

Early Music REVIEW

Number 145

December 2011

ISSN 1355-3437

Price £2.50

Editors: Clifford Bartlett
Brian Clark (CDs)
Renewals: Elaine Bartlett
Diary & Advertising: Helen Shabetai
Cartoonist: David Hill
CD Reviewers:
Amanda Babington
Andrew Benson-Wilson
Ian Graham-Jones
David Hansell
Victoria Helby
David Hill
Diana Maynard
Stewart McCoy
Brian Robins
Stephen Rose
D. James Ross
David Stancilffe

2	Reviews of Music	CB
7	Reviews of Books	CB, Barbara Sachs
9	The cat's pyjamas	David Hill
15	Ambronay	Brian Robins
17	London Music	Andrew Benson-Wilson
22	Brecon Baroque Festival	AB-W
23	Innsbruck	AB-W
25	L'Arpeggiata	CB
26	Monteverdi <i>Laudate Dominum</i> (2 basses)	
30	CD Reviews	
51	Emma in Byrdland	Richard Tubbet
52	† Montserrat Figueras	CB

Early Music Review is published in
alternate months
The International Diary is published every month
except January

tel +44 (0)1480 452076 fax +44(0)1480 450821
clifford.bartlett@btopenworld.com
elaine.bartlett2@btopenworld.com
Contact for CD reviews brian@hotmail.com

Annual subscription UK: £22.50 Europe: £27.50
Rest of World: £40.00 (air) £27.50 (surface)
(foreign rates £5 cheaper without Diary)
Sterling cheques payable to
The Early Music Company Ltd
Subscribers from abroad:
Payment information on renewal invoices

I generally have Radio 4 playing in the car, but one afternoon recently I rejected that and Radio 3 and had ten minutes of ClassicFM. I caught the last movement of Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony – ludicrously short without the repeats. My mind turned back to the Early Music Centre Festival in 1988, when I booked the OAE under Kuijken to play Mozart's three last symphonies in a single concert. What particularly struck me was the way the balance of the works changed when the finale repeats were taken. Anyone hearing that movement for the first time without the repeats would have been so amazed by the contrapuntal extravagance in the coda that an encore would have been essential. The repeat allows for that, but more importantly, it gives the finale as much (if not more) weight than the usually more formally sophisticated first movement.

In my youth, virtually all repeats were omitted, except in Minuets & Trios, though the reprise of the minuet lacked repeats. Handel's arias were often curtailed – usually by omitting the B section. Bach was respected slightly more: the B sections were retained but the *Da capo* was restricted to the introduction. With the speed at which many arias were performed, one can see the point. Going back several centuries, when 14th and 15th century rondeaux first reached audiences, the repeat structure seemed far too long and the standard pattern was reduced. Again, one can hear why they could seem interminable; but there's no problem in good current performances. Now repeats are expected, though, perhaps there should be the occasional surprise, such as playing a section thrice (as specified Handel's *Firework* Music, though impatient conductors can diminish it to three times through without repeats).

The Mozart was followed by an extraordinary adaptation: *Pur ti miro* with violin and cello solo (and some string orchestra filling-out). One positive reason for such an arrangement would be to have the solo lines sounding at the same pitch without a countertenor stretching his range above his comfort (and articulation) zone. It is still often sung by soprano and tenor, and it was this that the arrangement emulated. It had no point whatsoever: without the words, the music had no meaning – at least, with the players on that recording it didn't.

CB

REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

BOHEMIAN SANCTUS TROPS

Tropi ordinarii missae: Sanctus Editor Hana Vlhová-Wörner (Repertorium Troporum Bohemiae Medii Aevi Pars III) Editio Bärenreiter Praha (H 8017), 2010. 211pp + 12 facs, £32.50

I wrote about vol. II in *EMR* 130 p. 2. Vol. III contains 50 tropes to the *Sanctus*, including *Osanna* and *Domine Deus sabaoth*. Some are virtually independent poems, such as No. 23, *Gaude quam magnificat*, with a dozen four-line stanzas set to the chant of the first two of the three Sanctuses in a way that ignores the shape one would hear from the chant but is quite catchy in triple time. Contrariwise, No. 12 *Deus pastor, iudex iustitie*, which looks from the text as if it might be hymn-like, is set to melismatic chant, the same for each verse. Others are short passages of prose. The tropes date from the 12th to the 16th century, I'm not sure how often troped sanctuses are sung now, but it's good that the variety of late medieval chant is becoming accessible.

FRANÇOISE DE FOIX

Das Chansonnier der Françoise de Foix (um 1520), Dame von Chateaubriant (1495-1537) (MS Harley 5242, London, British Library) herausgegeben von Jean-Marie Poirier. Cornetto (CP1007), 2010, [80pp], €30.00

I've chosen to quote the German title of the cover rather than the French version on the first page. Strangely, there are no page numbers except within individual pieces, which suggests that each piece was prepared as a separate computer file and perhaps circulated independently. There are a pair of pages of introduction in English, repeated in German, which are informative, though there are no commentaries on individual chansons: the sort of volume that covers everything tends to cost a three-figure sum, so there is some merit in simplicity. It would have been good, though, to have had one page of facsimile to get some idea of what lies behind the modern notation. At least we can see from the colour picture on the cover what Françoise looked like. Françoise de Foix was from a family with royal links. In the early 1520s, she was Francis I's official mistress. There are 31 songs, in three parts apart from one in two. Missing items can be reconstructed from concordances. Only one item has an ascription, to Fevin, with six others identified as being by him; there are also songs by Pierre de la Rue and Agricola. Styles are both courtly and rustic. This sort of chanson was soon to be outdated by the four-part chanson of Sermisy etc – coinciding almost exactly with Françoise's period as mistress.

TURIN TABLATURES

Composizioni inedite dall'intavolatura d'organo tedesca di Torino A cura de Candida Felici Forni (IV N. 104), 2011. xxxvii + 153pp, €46.00

The 16 volumes of German organ tablature in the Giordano and Foà collections in Turin took rather longer than the Vivaldi MSS to reach the musical world, the prime publication being a Oscar Mischiati's 150-page article in *L'Organo* in 1963. Forni published a facsimile of the first volume in 1970. The MSS were copied professionally in the latter half of the 1630s, perhaps in Augsburg or Nuremberg. The repertoire is primarily German and Italian, the latter transferred into German tablature notation.¹ The appearance of 2000 pieces has provided a major new source, though in the case of the Italian music, much is transcribed from the Italian tablature (staff-notation to the non-specialist) of the printed sources, to the Turin MSS's German tablature.

This publication contains the pieces in vols. 1, 2 & 6-9 that have not appeared in modern editions.² There are 35 of them, arranged in order of Praeambula, Toccatas and Ricercars intermingled with a couple of fugues. There is an Introitus by Valentin Dretzell, four Toccatas by Johann Staden, four ricercars (one with a Fantasia) by Carl van der Hoeven, and four Ricercars by Johann Staden. The thorough introduction (in Italian and English) has information on the MS, the notation, the copyist, the contents, the composers and editorial criteria. The transcriptions are a delight to read, though need a page-turner or a good memory for performance.

It was initially a disappointment that this excellent edition contains music only by the also-rans. But it is still worth playing: not all the cherries have been picked by editions of attributed pieces by the major composers.

THE LUTE -MUSIC FACSIMILE

The Matthew Holmes Manuscripts I: Cambridge University Library MS Dd.2.11 (The Lute Society Facsimiles, 7) The Lute Society, 2010. ISBN 978 0 905655 71 0 £75.00 (£50 to members). Details at www.lutesoc.co.uk (The web site gives the weight as 2.100 kg, pushing it just over the 2kg level to 4kg, costing £8.95 UK post.)

1. Dutch, English and French musicians are mentioned at the beginning of p. xvi and elsewhere, but the English composers mentioned, Philips and Bull, were expats.

2. But footnotes 21 & 23 refer to a publication of five items – unless Reichling's *Fränkische Orgelmeister des 17.Jahrhunderts* (Merseburger, 1967) is a facsimile rather than an edition.

This is the most comprehensive of the English lute MSS, from the period for a score of years after the Armada. There are two volumes inside a slip case. The facsimile contains 200 pages, original size 37.5 x 26.5 cm, reproduced in colour – not that there is any fancy notation, but to enhance the clarity of the music. The facsimile volume is prefaced by list of the 324 pieces it contains (56 for Bandora), with composer (if known) title, folio and page. Most of the music is for six-course lute. There is a separate volume of 70 pages in the same format containing the introduction, inventory, commentary and bibliography. The MS has suffered some deterioration from use since scholars first became interested in it, and some microfilms show passages that are now unclear.

The publication is a communal activity. The main author is John H. Robinson, who contributed the introduction, inventory and bibliography; Stewart McCoy was responsible for the 35-page commentary, with concordances and notes on illegible features for each piece (A separate Tablature Supplement comprises 8 pages of modern tablature for passages now illegible in the MS.) The Introduction tells the story of the MS and its companions (lute solos and Morley-style consorts) largely through quotations from previous writers, an approach that works well. It was the late Ian Harwood who announced in 1963 that the scribe of this and the other associated MSS was Matthew Holmes. He probably began the MS around 1588, when he became Precentor of Christ Church, Oxford; he moved to Westminster Abbey in 1597 and the MS seems to have been completed by 1600. The idea that circulated earlier that this and the other MSS in the group were produced locally in Cambridge was unfounded: they reached what is now the University Library in 1753.

The idea that facsimiles of original sources are documents for players, not just scholars, and should be priced accordingly was largely created by lutenists, who could read the original notation but not versions transcribed for the mostly tablature-illiterate musicologists. The Society price compares favourably with the much slimmer Scolar Press lute-book facsimiles of the 1970s. With Christmas fast upon us, this is an obvious present for any lutenist who hasn't already succumbed (though the recipient might not be very sociable for the holiday period). It contains much of the best lute music of its period in mostly accurate copies. The only thing I can criticise is the absence of any indication of front or back on the facsimile: perhaps it should have "front" and "back" printed on it!

GAGLIANO III

Gagliano Madrigals Part 3: Il terzo libro de madrigali a cinque voci (Venice) 1605 Edited by Edmond Strainchamps (Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era, 174) A-R Editions, 2011. xi + 72pp, \$88.00

This begins with 14 five-voice madrigals, averaging about

three-pages each – concise works, expressive and generally presenting the texts audibly. The non-Italianate reader will find the poems set out alongside translations – something that A-R do more thoroughly than other publishers. The ranges vary, but not so much as they seem. The editor has a very full introduction, with discussions of each madrigal. But he doesn't suggest that the overall compass of nos 1-5 & 14 should be transposed down to the level of 6-13. His comments are not very susceptible to rhythm. The obvious example is No 7 (*Vaghi rai*), which is dominated by the alternating of 3/2 and 6/4, though with inbuilt contrasts unlike *Orfeo's Vi ricorda*. So much is written in the notes that is obvious that omitting the specific rhythm is odd.³

The book concludes with two madrigals by Luca Bati and one each by Giovanni and his cousin Lorenzo Del Turco. Bati's *Mentre con mill' amori*, another chiavette piece, rounds off the volume with a ten-part, double choir ceremonial piece which, unlike anything else in the book, shouts out for instruments with the voices.

GHIRLANDA SACRA 1625

Leonardo Simonetti (1570-1631) *Ghirlanda Sacra: Gesamtausgabe in vier Bänden für 1 Singstimme & B. c. Band I mit 16 Motetten von Berti, Caprioli, Castello, Finetti, Grandi, Monteverdi, Priuli und Rovetta (Venedig 1625)* herausgegeben von Jolando Scarpa Edition Walhall (EW 692) 2011, 52pp, €24.80

This anthology of solo motets is the source of a considerable number of pieces that have become well known as editorial antiphon substitutes in Vesper recordings and concerts as well as in recital programmes. Several have been published separately – some, indeed, by myself. It is good that a complete edition is in progress: this is the first of four volumes. Editorial style follows that of other editions in the *Voce Divina* series by the same editor. I wonder why, with a facsimile edition being accessible in hard copy and online, the edition makes it more difficult to read than necessary. For instance, with a series of repeated semiquavers or demisemiquavers, it is easier to read if they are split into metrical groups by making the top beam continuous (as in the closing bars of the Monteverdi duet in this issue). Whether to use two- or four-minim bars doesn't make much difference. This edition prefers long bars, with small dashes splitting them into short ones, whereas I find it less confusing to use short bars when the original barring is irregular. But it is not a serious issue. I doubt whether the composer or printer was concerned about barlines, but the notation can give singers subconscious help by spacing three triple semibreves in the space of roughly a single semibreve: The tripla spacing here is inconsistent, and the preservation of black notation is quaint rather than musically significant. A characteristic of this and most early prints is that the

3. Am I the only person who objects to the retaining *verse* as anglicised Italian for what in normal English is called *line*?

notes are printed quite close together. The modern use of proportional spacing can be helpful to the reader, but the spacing of the new edition seems very erratic. The underlaid texts are unedited, with random capitals and no punctuation, which isn't very helpful in a world where Latin is no longer the language of the Roman church or the educated singer. The texts are printed separately in edited form at the end of the volume, with German translation, but light punctuation in the underlay would be more useful. It would help those who are singing the motets in a musical, not a liturgical context, if the gaps left for an appropriate saint were filled by one whose name fits the rhythm of the music.

