

16th century

## EDITIONS

### GIOVANNI DE MACQUE: IL PRIMO LIBRO DE MADRIGALI A QUATTRO VOCI

Edited by Giuseppina Lo Coco  
Biblioteca Musicale n. 32. (LIM, 2017)  
x+143pp. €25  
ISBN 9788870969252

**G**iovanni (Jean) de Macque was born circa 1550 in Valenciennes, then part of the Spanish Netherlands, but he was active in Italy throughout his career, in Rome for a decade (from 1574?), during which time he published five books of madrigals (for A. Gardano, Venice) and became the organist at San Luigi dei Francesi, and in Naples from 1585 until his death in 1614. After a century in which the Italian courts imported musicians and polyphony of the Flemish school, polyphony was already thriving in the hands of Italian composers (Palestrina, Gesualdo and others). This is no way hampered de Macque, who attended the family reunions organized and patronized by Gesualdo, where he was in contact with composers, patrons, and *litterati*. He became part of the Prince's entourage at least from 1586, the year in which he dedicated his *Ricercate et Canzoni francese a Quattro voci* to him (of which only the tenor part survives).

His *Primo libro de' madrigali a 4 voci* of 1586 followed his five previous Venetian madrigal publications, between 1576 and 1583, mostly for 6 voices, and preceded another seven to come out between 1587 and 1613. The books were numbered according to the number of voices, and we have no knowledge of a second book of 4-part madrigals, the *Terzo ... a 4 voci* appearing in Naples in 1610. The only known complete copy of the *Primo libro ...* was lost during World War II, found in the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków by D. A. D'Alessandro in 1987 and subsequently returned to the Berlin Deutsche Staatsbibliothek. Many lists of de Macque's works still do not report it.

The LIM has printed these 21 short madrigals (25 to 45 bars each) in a small, easy to hold volume of 150 pages. Most contain three well-spaced systems of the score, with easily readable lyrics, the short melismas alternating with syllabic note-setting and the wonderful counterpoint clear to the eye. Sometimes publishers do not appreciate how important it is to grasp whole phrases in a glance, which we

can do here. Each two-page spread of about 20 x 29cm can also be easily scanned.

Ten of the madrigals (I-VI, XII-XIII, and XV-XVI) are by Petrarch, the rest anonymous. The first six set the six stanzas of Petrarch's 8th Sestina, *Là ver' l'aurora, che sì dolce l'aura* to music, as was also done (in part or in full) by Palestrina, de Lasso, Pietro Vinci, Mateo Flecha el Joven, Striggio, and undoubtedly others before and after de Macque. Each stanza has six lines, without rhyme, each ending with one of six words, according to an ever-revolving order whereby abcdef changes to faebdc. These six madrigals are in F major, with numbers 2 and 5 ending on the dominant. De Macque did not set Petrarch's concluding tercet, in which the six words appear in the middle and end of three lines – perhaps there not being enough text for another madrigal. The tercet is more a poetic feat than a climax: it sums up the unified theme of frustration with the impossibility of moving Laura's feelings by love or verse. The 6th madrigal starts with the laughter of the plants and flowers and ends with seven bars in which a skipping dotted rhythm describes the final metaphor: namely that the 'angelic soul', his beloved, does not hear his amorous notes, as we, when singing our verses in tears, may as well be trying to catch [run after] the breeze with a lame ox! *Zoppo* (lame) is sung to long notes, and *l'aura* (the breeze) is Petrarch's frequent homonym for his unobtainable Laura.

The other two pairs of settings of Petrarch are of Sonnets (192 *I' piansi, or canto, ché 'l celeste lume* and 51 *Del mar Tirreno a la sinistra riva*). In each the two quatrains (abba abba) form the first madrigal, and the remaining two tercets (aba bab) are used for the second.

This edition is scrupulous in presenting the texts in modern spelling, adding punctuation and necessary letters in brackets or in italics (the latter for vowels truncated by an apostrophe before a different vowel). Where the elimination of an apostrophe does not affect the pronunciation, the truncated words are spelled out in full, observing the metrics, to make the text comprehensible. Other corrections which Italian academic conventions require (correcting misprints, wrong accents, abbreviations, "j" for "i", and removing the obsolete etymological "h") make this edition not only much easier for Italian and non-Italian speakers to use, but is exemplary for the correct division of syllables in the underlay.

Singers will notice that the present score (SATB in G and F clefs) was originally in parts for Canto (G2), MS (C2), A (C3), Baritone (F3). The vocal ranges are never

extreme, and there is virtually no chromaticism, despite de Macque's close connection to Gesualdo. The occasional original ligatures are indicated by brackets above the separated notes. After 432 years this beautiful music, originally only in part books, has the well-edited score it deserves. Titles of the madrigals are as follows:

- I. Là ver' l'aurora, che sì dolce l'aura (1st part)
- II. Temprar potess'io in sì soavi note (2nd part)
- III. Quante lagrime, lasso, quanti versi (3rd part)
- IV. Uomini e dei soleva vincer per forza (4th part)
- V. A l'ultimo bisogno, o misera alma (5th part)
- VI. Ridon or per le piagge erbette e fiori (6th part)

- VII. Quando sorge l'aurora
- VIII. Nel morir si diparte
- IX. Quel dolce nodo che mi strinse il core
- X. Donna, quando volgete
- XI. Crudel, se m'uccidete

- XII. I' piansi, or canto, ché'l celeste lume (1st part)
- XIII. Sì profondo era e di sì larga vena (2nd part)

XIV. O fammi, Amor, gioire

- XV. Del mar Tirreno a la sinistra riva (1st part)
- XVI. Solo ov'io era tra boschetti e colli (2nd part)

- XVII. Non veggio, ohimè, quei leggiadretti lumi
- XVIII. Al sol le chiome avea
- XIX. Donna, se per amarvi
- XX. O d'Amor opre rare
- XXI. Chi prima il cor mi tolse

Barbara Sachs

FRANCESCO SPINACINO & JOAN AMBROSIO  
DALZA, ANTHOLOGY FROM OTTAVIANO  
PETRUCCI'S TABLATORES FOR LUTE  
ed. Paolo Cherici  
44pp. €15.95  
ISMN: 979-0-2153-2359-9  
SDS 25 (Bologna: Ut Orpheus, 2017)

The first publisher and printer of music was Ottaviano Petrucci (1466-1539), and his first book, *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton*, appeared in 1501. Between 1507 and 1511 Petrucci printed six volumes of lute music with Italian lute tablature: two books

by Francesco Spinacino (both 1507), a third by Giovan Maria Alemanno (1508) which is now lost, a fourth by Joan Ambrosio Dalza, and two collections of lute songs by Franciscus Bossinensis (1509 and 1511). (The word "by" here does not necessarily mean composed by; it could also mean, collected, arranged, intabulated, or any combination of those.)

