

BOOKS

JOHANN ERNST BACH: THEMATISCH-SYSTEMATISCHES VERZEICHNIS DER MUSIKALISCHEN WERKE
Bach-Repertorium: Werkverzeichnisse zur Musikerfamilie Bach, Band VI
168pp.
Carus-Verlag 24.206/00
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Published in collaboration with the Research Project of the Saxon Academy of Sciences in Leipzig, located at the Bach Archive Leipzig, this latest instalment of the 11-volume series of “thematic-systematic” catalogues of the known works of the members of the Bach family other than Johann Sebastian (1695-1750) breaks the output of Johann Ernst (his nephew, 1722-77) into nine categories: keyboard works, chamber music, symphonies, oratorios and passions, liturgical church music, church cantatas, secular cantatas, songs and motets (which are labelled A–H, with the suffix “-inc” if there is reason to doubt the attribution), and spurious works (Y). There is not a huge amount of music (although he was Kapellmeister and organist at Eisenach, he seems to have been more active as the court lawyer), so – for example – Section C: Symphonies has an introductory page (quoting Gerber’s assertion that Bach wrote “many symphonies”) and a second page with a single entry, detailing its unique source (currently in North America!) The Passionsoratorium entry is based on the modern edition, since the whereabouts of the original has been unknown since 2007. Liturgical church music covers a *Missa brevis* on the melody “Es woll uns Gott genädig sein” (mistakenly catalogued elsewhere as TVWV 9:8), and three settings of the German version of the Magnificat text. As one would expect from such a prestigious lineup of musicologists and publishers, the book is both packed with immense amounts of information that will undoubtedly contribute to a wider understanding of JEB’s output (and facilitate the identification of further works by him!) and a beautiful object in its own right. At around 1cm thick, its modest appearance belie the enormous value of its contents.

Brian Clark

EDITIONS OF MUSIC

ANTONIO SALIERI: REQUIEM WITH TWO RELATED MOTETS
Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era, 108
Edited by Jane Schatkin Hettrick
xxv, 4 + 248pp. \$360
ISBN 978-0-89579-859-6

This is Jane Schatkin Hettrick’s fourth Salieri contribution to the RRMCE series, following a mass in D (vol. 39), one in D minor (vol. 65), and a Plenary Mass in C with Te Deum (vol. 103). Scored for SATB (solo and chorus), two oboes, English horn, two bassoons, trumpets, trombones, timpani, strings and organ, Salieri intended it to be performed at his own funeral (he started writing it in 1804...), along with one of the two motets of the title (*Audite vocem magnum dicentem*, which in the event was not part of the service; the other work in the volume, probably Salieri’s last, is a smaller-scale motet with string accompaniment only, *Spiritus meus attenuabitur*). The inclusion of music for English horn seems to follow a Vienna *Hofkapelle* tradition, since both Bonno and Eybler used it in their Requiem settings. As one would expect with the distillation of years of study of her subject, the editor presents a clear picture of the works’ histories and a very clean edition. Completists will probably disagree with me, but I don’t fully understand why the clarinet part (a contemporary alternative for the English horn) for the Requiem is printed separately, and even less so why it merits a whole page of critical notes to itself – could those seriously not have been integrated into the main commentary? That is such a minor quibble in the context of such a magnificent volume which will hopefully encourage more performances of Salieri’s neglected music. Perhaps the two smaller works could be made available as off-prints so choirs could have a taster?

Brian Clark

RECORDINGS

C. P. E. BACH: THE SOLO KEYBOARD MUSIC,

VOL. 35

“Für Kenner und Liebhaber” Collection 5

Miklós Spányi *tangent piano*

78:32

BIS-2260 CD

Wq59, Wq69, Wq79 (solo version)

☞ The musical genius of the great Bach seems in fact to be inexhaustible. However often one studies his sonatas, rondos, or fantasias [...] and however one compares them with one another, or with the works of other masters, one always finds that each piece is entirely new and original in its invention, while the spirit of Bach is unmistakably present in them all; this composer is literally incomparable. No, not J. S. Bach, but an encomium directed at his eldest son by the *Magazin der Musik* on the occasion in 1786 of the publication of the 5th in the series of his keyboard works issued under the title ‘Für Kenner und Liebhaber’ (a catch-all marketing ploy meaning for both experienced and less experienced players).