Of the 16 motets in this volume, six are for tenor, 8 are for soprano, one is for alto and one is in tenor clef (no – the edition isn't pedantic enough to preserve the original C clef) but headed "Alla Quarta Bassa", with quite a high tessitura, but which would take the continuo part lower than the usual. There may be slight differences in tessitura, but there seems no reason why tenors shouldn't sing soprano motets and vice versa – but it would have been useful if the compasses had been given at the beginning of each piece.

One feature not mentioned in the introduction is the format. The original publication was a pocket book (allowing for pockets being of a different shape from now) with only four staves per page, though the width is that of a normal music book. The singer could carry it around with him, and one can imagine the star soloist producing appropriate antiphon substitutes out of his pocket, independent of the choir's library. Unusually, the voice part was issued separately from the score (most monody collections were only published as scores), so the singer had his own voice part and could lend the score to the organist.⁴ The two printings of the voice part are not always identical – a feature not unusual in church collections where the continuo part differs from that in the vocal part-book, Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers* being a well-known example. The editor draws attention to this, and comments: "Thanks to this editorial peculiarity, modern musicians sensitive to the need to respect performance practice are in a position to see and better understand the ornamentation techniques in use at the time and thus enrich those melodic lines which would otherwise appear 'bare' and perhaps disconcerting in their uniformity." But nowhere, in vol. I at least, is there any indication of such differences in the edition.⁵ As far as I can see, the second copy inserted into the volume is identical except that the voice part is in smaller print, which seems pointless since the

4. Despite the editor's list of possible instruments, the organ would have been the normal church choice, with theorbo as an alternative for domestic use – those who still (like the editor) think of "the baroque" as a uniform period shouldn't add a cello or other melodic bass instrument.

5. The published facsimile, Garland's *Solo Motets from the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 3, only reproduces the score, but with an introduction listing differences in the part, but both score and part are now available online: google *Petrucci Simonetti*.

layout is the same. There is no keyboard realisation, but some light editorial figuring might help the accompanist. My current practice is to distinguish the few original figures by printing them with a circle.

It does seem a pity that the editing goes just a bit too far in the preservation of incidentals of the original and some singers might get put off by it. But there's a marvellous selection of solos here, and I hope singers will explore this and the remaining three volumes when they come.

PURCELL & GREBER

Purcell *Two Songs on a Ground... with an Introduction by Peter Holman* Green Man Press (Pur 17), 2011. 20pp + parts, £7.40

Jakob Greber *Tu parti idolo mio: Cantata for alto, recorder, two violins & continuo* Edited by Michael Hofmeister Green Man Press (Gre 2) 2011. 19pp + parts, £8.40

Two welcome publications, one obscure, the other at least partly familiar. There is perhaps a slight ambiguity in the title, in that the grounds are not identical. "O Solitude" is one of Purcell's outstanding songs, to a text translated from the French by Katherine Philips. I assume that if anything was known about the reason for the use of only an eighth of the poem, the informative introduction would have mentioned it. It feels a bit long as a poem, and certainly would have outstayed its welcome as a ground! Strangely, the editor is not named: presumably the Green Man himself. Both songs are in the same key (or rather keys, since they exist in C and A minor: the edition gives both versions.) "What a sad Fate is mine" is given less attention, and we are not told that the text is anonymous: one can see why it wasn't thought worth printing separately as verse like "O Solitude". The heading "A Song in Two Parts" is a mistake in the first edition of *Orpheus Britannicus* and was later corrected to "A single SONG". It's certainly worth singing, but if you perform both grounds in the same concert, "What a sad Fate" should come earlier in the programme. Both poems are written from the male perspective, and "What a sad Fate" is (in the C minor version) more likely to be for a Crump-tenor, with its frequent top Gs and A flats and a range of barely an octave. "O Solitude" has a wide range from middle C to top G, which is used with great care by the composer, the Gs not occurring till halfway through the song, and only sustained five bars before the end. As usual, the main edition with realised accompaniment is accompanied by a score with only voice and bass and separate bass part. I'm not convinced by the keyboard part at bar 3, where the bass has A flat G F minims and the voice enters on the second beat with a C against a 6/4 chord.⁶ Not many songs of the period have the singer

6. Peter Holman notes in a series of review of Purcell recordings in the current Early Music that Paul Agnew sings it accompanied only by a viol. I don't think that the editor's 6/4 chord works. The preliminary stave shows a two-flat signature; I don't have the sources from the 1680s

beginning with a descending seventh with the first note starting on what could be a discord.

Jakob Greber was born around 1683, probably studied in Italy, was in London from 1703-07, then worked for Duke and later Elector Karl Philipp in Austria and southern Germany. He died in Mannheim in 1731. This cantata seems to date from around 1717. It's a pleasant piece, though suffers a bit from mostly lacking the emotional content of the text, though there is a snatch of chromatic writing in each of the two recits. The scoring is for alto voice, two violins and continuo, with a lively part for *flauto*, which one assumes to be recorder at this date. The demisemiquaver broken-chord patterns in the first aria, semi-quavers in the second, are a bit mechanical, but it is worth an airing. An annoying editorial feature is the use of an asterisk to refer to the critical commentary. There are two recognised ways of indicating an editorial tie without needing verbal comment, and most of the corrections are too obvious to need attention drawn to them. I haven't seen Gre 1, which is for alto, recorder and continuo

PARTITURBUCH LUDWIG

David Pohle 82. *Sonata à 4 aus dem Partiturbuch Ludwig*
Edition herausgegeben von Simon Steinkühler Walhall (EW 756), 2011. iv + 12pp + parts, €14.80.

Johann Michael Nicolai 83. *Sonata aus dem Partiturbuch Ludwig*
Edition herausgegeben von Simon Steinkühler Walhall (EW 755), 2011. iv + 12pp + parts, €14.80.

Two issues in the series *Kölner Reihe Alter Musik* offer interesting quartets, edited by Simon Steinkühler from the Wolfenbüttel Cod. Guelf. 34-37 Aug 2^o, a mid-17th-century MS of 100 instrumental works copied in 1662 by Jacob Ludwig as a birthday present for his patron Duke August of Brunswick and Lüneburg.⁷ Pohle's sonata is for 2 violins, gamba and violone + bc, Nicolai's is for the same forces except for fagotto rather than violone. Both are lively pieces, in an open style enabling all instruments to shine (and none to hide). The "viola da gamba" part in both works looks to me more comfortable on tenor than bass, rarely going onto the latter's bottom string and going an octave above the top bass-viol string: whether intended or not, it would be worth trying. The MS only resurfaced in the last 20 years, and is providing some fine music. There is, however, a problem of the introductory material. If an English translation is to be offered, it needs to be rather better than what is given, and at times, reading back to the German, even with my limited knowledge of the language I can see that a copy-editor is needed for both languages.

My apologies to Simon for not using his emails earlier this year to re-establish communication.

at hand, but the 1698 *Orpheus Britannicus* I has three flats, as does this edition.

7. Thematic catalogue at www.vdgs.org.uk/files/VdGSJournal/Vol-04; the MS itself is available online

OCCASIONAL ORATORIO

Händel *Occasional Oratorio: Oratorio in Three Parts*
HWV 62 Piano reduction...by Andreas Köhs.
Bärenreiter (BA 4089a), 2011. xi + 295pp, £36.50.

It's not just the strange title that has limited performances. There hasn't been a vocal score since one published by Robert Cocks in 1856: I wonder if Robert King found a copy for his recording. It was composed in haste in the first few weeks of 1746 (unusually, the autograph isn't dated) when London was still in panic because of the Jacobite invasion even though they had marched back north again after reaching Derby on 4 December 1745. The country didn't relax until after the vicious battle at Culloden. The oratorio makes a pair with *Judas Maccabaeus*, which celebrated the victory: the two works might well be performed as a pair on successive nights (perhaps by a pair of chorale societies collaborating by doing one work each). It probably isn't coincidental that Merlin Channon edited that oratorio too, but for Novello.

Handel's music is often based on ideas from elsewhere (whether by him or other composers), but this is nearer to a pasticcio, and I would have thought that it would be easier to name in smallish print the source at the foot of the first page of each item rather than bury them in prose in the introduction: there's no shortage of space between the bottom stave and the edition number. A more general point: indicating the instrumentation in the same position would be very helpful for singers trying to concoct a recital programme and wanting to know whether money can be saved by choosing arias with particular scoring. The full score is available (BA 4089: £307.50). I haven't checked the Chrysander score, but I can provide copies at £30.00.

CELLO SONATAS

Carlo Graziani *Twelve Sonatas for Violoncello and Basso*
Opp. 1 and 2 Edited by Mara E. Parker (Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era, 83) A-R Editions, 2011. xxii + 106pp, \$128.00.

G. B. Platti *12 Sonaten für Violoncello und Basso Continuo*
herausgegeben von Fabian Boreck Band I & II Edition Walhall (EW 840), 2011. 2 vols, €21.80 & 22.80.

Platti (1697-1763) is the earlier of these two composers. He spent the second half of his life at the Würzburg court. Count Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn was particularly fond of the cello, and some 50 works involving the instrument survive in his library. Platti's four *Ricercate* for violin and cello are published as EW 824 (see *EMR* 143, p. 6). The two sets of six sonatas for cello and continuo are published in separate volumes, each with the same informative introduction. They are dated 1725, quite early for cello/continuo sonatas. Unlike later duos, the lower part does look like the bass of sonatas for violin or flutes, so the options of duo (with harpsichord or cello) or trio

(with both) are plausible; the bass figuring is erratic. To a non-cellist, the solo part doesn't look too tricky. One editorial oddity is to turn the trill sign into +, which doesn't look right.

Little is known about Graziani's life (apart from his origin in Asti in the Piedmont) until he turns up as cellist in 1762 in the orchestra of the tax collector La Pouplinière. He may have been around a bit earlier, since a royal privilege for publication of instrumental music was granted in 1759, but the editor suggests that this was in anticipation of his move to Paris, and his op. 1 was published in 1761 as advance publicity; op. 2 appeared in 1772. Meanwhile, he had moved to London as cellist in the King's Theatre in the autumn of 1763 and met the young Mozart the following spring. He left London, probably as the victim of fraud, and spent most of the rest of his life in Germany, where he died in 1787. RRMCE 49 includes a selection of his MS sonatas, his op. 3 (from the early 1770s) is vol 15 in a brightly-covered Italian wartime series *I classici musicali italiani*, Milan, 1943. I started comparing op. 1 with op. 2, but my thoughts were not entirely consistent with the editor's, and I wonder whether both of us were concentrating too much on distinguishing them. The editor leans to the assumption that the bass figuring was added by the publishers, but the parts look comfortable for keyboard, and the point that the MSS lack figures isn't as strong as it might seem, since Italians were much more used to playing unfigured basses.

Looking at the sample page of facsimile of Graziani's op. 1, I'm puzzled at the need of an edition. The critical commentary picks up a few slips and more inconsistencies, but that's part of the transmission of the music and players should expect that – they managed to cope with it at the time! Op. 2 is available in facsimile in vol. 7 of Garland's *The Eighteenth-Century Continuo Sonata*. Platti is even better serviced by a marvellously clear reproduction of the MS accessible by googling Petrucci Platti.

KOŽELUCH II

Koželuch *Complete Sonatas for Keyboard II: Sonatas 13-24*. Edited by Christopher Hogwood Bärenreiter (BA 9512), 2011. xxxvii + 203pp, £36.50.

I'm sure I played through some of the sonatas in volume I, but my computer can't find a review. So unless I'm imagining it, I'll probably be repeating the substance of a previous review. He strikes me as a straightforward composer, writing music that is direct, not too difficult to play and avoiding superficial virtuosity. The pages seem remarkably clean – this is partly to Bärenreiter's credit, but also to the avoidance of excess performance instructions by the composer. Mozart seems to have rather more slurs, for instance. If these sonatas had been around when I was in my teens and spent hours playing the piano (I might have done better to have spent the time practising, but I

had no expectations of any serious involvement in music then), I'm sure they would have remained accessible on top of the piano. An edition of the 1950s, however, wouldn't have been anywhere near as attractive nor had so excellent an introduction.

