informed way as well as doing what most conductors still expect of a 'soloist'. I valued the fine recordings of these early cantatas by the Purcell Quartet with Emma Kirkby, Michael Chance, Charles Daniels and Peter Harvey greatly when they came out in the early 2000s, but that was still a coro made up of four distinct 'solo' voices, that has remained the one-to-a-part standard in this country.

But Vox Luminis have approached these early Bach cantatas from the style of ensemble singing they have created for Bach's 17th-century predecessors. This means that the ensemble sound, like that of the organ, is robust, but open voiced rather than 'produced'. Not everyone will like it, but (to me) it offers an unrivalled blend and clarity. You can get a glimpse of how it is achieved on the useful Youtube video that Lionel Meunier has produced to accompany this venture:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISVQERBzU5E>

This style of intimate attention to each others voice production as well as to the phrasing and diction is well illustrated, and makes for a style of music-making that has more in common with a viol consort playing to each other.

Some of the individual singers offer moments of great insight too: Vox Luminis have drawn in Reinoud van Mechelen, the singer/director of *A Nocte Temporis* (CD

Alpha 252, reviewed in December) to sing with them in 131 and 12, and that sets a new standard for Vox Luminis' solo contributions, which are always musical, clear as a bell and beautifully phrased. I particularly like the alto as well, Daniel Elgersma, who has the particularly strong lower notes of a true haute-contre, which you rarely get with an English cathedral-style male alto. For me, as so often the only vocal query I have is with the soprano line. Excellent though the singers of Vox Luminis are, they do not have quite the edge of boy trebles like Leopold Lampelsdorfer singing in Eichorn's *Weihnachtsoratorium I – III* (VKJK 1238) or Jonty Ward in Higginbottom's Mozart Requiem (NCR 1383), for example.

You can tell that in spite of the lack of some basic information in the liner notes, I rate the approach of Vox Luminis both vocally and instrumentally highly. This is great music-making, and the ease with which the sensible tempi changes are managed without any overt conducting as well as the cohesion and coherence of the style that make the texts the focus of the performances sets a new benchmark in the way we are learning to approach Bach Cantatas.

*David Stancliffe*

### J. S. BACH: 'CELEBRATORY CANTATAS'

[Hana Blažiková, Hiroya Aoki, Charles Daniels, Roderick Williams SCTTB], Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki

70:23

BIS-2231 SACD

BWV206, 215

**T**hese two secular cantatas are closely linked. Bach was at work on BWV 206, a complex musical commentary on Augustus III's role as both Elector of Saxony and King of Poland by describing the various claims to supremacy made by the four rivers that thread through his domains for his birthday in October, when it was suddenly announced that Augustus was coming to Leipzig for the Michaelmas fair in 1734 in person. So work on BWV 206 was shelved (it was eventually performed in 1736), and work hastily started on a grand celebratory cantata that must have been completed in about three days – *Preise dein Glücke* (BWV 215) – that was performed in the open air on October 5th.

To meet the tight deadline, Bach re-used as the opening chorus a movement of a name-day cantata from 1732 that was eventually to become the *Osanna* in the B minor

Mass, a couple of arias from existing cantatas for tenor (3) and bass (5), leaving himself the task of composing new recitatives, a soprano aria (7), later re-used in part V of the Christmas Oratorio, and the final chorus (9). Though clearly a great success, the occasion was marred by Bach's trumpet player, Reiche, suffering a fatal stroke that night, said to have been brought on by inhaling the smoke from the six hundred wax tapers held by the University students.

The three soloists in 215 are all familiars at the top of their game, and the Suzuki machine works its magic, with the brass led by Jean-François Madeuf, so no fingerholes. The recitatives are by no means child's-play, having decorative figures on pairs of oboes and flutes respectively in the Tenor and Soprano ones (2 and 6), and complex interplay with all three instrumental cori in the final one (8). Composing, copying and rehearsing just these new movements in three days would have been almost unimaginable, let alone re-setting, copying and rehearsing the other movements. This performance is particularly notable for the clarity and balance of the chorus work in the opening eight-part chorus, where each line is doubled and there is a fine central section which didn't survive in the Osanna.

In *Schleicht, spielende Wellen* (BWV 206), eventually performed in 1736 at the Café Zimmermann and again in 1740, the music is less generic and so was not subject to re-use in other contexts. This is a pity, as it is superb, and is, in consequence, less well known than its much-parodied companion pieces. Its inventive characterisation of the nationalities through their mighty rivers produces music from Bach unlike any other of his surviving compositions, including the soprano aria (9), which calls for three flutes. I particularly enjoyed the counter-tenor Hiroya Aoki in his aria with a pair of oboes d'amore (7), a complex imitative texture – vintage Bach.

Both these cantatas produce wonderful playing and singing from Suzuki's forces and are a total delight. I cannot recommend this CD too highly, and am playing it frequently, discovering fresh nuances each time. Buy it at once and let it be your companion all summer long.

*David Stancliffe*

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## BACH AND BEFORE

The Bach players

62:43

Hyphen Press Music 012

BWV75 + music by Kuhnau, Schelle & Schein

The Bach Players' latest CD continues their imaginative pairings and leads to Cantata 75 by way of some of Bach's predecessors as Kantor of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig.

Johann Hermann Schein, who died young, was born in the same year as Schütz (1586) and is represented by the Geistliches Konzert *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*, a short motet with a figured bass part for organ, and Suite no. 20 in E minor from *Banchetto Musicale*. The five-part string playing here is a delight, and the cool, zingy chords are well tuned. Would a theorbo have been a nice addition in this piece?

From Johann Schelle, Kantor from 1677 to 1701, we have an instrumental canon on *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland* and a cantata *Aus der Tiefen*; and from Johann Kuhnau, Bach's immediate predecessor, there is a more substantial cantata setting each of the six verse of the chorale *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan*.

The Bach Players play and sing one-to-a-part, and their booklets, while listing the musicians, the timings, and the texts in German and English give most of the space to an essay by their excellent keyboard player, Silas Woolston. This one is typical, and by way of introducing the planning of the programme, manages to be both scholarly and informative: a pleasure to read.

The performances are good, and when I began to listen to the Schein motet, I was impressed by the increased clarity and blend of the singers since I heard them last. The accurate chording in the homophonic sections felt like an improvement on some of their more recent CDs and made me think how sensible it is to approach Bach from behind, as it were. Then the virtues of relatively clean singing can be carried through to the Bach, even if the plosive final consonant in 'bestellt' was surely not the best of which they are capable.

But that is not altogether the case. I notice that Rachel Elliott's poise and accuracy in verse 4 of the Kuhnau is splendid, but she sometimes introduces a wobble on the final note of a phrase: I could understand this on the strong, penultimate note but surely not on the weak final note? It makes it sound as if she is running out of breath. This happens in the aria in BWV 75 as well, where this may - understandably - be the case at the end of the florid

cantilenas! Nor is the rich-voiced Sally Bruce-Payne immune: in verse 5 of the Kuhnau, she allows what today's singers are taught is expressive singing to win over the purity of the line. Balance and clarity are restored with a decent weight of organ tone and elegant but simple oboe playing in the final verse, but vibrato is an ornament in this period.

In the Bach, his first cantata after arrival in Leipzig, his hearers were treated to an extended two-part exposition of the where the opening verse of the Chorale *Was Gott tut* in an extended setting concludes each part, and the same chorale on the trumpet is the *cantus firmus* for a string sinfonia that opens Part 2. The trumpeter, Adrian Woodward, is splendid here and in the C major aria with the bass that follows, shading off his top C beautifully (singers take note!). However, in the opening chorus the singing style adopted in the Schein is abandoned from the first alto entry in favour of a more soloistic approach; even the nimble fugato has the singers of the upper lines pushing through their held notes in the 20th century style, though tenor and bass do better. I suspect that people find Bach so demanding that best intentions give way under the pressure of getting the notes, the text and matching the instruments' sound into place. This is where the exacting preparation and leisurely rehearsal timetables of groups on the continent win over our under-financed system in this country.

I make these comments not in any carping sense, because I admire this group's music-making; but I would like them to gain that fluency and unanimity of which I hope and believe they are capable, and especially the integration of their singing style with the instrumental character of their music-making.

*David Stancliffe*

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BACH: ANGENEHME MELODEI!

Huldigungskantaten BWV 216a & 210a

Katja Stuber, Franz Vitzthum, Daniel Johannsen, Deutsche Hofmusik, Alexander Grychtolik

52:41

deutsche harmonia mundi 8-89854 10522-8

**T**his is another pair of secular cantatas – this time homage cantatas – in a performing reconstruction by Alexander Grychtolik as a companion CD to his *Ruhm und Glück*, versions of BWV 36a and 66a, reviewed in EMR August 2013.

*Erwählte Pleißenstadt* (BWV 216a) is more difficult

to reconstruct, as although there exist some fragments of BWV 216, a wedding cantata written in 1728 from which it was parodied, and we have BWV 204.8 & 205.13 from which two arias (numbers 3 and 7) can be fully reconstructed, it is only the music of the Tenor (Apollo) and the Alto (Mercury) that form the original thread of this reconstruction.

In *O angenehme Melodie* (BWV 201a), we have a more secure basis. The Soprano part survives entire, as does a print of the earliest dedicatory version. The instrumental parts of the arias and the two accompanied recitatives exist in a later parody, the wedding cantata *O holder Tag* (BWV 210), so all that is missing is the BC for the secco recits 3, 5 and 9, where the reconstructed chord sequences seem entirely plausible.

This remarkable and taxing solo cantata is splendidly sung by Katya Stuber, who has a wonderful voice – clean and clear, but rich and expressive; warm and colourful, but never wobbly. This was a delight, as she has sung opera – Wagner and Debussy as well as Mozart and Handel – and I was not expecting such a stylish HIP performance. The single strings, d'amore and traverso of Deutsche Hofmusik play fluidly with a spring in their step, and this whole performance was a delight.

I'm very slightly less enthusiastic about BWV 216a. I enjoyed the original voice tessiturae with a tenor singing what in BWV 216 is given to a soprano, and these surviving parts of 216 certainly establish basic tonalities. But the secco recits are entirely new, as are the instrumental parts for two arias.

But these are personal preferences. The singing in 216a is excellent, and the performances are well served by a generous acoustic and excellent recordings. Both cantatas are recorded in this version for the first time, and should be warmly welcomed – indeed enthusiastically in the case of Katja Stuber's 210a.

*David Stancliffe*

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J. S. BACH: THE ENGLISH SUITES, BWV 806-811

Alessandra Artifoni

134:31 (2 CDs in a jewel case)

Dynamic CDS7793.02

**A**ll we know from the extremely minimal liner notes is that Artifoni plays on a copy of the 1702-04 Mietke in Berlin, made by Tony Chinnery in 1998, and tempered Neidhar 1724. This CD was recorded in the Villa L'Oriuolo in Florence while her parents were

celebrating their Golden Wedding in August 2016, and so is dedicated to them. We don't even have a list of the movements within each suite. For full-priced discs at full price, this is pretty thin.

From her playing we learn that she is competent, and creates a full if rather hard sound on her instrument. She doesn't quite have the fluency and poise of a Richard Egarr, but the rhythms are well-maintained, and it always feels like dance music. And while it rarely feels as if the tempi or the registration are inappropriate, I had a slight feeling of weariness when I had listened to all six suites in a row. She has previously recorded a certain amount of Bach, including the French Suites and some partitas.

*David Stancliffe*

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### J. S. BACH: SONATAS FOR FLUTE AND HARPSICHORD

Pauliina Fred, Aapo Häkkinen

70:17

Naxos 8.573376

BWV 1030-35

**T**his is a very good recording, and stands up well to all the others I know in quality of tone, the clarity of the recording and the sense of partnership between the two players, both well-known in the Finnish period instrument world.

Fred plays most of the sonatas on a full-toned and crystal-clear Wenner copy of a Palanca flute, but switches for BWV 1035 to a lighter-voiced copy of a Rottenburg by Claire Soubeyran. In this sonata she is accompanied – the right word here for the sonatas where the keyboard is a continuo instrument rather than a sparring partner – by a clavichord, whose arpeggios in the final Allegro assai seem especially plausible. For BWV 1033, which may have had its origins in a sonata for unaccompanied flute dating from Bach's time in Köthen, Häkkinen plays a lute-harpsichord by Knif & Ollikka (2014). This certainly suits the rhapsodic nature of this sonata well, while in BWV 1032 he plays an Italian-style instrument, where the single 8' used in the slow movement is a singing alternative to the lute stops used in the slow movements of 1030, 1031 and 1034. These multiple possibilities of registration illustrate the quality of preparation that has gone into the choices the players make about tone, phrasing and tempi, especially the easing of the tempo where it seems right. In the other sonatas, registration – including the use of the lute stop – seems well-judged, and softens the edge of the

somewhat hard-toned flute (so good for balancing with other instruments in a larger band, I imagine) a bit.

The quality of attention one to the other in these sonatas is very high, and makes for chamber music making of the highest order. I can't believe that there could be a better recording of these characterful and diverse works. I entirely recommend this CD. 5533

*David Stancliffe*

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### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH: SONATA AND PARTITAS

Enrico Onofri *violin*

54:55

Passacaille 1025

BWV 1001, 1004, 1006

**T**his CD presents three of the *Sei Solo*, refreshingly and elegantly played by Enrico Onofri at  $a=390$  on an anonymous Italian violin of the early 18th century, using a copy by Luc Breton of an anonymous late 17th-century bow.

Not only are the layers of 19th-century varnish stripped away, but the fluidity of his nuanced playing, sensitive to the essentially dance-like nature of all the movements played, balances an almost throw-away articulation of the ornamental notes with a clear sense of the clean overall architecture of each movement. Lovers of the great romantic tradition of interpretation as exemplified by Joseph Joachim will be in for some surprises, but I found the singing articulation of movements like the Ciaccona in Partita 2 and the Preludio of Partita 3 absolutely captivating. He has studied Quantz's detailed descriptions of German performance styles carefully, and worked on translating his advice about tonguing and shaping each note into his violin technique, so every phrase is carefully presented and articulated, with lovely understated *inégales*. He chooses a low pitch to match the Köthen Kammerton and this gives him greater clarity of articulation. All this creates a wonderful sonority.

I hope Onofrio overcomes his scruples and feels that he can record the other three of the *Sei Solo* soon, as these are most beautifully played. What he has given us as outstanding musically as it is fascinating from a scholarly perspective.

*David Stancliffe*

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## BACH AND FRIENDS

Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas *organ/harpsichord*  
79:54

Ambronay AMY048

Böhm, Buxtehude, J. C. F. Fischer, Georg Muffat, Pachelbel, Scheidemann

This is a recital by a young prizewinning organist/harpsichordist from the Southwest corner of France. He plays a harpsichord by Philippe Humau – a copy of an instrument made by Johann Heinrich Gräbner in Dresden in 1722 which has been in the Villa Bertramka in Prague since 1787. It has a mature and resonant tone. The organ is a 3 manual instrument by Dominique Thomas built in the north German style of Arp Schnitger for the church at Ciboure in 2014. The plain, flat wooden roofed church has dry acoustics, that do the instrument no favours, but every note – even when manual 16' ranks are drawn – is clear, and the sound is not only powerful in the tutti but elegant and characterful when only a few ranks are used. This is an exciting instrument, and I hope that there will be an organ by Thomas in the UK before too long.

The programme title 'Bach and his friends' is a slight misnomer. Scheidemann died in 1663, and Buxtehude and Pachelbel at least cannot be called friends in the normal sense of the word. But it makes a good selection and gives a context to Bach's works we do not often hear. For an example of Louis-Nöel Bestion de Camboulas' – what a splendid name! – fine playing, listen to his articulation of the entries in the fugato sections of Buxtehude's Praeludium in G minor: each entry is beautifully phrased and given the clarity and shaping it deserves without the onward rhythm being in any way distorted. This is elegant playing, and apparently straightforward pieces like Pachelbel's Aria Sebaldina from *Hexachordum Apollinis* acquire a lyrical presence.

When he comes to the organ, the registrations – it would have been good to include details in the booklet as well as the specification – are varied and displays the colours and richness of Thomas' organ. There are six manual reeds, and four on the pedal, and a rank with a Tierce on each of the three manuals, but in the Böhm *Vater unser* the decorated chorale is given to a single principal rank, and its sweet, singing tone illustrates the builder's skill as well as the player's.

So this is a fine introduction to a skilled and elegant player as well as two splendid instruments. I recommend this disc to connoisseurs of both.

David Stancliffe

## MUSICAL OFFERING

The Bach Players

54:13

Hyphen Press Music HPM 011

BWV1057 + BuxWV257

This is a first-rate performance of a late and intriguing work that is under-performed. There is a CD by Ton Koopman from 2009 and a more recent one by Ricercar in 2015, but this version was prepared and scored by Silas Wollston, the group's harpsichordist, whose excellent essay in the booklet *Bach the orator* is a model for what research and performance practice can create, and I doubt if it could be bettered. He convincingly summarises Ursula Kirkendale's thesis that the rhetorical basis for the order of the movements is to be found in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, and displays how this works in practice.

Everything is good, except possibly the choice of a Buxtehude trio sonata as a filler: there are a lot of underperformed J. S. Bach fragments among his more canonic writing, (BWV 1072-8), or his arrangement of Fasch's trio for organ (BWV 585) which might play more interestingly alongside *The Musical Offering* than BuxWV 257.

But this is really beside the point. The playing – apart from a slightly lumpy start to the Ricercar à3 – is neat, balanced and fluid. Each of the players in Nicolette Moonen's group (flute, violin, gamba and harpsichord) is confident without being exhibitionistic and the clarity of the recording in a sufficiently yielding acoustic is a tribute to the seasoned producer, Roy Mowatt, and the editor, Nick Parker. Silas Wollston plays a Clayson & Garrett copy of a Dulcken 1745 instrument.

David Stancliffe

## JUST BACH

Johannette Zomer *soprano*, Bart Schneemann *baroque oboe*, Tulipa Consort

61:00

Channel Classics CCS 39917

Cantata sinfonias and arias + BWV 202

I cannot commend this. In spite of some lovely moments – mainly of playing – the overall quality of musicianship is below par. In spite of singing with a number of distinguished directors, she begins the aria *Mein gläubiges Herze* from Cantata 68 with a terrible 'come

hither' scoop up to the first note. And while some of her singing is controlled and lovely, she has one of those voices that are permanently smiling.

The instrumental playing is patchy too; the CD opens with the Overture to the First Suite, and the bassoon's inability to play the fast passagework rhythmically is sadly evident in his first exposed passage in bars 28 & 29, and the upper strings are very hurried too in bars 89 & 90. Later the bassoon is better, but makes a dull, fluffy sound, and the string accompaniment in the aria *Wie zittern und wanken* from BWV 105 has absolutely no give, so any interplay that there might have been between voice and oboe seems strictly forbidden.

The music of course is wonderful, but this anthology is produced with the *Smooth Classics* of *Classic FM* in mind, so it is difficult to see to which of EMR's readers it might appeal. It is recorded in a church, but the acoustics are not always very clear. All that said, however, it looks from the photos in the notes as if they are enjoying themselves!

David Stancliffe

#### BACH: THE PARTITAS

Richard Egarr *harpsichord*

154:59 (2 CDs in a wallet)

harmonia mundi USA HMM 907593.94

Richard Egarr plays the Partitas – Bach's 'Opus 1' – on a 1991 harpsichord by Joel Katzman of Amsterdam after a Ruckers from Antwerp of 1638 which is tuned in his version of a 6th comma 18th-century temperament at a=399.

The instrument sounds rich and springy at this pitch, giving a bloom and mellow resonance to each note that Egarr can use to advantage to sustain the tone in the slower movements, while offering sufficient life and clarity in the faster passagework. I was never conscious of any artificiality in his chosen tempi, and the result of listening to all six partitas through at one stretch is of being mesmerised by the apparently effortless rightness of it all. So fluent, so sparkling, so dance-like, and yet so engaged, well-planned and serious a journey. Where did he get all this from?

Then I read his remarkable essay in the liner notes which describe what Egarr calls 'the mind-boggling abilities of Bach to infuse this seemingly effortless music with godly patterns and personal algorithms of stunning brilliance.' First he explores the numerology derived from the name, then moves to the mathematics of the Trinity and of Tempus Perfectum, paying careful attention to the

cross shapes of the sharps in the key signatures in Partita 5 and then turns to Partita 6, where he finds Bach at the foot of the cross. 'These cross figures contain predominantly intervals of the third and seventh. The three voices of this fugue, which takes us to the end of this world, enter in the first, third and seventh bars of each half. Is it a coincidence that Bach chose to delay publication until 1731?'

I can only give you a flavour of the theological and mathematical brilliance with which Egarr is convinced Bach's music is infused, but I have never heard either such convincing arguments or such convincing playing. The more Bach I study, the more I am clear that it is not only the more obvious church music, performed in the service of the Lutheran rite, that reveals Bach's comprehensive and coherent expression of his faith in all that he wrote.

This is a very good recording. Not only is the actual recording of a very high quality, but the performance could not be bettered either technically or cerebrally.