The opening quotation is wordy, but worth quoting since it underlines not only the esteem with which C. P. E. Bach was held by the end of his life (he died in 1788), but equally because it remains as valid and succinct a description of the half dozen works included in vol. 5 as one might hope for. It includes pairs of works in the three forms mentioned in the quotation. The two sonatas in the set are very different, the E-minor’s opening Presto exploits the contrasts between upper and lower sonorities, the articulation of the flowing passage work allowed full value by the ever-admirable Miklós Spányi’s refusal to hurry. By comparison the opening Allegro of the Sonata in B flat is a big, virtuoso movement, surging as relentlessly and purposefully as a fast-flowing mountain stream. It is followed by a simpler Largo – again taken at a judiciously moderate tempo – taken from an earlier work composed in 1766 and a final Andantino grazioso that finds Bach making a rare visit into Rococo territory.

The rondos and fantasias are all highly distinctive. The G-major Rondo has a wistful, expressive song-like principal theme, its inherently placid mood interrupted in the central episode by emphatic chords, while that in C minor is more fragmentary, with many pauses and changes of direction and mood reminiscent of the *Empfindsamkeit* of Bach’s Berlin years. The fantasia is the form in which

Bach was perhaps happiest as a keyboard composer, the freedom it offers for the kind of ‘unmeasured’, improvisatory writing ideally suited to the composer’s poetic, proto-Romantic temperament. Both the F-major and C-major are marvellous examples of this, the latter an extended work taking the player (and listener) on a wondrous journey of rich, improvisatory character, all started by the little arpeggiated flourish answered by a ‘cuckoo call’ with which it opens.

In addition to the ‘Für Kenner und Liebhaber’ pieces the CD includes two sets of variations, one based on the German folk song ‘Ich schlief, da träumte mir’, which adds further variations to an earlier work. Neither compares with the other works included, although the *Arioso sostenuto* in A with five variations, Wq 79 has considerable poetic appeal. As already intimated, Spányi’s performances on a copy of a tangent piano of 1799 are of the highest order, being both technically outstanding and displaying the kind of musicality that disarms criticism. My sporadic critical visits to this unostentatious but immensely valuable series have been uniformly rewarding, but rarely more so than on this occasion.

Brian Robins

JOHANN SIMON MAYR: VENETIAN SOLO MOTETS

Andrea Lauren-Brown *soprano*, Markus Schäfer *tenor*, Virgil Mischok *bass*, I Virtuosi Italiani, Franz Hauk

61:35

Naxos 8.573811

When Clifford and I started Early Music Review, we always said we would review HIP CDs and others that featured world premiere recordings; all eight tracks – of repertoire dating from 1791 to c. 1802 – on this CD are just that, and (in some respects, despite myself) I enjoyed the experience of hearing them. Mayr is better known these days as an opera composer and these four Marian antiphon settings (no fewer than three *Salve Reginas!*), three multi-movement motets and a 12-minute dramatic Italian piece confirm his gift for both capturing the mood of words and writing for the voice. The six of the eight works are for soprano (one *Salve Regina* is a duet with bass), while the *Salve Regina* in B flat and the Italian piece (*Qual colpa eterno Dio*) are for tenor. The booklet notes contain a wealth of information about the sources and lament the lack of a comprehensive study of this aspect of Mayr’s output; on the basis of this recording, that would seem a fair assessment. Indeed, perhaps some

HIPsters would like to explore the four oratorios he wrote for the Mendicanti in Venice?

Brian Clark

MOZART: MASONIC WORKS

Cantatas and Funeral Music

John Heuzenroeder *tenor*, Die Kölner Akademie choir & orchestra, Michael Alexander Willens

73:52

K148, 345, 468, 468a, 471, 477, 483, 484, 619 & 623

I fear the temptation to emulate today's headline writers and describe a CD of Mozart's Masonic music as 'chippings off the master's block' is too great to overcome, so I can only apologise. In fact, while all nine works that fall into category were composed with a functional purpose, not all of them are as insignificant as that might imply.