GERMAN SINGSPIELE

Johann Friedrich Reichardt *Claudine von Villa Bella* Piano-Vocal Score Piano Reduction by Robert Meikle (Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era, 79P) A-R Editions, 2011. 229pp, \$144.00

Der wohltätige Derwisch (Vienna, 1791) Piano-Vocal Score. Piano Reduction by David J. Buch. (RRMCE 81P) A-R Editions, 2011. 118pp, \$90.00

Claudine.. was written as a Singspiel by Goethe in 17786, but not performed until 1795, in a setting by Reichardt; subsequently two teenagers attempted it, Schubert (in 1815) and Humperdinck (in 1868). *Der wohltätige Derwisch* is another Schikaneder production, with music by a variety of composers. In both cases, A-R has published the full score (each \$295) and these are presumably made available for performance. The full-score prices are the going rate, but normally vocal scores are considerably cheaper (often about 10% of the full score price), and they have at least a page or two of essential introduction and a list of the instrumentation. The opera vocal scores that Macfarren produced for Novello in the later 19th century give the reader quite detailed information of the original scoring on the two stave reduction, though it wouldn't work for most modern works. But adding instrument names at relevant points in Handel wouldn't be too complex. A-R Editions, however, are not geared to the opera market, and I'm not sure how useful a vocal score is for serious academic study. I doubt if sales of either of these will reach enough users to justify a viable price.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Space and time have prevented me reviewing everything in the current pile. I've covered some of the recent batch of Walhall editions. Franz Biersack handed me a box of review copies at the Greenwich exhibition and I haven't got through them all yet – and even haven't reviewed the piece I really wanted, Biber's *Nightwatchman Serenade* (score & parts cost €24.80.) There is also a new batch from the Viola da Gamba Society and, last to arrive, *Musica Britannica* 91 – six liturgical pieces for voices and orchestra by William Croft.

I appealed for a reviewer of James Tyler *A Guide to Playing the Baroque Guitar* (Indiana UP, 2011. x + 160pp, \$34.95 ISBN 978 0 253 22289 3) at Ian Harwood's memorial concert¹ the volunteer was a member of the *EMR* team I could have asked weeks ago: Stewart McCoy. It's odd that a book published in 2011 doesn't acknowledge that the author died on 23 November 2010.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Clifford Bartlett & Barbara Sachs

BRUNO TURNER FESTSCHRIFT

Pure Gold: Golden Age Sacred Music in the Iberian World: A Homage to Bruno Turner Edited by Tess Knighton and Bernadette Nelson Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2011. xxvii + 484 pp, € 88.00 ISBN 978 3 937734 88 0

It anyone deserved a Festschrift, Bruno Turner does. The book ends with a lengthy interview by Luis Gago, which reads convincingly as conversation. It would have gained from a bit more editing, and Bruno might have been more tactful in his comment on the anonymous Requiem discussed in the volume. Of the musical influences in his childhood, we are fortunate that chant won over Wagner – there are enough Wagnerian enthusiasts and experts covering a much smaller amount of music than the whole output of renaissance Iberian composers, let alone the English music that Bruno was involved with before the Spanish bug bit him. The advantage of coming from a musical family evidently made up for the absence of an academic education, and working for the family business gave him an independence that let him follow his own path. The interview wanders in various directions, but Bruno comes over as an example of the advantages of that independence.¹ Our contact has been casual, except for the period when we were both council members of the Plainsong and Medieval Music Society, where he was valuable for his business approach as well as his musical experience. He is one of the most knowledgeable and friendly people I know. This also comes over in the introductory remarks by Tess Knighton and Ivan Moody.

The Festschrift has 17 contributions in three sections: sources and repertoires, music and liturgy, and Motets and musical tributes. Bruno may have preferred a volume that wasn't quite so academic, and his current interest in Spanish hymns (the melodies, not the settings) barely features. But the volume represents the areas in which Iberian scholars are working, and what they have produced is impressive. I was surprised that the three sponsoring organisations are Portuguese.² How can they (or Spaniards, for that matter) afford it? The German publisher has produced a sturdy volume that is likely to be a reference book for many years. CB

¹ I asked Bruno to clarify one point in his interview. David Munrow "was talking about cooperating on some Masses by Ockeghem" (p. 396). He confirmed that David wasn't proposing performances with instruments. This reinforces David's explicit statement to Hugh Keyte and my assumption from his enthusiasm for Josquin that he was moving into the world of vocal renaissance polyphony, and with his personality musicality and PR skills, the early music world might have been different.
² Only two of them mention Portugal in their title, but CESEM is printed in full in the credit for Ivan Moody in *Christian Music*.

LAMBERT, BACILLY, La BARRE. Le CAMUS

Catherine Gordon-Seifert Music and the Language of Love: Seventeenth-Century French Airs Indiana UP, 2011, 390 pp, \$44.95. ISBN 978 0 253 35461 7

I must confess that I'm more familiar with and relate more closely to the French airs from the early part of the 17th century. This book perhaps explains why. The author sets out in enormous detail the conventions within which poems and settings operated. I was reminded of the music of Corelli, whose six opera (or opuses) tend to follow extremely restricted stylistic patterns – one reason why his music is such a good place to start budding continuo realisers. Not that the later 17th-century French airs are individually dull. But they have a restraint that will not satisfy all listeners, following a concept of good-taste that is more limiting than that of most repertoires. There is possibility can expression may feel stronger when straining against the conventions of the style; some of the songs are merely pleasing, some have a greater power. A benefit of writing a study of short songs is the ability to quote examples extensively: you can read about a song then sing it to test the author's arguments, which are, indeed, convincing. A crucial verbal insight from the period is Bacilly's suspicion of being an originator or initiator (pp. 56-7). Ultimately, the good-taste element in French music must be a consequence of not rocking the boat in an autocratic state – perhaps holding a large country like France together needed such constraints. This is an excellent study of a limited repertoire, and there are certainly songs here that are worth discovering, despite the conventions.

CB

CHRISTIAN MUSIC

Tim Dowley Christian Music: a global history Lion, 2011. 264pp, £20.00 ISBN 978 0 7459 5324 3

This could be described as a small coffee-table book – lots of pictures but not too heavy. The range of topics is wide, starting with music in the Old Testament (which has suspiciously little overlap with that described by John Arthur Smith: see review in *EMR* 143 p.10), covering 2000 years of European music, with treatments of the USA, Africa, Latin America, India, the Antipodes, China and the Pacific. At a certain level, this is useful. But the less that is said on any object, the more care needs to be taken, and this needed much more critical examination before it came to press. It is, for instance, grossly disproportionate to devote two pages to Hildegard of Bingen and (placed just before Monteverdi) *Amazing grace*. Why is the page on

Change-ringing and Tuned Handbells mostly taken up by Big Ben, which is relevant to neither? There are no music examples as such, though there are small facsimiles of a fine shape-note hymn *Star in the East* (p. 123 – sadly, too small to sing) – and *Silent Night* (p. 178 – the standard version after the tune was already corrupted and given too wide a compass). Many pages have no numbers: does the designer never use an index?

There are, however, more fundamental problems: for instance, the failure to give any characterisation of the music. The discussion of Charles Ives has enough space to drop a hint at his individual style, but the mention of Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* gives no idea how original it sounds. There isn't a clear enough distinction between church music and Christian concert music and between church music for professionals and music for congregations. Books without pictures may be boring, but they could surely have a bit more relevance. There's a picture of the outside of old St Paul's Cathedral on p. 103. How did music function inside it?

The book has potential, but I suspect that it is primarily a publisher's creation. A pity: with stronger editing, it could have been so much better.

CB

RECERCARE XXII

RECERCARE XXII/1-2 2010 Journal for the study and practice of early music directed by Arnaldo Morelli. LIM Editrice [2010]. 178 pp, €24 (€29 outside of Italy) ISSN 1120-5741 ISBN 978 88 7096 631 2
recercare@libero.it; lim@lim.it – www.lim.it

The current issue, after a personal tribute to W. Osthoff by Lewis Lockwood, is almost entirely in English: only one of the six essays, on Venetian poet and priest Alessandro Gatti, is in Italian. *Recercare* has also resumed adding summaries in both languages, which are now grouped together at the end of the volume. A list of books received is given, but without reviews.

In *The international context of Boniface IX's court and the marginal drawings in the Chantilly Codex* (Bibliothèque du Château, Ms. 564) the art historian Francesca Manzari compares preparatory portraits in a missal (in the Hermitage) intended for Boniface IX, the completion of which was interrupted in 1404 by the pope's death, to similar caricatures of chanters added to the Chantilly Codex of French secular polyphony. The anonymous artist, whether Italian or foreign, was therefore active in Rome then, and the codex itself must have already reached Italy as well. Ten plates, in black and white, are included.

Gioia Filocamo's intriguing speculation (but perhaps too briefly argued to be convincing) in *To the Madonna, Jesus, or God? Choosing a lauda contrafactum text*, is that in ten secular polyphonic settings (from three prints and three

manuscripts of laude with Italian texts from the early 16th century), the poems on the pains of love, on fortune or misfortune, and expressing intense emotions, became respectively prayers to the Madonna, to Jesus, and to God. The psychological "bridge" she perceives is not obvious to me, and her conclusions are illustrated by very few texts, but readers may want to be reminded of the author's mammoth 988-page volume of music and texts from manuscript *Panciatichi 27* of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence (Brepols Publishers, 2010), the result of 14 years of her work. [Reviewed in *EMR* 139, p. 6]

Rodolfo Baroncini describes some phases of Alessandro Gatti's life (no birth and death dates given) and works (especially the *Madrigali* of 1604). Over half of the 85 texts were set to music between 1604 and 1645 by composers including Croce, Merula, Donati, Usper, Schütz, G. Gabrieli, Melli, S. Rossi, Rovetta *et al.* and those in Latin illustrate the trend to create new motet texts in the expressive style of madrigals.

Alexander Dean graduated from and teaches at the Eastman School of Music. His Ph.D. dissertation embraces the subject of his essay here: *Ecco l'alma mia bella: alfabeto and oral traditions in 17th-century Italian song*. The technique of chording on the guitar predates by more than a century the first theoretical treatises acknowledging the existence of triads. Neapolitan, Roman and Venetian songbooks of the early 1600s used letters (*Alfabeto*) to designate guitar chords otherwise notated in tablature, and this provides us with printed evidence of an established tradition (from villanellas to dance-songs to chamber songs) of how this music was played, contemporary with and independent of the development of continuo. He compares Orazio Giacomo's and Giovanni Stefani's prints (1613 and 1623 respectively) of the piece named. The article is very enlightening, though I suspect that some printing errors (Roman numerals) in the examples have made his harmonic analysis look wrong (e.g. F chords in Gm identified as II, III chords as vi) – without disqualifying his conclusions.

The longest study in the volume is on the concise *Missa brevis* of Giovanni Rovetta (?1596-1668) of which the author, Jonathan R. J. Drennan, has produced a new edition and studies of its style and structure; its annual function over five centuries – at S. Marco up to the fall of the Venetian Republic in 1797, and from 2000-2008; and its sources.

Paolo Russo writes about Egidio Romualdo Duni (1708-1775), who composed the lost music for *La semplice curiosa* (1751), a *comédie à vaudeville* or early *opéra comique* based on *La Chercheuse d'esprit* (1741), before he settled in France in 1757. This genre included intermezzi and vaudeville in Italy, and the study of its libretto shows characteristics of French theatre differentiating it from prose theater, later *opéra comique*, and *commedia dell'arte*. Barbara Sachs

The Cat's Pyjamas, or 'Why don't you sing properly?' Part II

David Hill

When I was a countertenor I loved to sing lute songs more than any other music, and gave many recitals that included them. I believe that they are some of the very greatest of English music, and I was passionate about promoting them to a wider audience. This led me to attempt to produce better, clearer performing editions for singers, and more recently, to devise paraphrases of the songs of Dowland as an aid for singers to help clarify the often complex and dense poetry that he set. But I was always disturbed by the fact that performance using my falsetto voice always involved a compromise of downward transposition – one that I simply could not convince myself was historical, and I never felt entirely comfortable with all the other technical 'adjustments' that needed to be made in order to ensure that material was in the correct key to allow it to fit in the centre of my typical but narrow range. Although this scheme relied upon an accommodating lutenist with a 'transposing' lute that allowed the music to sound at a lower pitch, many lute songs and Italian motets still needed to be copied out at different, almost always lower pitches than originally published. Preparation for every recital always began with a meeting specifically to discuss and agree feasible keys for the pieces I chose to sing.

In the previous issue of *EMR*, I suggested that there was no historical evidence that, contrary to popular modern practice, countertenors ever sang lute songs, and that it was a completely modern invention, dating from 1953. Here I shall endeavour to explain why I feel that such a style of performance is very unlikely indeed to have occurred in Tudor and Stuart England.