David Stancliffe

#### BACH: GOLDBERG-VARIATIONEN

Davide Pozzi *harpsichord*

61:19

Pan Classics PC 10374

#### BACH: GOLDBERG VARIATIONS

Pieter-Jan Belder *harpsichord*

77:40

Brilliant Classics 95471

One of the things that struck me about two more Goldbergs to add to those by Christine Schornsheim (reviewed last October) and Ignacio Prego's (reviewed last November) is the difference in timing. Pozzi, without seeming hurried (though he is very nimble) takes a mere 61.19 to the 79.08 of Prego, the 74.05 of Schornsheim, and the 77.40 of Pieter-Jan Belder. A second distinguishing mark is the instrument. Both Schornsheim and Pozzi play copies of a Mietke, though a different instrument: Schornsheim's is a copy by Christoph Kern after a ca. 1710 instrument, while Pozzi's is by Cornelis Bom after an undescribed Mietke: the mellow tone of both of them reveals a family likeness. Most distinct is the instrument used by Pieter-Jan Belder who chooses to play on a recent copy of a Ruckers of 1624, dating almost a century before the others. The action is noisier, and I instinctively associate the more clunky sound with composers a generation of two earlier than Bach like

Sweelinck and his pupils.

Of the notes accompanying the CDs, Pieter-Jan Belder's are the fullest and most detailed for those who do not know the music so well or do not have a score in front of them. His notes tell us that this is a replacement for his 1999 recording (already a second version!), and will be his last. In spite of that, I find his playing more staid, and, although more flexible than Schornsheim's, a trifle mannered. That and the more 'old-fashioned' sound of his Ruckers-type instrument, tend to give us a more schoolmasterly performance as opposed to Pozzi, who has grace and fluency abounding. Even when Pozzi is playing in a slow tempo, the momentum derived from the essential dance rhythms behind so many of the variations tell you where the whole movement is headed. I like it, in spite of the very minimalist essay (in German, English, French and Italian), which is hot on structure and numerology but thin on Belder's kind of exposition.

This minimalist essay, though, is revealing. Looking at the way the 30 variations and two statements of the Aria can be divided, Pozzi points to the Trinitarian 10 by 3, with groups of 3 – two variations and a canon in each – but notes also the two sixteen-fold divisions, with the French Overture opening the second part. He tunes his instrument to a modified Werkmeister IV at 415, while Belder discloses nothing except the maker's name – Titus Crijnen 2014.

So in preference to the scholarly and considered third version of Belder and second of Schornsheim, I find myself more captivated by Prego, and even more by Pozzi. Which version you would like to have – you may already have many – is very much a matter of individual taste. Both versions reviewed here are excellently recorded and faultlessly – though differently – played. You will need to hear them both before deciding for yourself, but of all four, I will tire least, I think, of Pozzi.

*David Stancliffe*

.....  
BACH: GOLDBERG VARIATIONS  
SELDOM SENE Recorder Quintet  
75:00  
Brilliant Classics 95591

**T**his CD arrived in Huntingdon when I was working at Clifford Bartlett's house. Clifford has been suffering from Alzheimer's for a couple of years now and, although he still enjoys sitting at his organ sight-reading music, his enjoyment of music has become

more restricted; he tends to listen by choice to Vaughan Williams symphonies, resents the fact that BBC Radio 3 play Bach every morning as he is about to get up, and anything unfamiliar is considered "silly". One thing is not changed: his absolute aversion to recorders! So, when he went to throw this in the bin (!), I decided to rescue it and dupe him into listening to it during one of our many daily car journeys. Suffice to say that the five ladies of Seldom Sene – as I had imagined – overcame his prejudice (both against Bach and the recorder) with their stylish arrangements of this most re-scored piece from the BWV, not to mention their breath-taking performances on no fewer than 21 instruments (right down to one they had CrowdFunded). There is something about involving human breath in the performance of such music that shapes and informs the lines in a way that keyboard instruments and even stringed arrangements would do well to emulate. This is a superb disc that I have often listened to, and I heartily recommend it to anyone who is a fan (or, indeed, not a fan!) of recorders or the Goldbergs.

*Brian Clark*

.....  
BACH ALL'ITALIANO  
Simon Borutzki & Ensemble  
68:48  
klanglogo (Rondeau) KL1517  
BWV593, 971, 973-6, 978, 986

**T**his is a project after J. S. Bach's own heart, as the arch-arranger's keyboard arrangements (of Vivaldi, Marcello and anon) are further re-arranged for recorder and continuo! Much of this music inhabits a twilight zone in the composer's oeuvre, by him and yet not by him, so much of it was unfamiliar to me, and it strikes me that these adaptations for recorder and BC work rather well, bringing some rather fine music into the spotlight. There are occasional passages which don't sound entirely idiomatic for the recorder, but Borutzki's stunning virtuosity carries the day, while his musicality and that of his continuo team mean that the performances are extremely engaging. We hear him play a selection of different recorder sizes all with a persuasive mastery, seven different instruments of four different sizes, which gives the CD a fascinating dimension as an introduction to the Baroque recorder in its many guises. Particularly delightful is an account of Bach's own *Italian Concerto* on a charming original anonymous Baroque descant instrument, alternating with a tenor recorder (with lute

accompaniment) for the Andante. This refreshing CD is a thorough delight, usefully bringing music which clearly appealed to J. S. Bach to a deservedly wider audience in imaginative and musically thrilling performances.

*D. James Ross*

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## BACH & SONS 2

Zürcher Kammerorchester, Sebastian Knauer

69:50

Berlin Classics 0300764BC

BWV1044, 1055, 1056, J. C. Bach: Concerto in f; C. P. E. Bach: Concerto in G

This is a second CD produced by the pianist, Sebastian Knauer, of keyboard concertos by Johann Sebastian coupled with two by his sons to link the 'old' Bach to the coming age.

You may think it curious, but it isn't the modern Steinway grand that I have any problems with: this is beautifully and lightly played by Knauer, who quotes Roger Norrington's dictum 'Period performance is in the mind, and not in the hardware', and provides a powerful advocacy of that in these performances. It is more with the overall style including the tuning of the string band, and in particular the way they shape and play through their lines especially in the violins. I did not imagine that the effect in one of my favourite Klavier concertos, the A major BWV1055, would be so striking. It is partly that 21st-century approaches to phrasing, to long lines, to sustaining or even growing phrases that are in themselves less significant is such a contrast to the shorter bow strokes and floating lines we are used to in period instrument ensembles.

Their approach seems to me to pay off splendidly, especially in the Johann Christian F minor concerto with its pre-*Sturm und Drang* drive, and in the C. P. E. Bach G major concerto with its lyrical, classical lines, but to be essentially at odds with the different sort of partnership between strings and keyboard (and the flute and violin in BWV 1044) demanded in the concertos by J. S. B., where a more interlocked partnership is surely required.

So while I enjoyed Knauer's musicianship, it was Bach's sons whose music fares best in this collection.

*David Stancliffe*

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## SONYA BACH PLAYS J. S. BACH

*Keyboard Concertos, Italian Concerto*

Sonya Bach *piano*, English Chamber Orchestra, [John Mills]

103:02 (2 CDs in a standard jewel case)

BWV971, 1052-56, 1058

These are rather exaggerated performances, recorded on two occasions – March 2014 and February 2015 – in St John's Smith Square. Sonya Bach is a young Korean pianist who plays a Steinway and is photographed for the cover draped over it.

She is clearly in love with it, and has been playing since the age of two; and also with J. S. Bach, whose contrapuntal writing she had mastered by the age of 10. Her performances are mostly in the vigorous style, with heightened dramatic accents and rather exaggerated dynamics, including some pretty extreme crescendos and diminuendos. The ECO strings play neatly, but neither they nor she are as aware of HPP as – for example – Sebastian Knauer, playing concertos in Bach & Sons 2, with the Zürcher Kammerorchester reviewed above.

If you like your Bach *Klavier concerti* with this scoring and style, you may be seduced by these sounds, but I'm not very keen on this approach.

*David Stancliffe*

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## BARRIÈRE / DE BURY: SONATES ET SUITES

POUR LE CLAVECIN

Luca Quintavalle *harpsichord*

159:19 (2 CDs in a case)

Brilliant Classics 95428

BARRIÈRE Book 6 + six character pieces; DE BURY Four suites

Jean-Baptiste Barrière (1707-1747) was a *basse d'orchestre* at the Paris Opéra and the first French composer to write idiomatically for the cello (four books of Italianate sonatas 1733-40). His fifth published volume was of six sonatas for the *pardessus de viole*, the first five of which he transcribed for harpsichord and published, together with an entirely new sonata and six single pieces, as his Book 6. These thus became the first keyboard sonatas to be published by a French composer. And pretty spectacular they are, combining string figurations with elaborate broken octaves and sweeping scale and arpeggio patterns. Imagine an amalgam of Royer, Rameau and Scarlatti on their headier days: this is virtuosic stuff. Luca Quintavalle is more than up for the challenge and even manages to sound as if he is enjoying himself.

He sounds equally happy on the second disc, this time in the more obviously French *ordres* of Bernard de Bury (1720-85). His career was spent entirely at the Versailles court: son of an *ordinaire de la musique du roi*; keyboard player to the *chambre du roi* (1744); *maître de chapelle* (1744); and successor to Rebel as *surintendant de la musique du roi* (1751). The music of his *Première Livre* (1736/7) clearly shows the influence of Couperin (hardly surprising since Bury was still in his teens) both in musical details and in the titles of the pieces. Very occasionally the ornament playing is a little deliberate but the tremendous surge of the final Chaconne persuades me that I should bring out the rarely deployed 5\* for the performance.

The booklet identifies the instrument (a very good 2015 copy of Donzelague 1711), includes an informative essay about the music and an artist biography but is in English only.

David Hansell

#### CORELLI'S LEGACY

Szabolcs Illés *violin*, Dalibor Pimek *cello*, Ondřej Macek *harpsichord & organ*

61:35

Hungaroton HCD 32765

This enterprising CD places music by Corelli next to works by several of his pupils Visconti, Somis, Mossi and Castrucci and the only one I had come across before, Geminiani. As such it is an interesting exploration of the initial influence of the great master, although of course his highly original shadow falls far and wide on the music of the whole Baroque era. Apart from Corelli's opus 5 no 3 Sonata, all the works here are receiving their premiere recordings, and this alone makes the CD thoroughly worthwhile.

The playing is sensitive and the music elegantly and appropriately ornamented, so I found myself slightly puzzled by what was lacking. Szabolcs Illés's Baroque violin tone is slightly shallow and scratchy, either due to the acoustic or the recording, and his intonation very occasionally is a little slap-dash, but perhaps ultimately the musicians sadly don't sound entirely 'on top of' this distinctive repertoire, and the music just sounds rather joyless.

On the subject of pupils, Illes is a pupil of Sigiswald Kuijken, which is why I am surprised that the playing is not more passionate and idiomatic, but having returned to the CD several times I'm afraid it just isn't. There are those

who will want to own this CD simply because of the wealth of unfamiliar material here, but I couldn't help wishing that it could have been more appetisingly presented.

D. James Ross

#### COUPERIN: L'APOTHÉOSE DE LULLY, LEÇONS DE TÉNÈBRES

Arcangelo, Jonathan Cohen

70:35

Hyperion CDA68093

In the general context of current programming styles it feels odd to have a disc which offers two quite unconnected groups of pieces. I must say that I would have preferred to hear *L'Apothéose* in the context of other instrumental music and, especially, the famous *Leçons* in the company of other *petits motets* by Couperin. There are some brilliant examples out there which really are too little sung. Anyway, back to what actually happens. The *concert instrumental* is most beautifully played by the strings, with loving attention given to every detail but with no sense of tip-toeing from note to note. I liked having the movements' titles spoken though they could have been very slightly slower and at a very slightly higher level. The only element that jars is the combination of lute and harpsichord on the continuo. This is just too much and is at times an over-active distraction from the simple nobility of the upper parts. I'm afraid that I did not enjoy the *Leçons* quite as much. Others may not be as disturbed by the singers' vibrato: I would have liked less so that the ornaments, especially the trills, were clearer and more special adornments to the line. In the booklet, Graham Sadler's elegant note appears in English, French and German though artists' biographies are in English only, as are the translations of the sung Latin texts.

David Hansell

#### FIORÈ: COMPLETE CELLO SONATAS & 17TH CENTURY ITALIAN ARIAS

Elinor Frey *cello*, Suzie LeBlanc *soprano*, Lorenzo Ghielmi *harpsichord*, Esteban La Rotta *theorbo*

74:38

passacaille 1026

As well as presenting Angela Maria Fiorè (1660-1723)'s output for cello, this disc introduces a fairly recently discovered repertoire of opera arias

featuring solo cello by such composers as Pollarolo and Marc'Antonio Ziani, in addition to less well-known names like Monza, Sabadini, Magni and Ballarotti. Beautifully recorded with a total of just four musicians, the programme is balanced between instrumental and vocal pieces, and shows not only that there is no need for a stringed bass for such repertoire, but also how, even at this early stage in its development, late-17th-century Italian cellists (and composers) already recognised the exceptional singing quality of the instrument. Frey and LeBlanc display both warm lyricism and agile virtuosity – neither the arias nor the sonatas are lacking in technical demand. Ghielmi and La Rotta's continuo realisations are richly inventive; I especially enjoyed the simple sounds of cello and theorbo alone, the elegantly shaped bowed lines contrasting with the gently pointed bass notes and occasional flourished chord – simply exquisite. Full marks then for discovery and execution!

*Brian Clark*

DANICAN PHILIDOR: SIX PARISIAN QUARTETS,  
L'ART DE LA MODULATION

Ars Antiqua with Elizabeth Wallfisch

65:07

Nimbus Alliance NI 6347

These six delightful "Quatuors pour un Hautboy, 2 Violons, et Basse" were published in 1755. Gambist Mark Kramer's notes say relatively little of the music (in all honesty, there is not much he could have said, since these are the composer's only surviving chamber works) but they do a marvellous job of setting the scene, describing the transition of taste and artistic and musical styles as the strict order of Louis XIV's France gave way to the Age of Enlightenment. Philidor was better known in his own day as a master chess player, capable of playing three games simultaneously while blindfolded; thus, writing music in four parts in ever-varying combinations was no complex task for him. These are enjoyable pieces, very nicely played, but they are less contrapuntally complex than Telemann's of three decades earlier, and – in terms of the rococo filigree that Kramer highlights – they scarcely rival the many quartets produced by Janitsch, his Berlin-based contemporary. Ars Antiqua perform *sinfonie* 3, 4 and 6 with flute instead of oboe. Their inclusion of a harp is probably justified on the basis of the instrument's popularity in French music tooms of the period, and I suppose the original gamba player might have read over the

keyboard player's shoulder. Yes, these are quartets for six! And thoroughly entertaining they are, too.

*Brian Clark*

DELLA CIAIA: OPERA OMNIA PER TASTIERA

Mara Fanelli *harpsichord*, Olimpio Medori *organ*

159:13 (3 CDs in card wallet)

Tactus TC 670480

Della Ciaia (1671-1755) was a Pisan nobleman who spent sixteen years with the Tuscan fleet, whiling away his time with composition, before moving to Rome and eventually back to Pisa, where he became a priest. He helped design and paid for a famous five-keyboard organ in the church of the Knights of St. Stephen (of which he was a member) in his home city. His *Opera Quarta* for keyboard, probably published in 1727, contains six sonatas for harpsichord, 12 short *Saggi* for organ in each of the modes, six *ricercars* and an organ mass (Kyrie and Gloria only). A Christmas pastorella was later added to a copy of the print now in Berlin. All are included on these three discs; none of it can be called great music but it represents a somewhat quixotic individual take on the keyboard idioms of his time and getting it all on disk was clearly a labour of love for these two performers.

The six sonatas are played on two CDs by Mara Fanelli on a Taskin harpsichord copy by Keith Hill. All are in four movements: a rhapsodic toccata, a canzona based on imitative writing and two contrasting *tempi*. There is a lot of repetition of figuration, phrases and even individual notes; the occasional bizarre twist does not altogether relieve the tedium, though Fanelli gives an accurate account. The organ music is played by Olimpio Medori on the 1775 Pietro Agati organ in the Pieve di Santa Maria Assunta in Pistoia, which proves a very appropriate instrument. The *saggi* and *ricercari* are relatively short pieces which show a more disciplined side of Della Ciaia and are effectively registered by Medori. The organ mass is actually an arrangement of parts of the composer's own setting for four voices, based on the plainchant *Missa Cunctipotens*, with the addition of an introductory toccata. The alternatim plainchant, sung by soloist Paolo Fanciullaci, is accompanied on organ, using accompaniments taken from an early eighteenth-century Roman manuscript. It is a useful example of how such alternatim masses would have been performed at this period. The Pastorella is an extended sectional piece of nearly 14 minutes, with typical bagpipe imitation as well as special bird effects. There are very comprehensive booklet

notes, though track timings are not given. A worthwhile project shining light into a forgotten corner of the repertory.

*Noel O'Regan*

FUX: AVE REGINA

Hana Blažíková *soprano*, Accentus Austria, Thomas Wimmer  
57:18

deutsche harmonia mundi 8 89854 11892 1

Classy programme, classy music, very classy performances – pretty much ideal, in fact. Hana Blažíková controls her vibrato so that we hear clearly the perfectly pitched core of her tone, which thus becomes both an apt companion and a contrast to the cleanly played violins. And the music is very attractive: Fux could really do it, not just write about it. The only disappointment is that all the vocal items are accompanied by chamber-scaled forces: it would have nice to have at least one with the larger forces which were deployed on important occasions in the imperial chapels. The booklet (Ger/Eng) essay would have benefited from a fiercer copy editor - the English does occasionally read like a translation - though the content is good. I'm quite surprised that our editor passed this on!

*David Hansell*

GRAUPNER: GOTT DER HERR IST SONNE UND SCHILD

*Epiphany-Kantaten*

Andrea Lauren Brown, Kai Wessel, Georg Poplutz,  
Dominik Wörner SATB, Kirchheimer BachConsort,  
Sirikka-Liisa Kaakinen-Pilch

92:28 (2 CDs in a single jewel case)

cpo 555 146-2

So many cantatas by composers other than Bach are rarely (if ever) performed, let alone recorded, simply because they were not written for either Christmas or Easter. One notable exception was a cpo recording featuring Ludger Rémy. While those were all from the same year (and thus formed a sensible unit), this new recording of five cantatas for Epiphany (otherwise known as the feast of the three kings) selects works from the latter part of Graupner's working life at the court of Darmstadt. The number of Sundays after Epiphany varies each year because of the alignment of more significant church festivals with the actual calendar. Here, there is one cantata for the feast itself as well as the 2nd and 4th Sundays thereafter, and two for the 3rd Sunday (the GWV numbering system is

slightly odd: 1111 is the code for any cantata text written for Epiphany and the two numbers after the slash are the year in which it was composed). The booklet notes explain that these particular cantatas have been chosen because of their colourful instrumentation; Graupner had always been interested in a rich sound palette; here the flauto d'amore, oboe d'amore, chalumeau, viola d'amore and a pair of horns all feature. I have published a lot of Graupner's music and I am still amazed how much better it sounds than it looks – personally, I would have preferred a programme of his settings for Epiphany itself from his appointment as Kapellmeister until he stopped composing, which might have shown how his style developed and changed over time. That is not to criticise these performances, which are excellent; if Graupner's recitatives would not be out of place in the Hamburg operas which had brought him to the Landgrave's attention in the first place, seemingly inappropriate dance elements pervade the arias and chorales, yet I think the latter are actually his most original compositions – each choral phrase is framed and decorated by instruments, much in the way a baroque organist may have done. Maybe we can have a follow-up recording by these marvellous musicians of cantatas for Trinity Sunday, from key points in Graupner's career?

*Brian Clark*

HANDEL: CATONE

Sonia Prina *Catone*, Roberta Invernizzi *Emilia*, Kristina Hammarstrom *Arbace*, Riccardo Novaro *Cesare*, Lucia Cirillo *Marzia*, Auser Musici, Carlo Ipata

125:15 (2 CDs in a wallet)

Glossa GCD 923511

Catone takes us into the murky world of the Baroque operatic pastiche, where overworked operatic composers such as Handel occasionally resorted to stringing together arias by his contemporaries with purpose-built storylines and recitatives. What is fascinating is whom Handel preyed upon. It is convenient that Leonardo Leo had staged a Catone opera in Venice in 1729, so Handel helped himself to a number of arias from this, while he also drew upon the fashionable music of Porpora and Hasse and even found some Vivaldi he could shoe-horn in. The choice of Porpora and Hasse is particularly interesting, as several of the castrati Handel worked with in London had sung their music, and they may even have already known the material he was now purloining – minimal time wasted on rehearsal!