For the present anthology Paolo Cherici chooses a fair selection of pieces from Dalza's collection: four calatas, two pavana-saltarello-piva suites (one alla venetiana, and the other alla ferrarese), all five tastar de corde, eight ricercars, and four intabulations including two frottole by Bartolomeo Tromboncino. He could have included more calatas and more pavana-saltarello-piva suites, or even reproduced the whole of Dalza's book, but instead he dips into Spinacino's *Libro Primo*, and extracts just seven ricercari. I don't see the point, since it creates an imbalance between the two composers. I think it would have been better to save up Spinacino for a separate volume. Furthermore, to describe the edition as an *Anthology from Ottaviano Petrucci's Tablatores* is slightly misleading, since the editor includes none of the lute songs or the 46 ricercari from the two books of Bossinensis.

The format is similar to other books in the Paolo Cherici Collection. The tablature is clearly laid out on the page, with no page-turns, and there are 36 pages of music. Cherici maintains the original notation – Italian lute tablature. He provides an interesting Preface in Italian and translation into English, which gives information about Petrucci, together with what we know about the lives of Spinacino and Dalza. He compares and contrasts the contents of their books: Spinacino included intabulations of music by Franco-Flemish composers such as Josquin, Brumel, Ockeghem and Ghiselin, whereas Dalza concentrated on dance music, and music by Italian composers, notably Tromboncino. Some of Spinacino's intabulations involved complex divisions, whereas Dalza kept the vocal original fairly intact, give or take leaving out one of the voices. It is an interesting comparison, but largely irrelevant if we have no intabulations by Spinacino in the edition. The English translation of the Preface would have benefitted from better proof reading: publicatiotts (publications), appare (appeared), and calledn (called). Strictly speaking the Salterello on page 12 should be spelt Saltarello. It is a pity Cherici does not reproduce Dalza's introduction, which explains why there are special rhythm signs for the Saltarello and Piva (pp. 8-9), and Piva (p. 14).

As far as the editing of the music is concerned, Cherici

shows where notes have been changed by putting them in square brackets. However, there is no critical commentary, so there is no way of knowing what those changes involve. The exception is a footnote for a note changed on page 7. I checked the first piece (which has no editorial square brackets) against the original and found the following alterations:

- 1) bar 40, 2nd note: 0 on 3 changed to 0 on 2;
- 2) bars 49, 50, 54, 82: right-hand fingering dots added to be consistent with similar passages;
- 3) bars 63, 79, 144: right-hand thumb and index dot swapped round;
- 4) bar 121, 3rd note: 0 on 3 changed to 0 on 4;
- 5) bar 127, 3rd note: 3 on 2 changed to 2 to 2;
- 6) bar 149, 2nd and 3rd notes: 3 on 2 changed to 3 on 3; 1 on 2 changed to 1 on 3.

The structure of this piece has puzzled me for many years, but for chord patterns to show some sort of consistency there appears to be a bar missing, perhaps because of haplogy. My solution is to play bar 109 again between bars 110 and 111. Cherici reproduces the notes of the ending as they were in the original, with a pause sign over what in effect is the last chord, followed by five more notes; he does not include Dalza's "Finis". However, in spite of "Finis", it is just possible that Dalza's five extra notes were meant to lead back to the beginning as a Da Capo, in which case the last note (3 on 2) should be changed to 3 on 1 to match bar 2.

The Calata ala spagnola on page 6 of Cherici's edition was included by Hans Judenkünig in *Ain schone kunstliche vnderweisung* (1523), which helps throw light on editorial decisions:

7) bar 36, 3rd note: Cherici keeps Dalza's 1 on 2 (e' flat), but it is surrounded by 2 on 2 (e' natural). There is a good case for changing it to 2 on 2, especially as that is what Judenkünig has done;

8) bar 71, 1st chord: Dalza and Judenkünig both have 0 on 5, which Cherici (rightly, I think) changes to 3 on 5, but where are the square brackets?

9) bar 84, 1st two events: Dalza and Judenkünig both have 3 on 6 followed by no bass note; Cherici changes this (unnecessarily, I think) to 3 on 5 and 2 on 5, but even though he puts these notes in square brackets, there is no way of telling what was in his source.

Despite my various cavils, this is a useful edition, and

hopefully more lute music published by Petrucci will appear in future editions.

*Stewart McCoy*

DANIELE TORELLI AND GIULIA GABRIELLI:

MADRIGALI IN SEMINARIO

*Musiche vocali profane da una miscellanea storica a Bressanone*

Series "Biblioteca Musicale" no. 28

pp. xlviii+141 (LIM, 2017)

ISBN 9788870968156 €30

This is a selection from five Venetian prints of mid-16th century madrigals (from 1550 to 1572, and for two to five voices) that are bound together with a greater number of miscellaneous part-books of sacred music of the same period, forming a two-volume collection found in the library of the "Seminary" (short for the Studio Teologico Accademico di Bressanone). The compilation probably dates from the end of the 17th century or later, and their shelf marks are: I-BREs, XXI.L.10 and I-BREs, XXI.L.11.

This is the first volume of a project begun in 2008 at the University of Bolzano which aims to publish music from the archives of various churches of Bressanone, which is in the German-speaking province of Bolzano. The project includes polyphonic music, among which this surprising number of secular works has turned up. They were originally donated to the library by bishops and priests, and constitute a very small part of the library's holdings of 11th- to 20th- century manuscripts and prints. That said, this selection of 41 pieces, published in score here, and chosen according to various criteria (e.g. variety, quality, rarity, vocal ranges, versions of the literary material), represents a small part of the secular music found in the two compilations, themselves mainly containing sacred polyphony.

Giulia Gabrielli supplies this background, comparing the Seminary's library with all the other archives in the province. Only hypotheses can be made to explain why wealthy clerics donated so much secular polyphony in the 16th century, when printed, or in the following century.

The books found in the two compilations (and the number of pieces chosen from each) are: *Il Capriccio con la Musica sopra le Stanze del Furioso*, 1561 by Jachet de Berchem (8); *Il Primo Libro de Madrigali a due voci, dove si contengono le Vergine* [Petrarch], 1572 by Giovanni Paien (10); *Le Napollitane, et alcuni Madrigali a quatro voci* [sic], 1550 by Baldassarre Donato (7); *Opera Nona di Musica*

*Intitolata Armonia Celeste*, libro quarto a cinque voci, 1558 by Vincenzo Ruffo (10); and *Il Primo Libro de' Madrigali a tre voci*, by Costanzo Festa (4) and Giacomo Fogliano (2), from the later, corrected, invaluable edition printed by Claudio Merulo in 1568. [N.B. the *Opera Omnia* of Festa, in *Corpus mensurabilis musicae*, 25/7, only presents the 1564 and 1566 prints.]

The selection and editing make a very good impression, so after profiting from this new volume from the LIM singers may soon be going to Bressanone to see these prints, or other copies conserved elsewhere. Daniele Torelli's footnotes also say which of these 16th-century prints are already digitized, and where to find them. The transcription from part-books in unbarred mensural notation to score must have been an immense job, necessary to enable Torelli to assess the works and plan a balanced selection. His critical edition of the music and underlay was perhaps less problematic, judging from the modest number of corrections. He gives short biographies of the composers, histories of the prints, and compares the literary texts found here to other versions.