Who were the customers that Dowland, and the other ambitious lute-song composers of the early 17th century were aiming to sell their song books to? The minor gentry and emerging wealthier middle classes, presumably. You had to be wealthy enough to afford to own a lute, after all – a very expensive piece of kit to maintain in any age, even if provided by your employer. There had never been anything remotely like Dowland's *First Booke of Songs* of 1597 available to the musically-literate English public before, and it sold in numbers that prompted re-printings and later revised re-issues. Such a songbook was not a cheap item to purchase, and if, as seems very likely, the 'countertenor community'¹ consisted entirely of altos employed within chapel or cathedral choirs, purchase of

such a volume would have been beyond their income. So, 'lower-middle class' chapel altos aside, are the males of the more comfortably-off English families likely to have used a falsetto voice to interpret such music in their homes? I think the answer has to be definitely not, for several reasons.

Although it may possibly have been acceptable for a 'gentleman' to supply a falsetto alto line in a madrigal², part-song or even a sacred work in the home, I find it difficult to believe that members of this level of society would regularly indulge in what they might describe as a 'womanly' style of singing, one that might call to mind an association with those foreign castrati that they would have heard about. Such performance might even be misinterpreted as being rather comical³, and any form of exposure to ridicule is definitely not something the posher English classes seek!

However, I believe that there may be an even stronger reason for thinking that amateur, country house solo falsetto singing simply did not take place: The sound of a falsettist would, to a musically literate member of the Tudor or Stuart upper classes, bear that unmistakable association with those alto singers who were employed within the church or chapel – in other words, if they sang like that, it would make them sound as if they were emulating a paid musician – the unspeakable taint of trade! No-one in their social position would wish to be associated directly with the servant classes, and the very sound of churchy falsetto alto would surely supply an immediate link with chapel and cathedral to the hearer if altos only existed in (and by virtue of the existence of) such establishments. Even today, I'm sure few members of the British aristocracy or upper middle classes would consider singing falsetto. It simply does not fit with their perception of their status. Now, as then, they have people they pay to do that sort of thing for them!⁴ If any members of the elite ever did perform this way, we may expect that there

2. Although alto ranges in the published madrigals are seldom 'happy' ranges for today's falsettists!

3. All countertenors can tell you tales of how, even in the best behaved of audiences, there is often someone who, amazingly, has never heard a countertenor before, and struggles to cope. I always tried to include arrangements of a few popular songs at the end of recitals. I wished to sing Lennon and McCartney's lovely melancholy song 'Yesterday', but decided it was best avoided, fearing the inevitable reaction to the second verse: 'Suddenly, I'm not half the man I used to be'

4. Alfred Deller relished his anecdote of being asked by the owner of a stately home to contribute a group of lute songs to a musical evening: 'and bring that banjo-fella with you', his host suggested, referring to Desmond Dupré.

1. If all the nation's altos were only ever to be found in chapels, their numbers can never have been great.

would be some record of it, because it would be a notable event. (See the Campion reference below.)

Amongst the evidence we have to suggest that the 17th century countertenor was a voice that was expected to be used in a strictly choral context is this passage from Charles Butler's *Principles of Musick* of 1636:

The Countertenor or Contra-tenor, is so called, because it answereth to the Tenor, though commonly in higher keys: and therefore is fittest for a man of a sweet shrill voice. Which part though it have little melody by itself; (as consisting much of monotones) yet in Harmony it hath the greatest grace: especially when it is sung with a right voice which is too rare.

Butler considers the countertenor to be a voice best used with other voices, implying that it is unsuitable to be used as a solo voice in its own right ('by itself'). 'Consisting much of monotones' perhaps suggests that he considered the voice to be lacking in colour, and that last phrase is particularly interesting, implying that, then as now, good ones were rare. He does not mention whether or not such a singer was a falsettist, though 'sweet shrill voice' cannot really refer to the often-positited 'high tenors', which must always have been a very rare voice type.

The falsetto countertenor is, by its very nature, a projected voice. The air from the lungs has to make just the edges of the vocal cords vibrate to produce the upper octave – very similar to overblowing on a wind instrument. Most performances of lute songs in the 17th century are unlikely to have been sung by projected voices. Where would they need to project to? The concept of a recital, where a voice needs to fill the Wigmore Hall, for example, let alone a large town hall would be quite alien to most Jacobians. Lute songs are intimate songs for a few friends to share and savour at home, and the fact that we have become used to hearing them sung by projected voices is a product of our modern performing needs – not theirs.

Cesare Crivellati wrote in 1642: "In churches you sing differently from music-rooms; in churches you sing with a loud (i.e. projected) voice, in music rooms with a subdued voice." Ben Johnson's 'Masque of Beautie' featured a song "sung by a loud Tenor" ('So Beautie on the Waters' stood by Alfonso Ferrabosco II), which Robert Spencer noted was set "...in a very spacious manner, to enable the words to be heard in the slow acoustic of the Banqueting House, Whitehall... The direction for a 'loud' voice implies that singing was not normally loud, but that a modification was required by the unusually large acoustic of the hall".⁵

But the countertenor voice in lute song has another, far greater problem, and it is one that the evidence suggests no sensitive early 17th century composer would have

5. Robert Spencer: *Performance Style of the English Lute Ayre c1600*, in NATS (North American Teachers of Singing) Journal, 1985, and several other publications.

accepted. Put simply, it can prove to be very difficult to employ the falsetto voice in an expressive manner. Word-painting and subtle nuance rarely work as effectively for the falsettist as they do for a 'natural' voice. Few countertenors have the ability to colour a word or phrase 'properly' like a Bostridge, a Schwartzkopf or a Fischer-Dieskau, for the falsetto voice is, obviously, a completely artificial voice. We know from descriptions left by the Tudor and Stuart composers themselves that expressive singing was valued over mere belting⁶, and these songs demand expressive delivery – you can't just 'sing the notes' as you do in the choir stalls. It should not be possible to sing 'Can she excuse my wrongs?' without expressing some of the foot-stamping, table-thumping rage of the poet⁷ at the injustice of his being wronged – one simply cannot croon through it as one beautiful long line, because then the angry poem makes no sense, poetically or musically. Yet this is precisely what so many countertenors do – pipe through these great songs with little or no attempt at expressing the meaning of the text – just making their lovely, lovely countertenor sound so that we swoon. Often it is such a wonderful sound-world, of course, but is this really what the Tudor and Stuart composers expected? No – we know that they wanted the music to express, enhance, and elevate the text, to lay bare emotions and ideas, above all, to move the listener – and you can't do that properly in falsetto. As Robert Spencer⁸ memorably expressed it: "I think that many of today's singers of ayres are less expressive with both poem and music than was intended by their composer. Their instrumental, restrained way of singing... has been supported by musicologists such as Roger Fiske who, in reviewing a recording of ayres⁹, wrote: 'His lutenist preserves a cool anonymity, and I think the singer also should avoid too personal an association with the songs' " (My italics)

Bob was not singling out countertenors here, in fact¹⁰, but his criticism of the 'technically superb but emotionally restricted style' is just as relevant today as thirty years ago. Because he is basically such a 'one-trick-pony', the modern countertenor really has to work extra hard to try to 'sell' a song to an audience – to express the text. Those lute songs that countertenors do select to sing are usually chosen

6. Thomas Morley: *A Plaine and Easie Introduction* 1597: "to return to the expressing of the ditty, the matter is now come to that state that though a song be never so wel made & never so aptlie applied to the words, yet shall you hardlie find singers to expresse it as it ought to be, for most of our church men, (so they can cri louder in ye quier than their fellowes) care for no more, whereas by the contrarie, they ought to studie howe to vowell and sing cleane, expressing their wordes with devotion and passion, whereby to draw the hearer as it were in chaines of gold by the eares..." (my italics)

7. Probably the royalty-miffed Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux.

8. Robert Spencer: 'Performance Style...' (see note 5).

9. *Gramophone*, March 1984, p. 1093; Dowland and Campion songs by Ian Partridge and Jacob Lindberg, Hyperion A66095.

10. He was actually referring to the earliest Dowland recordings of The Consort of Musicke and the influential 26-part series of lute songs commissioned and broadcast by the BBC in 1980, and repeated in 1984. I now agree with his conclusions, although I did not at the time.

especially to show off the best aspects of their voice and its bell-like tone, enabling them to 'float' a pure line or focus sound to a pinpoint – a technique derived directly from cathedral and chapel singing, where it is still highly prized. This gives an impression of intelligent, committed singing, and the results can be astonishingly moving and powerful. Alfred Deller's 1960s 're-make' recording of Dowland's 'Flow my Tears' is still one of the most moving and beautiful performances of a lute song ever. But is it *right*? And does it matter?

We must assume, due to the setting of the (usually treble clef, but sometimes C1) vocal line above the tablature,¹¹ that Dowland et al. expected that most songs would be sung by the lutenist, to their own lute accompaniment – a skill that is rarely practised nowadays, when singers outnumber lutenists by thousands to one. The regular lute is 'fixed' at a certain pitch¹², and despite the tendency of most Jacobean amateur musicians, such as Edward Paston, to re-arrange music, mix and match instruments to suit those available and their personal tastes, most songs must have been expected by their composers to be performed somewhere near the written pitch by sopranos or, more usually, down the octave by tenors. It is true that there existed bass lutes, often tuned differently, which could effect a transposition, but these are a comparative rarity, would have been expensive and cannot be thought of as regular instruments. Whatever the function of bass lutes (apart from their consort use, if any), must we really force ourselves to imagine that a Tudor/Stuart lutenist ever said to himself: "I faith – methinks yon lower-tunèd bass lute shall prove most meet for my singing of Dr. Dowland's dittie in sweetly piping falsetto – for by this cunning plan may I yet read ye tab." Surely if such lute transpositions were commonplace someone would have referred to the practice somewhere? Thomas Morley, who also wrote lute songs, is conspicuously silent on the subject in his *Plaine and Easy Introduction*.

That bass lutes were sometimes employed to accompany singing in some country houses is confirmed by two songs in the Turpyn Book, where a lute tuned a fourth lower than the usual model is called for. Both of these, however, (the 2 parts of 'Pandolpho' and 'Seest thou not Nann Today?') feature their Cantus lines written at the sung pitch – there is no downward transposition effected by this 'low' lute. The Turpyn Book also includes a song written in the bass clef – a real rarity, but surprisingly for a 'low' voice range, 'Most Men do Love the Spanish Wine' is set to the 'normal' lute! Parsons' *Pandolpho* also exists as a consort song, which as a genre was usually sung by a boy

11. Usually in treble clef, but often in C1 – the bass part remains in F4, so there is no obvious suggestion of a clef code.

12. I realise that it is capable of many different tunings, and that pitch is relative, but most lutenists would agree that it would be difficult to employ the same lute for solo lute music and self-accompaniment if the same lute needed to be tuned as much as a fourth lower than normal pitch for the songs. We cannot assume that everyone could afford two or more lutes.

accompanied by four viols, and the Turpyn family bass lute with its lugubrious resonance would have been a good substitute. The vocal range of this song is certainly tailor-made for a treble voice. One of the pieces in this book, however, gives us a very specific clue as to which voice type sang one of the songs, at least chez Turpyn: 'O eyes leave off your Weeping' (by Robert Hales), which is also printed in Robert Dowland's 'A Musicall Banquet' of 1610.

The image contains two sets of handwritten musical notation. The top set is for a vocal line in treble clef, with the lyrics 'O eyes leave off your weeping' written above the notes. Below the vocal line is a lute tablature with six horizontal lines representing the strings, with various strokes and dots indicating fingerings and note heads. The bottom set is for a vocal line in bass clef, with the lyrics 'Eyes leave off your weeping' written below the notes. Below the vocal line is a lute tablature with six horizontal lines, with fingerings indicated by small letters (a, b, d, f) above the strings.

At the beginning of the lute tablature to the Turpyn book version is written a small 'rubric' – a tablature letter 'h' (which resembles a 'q' in Ann (?) Turpyn's secretary hand) which corresponds to the 6th fret on the highest string of the lute, intended to supply the singer with his/her first note. In this case, it is definitely her first note (and she's a soprano), because this fret equates to c'' (octave above middle c). However, in the Dowland printed edition of 1610, the rubric for the first note (|d| on the third string) equates to c' (middle c). Dowland junior therefore expected his singer to be a tenor. In fact, upon checking all of the lute tablature rubrics given in *A Musicall Banquet*¹³,

13. Several of the songs in *A Musicall Banquet* (including this one) feature the Cantus part over the lute tablature transposed into a key (usually) a whole tone higher, whereas the lute tablature part is in the 'correct' key. This is to simplify the printing of the Cantus line, avoiding the use of extra sharps and flats in the awkward moveable type system of the day. The printed Dowland lute tab, seen above, is in c minor,

every single symbol giving the singer's note proves to be in the tenor register, suggesting that a 'regular' male voice performance was the norm as far as he was concerned.