The present recording is an amalgam of several live concert performances and there is a fine orchestral sound and the singers are generally of a high standard. It is perhaps a shame in these days of the return of the superstar male alto that both castrato roles are taken by women – anybody who has heard Franco Fagioli sing one of these roles would regard any female voice, no matter how good, and these are both rather good, as a poor second best. What is certain is that this particular pastiche, and probably others which Handel concocted for his London audiences, are well worth exploring and recording. Until recently, those in the know used to sneer at them, but when you consider that most Baroque operatic plots are pretty impenetrable and often deeply silly, this kind of synthetic opera is probably no sillier and has the virtue of presenting the best work of several fine operatic masters, moulded into shape by one of the finest composers of baroque opera. Certainly, in this engaging performance it was hard to spot the joins.

*D. James Ross*

#### QUEENS: HANDEL - OPERA ARIAS

Roberta Invernizzi, Accademia Hermans, Fabio Ciofini  
78:02

Glossa GCD 922904

Music from Alcina, Berenice, Giulio Cesare, Giustino, Lotario, Poro & Scipione

This CD draws upon the many queens who grace Handel operas, although also the chief female opera divas, Cuzzoni and Strada del Pò, whose technical skill and dramatic presences inspired the music for his most successful female roles. An extended and slightly laboured playing-card metaphor dominates the programme notes, which however also find time to paint in some context for these major female influences on Handel's writing. Invernizzi is in splendid voice, characterizing Handel's heroines with a wonderfully varied vocal palette. For some she finds an almost shrew-like quality in her versatile voice, for others a rapturous lyricism, and only occasionally did I find the mannered vibrato in her upper range disconcerting – she more than amply shows that she can sing pure upper notes, but is inclined to lapse into vibrato if these are held for any duration. This is a tiny and maybe idiosyncratic objection to a generally superb and extremely expressive voice.

Ms. Invernizzi is beautifully supported by Accademia Hermans, one of the veritable plethora of simply superb period operatic instrumental ensembles which seem to have sprung up over the last decade. They play with

absolute unanimity and powerful expressiveness, and are given a couple of instrumental slots which provide a bit of relief from the otherwise wall-to-wall arias. These are all performances to savour, and are wonderfully evocative of the golden age of Baroque opera in the London of first half of the 18th century.

*D. James Ross*

#### HANDEL: NEUN DEUTSCHE ARIEN | BROCKES PASSION

Ina Siedlaczek, Lautten Compagney, Wolfgang Katschner  
64:30

audite 97.729

Handel would seem to have composed these nine settings of texts by Barthold Brockes in the 1720s while resident in London. He had met Brockes during their shared studies in Halle in the early part of the century, and a shared enthusiasm for Pietism meant that the two remained close. Perhaps Handel, whose English never really came naturally to him and who at the time was setting a succession of Italian opera libretti, enjoyed the relaxation of setting his native tongue, and his enthusiasm shines through in these dynamic pieces.

Drawing on the varied and excellent forces of the Lautten Compagney, the accompaniments are splendidly varied, while Ina Siedlaczek's boyish and versatile tones are just perfect for this repertoire. Intelligently, the performers fill the CD with music from the *Brockes Passion*, that other underrated collaboration between the two men. It is interesting to spot in this highly impassioned music the lovely sense of melody which pervades Handel's Italian operas and also to hear in it the roots of the late great oratorios – and at the same time to hear the intimate link with J. S. Bach's cantatas. This 'German' music is yet another aspect of this ultimately versatile composer which we tend to forget about, and in the delightfully characterized performances here the virtues of these unassuming pieces shine through.

*D. James Ross*

## HANDEL: WORKS FOR KEYBOARD

Philippe Grisvard

68:03

Audax Records ADX13709

HWV427, 435, 438, 467, 469, 563, 580, 584, 609 + music by Babell, J. P. Krieger, Zachow

The French harpsichordist Grisvard has played continuo on more than forty recordings but this is his first solo CD and an impressive debut it is too. Playing on a copy by Detmar Hungerberg of a Mietke harpsichord, Grisvard revels in this selection of Handel originals, arrangements (by William Babell) and works by his contemporaries Krieger, Mattheson and Zachow. There are two suites (HWV 427 and 438) as well as the big G major Chaconne and a variety of shorter pieces including two preludes which Babell wrote to preface his Handel arrangements. The Fuga in A minor (HWV 609) shows what Handel was capable of in the contrapuntal arena but most of the music here was written more for show. So there are lots of scales and, fortunately, Grisvard is particularly good at them! The continuous figuration lies easily under his fingers and the overall shape of the music comes through the layers of ornamentation, both Handel's and his own. The brilliance and exhilaration which contemporaries described in Handel's own playing certainly shines through these performances.

Noel O'Regan

## JIRÁNEK: CONCERTOS

Sergio Azzolini *bassoon*, Xenia Löffler *oboe*, Jana Semerádová *flute*, Lenka Torgersen *violin*, Collegium Marianum

69:09

Supraphon SU 4208-2

Rather appropriately, this CD (the second that this series – Music from eighteenth-century Prague – has devoted to the composer) should begin with a concerto whose origins are so obscure that it is not even certain whether it is by Jiránek or his great Venetian mentor (and regular supplier of music to his Bohemian patron and Jiránek's employer, Count Morzin) Vivaldi. That's a matter for musicologists; music lovers will hear a fabulous performance of an excellent work that has all the attributes of a three-movement baroque concerto. There follow five more, culminating in a work for flute, violin, viola d'amore and ensemble. Like all of his contemporaries, Jiránek was thoroughly immersed in the Italian style, so it

would come as no surprise if someone thought they were listening to Vivaldi. That said, each of the six works has their individual character, and what impresses most is the range of the composer's invention.

As with previous Collegium Marianum recordings, both the playing and the recorded sound are faultless. I did once joke that, if I were ever to win a very large amount of money on the national lottery, I should buy myself a villa or a small castle in Bohemia and employ an orchestra to entertain me with just such music; listening to it on CD is hardly the same, but it makes the dream all the more desirable! This is a beautiful recording that deserves to win all sorts of awards.

Brian Clark

## JEAN-MARIE LECLAIR: VIOLIN CONCERTOS

Europa Galante, Fabio Biondi

Glossa GCD 923407

op. 7 nos 1, 3, 4 & 5

Much as I was fascinated to hear Italians playing Fasch's music, it has been very interesting hearing them tackle Leclair's concertos. Of course, his violinistic family tree leads directly back to Corelli, and thus his music, though infused with Gallic harmonies and ornamentation, has a strong Italian heritage. Biondi and his colleagues have chosen four works from the first published set, op. 7 of c. 1737.

It is often said that one cannot avoid sub-consciously comparing "new" versions and I must simply confess that I was guilty of hearing things that "weren't quite the way Simon Standage" played them; whether or not that is a good thing, the older Chandos recordings come out on top (despite Biondi's virtuosity and the vitality of his colleagues' brilliant accompaniments) for one principal reason – too often I felt that the tempo was pulled about too much, presumably with the aim of making the music seem more dramatic than I personally feel it needs. Don't misunderstand me – *rubato* definitely has its place in Baroque music; there is a great deal to admire in these performances and recordings, but I feel the pudding has been over-egged a little.

Brian Clark

MOLTER: CONCERTOS FOR TRUMPETS & HORNS  
Jean-François Madeuf, Musica Fiorita, Daniela Dolci  
65:04  
Accent ACC 24327

This is the second new CD devoted to Molter's music this year and, once again, it reveals a composer of great imagination, particularly when it comes to instrumental colour. Alongside works for the brass instruments of the title, the programme includes a *Concerto Pastorale* for strings as well as a *Divertimento* for 2 chalumeaux, 2 horns and bassoon and *Tendrement* that drops the bassoon from the line-up. Anyone of a nervous disposition (or with troublesome perfect pitch) will suffer some discomfort at the brass playing as this is cutting edge natural instrument playing, all done with the embouchure without the artificial aid of finger holes, etc. If such a basic question of "authenticity" is still considered challenging, all credit to Madeuf and his colleagues for undertaking to give us these raw performances. I sincerely doubt whether many 18th-century musical events featured the perfection we expect nowadays – and my work as an editor who constantly has to correct mistakes in the source material confirms that the odds were stacked against error-free playing. Musica Fiorita play very well (though it is not indicated in which pieces the four oboists play). It is slightly frustrating that only three of the six full works on the disc are given their catalogue numbers – a librarian's nightmare.

Brian Clark

DALL'OGGIO: VIOLIN SONATAS

Maria Krestinskaya *violin*, Grigory Krotenko *bassetto*, Imbi Tarum *harpsichord/organ*  
63:14  
Panclassics PC 10378

The set of sonatas by Dall'Oglio from which the five pieces on this excellent CD come was published in Paris in 1738, some three years after the composer had settled in St Petersburg; they are, in fact, dedicated to a Russian field marshal, who was very much a court insider. The first two pieces have four movements, while the next two have only three (each with a slow opening movement and two livelier ones to follow); then comes sonata XII which begins with a Grave-Allegro pairing, then a theme and variations. While the sonatas are very much Italian in concept, Maria Krestinskaya is quite right in drawing attention in her notes to a definite Russian flavour to some

of the music. She draws some beautiful sounds from her Maggini (especially in some excursions to the very upper limits of its fingerboard), and she is nicely partnered by Grigory Krotenko on a bassetto (a photograph of his instrument – also a Maggini, which has survived in Russia – would have been nice!) which Dall'Oglio's younger brother is known to have played, and Imbi Tarum on harpsichord and organ. Apart from featuring these fine, stylish performances, this disc also shines some light into the obscurity of music at the St Petersburg court; let's hope that Krestinskaya goes on to record some of Dall'Oglio's symphonies and concertos, and continues to seek out lost repertoire from Baroque Russia.

Brian Clark

PLATTI: 6 TRIO SONATAS FOR VIOLIN,  
VIOLONCELLO AND CONTINUO

Armoniosa  
64:40  
MDG Scene 903 1978-6

Several previous encounters with the chamber works of Giovanni Benedetto Platti (c. 1697-1763) have a favourable impression fully confirmed by this new CD of trio sonatas. Born in the region of Padua, Platti was educated in Venice, where his father served as violist at San Marco. In 1722 he went with a group of Italian musicians to Würzburg, where he was offered a place in the service of the prince-bishop of Bamberg and Würzburg. On the archbishop's death two years later the orchestra was disbanded but Platti managed to find employment with the archbishop's brother in nearby Wiesentheid, where it seems most of his music was composed. After the court orchestra was re-formed in 1729 Platti returned to Würzburg, where he would remain until his death in 1763. There he came into contact with Tiepolo, who included Platti in one of his frescos forming a part of his re-decoration of the palace.

Platti composed 22 trio sonatas, of which the six performed here have been published. With the exception of the Sonata in C minor, WD 694 (the numbering comes from the Wiesentheid library that is home to Platti's manuscripts), which has only three, all have four movements, including the odd one employing dance forms. They tend to strike a balance between older Baroque forms and newer *galant* tendencies. Unsurprisingly it is the minor key works that are more likely to adopt the former, though the B-flat Trio ends with a well-worked fugue culminating in a particularly satisfying *stretto*. Arguably the

most satisfying sonata is the G minor (WD 691), which opens with noble, flowing *Largho* (sic) with considerable contrapuntal intricacy, before proceeding to a terse *Allegro* making much play on imitative sequences, another *Largho*, a heart-easing movement with effective use of suspensions and a brisk finale not without some quirky moments to add spice. Also worthy of special note is the opening *Adagio assai* of the Sonata in D (WD 680), an expansive melody that sounds like a quasi-operatic aria. But Platti's writing in general is highly accomplished and appealing. If there is a fault it is perhaps an over-reliance on sequences.

The performances by the Italian ensemble Armoniosa are very attractive, being accomplished technically, thoughtful and unfailingly musical. I was especially taken by the readings of some of the slower movements, where there is much affecting cantabile playing. Full marks, too, for the stylish ornamentation the players apply to repeats (most movements are binary form). One curiosity is the use of both harpsichord and organ as keyboard continuo at the same time, which presumably accounts for the thickening up of the bass texture. I write 'presumably' as it is difficult to tell just how much this happens, since the harpsichord is so backwardly balanced that it frequently cannot be heard. Still, this is a fine CD of music that is assuredly worth investigating.

*Brian Robins*

NICOLA PORPORA / GIOVANNI BATISTA

COSTANZI: 6 CELLO SONATAS

Adriano Fazio *cello*, Katarzyna Solecka *violin*, Anna Camporini *cello*, Pedro Alcacar *theorbo*, Lorenzo Profita *harpsichord*

Brilliant Classics 95408

Porpora is chiefly and increasingly known for his operatic compositions, and more specifically his work with and for the great operatic castrati Caffarelli and Farinelli. Working chiefly in and around Naples, the full extent of his abilities and the superlative quality of the musical scene there at the time has recently become much more apparent, and these lovely cello sonatas confirm that chamber music played an important part in this very dynamic artistic centre. Such was Porpora's degree of specialization as a vocal composer and teacher that he called upon the virtuoso cellist Costanzi to ensure that he was writing idiomatically for strings. Notwithstanding Costanzi's undoubtedly important input, this is overtly vocal music in nature, and even the more rapid virtuosic episodes

recall the throat-stretching demands Porpora placed on his singers. These 'sonatas' are structurally idiosyncratic in that they are really duets for violin and cello with continuo, the violin providing a simple melodic framework and cello exploring the music more profoundly in *concertante* episodes. This may sound very odd, but actually the pieces sound perfectly natural in performance. Adriano Fazio and Katarzyna Solecka on cello and violin respectively play with a lovely rapport and with an easy lyricism and musicality, conveying well their justified enthusiasm for this expressive and original music. It is exciting to find the exploration of music-making in baroque Naples extending beyond the field of opera, and unearthing such intriguing treasures.

*D. James Ross*

RISTORI: CANTATAS FOR SOPRANO | OBOE CONCERTO

María Savastano *soprano*, Jon Olaberria *oboe*, Ensemble Diderot, Johannes Pramsohler

68:12

Audax Records ADX13711

Giovanni Alberto Ristori will be an unfamiliar name to many. His birthplace in 1692 or 3 is the subject of dispute, but he was the son of a musician and actor who led a *commedia dell'arte* troupe in the service of the Saxon Elector and Polish king, August II, in Dresden. Ristori's earliest operas were staged in Padua and Venice, but in 1715 he and his wife settled in Dresden, where he survived the cull of Italian performers – though not without a cut to his wages – following the death of the elector in 1733. He would go on to serve the Dresden court for nearly forty years, composing operas, serenatas, cantatas and sacred works, at the same time acting as organist to the court Catholic chapel and harpsichordist at the opera. Highly esteemed at court, Ristori is today largely forgotten, though I encountered him quite recently through a not very satisfactory DVD of his 1736 opera *Le Fate*.

The three cantatas recorded here all have texts by one of the more artistic members of 18th-century European royalty, Maria Antonia, the daughter of the Bavarian Elector, who by the time she married Prince Friedrich Christian of Saxony in 1747 was already not only an accomplished singer, keyboard player and lutenist, but also a talented poet. Two of the cantatas have texts derived from Virgil's *Aeneid*, one on the familiar topic of Dido's abandonment by Aeneas, the other the lesser-known episode from much later in the *Aeneid* when Aeneas marries Lavinia, the

intended bride of his rival Turnus. The notes make much of Metastasio's praise for the latter poem, though given the great Viennese court poet's adept mastery of diplomacy, especially where royalty was concerned, we should perhaps be wary. The third poem is a more conventional pastoral tale. While all three texts are well constructed, they fall short of real outstanding merit.

Much the same might be said about Ristori's music, which while never less than highly competent never fully engages the imagination, or at least not that of this listener. Interestingly, the scores and parts – preserved in a beautifully bound volume as part of a collection once belonging to Maria Amalia – show that the cantatas were designed to be given either as chamber works with the usual alternating recitatives and arias or by a larger ensemble of strings and, in the case of *Lavinia a Turno*, oboes. It is the latter option that has been chosen here. This works especially well in the often-lengthy accompanied recitatives that dominate all three cantatas, one of the more unusual features. Despite the obviously more weighty subject matter of the two *Aeneid* cantatas, it is the pastoral *Nice a Tirsi* that seems to me the most rewarding. Its two well-contrasted arias consist of a touching lament for her absent lover by Nice and to conclude a charming 'duet' following the lovers' reunion, in which the role of Tirsi is taken by an obbligato oboe.

The performances by the young Argentine soprano María Savastano are very appealing. The voice has that attractive Latin burnish familiar from singers such as Maria Christina Kiehr and is well produced across the range, with well-developed chest notes. There's a fast vibrato, which can occasionally become troublesome on sustained notes and while technique is good in *passaggi* the articulation of ornaments, which includes rather shallow trills, is not always as precise as it might be. I do part company with Savastano (or whoever advised her) on her ornamentation of *da capo*'s, which to my mind are not sufficiently decorated and often resort to pulling the melodic line around too much. But I don't want to make a lot of these caveats. This is very good singing indeed, admirably supported by Ensemble Diderot, whose Jon Olaberria also contributes a fine performance of a brief 4-movement Oboe Concerto in E flat.

*Brian Robins*

## GIUSEPPE SAMMARTINI: 6 CONCERTOS IN 7

PARTS, OP. 2

I Musici

61:52

Dynamic CDS7777

The HIP world owes a lot to I Musici. I am fairly certain I had at least one boxed set of LPs of them playing complete Vivaldi concerto editions and it was partly through them that I discovered Baroque music. Unfortunately, around that time I also bought an LP of the new kids on the block, The Academy of Ancient Music under Christopher Hogwood, and my ears were forever opened to the possibilities of period instrument performance (squawky oboes and all!). Yet, if the arrival of this new disk raised an eyebrow, that is more a reflection on my pre-conceptions that anything else. Sammartini's concertos (four in three movements, two with only three) contain such a rich variety of material that the attention never wavers and while their bowing arms remain steadfastly in the 21st century, at least I Musici have engaged with earlier left-hand techniques – open strings resound brightly, trills start on the upper note and are shaped rather than automated, ornaments are added with imagination and relentless vibrato is banished. And all for the good, I would say. Even on modern instruments, it is perfectly possible to produce fine performances of this unexpectedly gripping music.

*Brian Clark*

## A. SCARLATTI: PASSIO SECUNDUM JOHANNEM

Giuseppina Bridelli [*Evangelist*], [Salvo Vitale *Jesus*], Millenium Orchestra, Choeur de Chambre de Namur, Leonardo García Alarcón

57:30

Ricercar RIC378

You have to read almost to the end of the booklet to discover that this is a composite work, created for this live performance by the director by inserting six of the *Responsori per la Settimana Santa* from a bound collection of Scarlatti's Holy Week music held in Bologna into his better known John Passion which can be reliably dated to 1685 in Naples.

This accounts for the abrupt change in style between the sombre polyphonic motet-style insertions and the continuous, narrative-based semi-operatic setting of the Vulgate text of John's Passion. In this performance the

Evangelist is a mezzo soprano, singing in a relatively strict measure with other characters and *turbæ* interjections. In this mix of recitative and arioso, it is mostly the chorus and the Christus that have the string accompaniment after the opening section. An attempt to colour the narrative and make it more dramatic by introducing changes of instrumentation into the substantial continuo line – cello, double bass, theorbo, archlute, triple harp, bass viol, organ and harpsichord – is only partially successful in making the Passion more dramatic and fluid. The text is predominantly set in major keys, with none of the modal flavour that makes the Germanic Passion narratives so antiquely ambivalent and soul-searching. This just sounds like post-Cavalli on a dull day.

It is partly that the singers – all bar two of whom are drawn from the well-prepared and well-known chorus – are not really specialists in this kind of music, so the effect is rather dated, and the vocal characterization and fluency we now expect from HIP performances just isn't there.

As you can tell, I do not find this work – in this performance – a transformative experience. But recordings of Alessandro Scarlatti's *Passion secundum Johannem* are not that common, so while I prefer the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis version with Rene Jacobs under Fritz Neff, I'm glad to have heard it.

*David Stancliffe*

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#### SCARLATTI: SONATES | 5

Pierre Hantaï *harpsichord*

78:00

Mirare MIR326

K. 27, 87, 124, 157, 205, 211, 238, 252, 253, 277, 388, 401, 474, 475, 547, 551

**Y**ou have to admire anyone who takes on 'the complete' anything, let alone Scarlatti's 555-stoned obelisk. A weakness of the package is the use of three nevertheless very good generic essays which tell us nothing about the specific sonatas in this programme other than by pure luck. Massive and more than counterbalancing strengths are the programming – a mix of earlier and later pieces – and the superb playing. In my doodles, I noted 'business-like but with panache', which I'm happy to stay with. In an ideal world, a variety of instruments might be used but I'm not at all unhappy with what I've just heard. In the end, the music itself is what you remember.