The LIM has printed the music very well: there are plenty of notes per line, which allows performers to see the counterpoint, the contrasts, and whole lines at once. The underlay fits without being too small to read. It is a little hard to keep a book of 189 large pages open on a music stand, and I see why a translation of the introductory material and texts was not included, as it would have added another 40 pages.

It may still surprise English musicologists (it should not) that Italian scholars present poetic texts in normalized spelling. This does not obscure at all the archaic derivation of the words, and is absolutely required since Italian is pronounced phonetically. To do otherwise would alter the pronunciation and make some words incomprehensible. Most corrections are made, in fact, silently (e.g. where -ti- is pronounced -zi-, or -lg- must be rewritten as -gl-). Others, if significant, are footnoted; and where Venetian spelling and pronunciation omits the doubling of consonants, it is supplied in brackets only in the critical presentation of the poetic texts, not in the music itself.

Given the uniqueness of the source, it will be hard for non-Italian readers to grasp exactly what this "collection" is. This brief summary cannot do justice to the 48-page introduction, but I hope it may explain the rather complicated, allusive and surprising title of the volume. At [www.lim.it/it/edizioni-musicali/5213-madrigali-in-seminario](http://www.lim.it/it/edizioni-musicali/5213-madrigali-in-seminario) one can see the detailed table of contents, with

composers, first lines and poets, if known. They are by Ariosto, Petrarch, Bembo, Sannazaro, Parabosco, Corfino, Poliziano, and Cassola; six of the Donato texts and two of the Festa madrigals are anonymous. Perhaps the last of the short homophonic Donato Napollitane [villanelle] is anonymous because the 'poet' didn't want to divulge his name? A rough translation of *No pulice n'è 'ntrato intro l'orecchia* would be:

*'A flea has gone into my ear,  
which drives me mad night and day.  
I know not what to do.  
Run here, run there; grab this, grab that;  
come to my aid! be my beauty!'*

The vocal ranges of all the parts of these madrigals are quite narrow, so many soprano or canto parts could be sung by contraltos, the latter doing some tenor parts, and tenors doing some baritone parts. The basses are indeed basses, but often only because of a couple low notes at cadences that could be taken an octave higher. Thus all the music in this selection could be performed by various interchangeable voices and without transposition. There is a lot to choose from.

*Barbara Sachs*

## RECORDINGS

### CONTRAPUNTAL BYRD

Colin Tilney *harpsichord*

62:33

Music & Arts CD-1288

The steady trickle of new recordings devoted to keyboard music by Byrd continues with this fine selection from the distinguished English musician Colin Tilney who is based in Canada. In this anthology, he investigates Byrd's copious engagement with polyphony in the varied forms in which he composed for keyboard. On the surface, Tilney surveys dances, variations, fantasias and grounds, but he makes subtle choices, in that *Pavana Lachrymae* is both dance and variation, *Quadran* is not only dance but also ground, and in one of its sources *The seventh pavan* is titled *Pavana. Canon. 2. pts in one* indicating another aspect of counterpoint within the structure of a dance.

In a selection such as this, with an expressed context,

there are always going to be pieces which one might wish that the executant had included. That said, Tilney's choices from various forms all numerously represented within Byrd's extensive oeuvre are judicious and in some cases revelatory. For instance, *The maiden's song* is one of Byrd's least recorded works, yet by drawing attention to it in this contrapuntal context, not just as a bunch of diverting variations on a pleasant old tune, Tilney reveals what a magnificent work this is, both in its construction and effect – he rightly and helpfully draws attention in his booklet notes (in which he gives Byrd's date of birth as 1543 rather than the now accepted 1539/40) to its “most heavenly” ending – enabling the listener to hear a perhaps unfamiliar and certainly neglected work in a new and shining light.

Tilney's trick is to balance unhurried tempi with an intense response to each piece, so that there are no gratuitous pyrotechnics, yet the fire in his interpretations is intense. This is particularly true in another relatively neglected work, the intimidating *Quadran* pavan and galliard with its jagged dissonances and rhythms which are all of a piece with Byrd's contrapuntal vision, not one which doggedly pursues counterpoint for its own sake, but in which these harmonic and rhythmic implications are developed to produce a musical narrative or travelogue to enthral and enlighten both the player and the listener.

The two fantasias could not be better chosen to illustrate Byrd's contrapuntal genius and Tilney's enlightening response to it. The Fantasia in d is a work of the composer's maturity, confident in its structure and in the distribution of melodies, rhythms and other devices among the dazzlingly moving parts of the whole. It is slightly surprising that in his booklet Tilney does not mention the possible reference to the plainsong *Salve regina* thought by many (but perhaps not CT!) to shape the opening of the Fantasia in d. The Fantasia in a is an early work, Byrd's (and arguably Europe's) first keyboard masterpiece, and here as in some of his other fantasias for keyboards and for viols, the raging torrent of ideas and polyphonic techniques has no right at all to come together so compellingly in such a convincing whole. Tilney eschews the repeat at bars 58-61 which is also ignored by Francis Tregian in the Fitzwilliam virginal book, but is given, presumably with some authority as a pupil of Byrd, by Tomkins in the work's other source. He also makes what feels like the longest pause on disc (there have been many recordings of this challenging *tour de force*) at the change of tempo in bar 129, but this seems consistent with Tilney's vision of Byrd's vision. Which leads to the conclusion that in their respective ways, Colin Tilney and

William Byrd are both visionaries.

*Richard Turbet*

## ONE BYRDE IN HANDE

Richard Egarr *harpsichord*

62:59

Linn Records CKD518

The versatile musician Richard Egarr contributes to what is something of a succession of distinguished recordings devoted to keyboard music by Byrd. Only *Pavana Lachrymae* and the *Praeludium and Fancie* overlap with the selection on Colin Tilney's choice of Byrd (reviewed above). This is another well-chosen anthology, wandering slightly further off piste than Tilney in including the exquisite pavan and galliard pair in A minor, BK 16. Here, the good news is that, notwithstanding Egarr's assertion in his booklet notes that the attribution is insecure, on the contrary the attribution is as safe as it can be for a piece from this period that does not survive in a source directly connected to the composer: both independent sources give Byrd as the composer, and Egarr seems simply to have misinterpreted a passage in an article by David Schulenberg (“The keyboard works of William Byrd, *Musica disciplina* 47 (1993): 99-121, esp. p. 103); or, he has relied upon the first edition of Alan Brown's *William Byrd: keyboard music* (1969) which was published before Robert Pacey's discovery of the second independent corroborative source (1985) duly noted by Brown in subsequent editions (1985 revised reprint of 2nd ed.; 3rd ed., 1999). That said, Egarr delivers a fine rendition of this exquisite piece, highlighting the poignant opening strain of the pavan and the songlike opening strain of the galliard, epitomizing his performances of most of the rest of the contents of this disc.

Indeed, it is clear from reading his notes that this recording is a labour of love for Richard Egarr. He has already recorded the complete works for harpsichord by Louis Couperin, the French composer most worthy of being named in the same sentence as Byrd. On this occasion he has not sought to emulate Davitt Moroney again, but has focused on a dozen or so works by Byrd that seem to have particular resonances for him.