There exist no descriptions in any contemporary documents of falsettists singing to the lute. The only example that I have encountered of (and here I must choose my words with extra care) 'a solo voice described as countertenor',¹⁴ in secular music appears to be in a Jacobean masque.

The lutenist David van Ooijen brought this to my attention, saying: 'Here's a reference to a countertenor by one who should know...' and went on to quote Thomas Campion in his description of a Masque from 1613:

From thence the Queen ascends by a few steps into the upper garden, at the end whereof, near the house, this song was sung by an excellent counter-tenor voice, with rare variety of division unto two unusual instruments, all being concealed within the arbour. 'O joys exceeding', etc.¹⁵

No-one can deny that the term countertenor, or even the voice (whether produced falsetto or high tenor) called countertenor, existed at this time, as the term is used to describe choir voices long before this date, but I think that the very fact that this voice range has been singled out for mention in the above description actually suggests that it was probably a rarity in such a musical performance, and thus merited comment. Soprano and tenor voices are seldom noted or commented upon in descriptions of masques, after all (unless they are 'loud'!) Campion also states that it was an 'excellent' countertenor voice, perhaps confirming Butler's assertion that good ones were rarer!

Furthermore, the phrase; 'unto two unusual instruments', does suggest that the song was not necessarily sung to the common or garden lute. Perhaps theorbos or other larger (and rarer) portable instruments were employed, since this appears to be an outdoor event. Theorbos were still the new kids on the block at this time, but the world of the

with the Cantus line printed in d minor (but with rubric for 'c' as the singer's note), whereas the hand-written Turpyn version features both Cantus part and lute tablature written in D minor. Thus the rubric supplying the singer's starting note becomes more important in *A Musicall Banquet* than in many other songbooks. Because the singer is already 'transposing', surely he would not anticipate a secondary transposition by using a 'low' bass lute as well?

14. Whatever that means – we certainly cannot assume countertenor always means falsettist. This problem of nomenclature has raged for a long time, and I don't think even our ancestors were sure what it meant in every case. It probably only ever means 'chapel alto' in the 16th/17th centuries – [i.e. someone who sings a part in an alto clef in an alto partbook. CB]

15. Thomas Campion: *A Relation Of The Late Royall Entertainment Given By The Right Honorable The Lord Knowles At Cawsome-House neere Redding : to our most Gracious Queen, Queen Anne, in her Progresse toward the Rathe, vpon the seuen and eight and twentie dayes of Aprill, 1613.* [Off the two extant songs, *Come away, bring thy golden theft* is in three parts, labelled *Cantus* (G2), *Altus* (C3) and *Bassus* and *Bass Viol* (F4) plus lute; the alto part has a range from the D below middle C to the G above middle C, with a lot of top Gs. *Woo her and win her* is for cantus in G2 clef. CB]

Masque was populated by 'other-worldly' characters, and falsettists with their 'artificial' voices, accompanied by a 'supernatural' mega-lute would certainly fit effortlessly into this world of artifice. Later, Britten had much the same other-worldly 'masquer' concept in mind when he conceived the wonderful role of Oberon for countertenor. Note also that Campion's singer is described merely as: 'a counter tenor', without mentioning his name. If he had belonged to a noble stream of society, as did many of the participants in the masque tradition, he would surely be named. The fact that he is not suggests that he is a 'servant', probably drawn from a chapel context.

The vast majority of John Dowland's songs have vocal ranges which are essentially across the treble clef from top to bottom, D to G, though most of them rarely stretch above E. A few songs (such as no. 8 in Book 3, and nos. 6, 13 and 17, 18 in Book 4), are pitched slightly higher, but these are the exceptions. Notably, most of the apparently 'alto register' songs appear in the most atypical of the four Dowland books: 'A Pilgrim's Solace', (4th Book) of 1612. By this date, we are well into the 'Courtly Masque' period, and Dowland appears to have been involved in composing songs for inclusion in several masques, though unfortunately their original contexts can no longer be identified.

The Song, 'Go Nightly Cares' is actually written in a stave headed 'Altus', and though it is within the range of most altos of either gender, it centres around the higher part of what we now call the alto register. Dowland's usual altus parts (in his four-part song settings), however, are often quite low-lying, whereas this example is clearly a song for a soloist, but with a wider range: middle c to d". Is this evidence for a falsetto masquer similar to Campion's countertenor lurking in the arbour? Sadly, we may never know for certain, though I suspect, from the evidence of the voice range, that it is.

'Go Nightly Cares' has almost the same range as songs nos. 20 and 21, 'Welcome Black Night' and 'Cease These False Sports' (d'-d"). These latter two are also quite obviously Masque songs, in this case, intended for a wedding, and presumably designed for staged (and therefore 'projected', i.e. sung directly to an audience) performance, and each concludes with a chorus. 'Go Nightly Cares' has parts for two viols, and was clearly intended for a similar 'professional' performance, though, again, the context is not known. These are not necessarily 'exceptions that prove the rule', of course. 'Altus' here could easily be sung by a female alto, since at this date, ladies (of the 'gentry') took part in masques. Nevertheless, it does suggest that the only occurrences of any of Dowland's songs in which a melodic solo part is likely to have been sung by an alto (of either gender) are within a Masque, and possibly even an outdoor context, where a projected ('loud') voice would be useful, and these are notated at the sung pitch – not implying any downward transposition.

Richard Taruskin, too, has questioned the modern overuse of the countertenor¹⁶, which, he describes, with glee, as being 'the very emblem of Early Music'. Referring to their singing in madrigals, pre- and counter-reformation Catholic church music and late medieval polyphony, Taruskin correctly states that 'there is no evidence that falsettists participated in any of these repertoires when they were current'. He could also have included Bach's Cantatas¹⁷ and oratorios to his list, as well as several other genres today widely, but mistakenly, considered the countertenors' 'rightful property'.

It seems as if musicians today feel as if there simply ought to be countertenors singing certain things – like the 'Spirit of Mercury' in *Dido and Aeneas*, for example. This casting has become commonplace, but it really is a bit of a squeak for a falsettist. Yet many directors feel that there should be an opportunity to insert a countertenor somewhere in *Dido*, because we have been told that countertenors and Purcell go together like a horse and carriage, and it's only a 'cough and a spit' of a two line part, after all, so why not stick one in there? In any case, it has long been thought that we need to question and re-assess whether the ubiquitous modern falsetto alto really is the same as the Purcellian countertenor – but that is a subject for another piece!

Handelian opera is another matter – here, as is widely felt, countertenors provide possibly the best modern equivalent to the castrati. At best, this compromise is fine – no-one would suggest employing farmyard techniques to resurrect the castrato tradition, though it is interesting to note that Handel, whilst never employing actual cathedral altos as soloists (until he turned to oratorio), used the word 'countertenor' as a term to describe – a *woman*. "Signora Merighi, a Woman of very fine presence, an excellent actress, and a very good singer, a Counter-Tenor"¹⁸. Clearly Handel saw the term as only referring to a vocal range, irrespective of gender!

16. Richard Taruskin: "The Modern Sound of Early Music" in *Text and Act*, page 165.

17. Who first considered that a countertenor was appropriate for arias in Bach Cantatas? Step forward Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Gustav Leonhardt. Friends and supporters of Deller from the 1950s, accompanying him in some of his earliest Vanguard recordings of Bach cantatas and arias, they were sold on the ideas of countertenors, and later went on to select Paul Esswood for the majority of their recordings of the Bach Cantatas. As a direct result, this unlikely English cathedral voice has now become *de rigueur* in Bach recordings, and the practice still continues, despite the fact that, as any countertenor will tell you, the tessitura for much of this repertoire, even at A415, is 'demanding'. Anyone who has heard a teenage unbroken alto such as Panito Iconomou or Andreas Stein in Bach would agree that theirs is a much more pleasant (and likely) sound for this genre. Deller's pure, clean sound was, of course, embraced as an improvement over the wobbly old 'Clara Butt' contralto, still widely employed up until the late 1960s, but Harnoncourt and Leonhardt's decision was, once again, a *modern* choice. This 'selection' persists, and is now become a tradition, in exactly the same way as countertenors in lute song has.

18. Part of a London newspaper report announcing the result of Handel's talent search for new singers in Italy. The announcement can only have been drafted by Handel himself. The complete cutting is pictured in Stanley Sadie's *'Handel'*.

In conclusion, the current state of popularity of the lute song, re-imagined as 'art music' in recordings and modern performance contexts, is clearly a completely modern invention – a product of our own time (and needs?) – and does not reflect how these songs may originally have been performed. We can never recreate the performing conditions of Stuart England, of course, nor would we necessarily wish to (it would probably appear uncomfortably 'Sealed Knot' or 'Blackadder II' if we did attempt it)¹⁹, so we have eagerly embraced a performance practice based upon the closest available model – the Lieder recital, and countertenors, too, adhere to this same model. The early 17th century lute song recital has been re-invented in the 20th century as a branch of the same tree as the Lied, and with all of the baggage of the German tradition. We have been spoon-fed this countertenor performance 'tradition' since 1953, have happily and unquestioningly swallowed it, and continue to order more, both live and on record, because some of us seem to like the taste of it so much. But like those comfort foods that we know we shouldn't have, perhaps we have now had far too much of a sweet thing?

As I outlined in part 1, there can be no doubt that Alfred Deller single-handedly invented the falsetto countertenor lutesong performance. When presenting these songs to a British post-war audience, he naturally adopted the Lieder and song performance tradition of his day, which has gone from strength to strength. But the falsetto voice really doesn't serve the music well. None of this is Deller's fault. He was a wonderful, trail-blazing musician, whose enormous contribution to the 'Early Music Revival' is still underrated and in danger of being forgotten, and I would never wish to denigrate his achievement or memory. Deller really could 'sell' these songs to an audience – but he was a 'one-off', and not every countertenor is a Deller – sadly. Perhaps we should all take a calm step backwards, and re-examine the proliferation of falsetto performances of lute songs. Just listen to some of the more recent ones, if you can bear to – some of them really are absolutely dreadful, like a washed-out watercolour of a familiar scene, and simply do not afford the music the respect it deserves. How would we have reacted if the popular young treble Aled Jones had recorded the complete *Winterreise* when he was at the height of his powers back in the eighties? I'm sure critics would have agreed that it sounded nice, but lacked the gravitas that Fischer-Dieskau, Pears or Hotter brought to it. Just listen to Andreas Scholl performing the entire *A Muscill Banquet*, and you will see that this is not so very different. Scholl tries really hard, and he is an amazing singer, of course, but in attempting to express these texts, as he knows he must, all he can really do is emphasise plosive consonants on words such as 'mourn',

19. For some reason, performing music in period costume, no matter how professional the performers, always has the whiff of the Village Pantomime or theme park about it. Is it only the British who perceive it this way, I wonder? We never comment on choirs wearing cassocks, for example – and they're medieval costumes!

'die' or 'kill'. Scholl is wonderful in the consciously 'artificial' world of Handel castrato arias, but his *Musicall Banquet* is really a parody of proper expressive singing. In the Scholl CD liner notes we learn, establishing the 'early music street-cred.', the exact 16th and 17th century provenance of the originals of all of the instruments used, the names of their modern makers, and even the fact that the harpsichord is tuned in $\frac{1}{4}$ comma meantone – but no mention as to how 'authentic' or appropriate Herr Scholl's voice may be in lute song repertoire!

We need to ask ourselves whether we really imagine that the sometimes anaemic style of modern countertenor performances in any way compares with proper, expressive singing of these wonderful songs, which was the style of singing that we know for certain the Tudor and Stuart composers themselves expected to hear.

I sincerely believe that the myth of countertenors singing lute songs can be likened to those times when your kids dress up the passive family cat in baby clothes or pyjamas for a bit of fun; the children really love to do it, the clothes will probably fit, and may even look quite good on the cat, and it gives us all a warm glow (especially the poor cat) – but we shouldn't pretend that anyone comes out of the experience with their dignity intact, least of all the cat.

Despite my fighting talk, these two articles have not been an attack on countertenors, merely their continuing unquestioned use in repertoire that they are very unlikely to have performed – a situation that the recording industry has undoubtedly encouraged. Ultimately, any responsibility for the 'burden of proof' for the very existence of the falsetto alto countertenor as a solo voice outside of a Tudor/Stuart chapel context must lie with its own proponents²⁰. It is not within the scope of the music-loving public to examine all the evidence to determine the truth one way or another, but I hope that these two deliberately provocative pieces may inspire the proper study that this issue needs for a satisfactory resolution.

Countertenors – I love you all – even the dud ones. This argument was not written in anger, hence the deliberately jokey tone sometimes, but I have waited a long time to set down this 'uncomfortable truth' in print. Believe me, I really do know precisely how much courage it takes to get up in front of an audience and sing falsetto. Musicologists – the gauntlet is down. I think we need a conference... and meanwhile, I am going into hiding.