*David Hansell*

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#### STEFFANI: BACCANALI

Ensemble Cremona Antiqua, Antonio Greco

85:09 (2 CDs in a case)

Dynamic CDS 7770.02

**I**n the wake of Cecilia Bartoli's 2013 exploration of Steffani's operatic, sacred and instrumental outputs, this package offers us a complete recording of his opera *Baccanali*, composed in 1695 for the Duke Ernest Augustus of Hannover. The orchestra of the Ensemble Cremona Antiqua play one to a part, with two violins, one viola, cello, violone and pairs each of flutes (actually recorders) and oboes, all played with considerable finesse. The recording was made live at the Festival della Valle d'Itria, and there is considerable background from onstage movements, the audience and most distracting a considerable and pretty constant infrasound rumbling either from moving scenery or passing traffic. The live onstage singing is also a bit patchy, with some singers coping better than others with a clearly very active production. It is useful and interesting to have a complete Steffani opera available, and there are some undoubtedly lovely musical moments in this, but without the visuals to 'explain' the intrusive background noises, I found these very distracting to the extent that it was difficult to shut them out sufficiently to enjoy the music. So I can report that this opera seems to bear out the promise of Bartoli's initial operatic samples – Steffani is definitely worth further attention, but this performance should have been taken into a recording studio to do Steffani and the musicians and singers justice. Another foolish economy was evident in the poor English translation of the programme note, replete with grammatical howlers. A missed opportunity.

*D. James Ross*

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#### TELEMANN: REFORMATIONEN-ORATORIUM 1755

Regula Mühlemann, Daniel Johannsen, Benjamin Appl, Stephan MacLeod *STBarB*, Bayerische Kammerphilharmonie, Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Reinhard Goebel

60:24

Sony Classics 8 89853 73872 4

**A**s everyone knows, 2017 marks a big anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation; what non-specialists may not realise is that that critical event is marked every year within the Lutheran church. It will come as no surprise, then, that special works were created especially throughout the baroque period to celebrate the

festival, and that Telemann was among the most prolific of composers. This world premiere recording presents an oratorio from 1755 which intersperses recitatives and arias for four allegorical figures (Peace, Devotion, Religion and History, in descending order of voice range) with hymns and choruses. The recording provoked something of a philosophical discussion in my mind, since I enjoyed the singing a lot (especially the soloists), and I loved the music and wondered at the still fertile and creative mind of its septuagenarian composer, and yet the modern instruments just sounded so inappropriate, especially in recitatives where half the time I could not even work out what the conductor was striving for by asking the players of whichever instruments they were (yes, even my keen ears struggled to identify them on occasion!) to produce the sounds they did... Given a "proper baroque band", there is some ravishing music here that could easily make its way into standard repertoire. While I honestly believe that all music should be available to all people, I also wonder if there is seriously no repertoire that these particular forces could more appropriately engage with.

Brian Clark

#### TELEMANN: TRUMPET & HORN CONCERTOS

Jean-François & Pierre-Yves Madeuf, La Petite Bande, Sigiswald Kuijken  
58:20

Accent ACC24318

TWV 44: D1+, 51: D1, D7, D8, 55: D7

Another recording of Telemann's trumpet concertos? I hear you cry. Well yes, but not as we know them, Jim! There are two aspects of the current disc that set it apart from anything you are likely to have heard before. In the first place, the brass instruments are played "au naturel", i. e., without any finger holes or hand stopping; secondly, rather than being soloist versus orchestra, these are – as the composer undoubtedly expected – played as chamber music with one instrumentalist per part. This of itself would be reason enough to acquire this disc, but there is the obvious additional attraction of getting HIP guru Sigiswald Kuijken's way-too-infrequent interpretations of Telemann's fabulous music and in this, as in every other respect, this listener was not disappointed. For all their typical associations with royalty and the military, the five pieces on the disc dispel once and for all the notion that you cannot build a thoroughly enjoyable recital in a single key. The wide range of sounds and textures in Telemann's

music, and these performances of it (which include two bonus tracks *without the trumpet!*) continually delight the ear in ever-changing ways, and although the boisterous faster movements with their often fruity brass tuning resounded triumphantly in whichever machine I happened to be listening to them in at the time, I actually derived a lot of pleasure from the quieter oases, where Kuijken & Co. took time to relish equally the composer's richer harmonic writing or his delight in much simpler fare. This is one for early brass fans, Telemanniacs and HIPsters alike.

Brian Clark

#### TELEMANN: THE GRAND CONCERTOS FOR MIXED INSTRUMENTS VOL. 4

La Stagione Frankfurt, Michael Schneider  
59:30

cpo 777 892-2

TWV 44: 41, 52: c1, 53: D2, e1 & 54: F4

The latest installment of cpo's latest marvellous series devoted to Telemann's music includes a double concerto (oboe/violin), two triple concertos (trumpet with two oboes and violin with two flutes), a concerto with eight instruments given solo roles, and another of the fabulous septets for pairs of violins, oboes, recorders and continuo. As ever with these performers and this director, the music dances and sings in both major and minor; I was surprised by the fact that some of the music was completely new to me – and yes, all you sceptics out there, it *sounded* new! Not the same piece regurgitated, as I read recently on yet another tiresome Facebook posting, "He's not exactly Vivaldi, is he?" commented one of the cognoscenti. [For those in any doubt, I intended that to be ironic.] Indeed, it is Schneider and co. who are at the very forefront of demonstrating beyond doubt that Telemann's multifaceted music is ever-changing, all-embracing. I hope they will eventually do more of his church cantatas – what a genuine revelation *that* would be!

Brian Clark

#### TELEMANN: OUVERTURE-SUITES

[Kirstin Fahr *recorder*], Neumeyer Consort, Felix Koch  
70:41

Christophorus CHR 77412

TWV 55: C2, G4, g2, a2

This year marks the 350th anniversary of Telemann's death and one would have imagined that given that anniversary and the other big one of the year,

groups might have sought out some of the many Lutheran cantatas that have never been performed, let alone recorded, in modern times, but so far the signs are not good...

The four orchestral works on the present disc are nicely played, but they hardly fall into the “little known” category, having all been recorded umpteen times already. Every time I review such compilations, I apply a simple rule: do the performers bring anything new to the table? If a HIP ensemble considers adding percussion “as a result of the assumption that some of Telemann’s overture-suites may also have been performed as mime (at the Dresden court, for instance” fulfils this requirement, who am I to disagree with this “particularly plastic tonal quality”.

The pieces themselves are nicely played (in the case of the recorder, very nicely) in a rather unforgiving acoustic; I doubt I will listen to it again, however; I prefer my Telemann without added extras.

*Brian Clark*

TELEMANN: 6 VIOLIN SONATAS, FRANKFURT 1715

Valerio Losito *violin*, Federico Del Sordo *harpsichord*

57:28

Brilliant Classics 95391

These sonatas for violin and continuo were the composer’s first published set, dedicated to Prince Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar, known to music history as a composer (Bach arranged his music for keyboard) who died, aged only 18, in the same year (1715). Valerio Losito believes that each of the six sonatas reflects a different aspect of the prince’s character, as listed in the dedication, and this informs his performances of the music. His renditions are certainly lively, and Del Sordo’s accompaniments are similarly committed, but I wonder if the microphones were simply too close to the violin, since some of the bow strokes are overly edgy; rarely are both notes at either ends of wide leaps equally audible (even allowing for one being stronger than the other as part of an interpretation); sometimes the accompaniment clouds the solo line (the end of track 7 is a case in point). It is very impressive how the harpsichord fills the accompaniment role (and how odd his absence seems in track 9, as if the violinist has gone off on a folk turn...) There are a few nice ideas here (from the performers, as well as the composer) but I found the whole experience hard work (and the over-emphasized low notes in track 10 tedious...) Dare I suggest the performers have over-interpreted at the music’s expense?

*Brian Clark*

VIVALDI: THE CONCERTOS FOR RECORDER

Stefan Temmingh *recorders*, Capricornus Consort Basel

68:40

Accent ACC 24332

When I first listened to this disc, I thought the record company had packaged the wrong ones into the sleeves; “no way this can be Vivaldi!” I thought... and I was correct. Had I read the cover correctly, though, I would have seen that, in addition to the “five and a half” authentic recorder concertos from the quill of the Red Priest, Temmingh and Capricornus Consort Basel give us preludes by his great admirer, J. S. Bach. Having spent a few weeks trying to get my head around the logic of such an arrangement, I have just read Temmingh’s booklet notes and find myself utterly convinced by his argument that, in order to admire properly the exuberance of the concerti, one’s brain first needs “cleansing” – the Bach (albeit instrumental arrangements) preludes act as the sorbet between courses. I was not persuaded by two of them (a pairing of psaltery and lute for one, harpsichord and organ for the other), and feel that another would have been better if the chorale melody had been taken by a wind instrument (although I expect it would have been less cleansing if Temmingh had played it on a large recorder...) The Vivaldi itself is fabulous, impressive without being showy, nicely paced and ornamented. Again, it was with the scoring I had problems; suggesting that the use of bass clef in violin parts when they play *bassetto* justifies using a continuo instrument for those parts (let alone that being a harp!) strikes me as silly – did Vivaldi’s harpist have a part showing the bassline and the *bassetto*? Has such a thing ever been seen? Still, I don’t want to end what is a very positive review of a wonderful recording on a negative aspect, which is more about my taste than the performances themselves which are first rate.

*Brian Clark*

VIVALDI: LES ORPHELINES DE VENISE

Les cris de Paris, Geoffroy Jourdain

65:05

Ambronay AMY047

Concerto Madrigalesco RV129, Sinfonia al Santo Sepolcro RV169, Kyrie RV587, Gloria RV589, Credo RV591, Magnificat RV610a

This disc revisits the “How was Vivaldi’s church music performed without men?” debate. Before I comment on Jourdain’s approach to it, I must first

of all simply commend the performances; both singing and playing are absolutely first rate, with a glorious choral sound, agile and stylish soloists and very fine instrumental contributions from all concerned. The programme is built around a Venetian “messa intiera” (Kyrie, Gloria and Credo; apparently the Sanctus and Agnus Dei would have been recited by priests during instrumental music), and the rich variety of styles employed by Vivaldi is notable – I was struck by accented bass notes of the Crucifixus, for example. Jourdain has spent a long time researching and thinking about Vivaldi’s SATB church music, and come to the conclusion that the surviving scores are notated in that format to make it more available to performers outside the ospedale network; he thinks the normal *modus operandi* where he directed the choir was that the upper three voices were performed as writ, with the bass sung an octave higher by a second group of altos (more often than not in unison with *col basso* violas!) All of this sounds reasonable, but my eyebrow arched at his contention that when the tenor part is “more interesting” than the soprano line, it should be transposed up an octave (with the happy consequence that doing so sometimes corrects Vivaldi’s naughty consecutive fifths). Who defines “more interesting”? And I worry about choral conductors who seem to think that “Joe Public” only listens to the soprano line (I’ve worked for and with a few!) This need not put anyone off acquiring the disc – as I said at the beginning, it’s a wonderfully accomplished recording that deserves to be widely enjoyed.

Brian Clark

#### VIVALDI : CELLO SONATAS

Francesco Galligioni, L’Arte dell’Arco

73:56

Brilliant Classics 95346

The programme notes for this CD are probably correct to dispel any doubts that these pieces are the work of Vivaldi – while he is not known to have played the cello, we know that he wrote idiomatically for a plethora of other instruments he probably didn’t play, and the music displays the master’s unerring sense of melody and motivic development. Galligioni’s playing is wonderfully passionate and he is ably and inventively supported by his continuo group using violone, organs, harpsichord and lute in a variety of imaginative permutations. While the fiery allegros with the soloist’s wonderfully bravura and yet gritty playing are terrifically exciting, it is in the more lyrical slow movements that the

ensemble reaches considerable heights of expressiveness. I occasionally felt that the recording was a little ‘close’ for comfort, but at the same time there is a pleasant after-bloom which emphasizes the tone of the baroque cello. Fresh from recording the Vivaldi cello concertos, Galligioni is absolutely steeped in the idiom of Vivaldi’s cello writing and surmounts the technical challenges of these sonatas with consummate ease.

D. James Ross

#### ARIAS FOR NICOLINO

Carlo Vistoli *countertenor*, Talenti Vulcanici, Stefano Demicheli

62:26

Arcana A 427

Handel, Pergolesi, Sarro & A. Scarlatti

Famous for creating the eponymous role in Handel’s spectacularly successful opera *Rinaldo*, Nicola Grimaldi – known as Nicolino – was as admired for his lyrical voice as his refined abilities as an actor, the second of these allowing him to draw in the crowds until his death at 59 when his voice was probably past its youthful best. Carlo Vistoli is yet another of the current crop of remarkable male alto voices, whose vocal ease even in the higher registers in which Nicolino excelled is apparent. And having introduced us to his readings of three arias from *Rinaldo* with orchestral episodes, he also performs other music inspired and sung by Nicolino, including Arias from Alessandro Scarlatti’s *Il Cambise* and Pergolesi’s *Salustia* as well as a section from *Arsace* by the relatively unknown Neapolitan composer Domenico Natale Sarro. As more attention is paid to the rich Baroque operatic scene in Naples, it can come as no surprise that Sarro turns out to be a composer of striking capabilities and originality. Talenti Vulcanici are another of these superb Baroque ensembles specializing in accompanying operatic Divas and Divos. Are they cloning these somewhere secretly, or are the same excellent players regularly meeting up under different names? It would seem not, and that these groups have simply sprung up to meet a growing demand for Baroque opera live and on CD. A CD like this ultimately stands or falls on the merits of the soloist, and with a couple of slight reservations, mainly regarding excessive vibrato when he turns up the volume, I must say that Vistoli provides thoughtful and vocally impressive accounts of this dramatic music.

D. James Ross

## BACH | VIVALDI: FOR MANDOLIN

Dorina Frati, Orchestra a Plettra Mauro e Claudio Terroni  
74:21

Dynamic CDS7787

This recording barely qualifies for inclusion in these pages, but given that baroque composers did quite frequently adapt their music to new circumstances, it would be churlish not to include it on the basis that Bach and Vivaldi would (at the least) have been surprised to hear such performances as these. In truth, the three concertos by Bach (the A minor for violin, D minor for two violins and Brandenburg 3!) and six by Vivaldi (one of them even originally written for two mandolins!) are pleasant enough; I thought I would tire of the repeated twanging of strings (especially in slow movements), but it is amazing just how quickly the human ear adjusts its expectations and – perhaps more with Bach than Vivaldi? – the music is all one hears. Technical difficulties mean that some movements are slower than one is used to, but overall I must say that I enjoyed listening to this while driving home from Glasgow Airport the other day. I don't know that I would actually ever sit down and listen to it from start to finish in one sitting again, but I might dip into it occasionally.

*Brian Clark*

## BOLOGNA 1666

Kammerorchester Basel, Julia Schröder

66:35

deutsche harmonia mundi 889853155927

Music by Alberti, Colonna, Laurenti, Perti, Torelli, Zavateri & anon

It has to be said that the title of this CD is slightly misleading. 1666 is the date of the foundation of the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna but, as only the oldest of the composers represented was an adult at the time and two of them weren't even born yet, the date is something of a red herring. The CD explores the music of a group of ground-breaking Bolognese composers, who – with a couple of exceptions – have sunk completely into obscurity. Giuseppe Torelli is perhaps the only one of them more generally known today, and that largely for his music with trumpets. This selection of sinfonias and violin concertos certainly demonstrates how radically original and ahead of their time the composers of the Accademia were, and Julia Schröder's beautiful violin playing in the latter brings this obscure bygone age to vibrant life.

Giovanni Colonna, Giuseppe Alberti (not he of the bass), Giacomo Perti, Girolama Laurenti and Lorenzo Zavateri deserve to be more than names in an archive register, and it is indeed surprising, and a sign of the embarrassment of riches available in Baroque Italy, that their instantly attractive music has been so comprehensively forgotten. The dynamic, precise and idiomatic playing of the Basel musicians on their baroque instruments is a major factor in the attraction of this disc.

*D. James Ross*

## CATHARSIS

Xavier Sabata, Armonia Atenea, George Petrou

66:00

Aparté AP143

Ariosti, Caldara, Conti, Handel, Hasse, Orlandini, Sarro, Torri & Vivaldi

This is an intriguing CD bringing recits and arias from early 18th-century operas by big names such as Handel and Vivaldi, other composers whose stars are currently in the ascendant such as Hasse, Conti and Caldara and relatively neglected composers such as Giuseppe Maria Orlandini, Attilio Ariosti and Pietro Torri. As soon as I put on the CD and heard Sabata's voice, I instantly thought of Handel's great castrato star Senesino, and strangely several of the arias recorded here were composed for him. Like Senesino, Sabata has a wonderfully rich low alto voice, as well as the gift for dramatic pathos which Senesino clearly also had. The programme notes make a valiant if not entirely successful attempt to tie the arias together using ancient Greek theories of drama, although the English translation unfortunately uses the word 'hybris' rather than the more customary 'hubris', and the whole construct is stretched *ad absurdum* in trying to embrace Hasse's oratorio on the Conversion of St Agostini! I would have preferred more information on the relatively unknown but excellent composers whose music is recorded here, often for the first time. No matter, this is a wonderfully engaging CD, and while the various curious photos of various parts of Mr Sabata's anatomy being drenched with water are undoubtedly intended to lend the product visual impact, this is a CD which more than stands on its considerable musical merits. If the excellent period ensemble Armonia Atenea occasionally seem to occupy a slightly more distant and more resonant acoustic space than the soloist, their contribution is superbly dynamic and, in the haunting aria "Gelido in igni vena" from Vivaldi's *Farnace*, positively apocalyptic. Listening to these powerful

performances it is easy to understand how it was that Senesino and his fellow castrati occupied the cult status that they did, able as they were to reduce audiences to tears with their sheer vocal wizardry and musicality. These are characteristics which Xavier Sabata also has in abundance, and on the basis of this CD I have mentally added him to my list of remarkable male alto voices which this new generation has produced.

*D. James Ross*

CONCERTO: WORKS FOR ONE & TWO

HARPSICHORDS

Guillermo Brachetta, Menno van Delft

56:24

resonus RES10189

J S Bach: BWV971, 1061a; W F Bach: Concerto in G; C H Graun: Concerto in A

For me, this doesn't get off to the greatest start with an *Italian Concerto* first movement that is perhaps just a shade slow and longer on rhetoric than rhythm. This general style of interpretation seems better suited to the rococo frills of Graun and W. F. Bach, whose music is both charming and charmingly played. The highlight of the programme is the exuberant and no-holds-barred performance of J. S. B.'s C major double concerto in which the players both inspire and steady each other, making sensible use of their instruments' resources to enhance the inbuilt contrasts still further. For what it's worth, I enjoyed the programme most in the order Graun, J. S. B. in F, W.F.B, J.S.B. in C. The booklet tells you what you need to know, but only in English.

*David Hansell*

EMPFINDSAM

Linde Brunmayr-Tutz *transverse flute*, Lars Ulrik Mortensen *harpsichord*

58:19

fra bernardo fb 1611782

Music by C. P. E. Bach, F. Benda, Kirnberger & Quantz

This is a beautiful CD of 18th-century music for flute and harpsichord by some of its finest exponents, many of them associated with the Prussian court of the celebrated royal flautist Frederick II. The enormous popularity of the transverse flute around the middle of the century along with the related triumph of 'Empfindsamkeit' as a general approach to music-making meant that some of the finest composers of the age devoted

themselves to composing flute music, and one of them even wrote the definitive guide on how to play it. Johann Joachim Quantz is represented here by a fine sonata and an intriguing Adagio from his 'Method', which the performers present according to the recommendations contained in the method. The initial 'flicks' to important notes are reminiscent of traditional flute playing and remind us that a close look at historical playing tutors always bears interesting fruit. The music on this CD is of uniformly superb standard as is the playing of the two musicians. Flautist Professor Linde Brunmayr-Tutz is well known from her exemplary playing in a number of prominent period instrument ensembles, and her prominent suffix acknowledges her marriage to Rudolph Tutz who, alongside Rod Cameron, is one of today's finest makers of Baroque flutes, and indeed made the flute his wife uses in this recital.

*D. James Ross*

FLUTE CONCERTOS

Sieglinde Größinger, Ensemble Klingekunst

62:30

cpo 555 076-2

Music by Bonno, Gaßmann, Monn & Wagenseil

Topped and tailed by concertos by Wagenseil, this survey of the mid-18th-century flute concerto in Vienna also features works by Monn, Gaßmann and Bonno. Four of them are scored for flute with (here single) strings and continuo. Broadly speaking, they are rococo in style, not really managing to escape Baroque ritornello form, with solo episodes accompanied by upper strings or continuo. The odd man out in the recital is the Monn piece which is for *concertato* harpsichord, flute, violin and bass; it really is an original sounding composition, with the keyboard sometimes duetting with the flute, sometimes the true soloist while the flute and violin provide a duetting background. The presence of lute as a continuo instrument prevents any direct comparison with C. P. E. Bach's quartets. It is a pleasant piece, though. In fact, the whole disc is enjoyable, and Größinger provides some neat cadenzas in the flute concertos. I suspect this is a line-up from whom we shall hear more.

*Brian Clark*

MAESTRO CORELLI'S VIOLINS  
Collegium Musicum 90, Simon Standage  
68:57

Chandos Chacone CHAN 0818

MONTANARI op. 1/2, 6 & 6 MOSSI op. 4/11 & 12 VALENTINI op. 7/11

**R**ichard Maunder's work on the performance of the 18th-century concerto bears the ultimate fruit here in wonderfully stylish performances of music by composers who were among the orchestra directed by Corelli in the original performance of Handel's *La Resurrezione* in 1708. Thus we have one-per-part performances of five fine concertos with four violin parts and Mossi's exceptional op. 4/12 for a total of eight violins with viola (except the Mossi pieces), cello, violone grosso and harpsichord (and archlute for three pieces). The playing is crisp and clean, the tempi well judged and the recorded sound exemplary. I have known the Valentini concerto for a long time, but rarely heard it played with such lustre. It is nice that only two concertos from Ensemble Diderot's recent Montanari recording are duplicated. I would certainly love to hear more of Mossi's output.