Masonry, at one time frowned upon in Austria, became hugely popular in the 1780s during the reign of the more tolerant Joseph II. Mozart became an initiate at the end of 1784, being followed by Haydn the following February. Anyone interested in Mozart's Masonic activities is directed to H. C. Robbins Landon's detailed survey in 1791: *Mozart's Last Year* (1988); suffice it to say here that he evidently took his membership seriously, composing music for a variety of occasions. The most famous of these is the brief, but powerful, intense work known as the *Maurerische Trauermusik*, K 477 (Masonic Funeral Music), usually heard in an orchestral version with the plangent tones of three bass horn dominating the texture. Here, for the first time so far as I'm aware, it is heard in a conjectural original version (by the musicologist Philippe Autexier) with the Gregorian chant (from the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*) introduced in the central section given to a male chorus. Although not listed in this way in Mozart's own thematic catalogue – nor is the version with three bass horns – his listing contains enough anomalies to at least make the proposition feasible. More importantly for the listener to the present CD, it is highly effective, the desolate text adding to the work's sombre potency.

Two other pieces stand out. One is the celebratory cantata, *Laut verkünde unsre Freude*, K 623, written for the inauguration of a new temple and Mozart's last completed work, music that not surprisingly has a strong relationship with *Die Zauberflöte*, completed two months earlier. Like the earlier cantata, *Dir Seele des Weltalls*, K429, which includes a charming aria welcoming the arrival of

spring, K 623 is scored for tenor, chorus and orchestra, although the latter also includes a duet with a bass soloist (the excellent Mario Borgioni). The remaining pieces are slighter strophic songs for tenor with alternating choral verses or refrains, accompanied by piano or organ. Perhaps the most interesting is *Lied zur Gesellenreise*, K 468, which concerns the journey toward knowledge and may have been composed for the elevation of Mozart's father Leopold to a new level in the Masonic hierarchy in March 1785.

In addition to the Masonic music, the CD also includes the interludes to Gebler's play *Thamos, König in Ägyptien*, the incidental music from which (including choruses) Mozart worked on over a period of time. While not directly connected with Masonry, the plot concerning overcoming the challenges of life is certainly Masonic in spirit. The interludes were among the last pieces Mozart composed (in the late 1770s) for the play, alternating music of lyrical sensitivity with passages of highly dramatic, powerful orchestration that point towards *Idomeneo*.

The performances of all this music are outstanding, the Australian tenor John Heuzenroeder being the possessor of an exceptionally agreeable lyric tenor capable not only of an easy fluidity in cantabile passages, but also of making dramatic points in declamatory recitative. Michael Alexander Willens draws excellent, idiomatic playing from the period instrument Die Kölner Akademie, of which he is music director. All in all, this is an excellent CD that explores some of the lesser known contents of the Mozartian treasure chest.

Brian Robins

MOZART IN LONDON

The Mozartists, Ian Page

144:50 (2 CDs with a thick booklet in a cardboard sleeve)

Signum Classics SUGCD534

Music by Abel, T. Arne, Arnold, J. C. Bach, Bates, Duni, Mozart, Perez, Pescetti & Rush (including 11 premiere recordings)

It is hard to think of a more valuable or ambitious long term musical project than Ian Page and Classical Opera's Mozart 250. At its heart, of course, is the plan to record all the composer's operas over a period of 27 years, yet of arguably even greater importance is the parallel conception of placing Mozart's compositional career within the chronological context of examining his music in relation to that of his contemporaries.

The present issue takes us back to the beginnings with the concert given at Milton Court in 2015 devoted to Mozart's earliest significant period of compositional

activity, the time spent by the Mozart family in London during his childhood in 1764-5. In addition to works by Mozart, it includes not only J. C. Bach, Abel and Arne, but also first recordings by composers of Italian opera working in London in addition to rarely heard English theatre music. It is a measure of the thought and scholarship that Page puts into the project that not only does the selection provide a snapshot of music in London in the mid-1760s, but that the works we hear are not just random choices but music that sheds a more direct light on the music that influenced Mozart and his own tastes. Thus the Abel symphony chosen is his op. 7/6 in E flat, a work justifiably copied by the boy (albeit substituting clarinets for oboes) and indeed until fairly recently known as Mozart's 'Symphony No 3, K 18', while J. C. Bach's heart-easing aria 'Cara la dolce fiamma' (from *Adriano in Siria*) was later embellished by Mozart with his own ornamentation.