20. Please don't write in (you know who you are) pointing out the existence of singers like Richard Jose, Hatherley Clarke, Joe O'Rourke, Will Oakland, and all the others who produced 78s of sentimental ballads in the early 20th century, and who are described as 'counter tenor' on their record labels. This is a complete red herring, and has nothing whatsoever to do with this issue. Just because Thomas Morley in the 16th century and the Victor record label company in the 1900s both describe a voice using the same term, it really does not mean that they meant the same thing in their respective centuries.

Giovanni Gabrieli

(1557-1612)

Celebrate the 400th anniversary of his death

The majority of his works are published by Beauchamp Press & King's Music

Complete

1597 *Sacrae Symphoniae*
(*Motets, canzoni e sonate*)
1615 *Canzoni et Sonate* (21 ensemble works)

Selections from

1587 *Concerti di Andrea & Giovanni Gabrieli*
1615 *Symphoniae Sacrae II*
(*Motets etc*)

Individual pieces from other sources.

Audite principes a16
Confitebor a12 & a13
Domine Deus meus a6
Dulcis Jesu a20
Exultet iam angelica turba a14
Hic est filius Dei a18
Hodie Christus a mortuis a12
Jubilate Deo a8
Lieto godea a8
Magnificat a33
Miserere mei Deus
O Jesu mi dulcissime a8 (3 settings)
Surrexit Christus/Ascendit Christus a16
Timor et tremor a6
Udite chiari

The Early Music Company,
The New House, The Fen, Fenstanton, PE28 9JT,
clifford.bartlett@btopenworld.com
+44 (0)1480 452076



FESTIVAL D'AMBONAY 2011

Brian Robins

Glancing back to my first *EMR* notice of the Ambronay Festival (in 2009; *EMR* 13172), I see the opening words were devoted to the ease with which one can fall in love with this festival, so insidiously do the charms of both venue and ambiance penetrate the senses. Two festivals on, the love affair happily shows no sign of waning. Not the least seductive feature of Ambronay is the real warmth and hospitality extended to critics – yes, really, critics – hospitality that this year extended not only to meals with artists and staff, but also the offer of weekend accommodation in the newly and beautifully restored late 17th-century wing of the abbey's buildings, formerly the 'cells' of the monks. We (as usual in these reports, not the royal 'we' but Anne and myself) took advantage of this offer to stay the opening weekend, apparently the first people to stay in the spacious room we occupied since restoration. It was tempting to imagine we might just have been its first occupants since the monk whose home it was in pre-Revolutionary-days, but that's perhaps fanciful.

As usual the festival was spaced over four weekends in September and early October, this year's being given the theme 'Passion Bach'. In all some 20 concerts were given as part of the mainstream festival, supplemented by a large and varied 'fringe', much of which takes place in the surrounding park and which managed to incorporate the featured composer on the first Saturday in the shape of two successive Swingle Singers concerts, the first of which took place concurrently with the main festival concert in the abbey that evening. Readers will perhaps be unsurprised to learn that we opted for the latter, devoted to three of Bach's secular cantatas, BWV 201, 205 and 213, directed by Ambronay's artist in residence Leonardo García Alarcón. With his sweeping, expansive gestures and sense of theatricality, Alarcón brings Latin drama to all he undertakes; not surprisingly he relished the rich scoring and surge of the opening chorus of 'Aeolus Placated' (No. 205), though at the expense of some rather rough brass playing from Les Agrémens. But in general Alarcón falls some way short of the ideal Bach conductor, being over concerned with melodic line at the expense of clear-defined rhythmic articulation. The constant ritardandos at cadence points soon become an annoying mannerism, too. Notwithstanding caveats, there was plenty of fine solo singing – bass Christian Immel was especially impressive as a commanding Aeolus and a sensitive Phoebus – and the Chamber Choir of Namur was on its customary responsive and incisive form. Amusingly, the conductor had apparently missed the point of Bach's satire in opting for the choice of Pan's bucolic 'Zu Tanze, zu Sprunge' as an encore, thus at least by implication aligning himself with the savagely mocked Midas.

Earlier in the day we had attended our first concert of the 2011 festival, an exceptionally enjoyable affair played by one of Ambronay's young ensembles in residence, Les Esprits Animaux. Seven strong, the group includes two violins, viola, flute, recorder and continuo, the wind players often doubling or alternating with the violins in trio sonatas. One of the major assets of Les Esprits Animaux is a strong group personality, projected here in extrovert playing of a programme that largely lent itself to such an approach: a *Ballet de Village* of Boismortier, Corrette's *Concerto Comique* No. 25 and a Telemann *Trio Sonata* (TWV 42:C1) including movements depicting ladies such as *Lucretia*, *Dido* and *Xantippe* (the reputedly bad-tempered wife of Socrates).

The following day brought not just one, but two superlative concerts. Pierre Hantaï is one of the most notable pupils of Gustav Leonhardt, of whose austere platform manner one is reminded by the Frenchman's platform demeanour. Especially noted as a Bach player, his recital devoted to the composer fully lived up to eagerly anticipated expectations. Playing a beautifully-toned Finnish-built harpsichord modelled on early 18c German instruments, Hantaï from the outset of the profoundly felt opening chorale 'Wer nur den lieben Gott' drew the listener into a world of disciplined yet always flexible playing that constantly illuminated hidden corners of Bach's complex counterpoint. There were, too, examples of dazzling virtuosity, not least in the Prelude to the English Suite No. 2, which there served to highlight the sense of inner tranquillity Hantaï found in the succeeding Allemande.

The evening concert was given over to countertenor Philippe Jaroussky's programme of Caldara operatic arias, a selection that will already be familiar to some from the CD issued on Virgin Classics. Here it was filled out to concert length with concertos by dall' Abaco and Vivaldi, and a Symphony by G. B. Sammartini, played with breathtaking brilliance by Concerto Köln. Still only in his early 30s, Jaroussky has already achieved the status of national treasure, his arrival on the platform being greeted by one of the longest ovations at the start of a concert I can recall. Arguably more androgynous in tonal quality than any other countertenor, Jaroussky's vocal timbre disconcerts some, yet for me the sheer beauty of his voice added to a near-flawless technique (true, like most early music singers he has no trill) that enables him to shape line with a creamy ease make him one of the most thrilling singers around. He has admirable dramatic qualities, too, as a wide gamut of emotion ranging from glittering coloratura in the *aria di furia* 'Non tremar' (*Temistocle*, 1736) to the touching sensitivity of 'Misero pargoletto' (*Demofonte*,

1733) readily showed, the recapitulation of the A section of the latter opening with a perfectly executed *messa di voce*.

The strings of French period instrument orchestras are notorious for excessive platform tuning, but it fell to those of Martin Gester's *Le Parlement de Musique* to make a brave attempt on a new world record at their performance of a conjectural 'Venetian Vespers' by Porpora on 16 September. Sadly, it was all to little avail. This was a thoroughly dispiriting experience, plodded through with lumpy textures, four square rhythms and ordinary work from the three soloists, who included the young mezzo Delphine Galou, who made such a strong impression at this year's Beaune Baroque Opera Festival, but was here singing in an alto register too low for her to be comfortable. The girls of *La Maîtrise de Bretagne* (these were works written for the *ospedale*) sung with poor discipline, and behaved with worse, looking thoroughly miserable for much of the performance.

The other event we attended this weekend was Vivaldi's *Farnace* under the direction of Diego Fasolis, enthusiastically reviewed by myself as a Virgin Classics CD set as recently as *EMR* 144, p.44. There were two cast changes for the Ambronay performance, the more significant being that of the role of Selinda, magnificently sung by Ann Hallenberg on record, here taken by the young Russian mezzo Alissa Kolosova. As yet no match for Hallenberg, she is nonetheless a most promising singer who improved markedly as the performance progressed. The most damaging difference was the ruthless cutting of the plain recitative, which skewed a cohesive plot to the point of distorting both character and motivation.

Other commitments dictated that we attended only one concert on the third weekend, that of *Concerto Soave* on 25 September. My choice of concert is generally much more work than artist driven, but I have to confess that I'd probably travel some distance to hear María Cristina Kiehr sing the Buenos Aires telephone directory. The programme for the oddly titled 'Dans les Jardins de Galilée' consisted mostly of 17th dialogues by such as Mazzocchi, Anerio, Banchieri and Monteverdi to form a cycle devoted to the life of Christ. Kiehr's partner, as is customary, was Swiss bass Stephan MacLeod, singing better than I think I have ever heard him and not at all overshadowed by the soprano, as was the case at Ambronay two years ago. Kiehr herself remains a phenomenon, the gloriously pure, yet richly emotional voice still produced with unwavering, exquisitely shaped line, ornaments still turned in a manner that should be a benchmark for every aspiring singer. Not the least of the pleasures of this concert was the interpolation of chant by an enchanting children's choir specially formed for the following weekend's *St Matthew Passion*, although it seemed a pity that their contribution extended no further than the group of Nativity works.

One of the great successes of last year's festival was the

revival of *Il diluvio universale*, a 'Dialogue for five voices and five instruments' (note the scoring), composed by Palermo-born Michelangelo Falvetti (1642-1692) for Messina Cathedral in 1682, the year he was appointed *maestro di cappella* there. The 2010 performance under Alarcón has been issued on Ambronay records (AMY026). Having had to miss last year's performance, the repeat given on 1 October presented an opportunity to catch up. Well, this is where I play party-pooper, I'm afraid. Alarcón does not do small (at least not at Ambronay). He does big and colourful, so has chosen to inflate a work for ten performers into one for forces three times that number, with a chorus and an orchestra including cornets and sackbuts, and, utterly incongruously, a percussionist playing an array of instruments including *zarb* and *oud*. The result was somewhat akin to giving a young child a refined pencil drawing and a particularly garish box of paints. Whether the original 'drawing' is that of a master is difficult to judge, but my impression is that even allowing for the Technicolor effect, it is some way from that. It has to be confessed, however, that the loyal capacity Ambronay audience begged to differ, demanding encore after encore from a conductor who displays evident relish in being the object of sustained acclamation. I report without further comment that one of the encores was the final fugue from *Falstaff*.

With wonderfully apt irony, the final event of the season the following day was a performance of the Mass in B minor given with single voices per part under the direction of Sigiswald Kuijken. Ambronay is, of course, much more than just its annual festival, having a didactic wing that includes an academy. In partnership with European conservatories this provides young artists with opportunities to work together within a multi-disciplinary framework. It was this Baroque academy that provided both vocal and instrumental performers for the Mass, a hugely daunting undertaking. In his editorial in October, Clifford wrote of how one sometimes 'encounters completely out of the blue an amazingly powerful musical experience'. This was just such an occasion. The performance was shared between thirteen different singers, a sensible idea since it meant not only that these incredibly gifted young singers were not pushed beyond their present capabilities by some of the most challenging music they will ever encounter, but also because it gave an opportunity for a larger number to participate. The near-unbelievable musical quality and deep commitment of the performance was a tribute to those who had coached these young performers from no fewer than 20 different countries, above all Kuijken, who led from first violin to produce an utterly dedicated performance that fused all his wisdom and long experience with fresh, exceptional talent. It is neither necessary nor appropriate to go into fine detail about a performance that ultimately provided me with one of the most moving experiences of a long musical life, an experience that was about so much more than just music.

LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

A Fairy Queen Dream

The link between Morley College and Purcell's Fairy Queen comes courtesy of Gustav Holst and his 1911 revival of Purcell's work, the first since Purcell's time. In honour of that occasion, Morley College presented extracts from Purcell's work alongside *A Fairy Dream*, a reworking of the masque in Act 4 by Harvey Brough, the whole billed as *A Fairy Queen Dream* (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 8 Sept). With a cast of thousands representing all the various aspects of Morley College's work, my focus was on the soloists, notably soprano Sophie Junker and tenor Mark Le Brocq, both of whom outshone the less experienced Morley contingent. Lawrence Wallington hammed it up outrageously in his theatrical portrayal of the Drunken Poet et al. The instrumentalists were a group of Guildhall graduates, who play under the imaginative name of the Guildhall Graduates Baroque Orchestra. Carina Drury, cello, and Kate Aldridge, double bass, deserve special mention. Harvey Brough's contemporary (and community-based) take on Purcell and Shakespeare was an attractive combination of light jazz and minimalism, with many of the pieces built around catchy little riffs from the harpsichord or cello.