*Brian Clark*

#### PACE E GUERRA: ARIAS FOR BERNACCHI

Terry Wey *countertenor*, Bach Consort Wien, Rubén Dubrovsky (with Vivica Genaux *mezzo-soprano* & Valer Sabadus *countertenor*)

74:40

deutsche harmonia mundi 889854105020

Music by Gasparini, Handel, Hasse, Pollarolo, Sarro, Torri & Vinci

**T**he concept of selections centred on great singers of the past has become popular in recent years. It is an excellent idea, not only as it provides a focus that might otherwise be missing, but – and more importantly – it can provide unique insight into the kind of voice possessed by a singer before we had the aid of recordings to determine such things. This is especially valuable in the case of a singer like the alto castrato Antonio Maria Bernacchi, whose fame rests principally, if perhaps unfairly, on a magnificent coloratura technique employed at the expense of expression.

Bernacchi was born in Bologna in 1685. After making his first operatic appearance in Genoa in 1703, he sang in 1709 in Vienna and Venice, the latter the city in which he would appear most frequently. But his fame rapidly spread throughout Italy and he was also engaged by Handel (at huge cost) in London, where he created the roles of Lotario

in the eponymous opera (1729) and Arsace in *Partenope* a few months later. Earlier, in 1720, he had been engaged by the Elector of Bavaria in Munich, service in which Bernacchi nominally remained until 1735. Particularly in his latter years he was known for his excessive obesity, a famous caricature depicting him having his stomach held up on stage by an extra. Bernacchi died in 1756, two decades after he had retired with a reputation on a par with the likes of Senesino and Farinelli, the latter of whom for a short while studied with Bernacchi.

The opening aria on the CD, 'Pace e guerra' from Pietro Torri's *Lucio Vero* (Munich, 1720) will do little to dispel Bernacchi's repute as an exponent of virtuoso coloratura, although the opening word announces Swiss countertenor Terry Wey's credentials with a finely graded *messa di voce*. Ironically the aria, like a number of the faster pieces, is taken at a rapid tempo, complete with fashionably clipped orchestral playing, that only serves to underline Bernacchi's reputation and the rather vapid nature of the aria. On the plus side it shows Wey's articulation of rapid passagework to be excellent, if rather less praiseworthy in communicating the meaning of the text. Here, as elsewhere, Wey's ornamentation of *da capo* repeats is largely sensible, mostly avoiding the wilder ascents and leaps that so many singers appear to be unable to resist. Rather more interesting than 'Pace e guerra' and coloratura arias like 'A dispetta' from Gasparini's *Il Bajazet* is the number of slower, more expressive numbers that suggest Bernacchi's talents were far wider than has been suggested. Among them are arias from the two London operas of Handel's in which he appeared. Arsace's 'Ch'io parta' from *Partenope* is sung by Wey with great expressive sensitivity, while the exquisitely lovely 'Non dispero peregrino' from *Lotario* is a 'simile' aria breathing calm spiritual advice, conveyed with eloquently sustained tone and line, though again I'm not entirely convinced Wey has captured the inner essence of the text. This repertoire remains full of undiscovered treasure, of which there are several examples included here, foremost an utterly wonderful duet from Hasse's *Demetrio*, in which Wey is joined, as he is in several extracts, by mezzo Vivica Genaux. This is one of those pieces – originally written for Hasse's wife Faustina Bordoni and Bernacchi – where Hasse's extravagant reputation as an Italianate lyricist *par excellence* is fully vindicated, a gorgeously flowing andante that synthesises passionate intensity with truly profound emotion.

Overall this is a highly satisfying CD. The repertoire, much of it new to CD, is often revelatory, while Wey is a

sensitive, responsive singer who shows himself capable of holding a sustained line with security, even if tonally his voice is perhaps not the most distinctive or characterful. With the exception of the caveat regarding brittle, clipped phrasing in quicker numbers, he is well supported by the Bach Consort Wien. Lovers of Baroque opera should snap up the disc without delay.

*Brian Robins*

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### ROCOCO - MUSIQUE À SANSSOUCI

Dorothee Oberlinger *recorders*, Ensemble 1700

78:57

deutsche harmonia mundi 8-88751 34062-6

C. P. E. Bach, Baron, Finger, J. G. Graun, Handel, Janitsch, Quantz & Schultze

**O**n this delightful CD recorder virtuoso Dorothee Oberlinger uses nine different recorders to play a programme of music which might have been heard at Frederick II of Prussia's Rococo bolt-hole Sanssouci. She has unearthed some charming and yet largely unfamiliar material including a beguiling Ground by Gottfried Finger, a fine double concerto for recorder and bassoon attributed to Handel, but sounding very unhandelian, and equally fine pieces by Quantz, Graun, C.P.E. Bach and the practically unknown Johann Janitsch, Gottfried Baron and Johann Schultze. As befits a CD called Rococo, Oberlinger and her ensemble play with delicacy and elegance, but where necessary with a stunning technical facility, and throughout there is beautifully gauged ornamentation. Particular highlights are the Graun Concerto for recorder, violin, strings and continuo, the Quantz music for solo recorder and a lovely recorder sonata by C.P.E. Bach, but my favourite track is a highly imaginative C.P.E. Bach Trio for bass recorder, viola and continuo. All of the playing on this revelatory CD is simply superlative, expressive, passionate and yet tasteful, creating a palpable presence of the refined environs of Sanssouci.

*D. James Ross*

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### SACRED DUETS

Nuria Rial *soprano*, Valer Sabadus *countertenor*, Kammerorchester Basel

60:24

Sony Classical 88985323612

Music by: A. Scarlatti, Pasquini, Colonna, D. Gabrielli, Bononcini, Torelli, Lotti, Caldara, Porpora

**D**uring a recent discussion on the diction of singers with a friend, I raised in particular the question as to why that of great singers of popular music and jazz – people like Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee and Frank Sinatra – was in general so much better than that of classically trained singers. Obviously there are some answers that come from the differences in the music itself, popular songs being usually more declamatory and syllabic and therefore easier to enunciate. But that doesn't explain everything and here as if to underscore the point is a CD that could not provide a better illustration of just how bad the diction of classically trained singers can be.

'Two of the most beautiful baroque voices ...' runs Sony's blurb on the cover. And indeed they are, though countertenor Valer Sabadus is liable to become a bit blustery in bravura writing. More to the point is the fact that throughout the whole the programme both he and the enchanting Nuria Rial might as well be singing their shopping lists for all the meaning of the text they convey to the listener. Which is a great pity, because this is a fascinating programme of duets and solos (pace the CD's name) taken from Italian oratorios of the 17th and earlier 18th centuries. The genre is of course very different from the English form, being heavily influenced by the spirit of the counter-Reformation and therefore much indebted to theatricality. So the innocent ear should not be surprised to find here duets that not only have texts that read (and you can read them in the booklet, even if you can't hear them!) like operatic love duets, but sound like them. Take, for example, the exquisite duet 'Lascia ch'io veda almeno' for Justice and Peace from Porpora's *Il Verbo in carne*, first given in Naples in 1747/8. This beautifully wrought number with its shapely vocal lines cajoled along by sequential orchestral figuration opens with the words (for Justice), 'Grant that I may at last see in this kiss, O beloved, the victorious world set aside its bitter pain.' Here, a hundred years after the event, are words and music to transport us back to ecstatic, erotic counter-Reformation world of Bernini's St Theresa. Much the same applies to another Porpora duet, from his *Il martirio di San Giovanni Nepomuceno* (Venice, c. 1730). Here an Angel sings to St

John at the moment of his martyrdom, 'O how sweet a victory in heaven I shall see you enjoy'. Again we find the same quasi-erotic tenderness and ecstasy in both music and text. It is worth pointing out in parenthesis that Sony have reversed the track listing for these two numbers, the II martiro duet being track 15, not 13 and vice versa.

The unavoidably bland overall impression made by the CD is not mitigated by the neat but somewhat anonymous support of the modern-instrument Kammerorchester Basel, who on their own account play Torelli's Concerto grosso, op. 8/8. The performance is tidy, but lightweight and a few moments of vulgarity in the central Adagio – some mannered rhythmic freedom and unconvincing portamenti – almost come as a relief. Ideal for anyone who likes lovely sounds as background music.

*Brian Robins*

### SO HÖRET MEINEN GESANG

*Klopstock settings by Telemann & J. H. Rolle*

Antje Rux, Susanne Langner, Tobias Hunger, Ingolf Seidel  
SATB, Leipziger Concert, directed by Siegfried Pank

68:04

Raumklang RK3502

Telemann: *Komm Geist des Herrn*, extracts from *Der Messias*

Rolle: *David und Jonathan*

There's some cutting edge stuff here from both literary and musical aspects. In this context what is particularly extraordinary is that the radical Telemann works on the CD date from his final years, when, nearing 80, the composer was still seeking new forms of expression employing modern texts. The Whitson cantata *Komm, Geist des Herrn* dates from 1759, in which year it was given in the five main churches of Hamburg. It is laid out in familiar form, with alternating da capo arias, both plain and accompanied recitative, and chorales. What was controversial was the use in the chorales not of Luther's much-loved hymn 'Komm, heiliger Geist' but a parody by the young upcoming poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, a substitution that caused outrage among the more conservative of Hamburg's ecclesiastics.

Today the doctrinal issues are of course unlikely to detain us long. More importantly the work is revealed as Telemann at his most mature and inspired. Scored for four voices with a resplendent accompaniment consisting of three trumpets, timpani and two oboes in addition to strings and continuo, the joyous opening bass aria employs full scoring, while following the first chorale a splendid extended *accompagnato* for tenor relates the

dramatic events of Pentecost. Here Telemann's response to the colourful text takes full advantage of the mimetic possibilities offered. There is also a delightful soprano aria, full of grace and playful leaps, rejoicing in the bounties bestowed by God. The final numbers, a duet for alto and tenor, and a chorale admit to a mood of greater ambiguity both texturally and in brief hints of the minor mode. The performance of this irresistible work is outstanding with excellent solo work from all four soloists, who also produce fine ensemble work in the chorales.

The other Klopstock setting by Telemann is of two extracts from the epic poem *Der Messias*, a huge undertaking on which the poet was occupied between 1748 and 1773 and which ultimately ran to 20 cantos. In the late 1750s Telemann set extracts from three cantos, one now lost. The other two recorded here are culled from cantos 1 and 10, the first a highly subjective reflection and contemplation on the Crucifixion, the second a song of lamentation for the crucified Christ by the Old Testament singers Miriam and Deborah, a setting that would become extremely popular in the latter half of the 18th century. *Der Messias* was highly controversial in its day, in part to due to its very personal sensitivities, in part for its unusual use of hexameters, a form that makes it a problem for composers to set in the customary division of recitative and aria. Telemann's answer, following Klopstock's own desire for greater naturalism, was to set the text as a near continuous succession of accompanied recitative and arioso divided between four soloists, the narrative broken only by an occasional short orchestral interlude. His desire to echo the qualities of *Empfindsamkeit* inherent in the text led to him littering the score with expressive instructions, 'with pathos', 'defiantly', 'magnificently' and so forth. While both extracts are of exceptional musical interest and quality, it is not difficult to understand why 'The Song of Miriam' (as it became known) attained such a special place, the poetry's pathetic lyricism and powerful rhetoric underscored by Telemann's sensitive and vivid response. Moments such as the upsurge of orchestral violence at the promise of retribution awaiting Jerusalem are quite unforgettable. Again both singing and orchestral playing are exceptional, with Antje Rux and Susanne Langner intensely sympathetic in 'The Song of Miriam'.

The Magdeburg organist Johann Heinrich Rolle (1716-1785) had his eye on becoming Telemann's successor at Hamburg, but lost out to C. P. E. Bach (by one vote!). His setting of *David und Jonathan* takes an episode from Klopstock's tragedy *Salomo* (1764). It consists of a dialogue

between David and his slain friend Jonathan, the son of King Saul. Rolle clearly seems to have had Telemann's *Messias* in his mind, setting the piece for tenor and soprano soloist in similar declamatory style. If it is less striking and imaginative than its model that says more about Telemann than it is intended as criticism of Rolle.

This is a disc of high musical quality, both as to works involved, the performances and the excellent sound. It is a pity therefore that it is marred by the lack of an English translation of the German texts, which are here of unusual interest. There is however an excellent introduction in English. It's perhaps worth noting that the Telemann works are available in fine if slightly less persuasive versions by Ludger Rémy (cpo 777 064-2 & cpo 999 847-2), where you will get translations.

*Brian Robins*

### CARNEVALE 1729

Ann Hallenberg, il pomo d'oro, Stefano Montanari  
129:56 [recte: 98:40!] (2 CDs in a cardboard box)

Pentatone PTC 5186 678

Music by Albinoni, Gaicomelli, Leo, Orlandini, Porpora & Vinci

The early music world has now become accustomed to the concept operatic recital, often designed around the repertoire of one of the great singers of the 18th century. This 2-disc set, devised by Helger Schmitt-Hallenberg, the musicologist husband of mezzo Ann Hallenberg, takes a rather different approach, concentrating on the repertoire given in Venice in the Carnival season of 1728/9. The choice could hardly have been shrewder. It was an extraordinary season that not only featured new works by some of the leading opera composers of the day – names such as Leonardo Leo, Geminiano Giacomelli, Tomaso Albinoni, Giuseppe Maria Orlandini, Nicola Porpora and Leonardo Vinci – but a glittering array of star singers including Faustina Bordini and the castratos Senesino, Farinelli and Nicolini, Handel's first Rinaldo. It is impossible to think of any festival today that could start to match such a line up.

The operas included that winter provide the Hallenbergs with a bountiful choice, it being noteworthy that despite the inclusion of composers who today are virtually unknown the musical quality is remarkably high throughout. Indeed, in the case of the extracts from an opera such as Leo's *Catone in Utica* I suspect strongly that we are looking at a work that demands revival. The excerpts from Orlandini's *Adelaide* also suggest an opera that would

warrant further attention, though the eponymous heroine's 'Non sempre invendicata', a Bordoni aria, is lifted from being a fairly conventional *aria di furia* by Hallenberg's dazzling coloratura virtuosity and powerful chest notes.

The bar for the whole recital is set high from the first aria, 'Mi par sentir' from *Gianguir* by Giacomelli, a sometime pupil of Alessandro Scarlatti who apparently shared his master's reputation for writing 'difficult' music. But there is nothing remotely difficult about this exquisitely lovely aria, which features an obbligato oboe (played here with a sensitivity that does not avoid the odd moment of sourness) and pizzicato strings. Hallenberg's singing of it is a master-class in Baroque performance practice, with elegantly shaped phrasing and precise articulation of *passaggi*, along with an acute attention to text that should be studied by all aspiring singers of this repertoire. The variation of vocal colouring and subtlety of expression is also something to be wondered at; one need only listen to the different accentuation brought to 'caro', the final word of the A section, to be aware of an artist who has thought deeply about her performances. Here as elsewhere the ornamentation of the da capo is also an object lesson, with decoration that never steps beyond the bounds of taste to distort the melodic line.

The second excerpt from *Adelaide* brings a long and fine accompagnato to introduce the aria, it being projected with intense dramatic purpose, before moving into a beautiful cantabile aria, 'Quanto bella' with violin obbligato, splendidly played by Montanari. Here one notes especially Hallenberg's superb *mezzo voce* and her precise articulation of the chain of trills that remind us of the inadequacy of most vocal performances of Baroque music, where one is lucky to hear a trill, let alone a whole sequence of them.

It would be possible, if idle, to subject every track on this peerless set to such commentary. These are performances to hear, not talk about. Suffice it to say there is much more treasure here, ranging from three arias from Porpora's marvellous *Semiramide riconosciuta* to a gloriously spun performance of Emilia's heartbreakingly lovely 'Ombra cara' from Leo's *Catone in Utica*, where Hallenberg's splendidly secure upper range comes into its own. Il pomo d'oro provides fine support throughout, with some truly Italianate legatos where appropriate. Finally, don't take any notice of the timings for the two CDs given on the box, which are wildly inaccurate. The (very short) total timing is that given in my heading. No matter. This is a superlative set that demands to be in every collection of Baroque opera enthusiasts. Were Ann Hallenberg working within the

parameters of mainstream opera I have for some while had absolutely no doubt that she would be rated among today's great singers.

*Brian Robins*

## Classical

### C. P. E. BACH: COMPLETE WORKS FOR KEYBOARD & VIOLIN

Duo Belder Kimura  
132:23 (2 CDs in a gem case)  
resonus RES10192

This is pretty much how to do it. Outstanding music, tracing a composer's stylistic development in one genre over six decades; excellent essay; and fine recorded sound, all of which serve or deserve playing of the highest order. My only small gripes are that the booklet is in English only and that the essay deals with the works (eight sonatas, a fantasia and a set of variations) in chronological order but this is not how they appear on the discs. Track references are helpful in this situation. But to stress – the playing and the music are simply splendid, with the use of piano for the latest music a sonic reminder of CPE's lengthy journey. If you like anything at all about 18th-century music – or even if you don't – this is for you.

*David Hansell*

### C. P. E. BACH: THE SOLO KEYBOARD MUSIC 3 I 'für Kenner und Liebhaber' Sonatas from Collections 1 & 2 Miklós Spányi *clavichord*

73:23  
BIS-2131  
Wq 55/1-3, 5, 56/2,4,6 [=H 244, 130, 245, 243, 246, 269, 270]

The Hungarian performer Miklós Spányi continues his complete edition of C.P.E. Bach's solo keyboard music with four of the sonatas from the first set 'für Kenner und Lieber' (the remaining two appear on another disc in the series played on tangent piano) and three from the second set. Published in 1778 and 1779 these are mature sonatas which, despite what the sleeve notes refer to as their 'tonal restlessness', are tightly constructed and very satisfying to listen to. Spányi plays on a Hubert copy made by Thomas Friedemann Steiner, a persuasive instrument for these sonatas. He is alive to all the rhetorical implications of the music as well as showcasing

its technical virtuosity. The recording quality is excellent.

*Noel O'Regan*

### C. P. E. BACH: THE SOLO KEYBOARD MUSIC, VOL. 32 Miklós Spányi *tangent piano*

78:54  
BIS-2205 CD  
'für Kenner und Liebhaber' Sonatas and Rondos from Collections 1 & 2

I cannot claim to have followed closely BIS's courageously unobtrusive project to record the complete corpus of the solo keyboard works of Bach's eldest son. I have, however, reviewed several of the previous issues in EMR and elsewhere and when I do return to the cycle am invariably struck not only by the originality of C.P.E. Bach's keyboard writing, but also the high level of performance consistently maintained by Miklós Spányi. Even given that Spányi has made a specialization of C.P.E.'s keyboard music – he completed an integral recording of the concertos in 2014 – it is remarkable that no hint of the routine has crept into his performances, even where the music is perhaps not the composer at his greatest.

The newest addition to the series brings three of the six sonatas from the first of Bach's *Kenner und Liebhaber* (basically a catch-all marketing ploy meaning the music is suitable for both accomplished and less accomplished performers) publications, which appeared in Leipzig in 1779, and the three rondos included in the second volume, published the following year. Spányi here plays a reconstruction of a tangent piano – a hybrid relative of both the harpsichord and the fortepiano - of 1799. The thoroughness of his survey is illustrated by the fact that the C-major Sonata, Wq 55/1 was also included in vol. 31 (which I've not heard) played on the clavichord, thus making for an interesting comparison of sonority with the composer's favourite instrument.

To my mind it is not the sonatas that are the most important works here, but the rondos. It was a form developed by Bach and as the notes rightly point out one in which for substance he had few rivals other than Mozart, whose rondos anyway have a rather different construction. Like Haydn and Beethoven, Bach tended to employ motifs rather than themes as Mozart did, using them not just in reiterations of the principal rondo statement but in the episodes as well. Thus here all three of the rondos (in C-major, Wq 56/1; in D-major, Wq 56/3; and A-minor, Wq 56/5) open with four-note chordal motifs that constantly reappear, at times juxtaposed with other material, at times

embedded within it. Wq 65/5, for example, has a rather pathetic, song-like motif developed into something rather stronger and contrapuntally between upper and lower register. Later it appears juxtaposed with gushing floods of surging arpeggiated figuration, the main feature of the first episode. Wq 56/1 is an exceptional work, almost a compendium of Bach's stylistic traits, including as it does passionate outbursts, disconcertingly fragmented material, abrupt silences and unexpected modulations.

The sonatas, as already suggested, seem to me less striking. Indeed Wq 55/6 in G in particular is surely one of Bach's less compelling keyboard works, with an opening movement in which it is at times difficult to comprehend what the composer is getting at, so disconcerting is the apparent lack of structure and continuity. But the drooping cascades that form the principal idea of the central *Andante* are appealing, as is the surging, flowing lyricism of the last movement.