That said, it is perhaps just as well that he has limited himself to the one disc. Throughout the seven discs of Moroney's boxed set, there are no quirky interpretations, besides an occasional flourish and the error of judgment over the choice of organ for most of the third disc; even

here his interpretations manage usually to transcend the acoustic and other obstacles. Egarr's disc is one of the best of its type, and comfortably takes its place among the stream of such recent distinguished recordings mentioned at the beginning of this review, but it is bookended by two distinctly quirky interpretations, a quirkiness which, if reproduced proportionally over the course of a boxed set containing over a hundred pieces, might well become irksome.

The first pair of pieces is the Prelude and Fantasia in a, BK 12-13. I would put the Fantasia forward as the first indisputable masterpiece of European keyboard music. Byrd's control over his almost riotous creativity is remarkable, with a succession of polyphony, homophony, varied tempi, sometimes almost anarchic rhythm, memorable melody and striking harmony are all rolled into a work that can be melancholy and buoyant with everything in between. How to approach such a work? Some performers rely simply on the note values and time signatures; others roll with them and respond in ways that are at best subtle but that can seem exaggerated. At first I felt that Egarr had overdone his response and entered the realm of exaggeration. Listening again after having heard the rest of the disc, I felt that it is perhaps more an expression of sheer enthusiasm, responding to Byrd's own creativity; if after the first hearing I felt something like exhaustion, after the second I felt something more like stimulation. Egarr certainly sets out his stall here. On a less subjective note, he observes the repeat at bars 58-61 from the presumably authoritative source copied by Byrd's pupil Tomkins; this is not given by Francis Tregian in the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book.

Thereafter matters become more grounded. This is an appalling pun as, after another Prelude, BK 1, Egarr plays two of Byrd's "short" Grounds, BK 9 and 43. These are given performances whose lyricism belies the stark titles. It would be interesting to ponder the point in discographical history at which interpretations of this sort of work ceased suggesting that you might not like this sort of work but it is good for you, and started to proclaim the wonders of works which might have dull titles but were conversely beautiful. The conclusion of BK 9 is quite exquisite in Egarr's hands.

And, speaking of dull titles, they do not come more dull than *Ut re mi fa sol la* and *Ut mi re*. Yet the former is one of Byrd's most radiant pieces, with the latter tagging along not far behind. Original sources make it clear that the second piece should be played immediately after the first, making for a substantial musical edifice. Although Moroney's

performance of *Ut re mi fa sol la* on the organ is one of the triumphs of his boxed set – and indeed of the entire Byrd discography, notwithstanding the unwise choice of instrument and acoustic – Egarr coaxes his harpsichord to come as close as the instrument can to emulating what can be achieved on the organ by a gifted player. Undeterred by the constraints of his cantus firmus, Byrd produces a work as full of vitality as the Fantasia BK 13, and Egarr maintains an irresistible momentum through Byrd's rhythmic and metrical adventures, revealing with clarity his counterpoint even in passages low in the registers such as at bars 48-49 while giving due dramatic emphasis to the sudden change from major to minor at bar 75. Egarr also gives the lie to Oliver Neighbour's dismissal of *Ut mi re* which is admittedly not as fine a piece as its partner, but nonetheless has much to offer.

It is also a pleasure to welcome the Fantasia BK 62, Byrd's longest essay in the genre, which seemingly made some impact in its day as both Peter Philips and Pierre Cornet subsequently used the same initial theme for their own fantasias. Egarr's sympathetic but not indulgent treatment of the *Pavana Lachrymae* reflects Byrd's own evident admiration for Dowland's piece – one has only to listen to the passionate scalar passages in the final strain - and after another Prelude, BK 24, Egarr leads us through the sunny *Fancie: for my ladye nevell* treating the normally triumphal concluding phrase with something like poignancy or nostalgia. Perhaps the rising scale with which the fantasia begins was taken by Byrd from similar passages in his motet *Descendit de coelis* (second book of *Cantiones sacrae* 1591, the year copying of *My Ladye Nevells Booke* was completed) at the word "lux" in bars 66-73.

And so to the final item, *The Bells*, Byrd's incredible edifice built upon a ground of two notes. This is a very personal reading by Egarr – he says in the booklet that it is the piece that turned him on to Byrd - yet ironically it is the one where he veers most away from what Byrd has written. Perhaps Egarr is emulating the sound of some actual modern bellringers whom he has heard, imitating their technique by adding extra notes to Byrd's surviving texts, and not always doing so flatteringly, as in one passage where the parts seem – deliberately, one assumes – to get out of time with one another. It is a passionate and committed performance, one where the performer deserves to be indulged.

*Richard Turbet*

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## A DECORATION OF SILENCE

*The lute music of il Divino Francesco Canova da Milano (1497-1543)*, Vol. 2

72:02

BGS128 (7 60537 09045 4)

Francesco Canova da Milano's ricercars and fantasias are freely composed polyphonic pieces, and consist largely of short sequences of musical ideas, each developed and explored. The present CD comprises 29 of them, which Nigel North arranges into sets according to key. The first set (Ness 6, 61, 67 65, 23) are all in F major. A distinctive feature of Francesco's style is his constantly shifting harmonic vocabulary, heard to good effect in Ricercar 6. B naturals replace B flats to take us sharp side of the spectrum, and E flats replace E naturals to take us flat side. However, these shifts are too temporary to count as modulation to a different key, but rather they are chromatic touches to an enriched palette of chords in F major. An interesting example is Fantasia 61, which effectively ends with a perfect cadence (C – F) in bar 34, rounded off with a plagal cadence (B flat – F) in bar 36. However, to reach the B flat chord Francesco inserts a quick chord of E flat – a secondary subdominant – which exaggerates the move flat side for the plagal cadence. Many of Francesco's pieces are similar in character, indeed some passages occur in more than one piece: the passage in bars 22-4 of Fantasia 61 is the same as bars 52-4 of Fantasia 67. For variety North adopts different speeds: Ricercar 6 is slow and rhapsodic. His rhythmic freedom is effective in clarifying phrasing and drawing attention to special chords, although sometimes it creates an unsettling jerkiness especially in descending scalic passages. Excitement is lost in bar 25, where four quavers are slowed down almost to the speed of crotchets elsewhere in the piece. In contrast, Fantasia 61 has no quavers, and North takes it at a fast and sprightly tempo. He corrects a dittographical error in Fantasia 65 by omitting bars 110-2: Arthur Ness in his collected Milano edition and Martin Shepherd in the Lute Society Milano series, both reproduce these bars, which I accept were wrongly duplicated in the original.