Weberlioz at the Proms

This year's BBC Proms was rather light on early music, and I was away for some of the offerings anyway. But I did get to the concert performance of Weber's *Der Freischütz* given by the Monteverdi Choir and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique under Sir John Eliot Gardiner (9 Sept), taking the place of the ritual Beethoven 9th on the penultimate night. It was given in the 1841 Paris version, with a French translation and recitatives by Berlioz. Berlioz made an excellent job of recasting Weber's work for the French audience whilst showing enormous respect for Weber's composition, bringing the whole thing together in a sort of Weberlioz fusion. To fulfil the demand for dance in Paris, he orchestrated Weber's piano *Invitation to the Dance* for the third Act. This performance was based on a recent staged version in Paris's Opéra Comique, with some of the stage interaction between the protagonists retained. Of course, the main problem of bringing a staged opera to the concert platform is that the acoustic relationship between orchestra and soloists is altered, even more so in the vast spaces of the Albert Hall. Although this was an issue, it did not spoil the evening. Andrew Kennedy relished the role of Max, gaining well-deserved applause for his first major contribution (*Ah! Trop longtemps de mes souffrances*) with its almost Wagnerian ending. Gidon Saks impressed as Gaspard, particularly in the scene at the end of Act 1.

Virginie Pochon was a lovely Annette, joining with a medley of solo instruments in her Ariette *Qu'un garçon jeune et candide*. Sophie Karthäuser was the troubled Agathe, her big moment coming with *Hélas! Sans le revoir encore*, with its horn flourishes in the final section bringing more well deserved applause from the sell-out Proms audience. Some pure theatre arrived with the famous Wolf's Glen scene, when the invisible spirits (at least to those not in the upper gallery) screeched and screamed as smoke poured from a kettle drum masquerading as a cauldron just below Sir Henry Wood's statuesque nose. Other theatrical moments, notably the costume changes in the chorus, probably needed more of the staged version for their meaning to become explicit. For me, one of the most interesting aspects was the revealing of the orchestral colour from the period instruments – the brass were noticeably brassy, the horns similarly horny (so to speak), and there were some excellent instrumental solo contributions. Gardiner took some risks in the pacing and colouring of the work, noticeably with a mean and moody start that I assume had some relevant visuals in the stage version, but overall producing a very convincing show in tricky circumstances.

Sir Jonathan's St Matthew

I only saw a filmed version of Sir Jonathan Miller's sparse 1993 dramatisation on the St Matthew Passion, but remember being moved by the intimacy and immediacy of it, notably in the close interaction between the obligato instruments and the solo-singers. Despite the intervening large-scale productions of the Passions at Glyndebourne and ENO, Miller retained the simplicity of his original production for the curious revival in the large and very secular space of the Olivier Theatre at a liturgically inappropriate time of year. The work was staged in the oval, with the two orchestras facing each other (one with their backs to the audience) while the chorus was similarly divided left and right of the central oval, which was where most of the solo numbers were performed. The only props were a kitchen table and some chairs. The players were the Southbank Sinfonia (an excellent post-graduate training orchestra), playing modern instruments in a commendably period manner, aided by the inspiring presence of Matthew Truscott as leader and with Poppy Walsh playing continuo cello and solo gamba. Unlike many reviewers, my starting point is that staged versions of works like this are perfectly valid. Although there is much I could discuss at length, I thought Miller's staging work extremely well, shorn of the excess of the more operatic versions. The only figure that I did not quite get was Jesus, who seemed to have been cast more for his

looks than anything. Sally Bruce-Payne, Benjamin Hulett, James Laing (a very impressive counter tenor) and Mark Stone all made excellent solo contributions, although Ruby Hughes seemed rather ill at ease on the night I was there. But the vocal highlight was from Andrew Staples as the Evangelist, his light, high and almost *haute contre* tenor voice perfectly reflecting his slightly bemused bystander/reporter role. The youthful chorus was from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. They worked well in their two teams, and I also spotted some talented young voices and natural acting ability. Paul Goodwin had the tricky job of conducting in the round, and also provided the English translation. [I was also extremely impressed by the original Goodwin/Miller TV performance. CB]

Unearthing the Italian Girl in London

Bampton Classical Opera does a sterling job of unearthing little known 18th century operas, although they are all too frequently let down by a lack of period style in the actual performance. Not so much of a problem, I hesitate to suggest, for their open air performances in the garden of an Oxfordshire Deanery or a girl's public school, but not really up to scratch when they bring the show to the London stage, in this case, St John's, Smith Square, with Cimarosa's 1778 'Italian Girl in London' (*L'italiana in Londra*). For some reason that I really do not understand, given their chosen repertoire, they insist on using modern instruments, overly operatic singers and, horror of horrors, some sort of electronic harpsichord device. The staging, translations and direction are all rather too clever, jolly-rompish and 'luvvy' – again, this is perhaps to the taste of Oxfordshire's not-quite-county-house opera lovers but, perhaps naively, I would like to think that we are a bit above that sort of thing in London. I assume they did not have an orchestra pit in the Deanery garden, so I am not sure why the orchestra felt the need to play quite so loudly here, giving the singers no chance at all. As to the work itself, well Mozart it isn't but it has its moments. With period instrumentalists, period singers and a period interpretation it could well find favour, but on this occasion it did not really stand a chance. Of course, Bampton Classical Opera could provide all those things – but it doesn't.

Italian fashion on English Ground

The 'English Ground' was the church of St George's Bloomsbury, an increasingly popular venue for music. The 'Italian Fashion' came courtesy of the recorder group Consortium5 together with soprano Siona Stockel (27 Sept) in their programme 'Musica Transalpina', exploring the transmission of the Italian madrigal onto English ground (the real background to the concert's sub-title). The well-planned programme included various *In nomines* slotted in amongst the English and Italian songs, with the recorder accompaniments making for a fascinating sound-world in the generous acoustic of the church. There was excellent use of tonguing as a means to project the recorder sound into

the acoustic. I heard soprano Siona Stockel in 2006 singing in a concert given by students from the Royal Academy of Music and commented: "She has a most impressive voice, with the focussed tonal quality that a good boy treble ought to have. Her intonation was spot on, and was achieved without the safety net of excessive vibrato. I only hope she retains her voice – so often I hear young sopranos with this delightful 'early music' voice, only to find them later transformed into wobbly opera singers." Although she certainly hasn't developed into a wobbly opera singer, her voice, as demonstrated on this occasion, sadly did not match its quality when she was a student.

"The Bostridge Project"

The Wigmore Hall's "Bostridge Project: Ancient and Modern" aims to explore the influence of older on modern composers and to compare the voice in the context of both period and modern instruments, reflecting Ian Bostridge's former incarnation as a historian. The first concert (28 Sept) focussed on the period instruments of the English Concert, particularly the oboe of Katharina Spreckelsen. They were directed by Harry Bicket and explored works from, or influenced by, Italy. The slowly unfolding harmonies of Scarlatti's Sinfonia to the serenata, *Clori, Dorino e Amore* segued into Vivaldi's Oboe Concerto in D minor, with its lovely central Largo performed by the always excellent Katharina Spreckelsen. Ian Bostridge then presented Scarlatti's cantata *Dall'oscura magion dell'arsa Dite*, the story of Orfeo with the singer acting as narrator and as Orfeo himself. Francesco Venturini (a composer I had never heard of) hailed from the Low Countries. He only published a single volume of instrumental music which included the curious Sonata in G minor, the high point of which was the central *Aria Affettuoso* written for 11 parts. Handel copied one of Venturini's fugues in his Op. 3/3 Concerto, but his contribution to this concert was the Italianate *Silete venti*, written for a soprano rather than a tenor, and with a text that suggested a female rather than male narrator. Nonetheless, Ian Bostridge's creamy milk chocolate voice fitted the mood well.

"Fingers, Felix and the Freeshooter" – and murderous thoughts!

With another of their increasingly bizarre concert titles, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment gave us "Fingers, Felix and the Freeshooter" which, for the literally-normal translated as Weber's *Der Freischütz* (a popular work at the moment), a piano concerto by Mozart and Mendelssohn's 'Scottish' Symphony. They were directed by two consummate and chatty showmen, Charles Hazlewood and Robert Levin. Levin is famed for his improvised cadenzas, although his contribution to the first movement of Mozart's Concerto in A (K.488) seemed to me to completely change Mozart's mood and genre. His jovial approach to music making came off in the final

Allegro assai, enlivened by little bassoon flourishes. Hazlewood directed the Weber and Mendelssohn, creating a vividly impressionistic *sotto voce* opening to the 'Freeshooter', even though he failed to bring the orchestra in together on either of the key moments. This was a continuing issue. Despite his evident enthusiasm (demonstrated in his rather fanciful introductions to the pieces), Hazelwood never really got to grips with the tricky business of conducting, seeming to respond to, rather than direct the music with his broad but indecisive gestures, unclear depiction of the beat and no indication of entries. Of course, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment are perfectly capable of playing excellently on automatic pilot (or making music without the need for a conductor) and I have a feeling they might have been doing just that on this occasion. The 7pm concert was followed by one of the OAE's Night Shifts, with the gap filled by a fusion band and with a DJ set afterwards. As usual, the Night Shift repeated some of the earlier items, but aimed at a younger audience, the stage lights switching to a seductive red, and with one of the OAE players bravely swapping his black shirt for a T-shirt. Inevitably, as is his wont on these occasions, the 'personality' presenter thought everything was "amazing". The youthful audience listened in their usual respectful silence, with the exception of one irritating young lady sitting close behind me who chatted to her neighbour throughout the first piece. Alas, she was just out of my sight so immune to my hostile stares and out of my murdering range.

English Touring Opera
7 cantatas and a trio of operas.

English Touring Opera do exactly what they say on the tin, annually touring operas around England. As usual, they started their latest run in (or near) the Britten Theatre, the 'near' referring to a new venture for them, a staged performance of Buxtehude's exquisite series of seven cantatas, *Membra Jesu Nostri*, in Holy Trinity Church, Prince Consort Road (5 Oct). They admitted that this was a "work in progress" and would develop over the months as they tour. The rather apologetic director (James Conway) of ETO referred to the staging as "weird". Frankly I could have done without either of these initial statements – it all seemed pretty good to me, however weird or undeveloped the organisers might think. The staging and movement was the brainchild of Conway and Bernadette Iglich – and, I would imagine, the five student singers and a Jesus figure that had the job of actually presenting it. The singers (Anna Anandarajah, Hannah Sandison, Rupert Enticknap, Simon Chalford Gilkes and Pnini Grubner) made a fine job of performing Buxtehude's often intense harmonies while gently acting out the different scenarios. As with most vocal students in the UK, they have not been encouraged to develop a vocal type suitable for music of this period, but all avoided any overly operatic stylistic lapses. The stylistic lapse came from the conductor, who was playing an electronic

organ/harpsichord device, producing a horrible noise, particularly in harpsichord mode. With a major music conservatoire just over the road, I was surprised that a more suitable continuo keyboard wasn't found. Only five playes were named in the programme (Anne Marie Christensen and Sophia Anagnostou, violins, Willemijn Knodler, cello, Pia Pircher, viola da gamba, and Jadran Duncumb, theorbo). This, and the lack of any visible additional viol players, led me to expect that the key 6th cantata would be performed with violins rather than the specified gamba consort, but out trouped the required further gamba players at the appointed time. The direction made good use of the space, and the audience, providing hand massages to those near the aisle. A few simple props and some self-propelled lights completed the staging – all rather effective, in my view.

Glyndebourne's spectacular 2009 staging of Purcell's *Fairy Queen* within the context of the play for which it was intended could well have blown all chance of anybody attempting to just perform the music again. Fortunately (particularly for those like me, who weren't impressed with the literary standards of Betterton's clumsy recasting of Shakespeare), ETO have re-dressed the balance by presenting a bold new interpretation directed by Thomas Guthrie (Britten Theatre, 6 Oct). Guthrie based his staging on the life and fanciful Shakespearian paintings of Richard Dadd, incarcerated in the criminal wing of the Victorian mental institution, Bedlam, from the age of 25 for murdering his father (thinking him to be the devil, as sons tend to do) and, as portrayed in this production, completely batty. The concept was applied with a relatively light touch, allowing Purcell's music to shine out on its own without the necessity of concentrating on the 'plot' – although that in itself was well worth following. The setting was an overnight in Bedlam, the six scenes into which Purcell's music is cast moving from the realistic (a naughty Mr Dadd causing trouble at bedtime) to the fanciful world of the fairies and supernatural that Dadd depicted with such minute precision in the paintings – the latter world, in this case, including the birthday of King Oberon (aka Mr Dadd) and the blessing of the marriage of two Chinese characters by Hymen. Two aerialists, two dancers and two puppets were added to the 8 singers to produce a very compelling and thoroughly justified setting for Purcell's music. As well as coming up with this imaginative interpretation, director Thomas Guthrie, a distinguished singer in his own right, also encouraged some excellent singing and acting from the young cast, with particular mention going to Mark Wilde, Nicholas Merryweather, Anthony Gregory (an attractive high tenor voice), countertenor Michal Czerniawski and Aidan Smith as the Drunken Poet/Patient. The ETO baroque house band is now calling itself The Old Street Band, a collection of the usual suspects on the London period orchestra scene, led on this occasion by Theresa Caudle and with some fine cello and gamba playing by Kinga Gáborjáni. The conductor was the very impressive Joseph McHardy,

who also provided some imaginative (but appropriate) harpsichord continuo.