*Brian Robins*

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#### J. C. BACH: SIX QUARTETTS OPUS 8 FOR CARL FRIEDRICH ABEL

Go Arai *oboe*, Daniel Deuter *violin*, Thomas Fritzsch *viola da gamba*, Inka Döring *cello*

75:23

Coviello Classics COV91712

Although there can be little doubt that Bach wrote music for his friend and colleague, Abel, there is no more than circumstantial evidence to suggest that this set of six two-movement quartets was among them – the gamba player “has been able to restructure the former viola part”. Be that as it may, these four performers give very convincing accounts of them, which gave me a new appreciation of Bach's music; with very few exceptions, any pieces I have ever played have had neither substance nor depth, but there are movements here that reveal a higher level of intensity, a clever ear for counterpoint and a satisfying structural sense. That said, I'm not sure I could listen to the whole disc through many times. The booklet is full of Gainsborough reproductions of the main suspects in the history of the publication, and a new edition of the music is available so anyone inspired can explore it for themselves.

*Brian Clark*

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#### FELICE GIARDINI: QUARTETTI DA CAMERA

Quartetto Mirus + Giorgio Bottiglioni *viola*, Nicola Campitelli *flute*, Attilio Cantore *harpsichord*

67:05

Tactus TC 710701

Years ago, while I was cataloguing a collection of 18th- and 19th-century music in the Central Library in Dundee, I flicked through several volumes of music by Felice Giardini. While they looked “nice enough”, nothing ever inspired me to get together with my string quartet friends and play through them. Now that I have heard this delightful CD – featuring works for a variety of ensembles – I will have to reconsider my decision; although these are not HIP performances, neither are they heavy modern renditions, and Giardini's tuneful and sometimes challenging music comes over very nicely indeed. I challenge you to play this to dinner party guests and ask them to guess the identity of the composer; undoubtedly, his name will be something of a surprise to most, but one or two more famous names may be thrown into the mix before they give up!

*Brian Clark*

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#### HAYDN SYMPHONIES

No 53 ‘*The Imperial*’

No 64 ‘*Tempora Mutantur*’

No 96 ‘*The Miracle*’

The Oregon Symphony, Carlos Kalmar

61:51

Pentatone PTC 5186 612

We are very fortunate in Scotland in that our premiere chamber orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, make use of period brass and percussion instruments, gifted to them many years ago by Sir Charles Mackerras, in classical repertoire and earlier, and it is only when I listen to recordings such as this that I recognize the full benefit of this. The Oregon Symphony are doing all the right things, playing with light bowing and no vibrato, the wind and brass players also eschewing vibrato and the more strident tone needed for later repertoire – and yet... There is a burnished tone to the strings which plays against the coolly classical lines Haydn writes, the brass are too wholesome and not punchy enough, the woodwind too rich without being sufficiently plaintive. You will find a growing school of thought nowadays that

says that authenticity is not about the correct instruments but only about the correct techniques, but to my mind this type of recording undermines that theory entirely. It is very beautifully played and a fine account of Haydn's music, if you are not interested in what Haydn intended it to sound like. But I am, and I am of the opinion that once you have heard a good orchestra on classical period instruments there is really no going back. The SCO is a very successful halfway house, where the punchy period brass and percussion add a genuine period flavour to their Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven, but when you think about it there is really no logic to being part authentic! Increasingly, I feel that there is equally no logic in buying an inauthentic CD if a perfectly good authentic one is available, so for all the undoubtedly sensitive playing of the Oregon Symphony this is really not for me.

*D. James Ross*

HAYDN: 'SUN' QUARTETS OP. 20 NOS. 4-6  
Chiaroscuro Quartet  
75:08  
BIS-2168 SACD

I reviewed this outstanding young quartet's CD of the first three of Haydn's innovative op 20 String Quartets some 14 months ago (<http://earlymusicreview.com/haydn-sun-quartet-op-20-nos-1-3/>), at the time expressing the hope that the set would be completed in the not too distant future. Well, here is the completion and unsurprisingly it maintains the high level of performance I noted with the earlier CD.

Reviewing the earlier disc, I drew attention to the sense one gets in the op 20 quartets of Haydn's ever growing confidence in his handling of the medium he did so much to create; it is the string quartet that Haydn is the true father of, not the symphony. Yes, there are things here that would develop further, the most obvious being greater democracy between the four instruments. Here the first violin still has the lion's share of the goodies that Haydn hands out, and one of the joys of the Chiaroscuro's performances is the exquisite finesse of Alina Ibragimova's playing, which throughout is not only technically outstanding in meeting the athletic demands of Haydn's at times virtuoso writing, but in more lyrical writing displays a purity of line and tonal sensuality that takes on an almost feline allure. Take for example the Adagio of the A-major Quartet (No.6), this is one of those movements where Haydn takes us into the opera house, the first violin singing a nocturnal

aria of love, complete with added ornamental passages and cadential fermatas, and here transformed by Ibragimova into moments of rare, unforgettable pleasure.

It would, however, be wrong and unfair to her excellent colleagues to place too great a stress on Ibragimova's playing. The balance achieved by the quartet is excellent and nowhere more so than in the two fugal finales, those of No.5 in F minor and the A-major Quartet. Here the counterpoint is laid out with luminescent clarity, each part essayed to telling effect. And again these fugal movements demonstrate the wonderful fertility of the young Haydn's mind, since they are tellingly contrasted. That of No. 5 is an old-fashioned, austere fugue thoroughly demonstrating how well Haydn had assimilated his lessons in counterpoint, while No. 6's is a three-part fugue with a much more modern feel, the light textures and fleet progress reminding us that the Classical era would find new purpose to such displays of contrapuntal wizardry. Elsewhere one notes Haydn trying out new ideas as to texture, as for example the Minuetto of No. 4, an extraordinary 'alla zingaresse' in which the earthy gypsy writing takes on almost orchestral textures. In the slow movement of the same quartet the sad little theme is treated in the first of a set of variations to disconcerting fragmentation and sparseness.

There are many other joys to experience (or discover) in this truly inventive set of quartets, just as there are in the near-flawless performances of the Chiaroscuro Quartet. Some may find the dynamic contrasts or freedom taken with such effects as rubato worrying, but, as noted with the first disc, I feel invariably that these stem from the players' engagement with the music, not affectation. Taken together as a traversal of op. 20, this is as revelatory a pair of Haydn string quartet CDs as I know of.

*Brian Robins*

JOMMELLI: LA PASSIONE DI NOSTRO SIGNORE  
GESÙ CRISTO  
[Anke Herrmann *Maddalena*, Debora Beronesi *Giovanni*, Jeffrey Francis *Pietro*, Maurizio Picconi *Giuseppe d'Arimatea*, SmSTB, Ensemble Vocale Sigismondo d'India, Ensemble Vocale Eufonia,] Berliner Barock Akademie, Alessandro De Marchi  
125:00 (2 CDs in a wallet)  
Pan Classics PC 10376 (1996)

This recording of Jommelli's 1749 Passion is not new, having originally been issued on K617 in 1996. It was composed during the period the composer was

nominally based in Rome, but the oratorio may have been written for Vienna, where Jommelli spent much of 1749. The work is divided into two parts, in the first of which the events of the Crucifixion are retrospectively recounted to Peter (who had of course fled the scene) by Mary Magdalene (sop), John (mez) and Joseph of Arimathea, the last named poetic licence, the man responsible for Jesus' burial not named in the Gospels as having been present at the Crucifixion. In the briefer second part, the mood turns to looking forward both to the vengeance that will be wreaked on Jerusalem, but also the conflict between doubt and hope that followed in the aftermath of Christ's death. Metastasio's libretto is colourful and graphic, employing many of the devices – so-called 'simile' arias are an example – familiar from his opera librettos.

Anyone approaching this Passion setting from the standpoint of those of the Baroque in general and Bach in particular may initially be disappointed in *La Passione di Gesù Cristo*. This is a fully-fledged early Classical work and the Classical era was not very comfortable with tragedy, especially religious tragedy. Arias are long and often demanding, while many will feel a number miss the deeper thoughts expressed by the character. Thus when Mary Magdalene sings 'Vorrei dirti il mio dolore' (I wish to express my sorrow), she does so in triple time and Lombardy rhythms that appear to belie any such wish. For this reason I think Part 2 is arguably the stronger musically. There are at least two outstanding arias in this section of the work, one being 'All'idea de tuoi perigli', Joseph's horrified reaction to John's prediction that Jesus will come again to Jerusalem to avenge the profanation of the temple. Set to a descending fugal figure and exhibiting strong vocal rhetoric, it illustrates Jommelli's writing at its dramatic best. Conversely, John's 'Dovunque il guardo' is a piece of deeply affecting lyricism set to an especially lovely text. Throughout the work Jommelli's orchestral writing looks forward to the richness of texture that became such a hallmark of his Stuttgart years (from 1753).

The orchestral playing on the present recording is highly accomplished, a major component of a performance that is in most respects excellent and rather less mannered than some of Alessandro De Marchi's more recent work. He is proved generally fortunate in his choice of soloists, too. The most demanding role is that of Peter, here sung with great dramatic conviction by the American tenor Jeffrey Francis, who is especially outstanding in Jommelli's splendid accompanied recitatives. Only in the more challenging tessitura of an aria like 'Giacché mi tremi does

he occasionally sound a little strained. Soprano Anke Herrmann is a touching Mary Magdalene who is an almost unqualified success. She has a decent trill, too, though she might have been encouraged to use it a little more often. Debora Beronesi (John) and Maurizio Picconi (Joseph) do nothing seriously wrong, but neither has a very distinctive vocal personality. There are only three choruses, De Marchi's decision – for which he seeks justification in his booklet on interpretation – to go for a large body not at all convincing for music whose character clearly suggests to me that they were intended to be sung by the solo quartet.

*Brian Robins*

LEOPOLD MOZART: SERENADE IN D MAJOR  
FOR TRUMPET AND TROMBONE, CONCERTO IN  
E-MAJOR FOR TWO HORNS, SINFONIA IN G  
MAJOR 'NEUE LAMBACHER'

Zierow, Millischer, Diffin, Römer, Bayerische Kammer-  
philharmonie, Reinhard Goebel

75:57

Oehms Classics OC1844

This CD is almost most interesting for what it isn't. It presents a selection of chamber works by Mozart senior on modern instruments directed by one of the luminaries of the authentic instrument movement. So what's missing? Well I was more disturbed than I imagined by the sound of the modern instruments, particularly the valved brass, but to a lesser extent by the modern woodwind, chunky string sound and 'play-along' harpsichord, which gave this recording for me a very 1970s sound. This is not helped by the bland nature of the music – Mozart minus the X factor. It is I suppose a useful exercise to find out how surprisingly uninspired Leopold's music is, but I'm not sure that I would be rushing to a recording studio with it!

Having said that there are a few eyebrow-raising moments here, particularly in the Serenade where the apparent lack of either trumpet or trombone for the first few movements sent me to the programme notes, where I discovered that the short attention span of the Salzburg audiences it was written for required a most unusual structure – an attention-grabbing opening, and just as interest was flagging, the addition of various concertante wind instruments. While I can understand the flagging interest, I was not prepared for the time-warp of the trumpet's almost Baroque clarino contribution.

This CD certainly provides a snapshot of the world that the young Mozart emerged from, but as that world

was every bit as stale as he complained it was, I found this CD of limited interest.

*D. James Ross*

MOZART: PIANO CONCERTOS  
Arthur Schoonderwoerd, Cristofori  
69:57  
ACC 24323  
KV 271, 413, 414

Judging from the back cover of the booklet, this would seem to be the sixth in a series of the Mozart piano concertos played by the Dutch fortepianist Arthur Schoonderwoerd, who also directs the Besançon-based ensemble, Cristofori. He plays a copy of Anton Walter piano of 1782. The cycle seems to have attracted little critical attention, this being the first CD I have encountered.

Of the three concertos on the latest disc it can be claimed without resorting to hyperbole that KV 271, the Piano Concerto No 9 in E flat, is not only the first great Mozart piano concerto, but the first great piano concerto in history, a work therefore of huge significance. Composed at the start of 1777, it was written for Louise Victoire Jenamy, daughter of the famous ballet master Noverre, when she visited Salzburg. Mozart did the noted young pianist proud, evidently taking considerable pains to provide her with a work that in scale and ambition comfortably exceeds the modest proportions that formed the norm in the mid 1770s. Its very opening announces something dramatic and innovative, a single bar's flourish answered by two bars from the soloist. The gesture is then repeated, the traditional opening ritornello thus swept away at a stroke. The Andantino, with sighing muted strings, is the first of many of Mozart's central concerto movements that will breathe the spirit of Romanticism, while the exquisitely lovely slow minuet Mozart inserts into the final Rondeau is an idea – the interruption of a quick movement with a period of reflection – he will return to only once again in his piano concertos, in the finale of the C-major Concerto, KV503. The other concertos were composed for a series of subscription concerts Mozart gave in Vienna in the winter of 1782/3. Both are more modest works than KV 271, their slighter character underlined by the fact that they can be played by single strings, the parts for oboes, horns and (in the case of KV 413) bassoons being optional.

I have mixed feelings about the performances. On a level of practical choice it seems a little perverse legitimately to adopt single strings – employed throughout the series, I

understand – but then also include the wind parts. The 'orchestral' playing is throughout of questionable quality, with too many examples of sour oboe tone, and poor string intonation and ensemble. Dynamics, too, are far from being observed with anything like the attention they should be. Listen, for example, to the opening of the central Larghetto of KV 413, marked *sotto voce*. Here the winds' piano interjection in bar 2 hits the listener with all the force and subtlety of a sledgehammer. Yet these are not performances to write off entirely. Schoonderwoerd is a musical, fluent and often sensitive player, and he frequently achieves a sensitive rapport with his musicians, phrasing with point or affection. The minuet passage in KV 271 mentioned above is a good case in point, the playing here achieving an affecting delicacy and poise that is most engaging. Moreover the single string accompaniment, although not really working for the bigger-boned KV 271, does at times throw up some interesting perspectives on balance.

So, while these performances are never going to reach the status of mainstream recommendation, they are not without merit, though that merit is not boosted by the churchy, over-reverberant acoustic.

*Brian Robins*

MOZART: THE COMPLETE WORKS FOR VIOLIN  
AND ORCHESTRA

Zsolt Kalló, Capella Savaria, Nicholas McGegan  
127:49 (2 CDs in a jewel case)  
Hungaroton HCD 32761-62

As a violinist (of sorts), I have always loved the concertos that Mozart wrote for the instrument; for many a year, my favourite recording has been the now-20-year-old AAM/Simon Standage set. In his review of that set, Richard Wigmore wrote in *Gramophone*:

*“By the side of most modern-instrument performances Standage may initially seem cool and reserved, with a relatively narrow dynamic range. But his pure, slender tone (with vibrato reserved only for specific expressive effect), delicate, precise articulation and rhythmic subtlety make for fresh and inspiring performances of music that has so often been drenched in an excess of opulence and sophistication.”*

The present set is (to my ears, at least) a re-visiting of precisely those values, and the essence of HIP. Kalló's style

is very much in the Standage mould, albeit with a far wider dynamic range, while Capella Savaria's larger, rounder tone reflects the advances that have been made in the intervening years with regards (particularly) to wind instruments. Of course, both sets are marvellous achievements. The new one is brightly recorded with a more generous acoustic than the earlier engineers managed; some of Kalló's cadenzas are especially inventive, played with captivating precision and poise; the whole enterprise is infused with youthful excitement, and I have enjoyed listening to the two discs for hour after hour (when I ought perhaps to have listened to some other disks for review...) – when the music (and the music-making!) is this beautiful, it's difficult to stop.

*Brian Clark*

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MOZART: THREE SALZBURG SYMPHONIES,

NOS. 21, 27, 34

Haydn Sinfonietta Wien, Manfred Huss

67:20

BIS-2218 CD

**M**y experience with this disc is a cautionary tale. I first listened to K 199 in G (No. 27) and K 338 in C (No 34) in relaxed mood rather than critical mode late one evening, finding my overall impression of the performances was not particularly sympathetic. There appeared to be an overall lack of charm and affection, with quicker tempos often sounding too hard driven. Listening critically in the cold light of day with scores to hand produced quite a different impression. Yes, there are times when I still find a movement over pressed – the last movement of K 134 in A (No. 21) is a case in point – but overall there are positives that for me certainly cast the performances in a new light.

Before investigating these positive qualities, a few observations regarding the works. The earliest, K 134 dates from the summer of 1772, is scored for a pairs of flutes and horns, and strings. As befits its key, the flute-inflected music bathes in the warm glow of a pastoral dawn or in its Minuet a bucolic country-dance. K 199 was written in the spring of the following year and has the same scoring but quite a different character. At its heart is a deliciously delicate Andantino grazioso, the scoring for muted violins, pizzicato violas and bass creating a soft bed that allows the flutes to weave nocturnal magic. K 338, the last symphony Mozart wrote before leaving Salzburg for Vienna, is conceived on a different scale altogether. Composed in 1780, it features the full festive scoring including trumpets

and timpani associated with the key of C. As is often the case, the missing minuet is replaced with the Minuetto, K 409, which Manfred Huss' note argues might have been Mozart's intention, though Neal Zaslaw (in his book on the symphonies) argues against the theory, convincingly in my view given that the Minuetto calls for two flutes, not included in the symphony's scoring. It is perhaps worth noting at this point that Huss observes every repeat and that he employs a fortepiano continuo in the C-major Symphony. I could not detect any continuo in the two earlier symphonies and the use of fortepiano (rather than harpsichord) in K 338 seems to me highly questionable.

So what changed my mind about the performances? I think above all it is Huss' obviously superb ear for balance and texture, enabling a clear distinction between first and second violins, and giving unusual clarity to the viola line. In addition I would add the acute observation of dynamics and accent markings that allows, for example, the difference between Mozart's wedge and dotted accents to be heard. I've already mentioned the entrancing sound world of the Andantino of K134, its spell unquestionably in part created by the exquisite balance achieved by Huss, aided it must be added by splendid playing, an encomium that also serves for the remainder of the CD. Also impressive is the way in which the conductor leaves us in no doubt that with K 344 Mozart was leaving behind the Italianate galant style of so many of the early symphonies. From the outset this is a big, bold performance, the grandeur and scale of the opening coming as quite a shock after the earlier symphonies. It's a performance full of strength and a muscular energy that reminds us that the rich grandeur of *Idomeneo* was only months ahead. The recording, made in two different locations, enhances the benefits of Huss' fine ear with sound of forensic clarity.

*Brian Robins*

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MOZART: PIANO DUETS VOLUME I

Julian Perkins & Emma Abate

68:04

resonus RES10172

K358, 381, 521 + J. C. Bach: Sonata in A

**T**here is a measure of poignancy attached to this issue since it is the last recording to have been made at Finchcocks before the retirement of Katrina and Richard Burnett and the dispersal of the marvellous keyboard collection built up there. On a personal note, I can recall with the greatest pleasure many visits to Finchcocks

over the years, particular during the annual early autumn festival. Both pianos employed here, a Viennese grand by J. P. Fritz of c.1815 (used for the Mozart) and a square piano by Anton Walter and son of c.1805 (J. C. Bach), were part of the collection.

Mozart's piano duets fall into two groups, the first works for two players at one keyboard, the second pieces for two keyboards. All the works on the present CD fall into the former category, from which K19d and K497 will presumably appear on a second disc along with the two-piano Fugue in C minor and D-major Sonata, K448, probably the finest of the duets.

I have listed the Mozart sonatas in the order in which they are given on both the cover and in the booklet, but listeners who are familiar with the music will be surprised to hear at the outset not K521, but the opening bars of K381. It would seem that the information for these sonatas was inadvertently transposed; I understand that the error has already been corrected on-line and the documentation of the CD will be amended at the first opportunity.

Such matters of course have no bearing on the performances, which are excellent in all respects. The Fritz piano has full and gracious tonal qualities generously exploited by Julian Perkins (who plays primo throughout) and Emma Abbate, who especially relish exploiting the colours produced by the many imitative exchanges Mozart gives the players. Cantabile Mozartian lines are also beautifully drawn; listen for example to Perkins' playing of the principal theme of the exquisitely lovely Adagio of K358, the kind of writing that would soon be finding its way into the central movements of the piano concertos. Both players are also untroubled by greater technical demands of K521, the big episode of the central Andante opening out to glorious blossom under the hands of Perkins and Abbate. The square piano on which the little J. C. Bach sonata is played is obviously a more modest instrument, but it has an attractively wheezy bass and the two-movement sonata, consisting of an Allegretto in the fashionable sentimental style and a breezy minuet, is ideal for this repertoire.

It is worth adding that all repeats are taken, allowing the performers ample opportunity to add ornamentation, which is always tastefully and not infrequently wittily added. The sound is a little close, but very much in line with what I remember as 'the Finchcocks sound'. I await volume 2 with considerable anticipation.