Mozart's indebtedness to Bach's London-based son is well known, his assimilation of Bach's bright liveliness and elegant, *galant* Italianate lyricism clearly apparent in the three symphonies included, Nos. 1 in E flat (K 16), 4 in D (K 19) and the relatively recently discovered F-major Symphony (K 19a). But here too is already the love of interplay and imitation between parts that predict the future supreme contrapuntal master of the 1780s. Here as well, especially in the development of allegro movements, is the innate sense of drama that heralds the born man of the theatre, even more potently evident in 'Va, dal furor portata' K 21, set to a text by Metastasio. It is an astonishing achievement made the more so when we realise it was the child's first aria, its dark poignancy stressed by the turn to minor in the second half of the main section. J. C. Bach's dominance of the London Italian opera scene during this period is recognised by the inclusion of four of his *seria* arias, particularly notably the accompanied recitative and aria 'Ah, come/Deh lascia, o ciel pietoso' from *Adriano in Siria*, first given at the King's Theatre on 26 January 1765, which, as Page notes, was the day before Mozart's ninth birthday. We don't know if Mozart was given a birthday treat, but if he attended the premiere or a subsequent performance he will have noted the dramatic effect made by the *accompagnato* and contrast of the eloquent dignity of the succeeding aria. He would surely have equally been delighted by Bach's concertante writing for oboes and horns.

English music is also featured, not only in the shape of two airs from Thomas Arne's hugely successful English adaptation of *Artaxerses* (an opera recorded complete by

Page), the sole surviving attempt at an English adaptation of *dramma per musica*, but also two arias from his unknown oratorio *Judith* (1765). The first is the beguiling 'Sleep, gentle cherub', a fine illustration of the composer's melodic gifts. The lighter genre of English theatre music is represented by music by Arne and Samuel Arnold, along with such forgotten figures as George Rush and William Bates. If this unpretentious music sounds slight to our ears, it is worth recalling that in the 1760s many an Englishman greatly preferred it to the grander utterances of Italian *seria*.

The theatre pieces have very different demands to the challenges of *seria* arias, being written for singing actors able to project them with character rather than virtuosity, requirements well met here by tenor Robert Murray and soprano Rebecca Bottone. The Italian opera extracts (and the Arne) are divided between no fewer than four different sopranos, mezzo Helen Sherman and tenor Ben Johnson, who is excellent in K 21, catching the rhetoric of the aria impressively. In keeping with Page's admirable policy of encouraging young artists, all the women are promising singers who acquit themselves well within the confines of the technique today taught singers who engage with early music, singing passage work with assurance and (mostly) ornamenting tastefully. I was particularly impressed with Martene Grimson in cantabile arias by Pescetti from the *pasticcio Ezio* (Kings Theatre, 1764) and the fine 'Se non ti moro' by the Neapolitan Davide Perez, a composer who remains too little known, from another *pasticcio*, *Solimano* (King's Theatre, 1765). Grimson sings both arias with great sensitivity, shaping the long melisma on the word 'dubitai' (doubted) in the Pescetti quite exquisitely. Otherwise all the singers here lack the ability to control both volume and vocal quality in the upper register, especially where upward leaps are concerned. This is an all-too-depressingly common feature of early music singing, making unstylish ascents into the stratosphere at fermatas and cadences about as unwise as Icarus' flight across the heavens. Nonetheless, as state-of-the-art singing this is about as good as it gets in all but exceptional cases. Page's accompaniments are unerringly supportive, while his accounts of the orchestral pieces are as musical and as idiomatic as one has come to expect from one of today's leading Mozartians, though I did wonder if the enchanting opening movement of K 16 might have been allowed to relax a little more. Given the length of the concert, the odd slips of string ensemble are entirely forgivable.

This is a long review, but given its musical and documentary importance I'm not inclined to apologise. It

simply needs to be added that the set is further enhanced by Ian Page's outstanding commentaries on each work and that the less than outstanding sound is of minimal consequence in the context of so much splendid music making.