The G minor set (Ness 70, 71, 88, 55) begins with two beautiful miniature ricercars (70, 71) taken from Vincenzo Galilei's *Intavolatura de Lauto* (Rome, 1563), published 20 years after Francesco's death. Ricercar 70 begins with five rolled chords, and grows into imitative polyphony, with the theme heard at three different octaves. North strings his lute as Francesco did, that is with the 4th, 5th and

6th courses strung in octaves. When one of these courses is plucked, both notes will normally be heard, but it is possible to emphasise the lower octave by plucking with one's right-hand thumb, or the upper octave by plucking with one's index finger. In bar 31 of Ricercar 71, a low f# on the 4th course is marked with a dot for the note to be played with the index finger, but North appears to use his thumb, bringing out the lower octave instead. Fortunately this tiny detail does not detract from North's thoughtful and expressive performance. In Ricercar 88 he changes c6 to a5, I think correctly, which coincidentally matches a similar passage in bars 55-7 of Ricercar 6; there are some beautifully placed chords in bar 27, but his *rallentando* at bar 51 loses the excitement of four fast cadential quavers.

The third set (Ness 78, 29, 91, 5) is in F major, and is played on a viola da mano tuned a tone higher than the lute. Both instruments were built by Malcolm Prior, and have a bright, clear tone, ideal for this repertoire. The earliest printed source of Francesco's music is *Intavolatura de Viola o vero Lauto* (1536), which mentions both instruments; it is likely that the music in Italian lute tablature was intended for the lute, and that the music in Neapolitan tablature was intended for the viola da mano, but both instruments have the same tuning, and they could be used interchangeably for any of Francesco's music. North also uses the viola da mano for the last two sets (Ness 52, 21, 63, 20, 18, 19).

Some of Francesco's pieces are quite short, lasting one minute or less. Ricercar 91 has a mere 29 bars, but North spins it out to 1'36" by playing it through twice. For track 14 he plays Ricercar 14, runs straight into Ricercar 74, and then goes back for a repeat of Ricercar 14, the whole thing lasting just 2'16". Fantasia 25, on the other hand, is an extended work, made up of many sections, each developing a particular musical idea; most surprising and effective are three semibreve chords at bars 111-3, which temporarily call a halt to the constant hustle and bustle of quavers and semiquavers scurrying across the fingerboard. Fantasia 83 appears twice in Cambridge University Library Dd.2.11: on folio 16r (used by Ness in his edition), and folio 18r (used by Shepherd for the Lute Society Milano series). North plays the version on 18r, but he does not include c4 in the first bar, a note which Shepherd reinstates for the sake of imitation of the opening theme. The CD ends with a long Fantasia from the Castelfranco MS, which does not have a Ness number, because it was discovered after Ness's edition was published.

This is North's second CD devoted to the music of Francesco. The first was *Dolcissima et Amorosa* (BGS 122).

I hope he will be tempted to produce a third.

Stewart McCoy

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## GIACOMO GORZANIS: SOLO LUTE MUSIC

Michele Carreca *renaissance lute*

52:43

deutsche harmonia mundi 88985374332

**G**iacomo Gorzanis (c. 1525-1574) was a blind lute player from Puglia, who spent much of his life in Trieste. He is best remembered today for having composed twelve settings of the *passamezzo antico* and *passamezzo moderno*, each followed by a *saltarello*, in all 24 possible keys, although none of these is included in the present CD. Apart from Michele Carreca's own tasteful setting for solo lute of "Marta gentile", from Gorzanis' *Il Secondo Libro delle Napolitane a Tre Voci* (Venice, 1571), all the pieces are taken from Gorzanis' four books of solo lute music published between 1561 and 1579. (Facsimiles of the original tablature may be found on line via the ever-useful <http://www.jobringmann.de/facsimile-links>.) According to the CD booklet, 16 of the 25 tracks are world première recordings.

Michele Carreca plays all six fantasias from the *Libro Quarto*. They consist of imitative polyphony mostly in four parts, with various contrasting ideas. In Fantasia Prima there are four bars with a distinctive "dum diddy" rhythm, soon followed by a couple of bars with quavers working their way from the lowest note G up two octaves and a fourth to c". It is not always technically possible to sustain some bass notes while there are treble divisions, for example in bar 29, but Carreca does well to disguise this with fluent, forward-moving playing. Surprisingly he omits four perfectly playable notes in bar 5. Did he accidentally miss them out when copying out the music? A feature of Fantasia Seconda is the frequent use of five- and six-note chords. Carreca spreads them at varying speeds for the sake of expression, resulting in a freer overall rhythmic interpretation. Rhythmic freedom is less desirable, however, in Fantasia Terza, and I feel Carreca could have taken his time to make it more steady. He omits notes at the beginning of bars 15 and 17. The theme of Fantasia Quinta is coincidentally the same as the first eight notes of the well-known hymn, "All creatures of our God and King" (sung to the tune "Lasst uns erfreuen" from the *Geistliche Kirchengesang* of 1623). After all four voices have entered imitatively with the theme, there are passages where the treble and alto are echoed by the tenor and bass, where

running quavers are shared by the treble and tenor, and towards the end, where block chords are each played twice. There is much variety, nothing outrageous, just a mood of cheerful optimism in the key of F major. Carreca plays with a bright, clear tone, pausing for breath at cadential points, and rolling chords which he thinks require special attention.

Some of the dance movements are thematically related, for example, *Pa'se mezo detto l'orsa core per el mondo*, is followed by a lively three-time *Padoana del ditto* and a super-fast *Saltarello del ditto*. I particularly enjoyed *Pass'e mezo della bataglia* which Carreca plays with a good, lively tempo and scintillating semiquavers at cadences. Gorzanis adds excitement to the echoing bugle calls with notes *séparées* followed by a sequence of *um-chings* leading to the final cadence, which Carreca plays with *panache*. (For anyone looking for the music, the three battle pieces are from *Il Terzo Libro*, not *Libro Quarto* as given in the liner notes.) With a few more lively dances including a nicely paced *Saltarello detto il Zorzi*, a couple of fine *ricercars* from *Il Terzo Libro*, and an intabulation of Baldassarre Donato's "Occhi lucenti", this CD gives us an idea why Gorzanis found favour with his patrons in Trieste.

Stewart McCoy

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## GORZANIS: LA BARCA DEL MIO AMORE

*Napolitane, balli e fantasie*

Pino de Vittorio, La Lyra – Bor Zuljan

56:48

Arcana A450

**T**he music of the blind Renaissance composer Giacomo Gorzanis has evidently long been known in his native Italy due to availability in modern editions of his *villanelle* and lute music, but this is the first period-instrument CD devoted exclusively to his work. The lute *Recercars* and *Fantasias* are delicate fare, whereas his songs have a rustic folky quality, enhanced by the rather naïve vocal style of Pino de Vittorio. Gorzanis was active in the north east of Italy, and to my ear his songs share features with the contemporary music of nearby Venice. I found that Pino de Vittorio's rather breathy and couthie vocal production wore a bit thin after a while, and I wondered how a different approach would change the tone of some of the songs, but on the whole this was an entertaining CD of catchy music by a composer I had hitherto never heard of.