*Brian Robins*

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## ROSETTI: SYMFONIE

*Vitae Pomeranorum – Zaginiony Świat Muzyki Pomorskiej, Volumen 1*

The FAMD.PL Orchestra, dir. Paweł Osuchowski  
60:55

Recart 0014

**T**he English version of the Polish in the heading is "The lost world of Pomeranian music"; Pomerania – in its end of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern across the north of Germany and Poland (to save you a trip to google.com!) – was apparently a hotbed of creativity. Anton Rösler was, in fact, born in Bohemia (like so many 18th-century composers) and is generally just one of many names that gets bandied about in discussions of the classical symphony. These lively and stylish performances of three four-movement pieces reveal a composer worthy of far more than a footnote! Particularly the symphony in G minor should be in every chamber orchestra's repertory – the "hints of Mozart" highlighted in the booklet notes (printed on a large fold-out sheet) are *extremely* pronounced. What I especially enjoyed about the renditions was their honesty; the horns are rustic and (frankly) raucous at points, but what point do the players have? That is the very nature of their instrument, and it gives a truer account of the sound world inhabited by the composer. Rosetti died the year after Mozart and was only six years older than him, so his was another life cut too short. I have enjoyed listening to this disc many times over the past few weeks and shall definitely return to them when I am in need of uplifting.

*Brian Clark*

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## RUST: DER CLAVIERPOET – KEYBOARD SONATAS

Jermaine Sprosse *fortepiano & clavichord*

76:01

deutsche harmonia mundi 88985369272

**T**his is a highly significant addition to the catalogue. Friedrich Wilhelm Rust was born into a musical family in the small Saxony-Anhalt town of Wörlitz in 1739. He undertook studies in law at Halle-Wittenberg University, at the same time deputising for W. F. Bach as church organist in return for lessons. Later he attracted the attention of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, who sent him to continue his studies firstly in Zerbst and then Berlin and Potsdam, where he was a violin pupil of Franz Benda and studied keyboard with C. P. E. Bach. In 1765-6

he travelled to Italy in the retinue of the prince, meeting Tartini, Nardini and G. B. Martini. He subsequently settled in Dessau, where he remained for the rest of his life, becoming Kapellmeister in 1775, the same year as a theatre was founded there under his auspices. He died in 1796.

Rust's extant compositions include a substantial number of chamber works, including some 50 violin sonatas, a rather smaller body of keyboard works and both secular and sacred vocal works, including seven stage pieces. The present CD introduces three keyboard sonatas from different periods of Rust's creative life, along with a charming set of variations on the song 'Blühe liebes Veilchen', a late work dating from 1794.

Judging from the three sonatas the major influences in forging Rust's keyboard style were J. S. Bach's two eldest sons and Franz Benda. Italy appears to have played little part, certainly in these works. The earliest of the three sonatas, in G minor, probably dates from the mid-1760s, the period during which Rust must have been heavily influenced by the north German style of Benda and C. P. E. Bach. In its at times wild spirit and lack of discipline in the opening movement it also surely betrays the eccentric hand of W. F. Bach. A thorough exploration of expressive sensitivity, the central Adagio sostenuto might have been created as a classic illustration of *Empfindsamkeit*. The performance, played on a copy of a Hubert clavichord of 1772 boasting a fine range of tonal colours, is outstanding. Jermaine Sprosse not only has a splendid technique that boasts nimble finger work and clean articulation, but he also responds with admirable empathy to the often-improvisatory character of Rust's writing.

The mid-career Sonata in C (c. 1780) opens with bright confidence, but the feel of impetuosity remains. The development is full of restless modulation tempered by brief passages of poetic meditation, but some of the most remarkable music on the disc comes in the massive central movement, a quasi-rondo founded on an improvisatory, hymn-like theme. The long central episode, marked Adagio sostenuto, is extraordinary music that seems to drift off, dream-like into a world of its own, while the final movement breaks out into impulsive virtuosity. The spirit of the whole sonata is again completely captured by Sprosse's involving performance.

The final two works, a late sonata in D dating from 1794 and the variations mentioned above, are played on a fortepiano built by J. A. Stein of Augsburg in 1792, so for once the excellent instrument is thoroughly contemporary with the music. However, this brings me to my single

reservation regarding the disc, although it is an important one. Unfortunately, the engineering has cheated to allow the clavichord to be heard at the same volume as the fortepiano, which as anyone who has ever heard the small-voice of the former will know is a nonsense. The construction of the D-major Sonata is interesting. It consists of a brief Adagio con espressione founded on dark, portentous chords, before proceeding to a large-scale Haydnesque Allegro with another extraordinary development section that constantly seeks to discomfort the listener, but ends with an exquisitely tranquil coda, all passion now spent. The variations are based on a charming song of folk-like simplicity, while the succeeding twelve variations run a gamut from the bravura of variation 2 to the minor key darkness of its successor.

With the exception of the caveat noted, this is a CD I've found totally compelling. The highest praise is due to Jermaine Sprosse for bringing Rust out of the shadows in such sympathetic performances. I am in no doubt he is a major figure certainly in need of further investigation.

*Brian Robins*

VANHAL: CONCERTOS FOR CLARINET, OBOE & BASSOONS

Luc Loubry & François Baptiste *bassoon*, Michel Lethiec *clarinet*, Piet Van Bockstal *oboe*, The Prussian Chamber Orchestra, Hans Rotman

68:00

Et'cetera KTC 1603

Regular readers will know that I am a fan of Vanhal's music, and his affinity with woodwind instruments; even modern players seem to share my enthusiasm, and while clarinet and bassoon somehow manage not to offend my HIP-sensitive ears, I'm afraid oboe and unchallenged (?) string players don't (that is in no way meant as criticism of the oboist, who plays beautifully!); so, while the solo episodes with their lighter accompaniments of violins and violas work, *tutti* are uninspired and lacking in air that isn't produced by some artificial dynamic or other. To be fair to The Prussian Chamber Orchestra, some of the slower movements are rather more successful, but the approach is generally neither inspired or inspiring. So some outstanding solo playing of some honest music, but it could have been so much better.

*Brian Clark*

## SACRED MUSIC IN LOMBARDY 1770-80

Francesca Lombardi Mazzulli *soprano*, [Ensemble Autarena], Marcello Scandelli

66:58

Pan Classics PC 10364

Carlo Lenzi: 2 sonatas, 2 Lamentations

Mozart: 2 sonatas (KV 225, 245), Exsultate jubilate

The name of Carlo Lenzi is likely to be known to few, a number that does not include *Grove Online*. He was born near Bergamo in 1735, subsequently receiving a musical education in Naples. On its completion Lenzi returned to northern Italy, where in 1767 he was appointed *maestro di cappella* at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. It was a post he would retain until his death in 1805, despite going blind during the 1790s. Lenzi left a substantial extant body of sacred works, among which are 34 Lamentations settings for Holy Week.

The setting of passages from the penitential Book of Jeremiah was one of the most commonly adopted forms in Holy Week for composers during the Renaissance and Baroque, its dark severity ideally suited to the week's final days. The two here by Lenzi, for Maundy Thursday, composed in 1780 and Good Friday (1778), follow the usual pattern of Hebrew incipits followed by verses from Jeremiah – here divided between aria and passages of quasi-accompanied recitative – with a coda on the recurrent text 'Jerusalem, return to the Lord thy God'. Lenzi's settings are thoroughly in accord with his Neapolitan training in the sacred style that dominated southern Europe during the second half of the 18th century, with passages of dramatic, operatic intensity juxtaposed with coloratura writing. Yet there is an individual, at times almost eccentric streak at play here, too, with writing that at times appears fragmentary or disjointed. In part I think this impression derives from Lenzi's fondness for breaking up the vocal line with orchestral ritornellos. Yet elsewhere, as at the words 'bonus est Dominus' (The Lord is good) in the Good Friday setting, the music takes on an exquisite inner beauty. The (poorly translated) notes make big claims for Lenzi's music. I'm not sure they are substantiated here, but the music is certainly interesting and it is equally certainly shown in the best light by the performances. I've recently much admired Francesca Lombardi Mazzulli in several operatic performances and here again she is outstanding. Although designated as a soprano, the voice has an appealing coppery quality of instrumental purity and a strong, well-produced middle range that suggests she may well end up as a mezzo. She also has a finished technique, with coloratura cleanly

and precisely articulated and – glory be – a proper trill. Her diction, however, could be better.

Lombardi Mazzulli is very well supported by Ensemble Autarena, who on their own account intersperse the Lamentation settings with a pair of Sonatas based on the Seven Last Words commissioned in 1771 by Cadiz Cathedral, the same establishment that would give Haydn a similar commission sixteen years later. The first starts in particularly impressive style, with a stormy, dramatic passage presumably depicting the earthquake, though later lapses into a more perfunctory allegro.

Also included are Mozart's *Exsultate jubilate*, qualifying for inclusion on a CD devoted to music from Lombardy by dint of the fact that it was composed in Milan for the soprano castrato Venanzio Rauzini, and two of his so-called Epistle Sonatas (KV 245 and KV 225). They of course have nothing to do with Lombardy, having – like all their fellows – been composed for Salzburg Cathedral. Lombardi Mazzulli's performance of the famous motet is most appealing for the reasons already cited above. In addition her diction here seems better, probably because she is more familiar with the work, and she strongly projects the central recitative. The two sonatas are perfectly legitimately played with one-per-part strings and greater dramatic emphasis than is usual. As noted above, the jury is still out on Lenzi, but the disc is well worthy of attention, particularly for Lombardi Mazzulli's fine singing.

*Brian Robins*

## Romantic

### BEETHOVEN: MISSA SOLEMNIS

Carolyn Sampson, Marianne Beate Kielland, Thomas Walker, David Wilson-Johnson *SATB*, Cappella Amsterdam, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Daniel Reuss

75:03

Glossa GCD 921124

In an ideal world, I would not have had to review this recording. The *Missa Solemnis* was a set work in first year at university and, frankly, as an 18 year old, I just was not ready to appreciate such a monumental piece of art, from any perspective. Now in my fifties and almost a regular listener to Radio 4, I find myself better able to cope with the challenge and, having worked my way through the Haydn and Hummel masses courtesy of the excellent Chandos series, then the Beethoven C major mass (which I had once sight-read in a concert in Glasgow, which was

very much a white-knuckle ride!), now the epic and once-daunting creation seems not only manageable and more easily understood, it is also a pleasure to sit back and enjoy. Everything about this disc guarantees intellectual satisfaction, too – the choral work is excellent, with unanimity of declamation and crispness of fugal entries, and the orchestra produces some glorious sounds (I feel I must highlight the sparkling contributions of solo flautist and violinist, but they are in splendid company throughout – the list of wind players reads like a *Who's Who?* of HIP giants!), but then above them the four soloists rise heroically, not in a “listen to me; I can sing much louder than all of you put together” sort of way, but rather in a “didn't Beethoven build this structure with such absolute mastery?” sort of way, allowing them to project their all-important contributions to so many massive moments in a single work. There are not many large choral works that bring me pleasure; I have learned to love Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, and I do enjoy listening to Eliot Gardiner's recording of the Verdi *Requiem*; it seems now as if I have no choice but to add Reuss' *Missa Solemnis* to that list, as I will be enjoying this recording for a long, long time!

*Brian Clark*

**BEETHOVEN: VIOLIN CONCERTO**

Anton Steck *violin*, *L'arpa festante*, Matthew Halls

62:01

Accent ACC 24320

+ Pössinger: *Violin Concerto in G*, op. 9

While there will be a great deal of interest shown in this recording purely by virtue of its claim to be a world premiere recording after the original autograph score, and the fact that the “filler” (who I detest this disparaging description!) was written by a violinist with a very close personal link to Beethoven, for me the disc is a tremendous success simply because it offers beautifully recorded, accomplished performances. Anton Steck is a first-class violinist and his accounts of these two very different works are honest and engaging. Yes, of course, there are moments when the subconscious inner ear is surprised by the unexpected, but these are rarely disturbing; even the early published editions of the concerto offer variant readings – Beethoven's score offers violinists up to four different versions of some bars! *L'arpa festante* (76543 strings) support Steck with some ravishing playing, and enjoy the tunefulness of Pössinger's relatively light work (with a far smaller orchestra and lasting just

under 18 minutes, compared to Beethoven's 44!) There is some evidence that Pössinger was the violinist to whom Beethoven turned for technical advice, so the pairing of the two works is appropriate. An especial delight of the recording are Steck's cadenzas for the Beethoven! Perhaps this line-up could be persuaded to follow up the booklet's title: “Viewed in a completely different light” – let's have another couple of contemporary concertos and Beethoven's Romances?

*Brian Clark*

**BRAHMS: VIOLON CONCERTO, SYMPHONY NO. 3**

Emilio Percan *violin/director*, National Symphony Orchestra of the Republic of Bashkortostan

69:28

Pan Classics PC 10356

Recordings of such repertoire rarely feature in Early Music Review; this one qualifies by virtue of the approach taken by the performers, in this case to follow “in the tradition of the Meiningen Court Orchestra.” While acknowledging that instruments themselves underwent tremendous technical change during Brahms' life, Percan explains in his booklet note that his primary concern has been with the thinning down of the strings (to 77444 for the concerto and 99544 for the symphony), a new layout for the band (second violins to the right, divided cellos left and right, violas placed centrally, woodwinds in one row, brasses behind, divided basses and percussion at the rear), and doing away with a conductor for the concerto. While I applaud the attempt to get closer to Brahms' intentions, I struggle with the actual sound – I don't doubt for a moment that audiophiles with fabulous equipment who enjoy modern instrument performances will love the new insights the layout allows. No disrespect to any of the performers intended!

*Brian Clark*

**THE CELEBRATED DISTIN FAMILY**

The Prince Regent's Band

55:40

Resonus RES10179

I fear that mention of ‘the celebrated Distin family’ in polite company nowadays would elicit nothing but blank looks, but in their heyday in the mid-19th century they were quite the thing, touring Europe and America to great acclaim. I warmed to them when I read

that they began commenced their stellar career with a tour of the Moray coast ending in Inverness. Springing from the Prince Regent's Band, George IV's elite brass ensemble, John Distin astutely formed a family dynasty of brass players similar to a Victorian version of the Jacksons or the Osmonds, who – taking advantage of contemporary developments in brass instruments – took the world by storm. A turning point for the group was their discovery and espousal of the newly invented Saxhorn, an instrument which featured prominently in their programmes as well as on the present CD. The new Prince Regent's Band comprises five players with a wealth of period brass experience who populate the brass sections of a myriad period instrument ensembles. The repertoire they have recorded here is by necessity only speculatively associated with the Distins, and ranges from pretty basic oompah music to subtle compositions by John Distin, often in arrangements by the group members, and altogether more adventurous repertoire such as arrangements of Verdi, Handel and Arne. I have to admit that the occasionally slight failures in tuning particularly in the cornets disturbed me – is this really entirely the fault of the old instruments? In some pieces the melody cornet is sharp at the top end of its range and in tune lower down – is it naïve to think that a bit of judicious 'pulling out' or 'lipping down' might have helped? These slight flaws are more than offset by the delightfully warm sounds of a consort Saxhorns, and the tasteful playing of the ensemble avoids any potential ennui. Helpfully the large collection of instruments the band members play is illustrated at the centre of a very informative essay by Anneke Scott, although the group photo with players clutching an ophicleide and a trombone slightly confuses the issue. Surely your first album is more than adequate excuse for a new group publicity snap?! Notwithstanding, the members of The Prince Regent's Band are to be warmly congratulated on this enterprising exploration of an almost entirely forgotten area of musical history.

*D. James Ross*

DONIZETTI: STRING QUARTETS I-3  
 Pleyel Quartett Köln  
 55:19  
 cpo 777 909-2

Donizetti might not be the first name you would come up with if asked to name a composer of string quartets. The truth, however, is that these

are three accomplished pieces, requiring virtuosity from three of the four players (the poor violist is pretty much a filler-in...), and all in the same four-movement pattern (fast - slow - playful - fast). The young Donizetti had regularly played Mozart and Haydn quartets with his teacher of the time, the opera composer Johann Simon Mayr. Klaus Aringer's informative note seems to cover the whole of Donizetti's quartet output, and together with other volumes featuring *The Revolutionary Drawing Room*, cpo has built up an excellent period instrument monument to Italian chamber music, of which we hear precious little. The Pleyel Quartett Köln (here playing late 18th-or early 19th-century instruments or have strayed from the eponymous composer's Prussian Quartets to music by Wolf and Gyrowetz for their most recent recordings, and very fine all of those have been. This CD adds another feather to their cap with fine playing from all concerned. The violinists take turns playing the Violin 1 part. I can heartily recommend this recording to all fans of the string quartet.

*Brian Clark*

JEAN PAUL EGIDE MARTINI: REQUIEM POUR  
 LOUIS XVI. ET MARIE ANTOINETTE  
 [Corinna Schreiter, Martin Platz, Markus Simon STB],  
 Festivalchor Musica Franconia, La Banda, Wolfgang  
 Riedelbauch  
 73:46  
 Christophorus CHR 77413  
 + Gluck: De Profundis

Symbolism hangs heavily over the music on this CD. The restitution of the Bourbon monarchy marked the start of attempts to cleanse France of the stain of revolution and Napoleonic imperialism. One of the earliest politically potent acts was the re-interment of Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette. It was conducted with elaborate ceremony on 28 January 1816 in the cathedral of Saint Denis, north of Paris, the traditional resting place of French monarchs. A week earlier, on the anniversary of the execution of the king, the same venue had hosted a specially commissioned Requiem Mass. The choice of composer was also highly symbolic. Had it not been for the onset of the revolution in 1788, Jean Paul Egide Martini (1741-1816), today best known as the composer of 'Plaisir d'amour', would have become *surintendant de la musique du roi*, an appointment finally confirmed more than a quarter of a century later. The composition of the Requiem would

prove to be one of his final acts, for he died only three weeks after its performance. The following year a rather better known commemorative Requiem, that in C minor by Martini's successor, Luigi Cherubini, was commissioned for the anniversary.

Martini's work is planned on a large-scale in twelve movements. It is designed for soprano, tenor and bass soloists, chorus and an orchestra including trumpets, trombones and a tam-tam, an instrument that found its way into funeral music during the Revolutionary period (Berlioz enthusiasts will not need reminding he used three in his Requiem Mass). Despite such implications, such assertive instruments are employed sparingly, but often to compelling dramatic effect, as in 'Tuba mirum', where trumpet fanfares play a part in effecting the building of successive climaxes that remind us that Martini was an experienced opera composer. The main heft of the work, both in terms of timing and weight, is in fact to be found in the opening *Requiem aeternam* and *Dies irae* movements, some of the briefer later sections apparently demonstrating a lack of real substance.

I write 'apparently' since any final verdict on the piece must be tempered given the well-intentioned, but ultimately inadequate performance on offer. It stems from a live performance given in Martini's birthplace, Freystadt in Bavaria (though both his parents were French). The chorus is an enthusiastic, but not very disciplined amateur group, the ensemble of which is poor and whose entries are frequently ragged. The best of the soloists is the tenor, whose singing in the lyrical duet *Ingemisco* is good. But among the soloists he has the least to do and both soprano and bass are mediocre, the latter at times being woefully off-pitch. The period instrument orchestral playing is on a higher plain, but I can imagine more inspiring direction. The final nail in the coffin is an opaque recording that renders the choral sound as an unintelligible pudding and sloppy English notes that have obviously not been proofread: the Battle of Waterloo was fought in 1815, not 1825, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were executed nine months apart, not on the same day, and far from being 'exactly a year after the execution' 21 January 1816 was 23 years after it.

*Brian Robins*

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## MENDELSSOHN: LIEDER IM FREIEN ZU SINGEN

Kammerchor Stuttgart, Frieder Bernius

65:00

Carus 83.287

opp. 41, 48, 59, 88 & 100

This recording has filled me with joy since it arrived. Many years ago, my friends and I sang in a group we called The Legrenzi Consort and, after giving a few well-reviewed concerts in and around Dundee, we were invited to sing at the University's Graduation Garden Party. Since we liked to explore relatively little-known repertoire, and being slightly disappointed that only a handful of people had turned out to hear us sing Monteverdi, I went looking for something different and chanced upon a volume of Mendelssohn's partsongs in the St Andrews University Library. Now, we were just four singers having a lot of fun, but the fantastic voices of the Kammerchor Stuttgart under Frieder Bernius are quite another proposition, but I'd like to think that we shared at least one thing – a total love of the music. Singing this repertoire has become slightly old fashioned, but this new CD from Carus will hopefully convince choirs around the world to take up the cause. Mendelssohn writes fabulously well for voices; with the Sing-Akademie zu Berlin at his disposal, he had ample opportunity to hear his output performed, and it is reassuring to read in R. Larry Todd's illuminating notes that these sets of songs were intended to for outdoor performance! I shall continue to enjoy listening to this excellent recording for a long time to come – each time I do, I feel a little happier than I did before.