Brian Robins

MOZART: PIANO DUETS, VOLUME 2

Julian Perkins & Emma Abbate

70:43

Resonus RES10210

+ Clementi: Sonata in E flat, op 14/3

A review of the first volume of Julian Perkins and Emma Abbate's survey of Mozart piano duets appeared in February 2017.¹ This second volume completes the survey and – as with vol. 1 – throws in an extra work by a contemporary. Also like its predecessor the instruments used come from the collection built up by Richard Burnett at Finchcocks, where the earlier issue was recorded. This time the Mozart sonatas are played on a grand fortepiano built by Michael Rosenberger in Vienna around 1800, the Clementi on an undated instrument built by the Clementi company in London in the 1820s. The Rosenberger is an instrument of rich tonal quality that suits the scale of the great F-major Sonata rather better than the early K19d, for which I found it rather too beefy. The sound, too, is a little more resonant than that on the earlier issue.

Much the most important work here is K497, which dates from 1786, a year of exceptionally rich achievement for Mozart, including of course *Le nozze di Figaro*. From the outset of the beautifully poised Adagio that prefaces the opening Allegro, the work displays total mastery of intricate dialogue between the players, a real sense of contrasted textures between solo and concertante writing and, as one might expect at this period, considerable contrapuntal complexity. There is, too, as one might equally expect of a work dating from the year of *Figaro*, a strong dramatic element, tense in the development of the opening movement, of a more playful *buffo* nature in the finale.

Mozart was already displaying an inherent sense of drama in K19d, composed just over 20 years earlier, almost certainly for him and his sister Nannerl to play, as the famous family portrait of 1780-81 probably illustrates. It is a work of considerable charm and fun that calls for much fleet finger-work of the kind impressively supplied

¹ <http://earlymusicreview.com/mozart-piano-duets-volume-1/> for those who might want to check back.

by Perkins (who I throughout mention first not from any lapse of manners but because he plays *primo*) and Abbate, who as on the earlier CD add often witty ornamentation in repeats. Curiously, they here repeat the second half of the opening Allegro where Mozart did not ask for it, but fail to do so in the outer movements of K497, where he did.

The final Mozart work is an oddity, a hybrid work consisting of two incomplete movements originally published by Andre in 1853 and included in Mozart *Neue Ausgabe* in this form. Later paper dating by Alan Tyson established that the opening Allegro had no connection with the following Andante, which is not only cast in a much simpler style but dates from three years later (1791). Nonetheless this has not prevented Robert Levin from undertaking a completion, which to my ears forms an uncomfortable juxtaposition between the inventive complexity of the opening movement and the Andante.

The Clementi sonata sits uneasily here, particularly since it follows K497 in the running order. It is indeed rather devoid of significant substance, being full of showy passagework that demands considerable dexterity from the performers but not a lot of concentration from the listener. Doubtless it might make a better effect in other company.

As already suggested, the stylish, fluent performances maintain the high level attained in the first disc. I did wonder if more might have been made of Mozart's dynamic contrasts in K497's opening Adagio, but that's a minor point in the context of such thoroughly rewarding and sympathetic playing.

Brian Robins

GAMBA CONCERTOS

The Viola da Gamba in the Spotlight

Thomas Fritzsch *gamba*, Michael Schönheit *pianoforte*, Merseburger Hofmusik

66:42

Coviello Classics COV91710

Concertos and sonatas by Abel, J. C. Bach, Johann Carl Graf zu Hardeck, Milling & Raetzel

This is one of those booklets (Ger/Eng) that has to be read so that the full story of these works' survival and restoration – a matter of luck, determination and musicological skill sensitively deployed – can be enjoyed and appreciated. I can be driven to distraction by mid-18th-century repeated note bass lines but here I rather enjoyed the gentle clucking of the 1805 Broadwood piano used on the continuo line, to say nothing of the melodic charms of the gamba above. It adds a particular frisson to

know that the solo instrument belonged to the aristocrat in whose library some of these pieces are preserved. It also helps that it is extremely well played. The recording does a good job too, keeping the soloist in the foreground while still allowing us to hear the supporting (single) strings when they have something to say. I approached this with a mixture of curiosity and trepidation. I finished it smiling broadly.

David Hansell