D. James Ross

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PALESTRINA: MISSA CONFITEBOR TIBI DOMINE  
Yale Schola Cantorum, David Hill  
70:24

hyperion CDA68210

+Benedicta sit sancta Trinitas,\* Confitebor tibi Domine, Introduxit me rex,\*  
Loquebantur variis linguis,\* Magnificat primi toni & Ricercar del quinto tuono\*  
(\*played by Bruce Dickey cornett, and Liuwe Tamminga organ); Ricercar del sexto tuono  
(organ solo)

I can still remember being stunned by the 1996 Dorian CD (DIS 80146) of polychoral music by Victoria sung by Saint Clement's Choir, Philadelphia – I had no idea that American choirs could and did sound so good. We ignore the American choral scene at our peril, as it is a sophisticated and well-financed sector which produces excellent results. Under the direction of David Hill, Yale Schola Cantorum produce a truly beautiful performance of the ordinary of Palestrina's double-choir *Missa Confitebor tibi Domine*, preceded by the motet he based it on, the eight-part *Magnificat primi toni* and various instrumental goodies. The instrumental works are played by the legendary Bruce Dickey on the cornett and Liuwe Tamminga on the organ, the latter also contributing a solo organ Ricercar. These instrumental tracks were recorded in Bologna, allowing Tamminga access to what sounds like an appropriate period instrument although no details are given, whereas the choral music was recorded in the lavish acoustic of Christ Church, New Haven, Connecticut. Built upon a clearly very dynamic church music tradition at Yale, the Schola Cantorum produce a beautifully refined sound and with David Hill at the helm give an intelligent and thoroughly musical account of Palestrina's music. Add to this admirable package a cogent and very readable note by the authoritative Noel O'Reagan and the result is extremely impressive in every respect.

D. James Ross

H. PRÆTORIUS: MISSA TULERUNT DOMINUM MEUM  
Siglo de Oro, Patrick Allies  
59:27

Delphian DCD34208

+ Music by A. Gabrieli, Handl (Gallus), Hassler, Lassus

Although not related to the more famous Michael Praetorius, Hieronymus Praetorius is part of a musical dynasty based in Hamburg, a city in which he seems to have spent his entire life. This is slightly surprising in that his music exhibits a number of external influences, not least that of Venetian polychoral music, but it a useful reminder that, while some Renaissance

composers accrued influences by working and studying abroad, many others simply studied the latest manuscript or printed music and learned its secrets that way. This certainly seems to be the case with Praetorius' magnificent Holy Week Mass *Tulerunt Dominum meum*, which displays a heady mixture of influences, including that of the Gabrielis. The rich warm tones of Siglo de Oro recorded in chapel of Merton College Oxford are ideal for this opulent repertoire, but it is clear that both choir and conductor, Patrick Allies, carry a torch for this overlooked masterpiece. Praetorius' music receives the ultimate test here by being placed in a context of some of the finest Holy Week music of the period written by composers such as Lassus, Handl, Hassler and Andrea Gabrieli. While all of these composers undoubtedly helped Praetorius mould his musical style, what is perhaps more remarkable is the individuality his music demonstrates. Through this remarkable mass, the motet on which Praetorius based it and a luminescent setting of *O vos omnes*, Siglo de Oro have cast a whole new light on a composer hitherto largely known for a few stock Christmas pieces and little else.

D. James Ross

TALLIS: THE VOTIVE ANTIPHONS  
The Cardinal's Musick, Andrew Carwood  
77:39  
hyperion CDA68250

This piledriver of a disc consists of the six votive antiphons – mighty works, most of which clock in at well over ten minutes – extracted from the Tallis Edition which The Cardinal's Musick, aka TCM, recorded on five discs between 2005 and 2016, as a successor to the thirteen discs of their prizewinning Byrd Edition. Also present is the ubiquitous and incongruously tiny hymn *O nata lux*. This was included presumably as a reassuring lure to buyers well disposed to Tallis but unfamiliar with the longest works on the album, or perhaps simply because there was room for such a short item; in any event, I wish that the less familiar but equally fine *Euge caeli porta* had been given the nod.

The quality of all the performances is very high, though not entirely consistent. On a few occasions the solo voices in the duets or trios that open these antiphons are, if not actually flat, on the underside of the notes. That said, Andrew Carwood's interpretations are consistently and unfailingly perceptive. Also these interpretations respond to the acoustic of the recording venue, Fitzalan Chapel,

Arundel Castle, so that pacing and balance between the parts is ideal, never so brisk as to obscure individual detail yet maintaining a pulse appropriate to the texture and indeed the texts themselves. There are some formidably fine alternative versions of all these pieces; the USP (unique selling point) of this disc is of course that all six votive antiphons are, so to speak, here under the one roof.

The first surviving reference to Tallis is as organist of Dover Priory in 1531, after which he joined the musical staff of Canterbury Cathedral. One of the earliest pieces on this album is *Ave Dei patris filia*. David Allinson, from whose Antico edition it is sung, has established that Tallis owes much to Fayrfax's setting (recorded by TCM on Gaudeamus CD GAU 142) and it required some serious reconstructive surgery by the editor to render it performable. Most alternative versions of these works are by fellow adult chamber choirs, but the most significant comparison for this and the two other earliest works is on *Thomas Tallis: the Canterbury Years* performed by The Choir of Canterbury Cathedral (Metronome MET CD 1014). This outstanding release also includes *Ave rosa sine spinis* and *Salve intemerata*. Here is truly a case where anyone with a penchant for this repertory should definitely possess both recordings. TCM has all the virtues of a specialist and experienced adult chamber choir, as delineated in the previous paragraph. Canterbury take nearly three extra minutes over *Ave Dei patris filia*, exploiting their cathedral's generous acoustic, while showcasing their remarkable trebles and expert lay clerks; the delivery by the latter of the first half of the concluding Amen is one of the most memorable and gripping passages of singing in any recording of this repertory. It has been suggested that the relatively shorter *Ave rosa sine spinis* was composed for the more modest resources at Dover. Yet again Canterbury provide a penetratingly committed and perceptive performance of another slightly rambling master piece (in the old sense of a piece of work presented by a journeyman in order for it to be evaluated as being worthy of a craftsman), as they do the more musically concise but much longer *Salve intemerata* which they hold together through a combination of passionate commitment and sheer beauty in response to Tallis's tighter construction, allied again to a sensitive response to the cavernous acoustic in which they are performing. For their part TCM provide an almost forensic response to Tallis's music, with not an harmonic moment or incident overlooked, but then again, neither do Canterbury miss a trick with their more leisurely though equally purposeful gait. If one were focusing on just

the Canterbury works, with the *Missa Salve intemerata* an added attraction, this luminous recording by Canterbury Cathedral Choir, which seems to exude their pride in having Tallis as one of their predecessors, is an essential consideration.

Another male liturgical choir, that of King's College, Cambridge under David Willcocks, provides the most interesting comparison with TCM's rendering of the more compact *Sancte Deus* for higher voices. Sir David's recordings of Tallis were revelatory in their day and set the benchmark, either to be emulated or reacted against. In any event, as demonstrated by King's recording of this antiphon, they possess the timeless virtues of sensitivity to recording location, to the meaning of the text, and to internal balance in relation to overall sound. Meanwhile TCM's version is as good as it gets when sung by an adult professional chamber choir populated by specialists.