*Brian Clark*

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## TOMÁŠEK: FORTEPIANO SONATAS

Petra Matějová *fortepiano*

71:14

Supraphon SU 4223-2

Sonatas opp. 13, 14 & 26/48

Part of an ambitious Supraphon series entitled 'Music from eighteenth-century Prague', these fortepiano sonatas by Tomášek only just slip in, being composed during the period from 1799 to 1805. It is clear from the elements of romanticism already apparent, in the composer's idiom, that Prague was very much in the mainstream of European musical thought at this time – we would recall Mozart's operas which premiered in Prague rather than Vienna – and while Tomášek was only four years younger than Beethoven, he survived into

the middle of the nineteenth century, living long enough to teach Hanslick, the critical musical scourge of end-of-the-century Vienna. There are similarities in these works with Beethoven's piano sonatas, but there is already also a romantic lyricism and elegance which both looks back to Mozart and Haydn and on to Schubert. Petra Matejová plays a copy of an 1815 Bertsche fortepiano, and her full-toned sound and formidable technique bring Tomášek's imaginative and inventive music vividly to life. Mention is made in her very informative programme note of a series of *Eclogues* which Tomášek also composed which sound as if they would make interesting listening, while the composer also wrote symphonies, piano concertos and chamber music. Looking at the extensive list of recordings already made in this excellent Supraphon series, if the many unknown composers are as good as Tomášek, it has been a very worthwhile exercise. And full marks for finding the cover painting – *Portrait of a Lady at a Pianoforte* by Adèle Romany.

*D. James Ross*

CLASSICAL VIENNA: MUSIC FOR GUITAR & PIANO

James Akers *romantic guitar*, Gary Branch *fortepiano*

67:47

resonus res10182

Music by Carulli, Diabelli, Giuliani & Moscheles

This charming CD takes us evocatively into the Viennese salon of the early 19th century with a programme of domestic repertoire for guitar and fortepiano. It is a genre of which I was hitherto completely ignorant, and the surprise is how well the sounds of period fortepiano and romantic guitar blend, a powerful argument if such needs to be made for the correct use of period instruments. This might incidentally be the moment where I lament the demise of the Finchcocks Museum, where this recording was made, making it the last in a noble tradition. Knowing nothing of the circumstances, I feel that its almost unique assemblage of period keyboard should perhaps be the sort of resource that should be saved for the nation. The 1826 Conrad Graf fortepiano featured here offers a delightful range of tone qualities, while James Akers' original 1820 Saumier guitar and a 2015 Panormo copy have a distinctive and gentle timbre. Incidentally both the fortepiano and the guitars also get a chance to shine in solo repertoire. With the exception of Diabelli (he of the variations) and the ubiquitous Moscheles, who seems to have sat at the centre of music-making in this era like a

spider at the centre of a Europe-wide web, the other two composers represented, Ferdinando Carulli and Mauro Giuliani, are unfamiliar. Their music is jaunty and tuneful rather than profound, but understandably this was the sort of repertoire the Viennese who attended operettas and waltzed the night away at the city's year-round balls wanted to play and hear in their drawing rooms. As in previous programmes, James Akers demonstrates great musicality and an awesome technique, while his partner Gary Branch handles the various features of the Graf fortepiano with panache, making it sing beautifully or almost whisper depending on the requirements of the music. The intimate acoustic of Finchcocks is probably just right for this repertoire, and if you feel rich enough you can plan your own concerts and recordings there as the property is currently for sale.

*D. James Ross*

OMBRE AMEM: GIULIANI & SOR

Gabriella Di Laccio soprano, James Akers guitar

55:10

Drama Musica DRAMA002

I approached this CD with high hopes, as I have enjoyed James Akers' previous explorations of unfamiliar repertoire, and indeed the solo guitar music by Fernando Sor and particularly the *Grand Overture* by Mauro Giuliani are enjoyable and executed with the finesse and elegance we have come to expect of this fine young guitarist. For me, things get seriously problematic, though, when he is joined by soprano Gabriella de Laccio in the *ariettas*, *seguidillas* and *cavatinas*, which make up the bulk of the CD. Whether through nerves or some other reason, her voice has a distracting quaver to it, but – more importantly – her intonation is regularly inadequate, such that I, personally, was unable to enjoy any of the sung music. This is a pity, as much of it sounded as if it was reasonably interesting repertoire, and the *seguidillas* by Sor had a distinctive Spanish flavour to them. I persisted in the hope that things might settle down, but, while some of the character pieces were a little more successful, the overall impression was distinctly uncomfortable. I wanted to like this CD so much that I have kept coming back to it and listening to tracks at random, but sadly I have to stick to my original evaluation.

*D. James Ross*

## Various

### AZAHAR

La Tempête, Simon-Pierre Bestion

82:29

Alpha Classics Alpha 261

Machaut: Messe de Notre-Dame, Alfonso X El Sabio: Cantigas de Santa Maria  
+ Stravinsky: Messe, Ohana: Cantigas

I have to admit that my heart sank when I looked at the paperwork with this CD and read that the word Azahar is the Spanish word for orange blossom, that the programme was a mash-up of Machaut, Alfonso X el Sabio, Stravinsky and Maurice Ohana, and that the programme note was in the form of an interview in which director Simon-Pierre Bestion declared of Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame*, 'You can take extraordinary liberties with this Mass – it's so modern after all.' Well no it's not – it's from the 14th century. His further assertion that his approach is 'neo-classical rather than historical' and that he likes 'disorientating the listener' further depressed me. Time to put on the CD, and in fact things are not as entirely demented as promised by the notes.

The gritty, choral post-Pères account of the Machaut *Messe de Notre Dame* with some kind of unspecified growling bass instrument (possibly a 'basson ancien'), and tutti passages supported by early brass and drums is mostly effective, if a little implausible. The same epic treatment of Alfonso's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is equally effective and implausible, and it is ironic that the music treated with the most respect is the most recent, the *Messe* by Igor Stravinsky and the rather iconoclastic settings of the *Cantigas* by Maurice Ohana.

Putting to one side these last two elements of the recording, which are probably the most successful aspects though of less interest to EMR readers, your reaction to the presentation of the early music here depends on what you are looking for from 'authentic' performers. I have to admit that a director whose self-declared approach is 'neo-classical rather than historical' is unlikely to satisfy my requirements, and the allure of epic, pumped-up Machaut, impressive as it occasionally may sound, really ought to be resisted as 'fake news'.

Stepping back from the concoction Bestion is offering here under the Azahar banner, we essentially have two CDs mashed together : a good performance of some relatively good Stravinsky and some generally less good Ohana, and a whole other CD of early music, generally well performed but on steroids and therefore historically implausible. If

that's your kind of thing, go for it, but don't expect a dinner invitation from me any time soon...

D. James Ross

BEWARE THE SPIDER! *Music on the theme of Tarantism*

Palisander 37:53

PALG 33

This very brief CD is a series of pieces from the late 16th to the 18th century rather spuriously linked together by the concept of the tarantella. Most of them have nothing to do with this theme although there are arrangements of 18th-century tarantellas. The 'straight' early music is beautifully played on a range of recorders, but a fair proportion of the CD is taken up with arrangements, such as Vivaldi's concerto 'La Notte' for flute and strings, interpreted as a nightmare by Miriam Nerval and given a rather distorted (*alla Red Priest*) performance by four recorders. I'm sure this goes down a bomb in concert, but I could do without it. What is it about Vivaldi's music that makes some musicians want to vandalize it? More effective were Nerval's arrangements of 18th-century tarantellas, including a charming 'Napoletana'. The playing throughout this CD is technically impressive and musically exciting, but in light of the variety of approaches to the music and the CD's extreme brevity I think it is more an item for the group to sell at the door after concerts than a very serious contribution to the recorder ensemble discography.

D. James Ross

DA PACEM: ECHO DER REFORMATION

RIAS Kammerchor, Capella de la Torre (Katharina Bäuml), Florian Helgath

69:41

deutsche harmonia mundi 889854 054120

Music by Altenburg, G. Gabrieli, de Kerle, Lassus, Luther/Walther, Montezio, Monteverdi, Moritz von Hessen, Parabosco, M. Praetorius, Schütz, Vecchi & Gregorian chant

This collaboration between the instrumental consort Capella de la Torre and the RIAS Chamber Choir presents a selection of music for voices and instruments from both sides of the Protestant and Catholic divide in the period following the Reformation. Many of the works feature texts relating to peace, clearly contributing to the attempt to emphasise the common ground shared by composers of both religious affiliations. Alongside works by the giants of the late Renaissance and early Baroque, Monteverdi, Schütz and Michael Praetorius,

we have music by more obscure composers such as Michael Altenberg, Jacobus Kerle, and even a rather gauche instrumental piece by Moritz, Landgrave of Hessen. The Capella de la Torre fields a wide range of wind and stringed instruments, and the two ensembles produce a rich opulent sound for the chronologically later works on the CD. In some of the earlier works I felt that the large choral forces, more often than not supported by an organ, produced a rather blander sound, which was not always appropriate for the repertoire. Generally speaking, I felt that the later works were generally given more convincing performances.

*D. James Ross*

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### HEROINES OF LOVE AND LOSS

Ruby Hughes *soprano*, Mime Yamahiro Brinkmann *cello*,  
Jonas Nordberg *lute*

71:28

BIS-2248 SACD

Music by Bennet, F. Caccini, Kapsberger, Piccinini, Purcell, Sessa, B. Strozzi, Vivaldi, Vizzana & anon

For all its apparent thematic interest, this CD is really a showcase for the vocal skills of Ruby Hughes, and these turn out to be considerable indeed. In these songs accompanied by lute and cello there is no place to hide, but Hughes' impeccable technique and expressive imagination take us on a rewarding tour of this lovely repertoire. Her opening Purcell air from *Bonduca* 'O, lead me to some peaceful gloom' establishes the air of melancholy which will prevail, but also lays out Hughes' credentials as she demonstrates a rich palette of vocal colours. These truly come into their own later in Hughes' intense account of Dido's Lament. Amongst the tragic heroines we also have fine music by 17th-century women composers Barbara Strozzi, Claudia Sessa, Lucrezia Vizzana and Francesca Caccini, who – with the possible exception of Strozzi – have left distressingly limited evidence of their musical careers. I have highlighted Ruby Hughes' lovely singing, but the instrumentalists both accompany her impeccably as well as contributing fine instrumental interludes of their own. These include engaging accounts of movements from Vivaldi's G minor Cello Sonata and a wonderful *Toccata Arpeggiata* by Giovanni Kapsberger and a *Ciaccona* by Alessandro Piccini both for solo theorbo. The CD ends appropriately with a riveting account of the anonymous 'O death, rock me asleep', the words of which are attributed to the tragic Anne Boleyn.

*D. James Ross*

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### DISCOVERING THE PIANO

Linda Nicholson *reproduction 1730 Cristofori-Ferrini pianoforte*  
71:39

Passacaille 1024

Music by Alberti, Giustini, Handel, Paradisi, Platti, D. Scarlatti & Soler

It is not clear whether the 'discovering' of the title relates to the early days of the piano or to the specific instrument used for this splendid CD. The latter is certainly something of a discovery for at least this listener. I imagine most readers of EMR will be aware that the piano was the invention of Bartolomeo Cristofori somewhere around 1690. During the first two decades of the 18th century his invention gradually became established and known in musical circles; after his death in 1732, building continued under his assistant and eventual successor, Giovanni Ferrini. The present recital is played on a copy by Denzil Wraight of an instrument built by Ferrini in 1730. There is an excellent introduction to it by Wraight in the booklet. It was once owned by Queen Maria Barbara of Spain, who bequeathed it to the great castrato Farinelli, it apparently becoming his favourite instrument. There is therefore a direct link to the Domenico Scarlatti and Soler sonatas included on the present CD.

Like other Cristofori pianos I've heard, this example is distinguished by its rounded warmth of tone and richness of bass, which – as the Scarlatti Sonata in G, K.547 amply demonstrates – can take on a chunky meatiness when required. Again, as is customary with Cristofori, there is an overall unity to the sound across the gamut, quite different to the deliberate contrast of tonal colours found in later fortepianos.

The repertoire chosen by Linda Nicholson to show off the instrument is an interesting collection that with one exception was composed relatively shortly after the 'birth' of the instrument. The exception is of course Handel, the well-known Suite in F (HWV 427) having been published in a set of eight in 1720. Nicholson mounts a convincing argument that Handel was almost certainly aware of Cristofori's instruments, which he would have met with during his sojourn in Italy, conjecturing that the 'cembalo' part of the famous competition with Domenico Scarlatti may even have been played on the Cristofori owned by Cardinal Ottoboni. The works by the lesser-known composers, a Sonata in G minor of 1732 by Ludovico Giustini, one of the first works specifically written for the piano, two-movement sonatas by P.D. Paradisi and Alberti, and Platti's Sonata in G minor, op 1, no. 4, all occupy mid-century galant territory to a greater or lesser degree, all

sounding thoroughly idiomatic on this Cristofori-Ferrini.

That they do is in no small measure due to the performances of Linda Nicholson. Never one to seek celebrity status, Nicholson has nevertheless long been one of our finest early keyboard players. Here her playing is informed by clean, precise finger-work and a technique capable of encompassing the most virtuosic passagework, as she demonstrably proves in the *Presto e alla breve* (II) from the Platti sonata, to cite but one example. But above all it is the sheer musicality of Nicholson's playing that makes the CD such a joy. Tempos throughout are beautifully judged, rubato is judiciously employed and there is a sensitivity and unfailing response to the instrument's characteristics and capabilities. I'll restrict myself to a single, but exceptional example, Scarlatti's Sonata in B minor, K. 87). Here the nocturnal mystery of the piece attains a magically intimate quality, the playing perfectly weighted and dynamically graded to produce a performance of compelling sensitivity. There is much else that could be written in similarly glowing terms, but I'd rather urge readers to discover this exceptional disc for themselves.

*Brian Robins*

## A MUSICAL JOURNEY AROUND EUROPE

Richard Lester *harpsichord & fortepiano*

79:35

Nimbus Records NI 5939

Music by J. S. Bach, F. & L. Couperin, Frescobaldi, Handel, Haydn, Luzzaschi, Merulo, Mozart, Paradies, Scarlatti, Seixas, Soler & Sweelinck

Richard Lester's compilation features some of the most popular pieces for harpsichord and fortepiano, together with some lesser-known ones. He relates his programme to Charles Burney's journey through Europe in 1766, though his own journey starts much earlier, with Luzzaschi and Merulo. He then passes through Frescobaldi, Sweelinck, Froberger and the Couperins, moving on to Bach, Handel, Scarlatti, Seixas, Paradies and Soler, and finishing with Haydn, Soler and Mozart. As such it also represents Lester's own fifty-year journey through early keyboard music and eight of these tracks have already appeared on Nimbus recordings. He is joined by his daughter Elizabeth on recorder for a couple of Frescobaldi canzonas – some delightful playing by both artists. The keyboard playing is very strong technically and highly assured rhythmically; it comes across as a bit generic, inevitable with such a wide repertory, but there are some highlights like his Froberger Toccata, Sonatas by Scarlatti and Soler, and the Mozart Variations on 'Ah vous

dirai-je, maman'. Four instruments are featured: a 17th-century Italian copy by Colin Booth, a chamber organ after Antegnati by Antonio Frinelli, a copy of the former Finchcocks Antunes harpsichord by Michael Cole, and the Schantz fortepiano in the Bath Holbourne Museum. This is a welcome disc, which stands as a summation of Lester's important contribution to the field while providing a good general introduction to early keyboard music on period instruments.

*Noel O'Regan*

## A NOBLE AND MELANCHOLY INSTRUMENT

*Music for horns and pianos of the 19th century*

Alec Frank-Gemmill & Alasdair Beatson

65:56

BIS-2228 SACD

Music by Beethoven, Dukas, Glazunov, Rossini, Saint-Saëns, Schumann, Franz Strauss & Vinter

At a time which has seen something of a backlash against the use of period instruments, it is great to come across this CD which makes such a powerful case for the additional value of performing on the instruments the composer intended. In the course of taking us through the 19th century and beyond using a variety of appropriate instruments, these two young musicians ably demonstrate how much their respective instruments changed in the course of just over a hundred years. We begin with a revelatory account of the Beethoven Horn Sonata with wonderfully resonant pedal notes from the Raoux orchestral horn of around 1800 which on their own make the exercise worthwhile. But listen, too, and enjoy the rasping hand-stopped chromatics which Beethoven exploits perfectly, as well as the clarity at the lower end of the Lagrassa fortepiano of 1815. Similar revelations are evinced from the music of Schumann and Franz Strauss by the use of a valved Wienerhorn and a Streicher 1847 piano – we are in a new sound-world which both exemplifies and made possible the Romantic composers' response to new possibilities. Back to a valveless horn with its varied palette of tonal qualities for Rossini and Saint-Saens before the early 20th-century piston horn – which Alec Frank-Gemmill uses for Glazunov, Dukas and Vinter – illustrates just how far we have come since we started. What is interesting, though, is that all the instruments featured, both horns and keyboards, have their own charms and their own relevance to the music of their times. This kind of instrumental odyssey is a huge technical challenge for players, and Frank-Gemmill and Beatson show consummate skill on all

of them as well as enormous musicality, as they traverse the decades. This CD is an education in the best possible sense, as well as making an undeniable case for the use of appropriate period instruments.

*D. James Ross*

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### TIME STANDS STILL

Friederike Chylek *harpsichord*

55:51

Oehms Classics OC 1864

Music by Byrd, Dowland, Farnaby, Johnson, Purcell & Tomkins

A double celebration: *Early Music Review* survives into another year; and Father Christmas was kind to me, dropping three superb discs down our chimney into the wood-burner: an astounding record of Chicago blues covers by The Rolling Stones; Terry Riley's fabulous Keyboard studies #2; and Quire Cleveland's luminous live recording taken from two concerts devoted to Byrd that they gave last spring in Cleveland and Akron, OH. So I was well equipped for good listening throughout the festive period. However, the very day that postal deliveries resumed after Christmas, a package containing the record under review here dropped through our front door. Riches upon riches?

Yes, or perhaps Ja, because this is an assertively Anglophile recording, played by a German harpsichordist on a German copy of a 1624 Ruckers instrument, released on a German label, with booklet notes written by a German musicologist who derides his fellow countrymen's notion of England as a "Land ohne Musik". Naturally, much of his contempt is based on what he perceives as the excellence of the virginalists, led by Byrd, and of Purcell. There is plenty of music by both these composers on this disc, and the entire contents are played superbly. I have only two reservations about the presentation. First, the list of items on the back of the sleeve is not identical with the order in which they appear on the recording, for which one has to refer to the booklet. Nevertheless it is still an inviting menu. Secondly, although the booklet notes are good as far as they go, more information about the individual pieces would have been welcome: for instance, one of the best pieces on the disc in terms of both quality and performance is Giles Farnaby's setting of a Pavan by Robert Johnson. Presumably Johnson's original version was for the lute. It would have been interesting and useful to have been told that this has not survived. It has been conjecturally reconstructed by Nigel North and can be heard being played by him on his

disc *Robert Johnson: The Prince's Alman, and other Dances for the Lute* (Naxos 8.572178, 2010).

Ms Chylek begins with an item from the left field of Byrd's oeuvre, the Prelude in F which survives anonymously but which Oliver Neighbour authoritatively ascribed to Byrd. Only an incipit is included in Alan Brown's complete edition of Byrd's keyboard music (BK 115) and a full text can be found in volume 55 of *Musica Britannica*, in which it is number 3 on page 2. Part of Neighbour's proof that it is by Byrd is its similarity to parts of Byrd's *Pavan and Galliard* also in F, dedicated to Ph[ilippa?]. Tr[egian?]. However, the opportunity to include this fine pairing is overlooked. After an anonymous Galliard from the Mulliner Book, there is more Byrd, with *My Ladye Nevell's Ground* followed by his setting of Dowland's *Lachrymae Pavan*, followed by two short pieces from the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*: an Alman by Robert Johnson, and Giles Farnaby's Paul's Wharf. The focus then shifts to Purcell, with his Suites in G minor and A minor, Z 661 and 663, bookending four short miscellaneous pieces, and being followed by two more. Byrd reappears with his *La Volta* BK 91, which is followed by the longest work on the disc, Tomkins' Ground, and the recording closes with two arrangements with differing provenances: Johnson's Pavan (see above) set by Farnaby; and Dowland's song (and title track) *Time stands still* arranged for the harpsichord by the artiste, Friederike Chylek.

It is a pleasure to emphasize that throughout the recital Ms Chylek's playing is immaculate and her interpretations judicious. She respects the composers' creativity in the longer and potentially repetitive pieces such as the Grounds by Byrd and Tomkins by responding to the subtle structures and varied textures that mark these out as the products of musicians who are great and not merely good. Meanwhile she can make a brief work such as the Corant from Purcell's Suite in A minor just as memorable by illuminating how Purcell incorporates a wonderful melody without destabilizing the piece as a whole. Similarly she relishes Byrd's almost torrential varied repeats in his *Pavana Lachrymae* while treating Farnaby's setting of Johnson's *delightful* and pensive Pavan with the utmost delicacy. Her arrangement of Dowland's song could seem incongruous but one imagines that she wished to illustrate that in the work of the English virginalists, time can indeed stand still, so this is her homage to these incomparable composers.

*Richard Turbet*

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