The same can be said about their reading of *Gaude gloriosa dei mater*, a mature work to set beside Tye's psalm setting *Peccavimus cum patribus* or William Mundy's *Vox patris caelestis* "for substance" as Thomas Tomkins might have said. Here the most intriguing comparison is with the recent recording by Alamire (Obsidian CD716) directed by David Skinner, co-founder with Andrew Carwood of TCM. Divergent career exigences necessitated his withdrawal from TCM's Byrd Edition after disc nine of the thirteen, and while Andrew became Master of the Choristers at St Paul's Cathedral, David fetched up at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge in the same role, and founded his own choir, Alamire. The USP of the disc on which his recording of *Gaude gloriosa* appears – *Thomas Tallis, Queen Katherine Parr & Songs of Reformation* – is that the work appears twice: beginning the disc as a votive antiphon, and concluding it as an English contrafactum with words provided by Henry VIII's final queen who seems to have commissioned Tallis to set her words to the music of his antiphon. Alamire's Latin version is 28 seconds shorter than TCM's, and feels it, while the English contrafactum is a further three seconds shorter but – probably appropriately given the politico-religious agenda behind it – feels even more driven. If Alamire's version occasionally glosses over some of the internal details that are more audible in TCM's recording, it is nevertheless still a fine achievement and provides a fascinating insight into an aspect of Tudor history. There is also a recording by a male liturgical choir, that of New College, Oxford, which is perfectly acceptable if one has a preference for such ostensibly more authentic choirs over those consisting of

female and male adults (CRD3429). For all that this is a work of Tallis's maturity, and therefore composed well into what we now call the Renaissance, there is an intriguing suggestion of the mediaeval at the words "quae corpore et anima" sung by a trio of inner parts.

Probably the latest of Tallis's votive antiphons is *Suscipe quaeso* in which all of his compositional expertise – including the manipulation of textures, strong melodies, striking harmonies, rhetorical use of homophony within a mainly polyphonic framework – is encapsulated within a work half the length of the longest of his earliest attempts in this form, and is illustrated in microcosm by his setting of the word "peccavi" towards the end of the first section. Although no recordings by male liturgical choirs are currently available, there are some varied approaches from the adult chamber choirs. Again there is an alternative version by Alamire on their recording of the complete *Cantiones sacrae* published by Tallis and Byrd in 1575 (Obsidian CD706) here sung, perhaps a little too briskly to the occasional detriment of the audibility of inner parts, by single voices where TCM employ two per part. Another fine version, different in character from Alamire in being more sinewy, is provided on *Thomas Tallis's Secret Garden* by Ensemble europeen William Byrd directed by Graham O'Reilly (Passacaille 963) who also include both *Gaude gloriosa* and *Salve intemerata*. The most radical version is by Clare Wilkinson and the Rose Consort of Viols on *Four Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal* (Deux-Elles DXL1129) which, given artistes of this outstanding quality, works well: one soon forgets that one is listening to a single voice (singing the superius part) and six viols rather than seven vocal parts.

It remains to say that TCM's version of the ubiquitous *O nata lux* is the best and most satisfying (that final cadence ... twice ...!) that this reviewer has heard since when, as a schoolboy, he first heard it on the first of those two famous recordings of Tallis, mentioned above, by King's College, Cambridge under David Willcocks. No doubt TCM will be happy to be mentioned in the same sentence as King's in this context, and suffice to say (tongue now removed from cheek) that the compliment is sincere.

Whether one purchases this disc depends on the purchaser's attitude to Tallis, Tudor music, owning duplicates, time, and money. Personally I own multiple versions of all these pieces, many of which I have had the pleasure of playing while researching and writing this review. I would not wish to be without any of those that I have mentioned, and if, in the tradition of *Desert Island*

*Discs*, I had to make do with only one such recording, it would be the wonderfully atmospheric Canterbury disc containing the three earliest antiphons. If you already own recordings of all these pieces, you would still encounter fresh approaches to, and insights into, each one on TCM's disc. If you own some of the works, it is worth purchasing this disc for those that you are missing. And if you have none of these pieces yet on disc (or the equivalent) do not hesitate to purchase it.

*Richard Turbet*

ÆTERNUM

*Music of the Elizabethan Avant Garde from Add. MS 31390*

LeStrange Viols

66:22

Olde Focus FCR912

In 2015 the excellent LeStrange Viols, from New York, placed us all in their debt with a fine debut disc of rewarding music composed by the neglected but estimable William Cranford (FCR905). Now they compound our debt by offering this selection from a manuscript in the British Library which is one of the most important of Elizabethan musical sources.

Why open the disc with the premiere on disc of *In aeternum*? It is a neglected work by the similarly neglected William Mundy, which survives only in this source, one of several with a Latin title but no text (like his *O mater mundi* recorded by Hesperion XX) so it could be an instrumental fantasia or a choral motet. So why the sudden prominence? Probably because LeStrange Viols want listeners to discover that this is a work of surpassing beauty, and they play it accordingly. This is followed by the famous, or perhaps infamous, *In nomine* by the otherwise unknown Picforth. It is his only known work, but even his Christian name has not survived. Each of the five parts plays a single unchanging rhythmic value different from all other parts, yet this literally timeless work hangs together convincingly and mesmerizingly, sounding in many places like a cross between the famous *Lento* of Howard Skempton and the studies for player piano by Conlon Nancarrow. In other recordings the "alto" part, which is in triple time and gives rise to more syncopations than the rest, is not always audible under the more active "treble", but here the LeStranges play every part except the cantus firmus itself pizzicato. This could emerge as a mere gimmick, but it successfully points up what Picforth is up to here, and although it sacrifices some of the sonorousness of his part-writing, it achieves a

scintillating clarity. Other interpretations are available.

Altogether there are 26 pieces on this recording, but before moving on to summarize the rest of the contents, I will mention the third work, partly to emphasize that the disc gets off to such a stunning start. This is John Taverner's *Quemadmodum*, another work with a Latin title but for which no text survives in any source. Like Mundy's *In aeternum* it has been editorially fitted out in more than one edition with a convincing Latin text for vocal performance. If it is indeed by Taverner, it must be a late work judging by its stylistic debt to the Franco-Flemish school, and whether instrumental or vocal, it is one of the composer's finest, and one of the best works of the Tudor period. Previous recordings by viols have all failed to do justice to Taverner's wonderfully expressive part-writing in relation to the sonorities that he creates, but LeStrange's interpretation is on a level with the best of those choral versions recorded by Contrapunctus, Magnificat and the Taverner Choir. The descending phrase that begins its second part "Sitivit anima mea" seems to have been borrowed by Byrd to begin the second part "Eheu mihi" of his eight-part psalm setting *Ad Dominum cum tribularer*.

I want to digress here briefly to discuss the attribution of *Quemadmodum* to Taverner, in the light of the work's proximity on this disc to Mundy's *In aeternum* and their being in the same manuscript. There are many similarities between the two pieces, the most striking being the recurrence in both pieces, especially in *In aeternum*, of the short phrase a b c a (at whichever pitch, the second note sometimes flattened, the third sometimes sharp, though obviously not in the same phrase) which often proceeds again to b, hence a b c a b. Doubts have been expressed over the attribution of *Quemadmodum* to Taverner, not least by Hugh Benham in his book about the composer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, p. 249) who notes that one source (WB MCG) attributes it to Tye. It is in fact anonymous in 31390 itself. This leaves two other sources, in both of which it is attributed to Taverner (Benham, p. 57). Mundy's *In aeternum* survives only in 31390. Other pieces by Mundy and works by Tye also appear in 31390, as well as the original *In nomine*, here correctly attributed to Taverner and with a fifth part added. *Quemadmodum* which as we have seen is anonymous in 31390, is Taverner's most uncharacteristic work, if it is indeed by him. Tye is an even less likely composer, and nobody yet has proposed Mundy, but *Quemadmodum* seems a little too old-fashioned to be by the same composer as *In aeternum*. Perhaps Mundy, younger by three decades, was impressed

by *Quemadmodum* – a cutting edge composition by English standards if by Taverner – and was inspired to incorporate some of its features, particularly melodies and sonorities, into his own work, while still imposing his own more modern stamp upon the latter.

The rest of the disc consists of either mainstream consort works, such as *In nomine* (highlights are the two pieces in seven parts by Parsons, the first of which has an alternative but discredited attribution to Byrd), and textless pieces that are known, or presumed, to have been composed for voices. One of the many charms of this disc is that several of the composers, like Picforth, are quite obscure, yet their music is most enjoyable. Edward Blankes, Clement Woodcock, Nicholas Strogers, Osbert Parsley, Mallorie and Brewster all receive their well-deserved day in the sun with some delightful consort music, and there are also appearances by prominent European composers such as Clemens, Croce, Wilder (albeit he was based in England) and Janequin, besides the less familiar Flemish composer Jacquet de Berchem – not to be confused with the now better-known older French contemporary Jacquet of Mantua. The majority of the Europeans' works represented here are instrumental versions of songs.

It remains to mention three motets by major English composers which survive with their Latin texts but which appear in 31390 in an ostensibly instrumental garb. Sheppard's *Dum transisset a6* is a Respond of surpassing beauty. The repeats are not included, neither is the intervening plainsong, but this still makes for a satisfying musical entity. Byrd is represented by two pieces. His first *In nomine* in five parts (an attribution to Mundy in one source is scored out) might originally have been composed for only four, with a fifth added possibly by the composer himself. The performance here is strikingly rustic compared with the urbanity of Fretwork's version on their complete recording of Byrd's consort music; interestingly Phantasm eschew the work altogether both on their own complete recording, and on their earlier disc which Byrd shares with Richard Mico, perhaps favouring the deleted attribution to Mundy. *O salutaris hostia* is by a country mile Byrd's – and indeed most other Tudor composers' – most discordant piece, as the young musician – perhaps playfully, perhaps satirically, certainly determinedly – bulldozes a three-part canon through the work. More peacefully, Tallis's *O sacrum convivium* is the most familiar of such pieces on the recording, but still disconcerting in this version not just for the ironed-out word-setting, but for some strikingly different accidentals, both present and absent in 31390,

compared with the more familiar vocal version from his *Cantiones sacrae* published jointly with Byrd in 1575.

LeStrange Viols' performances are all that one could desire. This really is a delightful disc from beginning to end – the exuberant *Me li Bavari* by Croce. Tempi are judicious, and balance such that all the parts can be heard clearly in both the prevailing polyphony and in the more occasional homophony. Nearly all the viols played are from the Caldwell Collection of Viols (in Oberlin, OH), instruments of the 16-18th centuries from England, Germany, France and Brabant. This recording is easy to obtain on the internet, and well worth purchasing.

*Richard Turbet*

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#### ITALIAN LUTE VIRTUOSI OF THE RENAISSANCE

Jakob Lindberg

81:11

BIS-2202 SACD

Music by Marco dall'Aquila, Alberto da Mantova & Francesco da Milano

The three Italian virtuosi represented here are Francesco da Milano (1497-1543), Marco dall'Aquila (c.1480-after 1538), and Alberto da Mantova (c.1500-51), who was also known in France as Albert de Rippe. The CD begins with Francesco's well-known Fantasia "La Compagna", played by Jakob Lindberg at quite a fast tempo, with crystal clear notes in the treble supported by the distinctive timbre of gut strings strung in octaves in the bass. The sound of the so-called 'Pistoy' bass strings made by Dan Larson soon fades away, but this is actually an advantage: modern synthetic bass strings can ring on too long, muddying melodic lines. 'La Compagna' is typical Francesco: a polyphonic section develops the opening theme of d", e" flat, d", followed by a fast little scale rising from g'. After 49 bars the pace intensifies with those same musical ideas explored in a variety of ways, culminating in a scale shooting up to the 12th fret. The same opening three-note motif recurs in Fantasias 66 and 33 (the fantasy to which Fantasia 34 is the companion). Lindberg's tone quality is exquisite, but I wonder if the microphone was too sensitive or placed a little too close to him. Particularly in the slower pieces one can hear background squeaks produced by his fingers as they move along the strings, which would not be so noticeable in a live performance. This is evident, for example, in Ricercar 51, which he takes at a slower, more reflective speed (lasting 3'19", compared with Paul O'Dette's 2'41"). Other pieces by Francesco include Fantasias 3, 15, 22, 33, 55 and 66, and

four intabulations of songs by Arcadelt, Festa, Richafort and Sermisy.

Unfortunately some lutenists today ignore Marco dall'Aquila, erroneously seeing him as Francesco's poor relation, yet they overlook some fine compositions, ranging from the short, simply stated Ricercar 30 to the more extended Ricercar 32. In his informative liner notes Lindberg describes Marco dall'Aquila as an innovator, and draws attention to his use of broken chords in Ricercar 30, which is similar to the brisé style of lutenists 100 years later. Marco's Saltarello 'La Traditora' bustles along nicely, with tasteful divisions now in the treble, now in the inner voice, adding momentum and uplift. His intabulation of Josquin's *Plus nulz regrets* is a particularly fine piece of music, with unusual harmonies reminiscent of the 15th century.

The music of Alberto da Mantova is often very difficult to play, and his fantasias are generally quite long. Fantasia 20 is the longest track of the CD, lasting 6'51". It consists of strict polyphony which occasionally produces some surprising dissonance. Lindberg's unhurried performance is masterful, as he gently plays off the different voices against each other with carefully shaped phrases. Alberto's five variations on La Romenesca ground have rather prosaic divisions, and the last is punctuated with predictable little dabs of fast cadential figures. His virtuosity is more evident in his intabulation of Festa's *O passi sparsi*, the first of two settings in volume 3 of the CNRS collected works: crotchet and quaver divisions in the treble and bass, extravagant semiquaver flourishes ending with super-quick demisemiquavers, brief excursions into triple time, and false relations (f natural/f sharp, e flat and e natural) adding spice to the harmony.

*Stewart McCoy*

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