A similar updating of an age-old story was behind's ETO's new production of Handel's *Xerxes*, directed by James Conway (Britten Theatre, 8 Oct). But whereas Thomas Guthrie got it all pretty well right, Conway's efforts were just about all wrong. Instead of singing his opening *Ombra mai fu* to a tree, which is daft enough, Xerxes sang to a Spitfire. Or, at least, to the arse end of a ticky-tacky Spitfire which, embarrassingly, had to be manhandled off the stage by being tipped on its tail – surely somebody should have checked the amount of side-stage space there was for the premiere. The whole thing was set amongst the Nissen huts of a Second World War airfield with the King (who I assume was a rather vague reflection of how the Duke of Windsor might have been, had he remained King into the war years) relying on a wind-sock to indicate his state of arousal. Jonathan Peter Kenny's conducting could perhaps be described (literally) as 'baroque' – and I don't mean that in a good way. In sharp contrast to Joseph McHardy's excellent and clear conducting of *Fairy Queen*, Kenny's extravagantly flamboyant flourishes, gesturing and general wafting about was, at best, distracting to the audience, particularly since he had two bright spotlights to highlight his antics. But more seriously, I could detect no discernable beat, no mouthing of words for singers or, indeed, any clear indications of their entries. The singers coped well (despite some bizarre flight-of-fancy cadenzas which I gather were also the responsibility of the conductor), but the orchestra were left to their own devices. Amongst the singers who impressed were Julia Riley in the title role, Laura Mitchell as Romilda, Rachel Lloyd as Amastris and, in particular, countertenor Clint van der Linde as Arsames.

ETO also revived their 2009 Handelfest production of Handel's *Flavio* (reviewed in the December 2009 issue of *EMR*), again with the pairing of James Conway as director and Jonathan Peter Kenny as conductor. This was a rather more sensible production, with a simple staging that allowed a focus on the characters. There were some oddities, but no more than is usual in opera direction nowadays. The opening confused me – the post-coital dawn duet between Vitige and Teodata found them both slumped in a doorway, looking as though they had ended up in a gutter after a night on the tiles. There was something of the am-dram in many of the characterisations, notably in Mark Wilde's portrayal of Ugone as a bumblingly bumptious and obsequious little man, with more than a hint of Little Britain's 'only gay in the village'. Teodate (Kitty Whately) and Vitage (a gamine Lina Markeby) appeared more like a mother and pubescent son than lovers. And Flavio (Clint van der Linde) was portrayed as a bit of an oaf who couldn't even manage to wear his crown without crashing it into the chandeliers. Paula Sides (who, with Andrew Slater and Clint van der Linde, was also in the 2009 production) excelled as Emilia.

For some reason, they all had little books with them. I have absolutely no idea what the directorial thinking was behind this, but it made it look as though they needed prompts or were reading the score. The *da capo* ornaments were more like elaborations than true Handelian ornaments and, as with *Xerxes*, I got the impression that they, and the cadenzas, had all been very carefully prepared by the conductor and not left up to the singers. Either way, they were unstylistic. These ETO tours are a tough call for the singers, many of whom appear in two or three operas and, on this occasion, with two suffering from the lurgy, but continuing, without any audible effect.

A Romantic hero

EMR readers will need no persuading of the importance of period instruments and performance style in music of the baroque and classical eras, but over the past decade or so, more and more period bands are now exploring the romantic repertoire. One recent example was the Academy of Ancient with their Cadogan Hall concert (12 Oct) under the title of "Awakening of the Romantic hero". Weber's *Der Freischütz* overture provided the first romantic alarm clock, albeit with a raggedy start to the two key orchestral entries, a common event, it seems, but nonetheless important to avoid. The 'Eroica' Symphony, usually heralded as the first work of the Romantic era, completed the concert, again with an awkward start as Richard Egarr bounced onto the stage and got the orchestra going well before the applause had stopped. Why do this? Why such a rush? We came to listen to the music. The rest of the work was similarly breathless. Although you can get away with this in the relatively compact and immediate surroundings of the Cadogan Hall, it really doesn't do the musical texture any favours, particularly as there was the potential for some real emotional depth in the AAM's performance. A shame, as works like this take on a different focus and colour when heard in smaller concert venues. All this increased the focus on the central work – a performance of Paganini's 2nd Violin Concerto with the extraordinary young Japanese violinist, Shunske Sato, making his UK debut. Spotted during his appearance in the Leipzig Johann Sebastian Bach Competition in 2010 (where he won the audience prize), this was a stunning performance of a work that would normally send me scurrying off to the bar. Playing on a copy of an 1846 violin (with gut strings) and a late Classical/early Romantic bow with minimal vibrato was just the start of it. Shunske Sato proved to have an exquisite musical mind and with the technique to project it. But he was about as far from Paganini's performing style and stage presence as you can get. Rather than play up the virtuoso showman, as well he could, Sato blended with the orchestra, both tonally and personally, turning from the audience and joining in with the rest when not in solo mode – and, most impressively, joining the rest of the band in the back desk of the violins for the *Eroica*. We need more soloists with this sort of personal attitude. As

to his playing, it was staggering – and I don't mean that in the virtuoso sense, although that was certainly there. What impressed me most was the elegance and mellowness of his playing and the extraordinary range of tone colour he produced. I look forward to hearing him playing an earlier repertoire.

Burning and freezing

Les Arts Florissants are regular visitors to the Barbican but, for their concert of Monteverdi madrigals, the Barbican very sensibly sent them off to the magically evocative space of Islington's magnificent Union Chapel (13 Oct). Reduced to just six singers and directed by Paul Agnew (one of the six), this was an amazing aural experience. The programme was centred around the works in Monteverdi's 1587 First Book of Madrigals but before we heard the complete book, we were introduced to other composers' takes on some of the madrigals from between 1582 and 1587. *Lapidabant Stephanum*, the opening piece in Monteverdi's *Sacrae cantiunculae*, his first publication (1582), was a sacred prelude to an otherwise secular concert. Of particular interest, and a neat bit of programme planning, was hearing versions of the to and fro of insults from a pair of ex lovers in the text of Guarini's *Ardo, si, ma non t'amo* ("I burn, yes, but love you not") and Tasso's female response *Ardi o gela a tua voglia* ("Burn or freeze, as you wish") in settings by Vecchi, Ingegneri and Monteverdi. Of these, Vecchi's was the most intense pair of settings, with the female response rather more vicious than the man's initial outburst. Burning certainly seemed to be the theme of the first half. Although concentrating on the words might put you off love for life, the singing was outstanding. Joining Paul Agnew in the line-up were Miriam Allan, Hannah Morrison, Marie Gautrot, Sean Clayton and Lisandro Abadie.

Figaro and Castor & Pollux at the Coliseum

English National Opera's two offerings in October were a new production of *Figaro* and their first foray into French Baroque opera with Rameau's *Castor & Pollux*. Fiona Shaw's new take of *Figaro* fields the usual array of directorial oddities, starting with an weird little scenario at the very opening when Don Basilo (who, in this production, is blind) wanders on stage towards a harpsichord while the orchestra are still noisily (and unnecessarily) tuning up. He manages to trap a bee inside the harpsichord case, and its electronic buzzing merges into the rushing scales of the overture. The set is a sort of flat-pack architectural device mimicking a maze set on a busy revolve with the usual sizeable ENO chorus and actors bustling in and around it. The maze remains throughout all four acts, although the format changes with the scene changes and various bits of animals appear from time to time. One distracting oddity was that the prompt corner desk was visible from my seat in the stalls, and about a third of the other stalls seats, with the occasional

occupant wandering towards and away from his desk. I wasn't there on the opening night, so I assume that this was deliberate rather than a mistake. But why? From Basilio's initial appearance in full 18th century garb, the dress slowly morphed into modern, as did the props, which included church-hall chairs, a vacuum cleaner and animal horns. Although Paul Daniel directed the ENO house band (on modern instruments) with a degree of panache, his harpsichord continuo was of the plinkity-plonk school with lots of twiddles. Is there really any contemporary evidence for this type of continuo in Mozart's time? I hear it so often and find it distracting.

More to my taste, and more potentially important as far as the London opera scene is concerned, was ENO's production of Rameau's *Castor & Pollux*, a co-production with the Komische Oper, Berlin. The entire operatic goings on are encased in a large plywood box with vertically sliding screens beneath which the singers slither to make their entrances, and which we view through a picture frame. The problem for English opera audiences is that Rameau is not Handel. It will take a while for audiences to get used to the stylised nature of French Baroque opera, just as Handel's interminable *da capo* arias took a while to settle in. But ENO made things hard by bringing the Australian director Barrie Kosky, something of a bad boy in German opera circles, I gather. He did all he could to remove this example of French Baroque opera both from France and the Baroque with a bizarre staging inside the box, involving a vast pile of earth, a lot of running about, men in skirts or without any clothes at all (but no naked women for those of my persuasion), a woman getting intimately fingered by a giant hand projecting from the pile of earth, and a curiously un-sexy pair of schoolgirls taking their knickers off, over and over again, only to reveal yet more knickers. I suppose we have to let opera directors do such things in the opera house, in case they are tempted to do them on the streets – but it really did not add much to Rameau. Amanda Holden's translation was less clever than usual and consequently fitted the text and the flow of the music a great deal better. The highlight by a long way was the music, both Rameau's and that produced by the singers and the ENO house band (raised well above normal level to be visible from all stalls seats) augmented by period specialists Christopher Bucknall, with some excellent harpsichord continuo playing, and Reiko Ichise on gamba. The conductor was Christian Curnyn, whose response to Rameau was far removed, and far better than Kosky's, managing to impart a real sense of period style to the modern instrumentalists, and producing some gorgeous musical textures, notably with the contribution from the flutes and bassoons. Of the youngish cast of singers, Allan Clayton and Roderick Williams excelled as the brothers, with Sophie Bevan equally impressive as Téläire. But all managed to lift themselves above the daft direction and allow the music to speak through, aided by Christian Curnyn's focussed and apposite conducting.

The Brecon Baroque Festival

Since they settled in Brecon with their young family, Rachel Podger and Tim Cronin have made their mark on the local music scene, not least in setting up the Brecon Baroque Festival, now in its 6th year. Usually based around concerts from Rachel's own group, Brecon Baroque, this year the Festival expanded by inviting a young guest group and a young singer to join them. The group was Ensemble Meridiana (Dominique Tinguely, recorder/bassoon, Sarah Humphrys, oboe/recorder, Sabine Stoffer, violin, Tore Eketorp, viola da gamba and Christian Kjos, harpsichord), the winners of first prizes at the International Telemann Competition in Magdeburg, the 2009 York Competition (leading to their first CD *Teleman – Tastes of Europe*) and, most recently, the Göttinger Reihe Historischer Musik der Internationalen Händel-Gesellschaft. I have reviewed them several times and have always been impressed. Their programme was both entertaining and musical, their wide range of instruments resulting in a varied palette of tone colour. Telemann wrote two works for their principal combination of recorder, oboe and violin, his Concerto (Quartet) giving each solo instrument (and the viola da gamba, which has an equally complex role) their chance to shine, with Telemann's writing being idiomatic to each instrument. It was nice to hear Rebel's *Les Caractères de la Danse* performed with each of the dances introduced. The attractive little Trio in D minor is now known to be by the Polish composer, Prowo, although it used to be listed as a work by Telemann.

The featured young singer was the Welsh soprano Sian Winstanley, who gave an outstanding lunchtime concert in the chilly mediaeval Chapel of Christ College with baroque guitarist Stephen Gordon and songs from Shakespeare by Morley, Dowland, Purcell and Arne. Although she is making her way on the opera circuit, her voice proved to be adept at this repertoire, producing a beautifully clean and focussed tone with perfect intonation, well articulated runs, effective ornamentation (she is a rare example of a singer who can trill properly, rather than just wobbling) and with vibrato appearing, quite correctly, as an occasional ornamental device. She used subtle rhythmic inflexions most effectively, notably in the opening 'It was a lover', and also demonstrated her ability to sing at the extremes of her range with equal conviction. She managed some beautiful low and *sotto voce* endings to a couple of pieces, retaining both tone and timbre throughout – not easy to do. Alongside her impressive vocal qualities, she is also a consummate performer with an engaging stage presence, appearing relaxed and approachable in these rather exposed surroundings. Her coquettish 'Come hither' glances around the audience in Arne's 'Under the Greenwood Tree' must have warmed many a cockle, although her later mocking of married men with the 'Cuckoos' of 'When daisies pied' should have reduced any

inappropriate ardour. Stephen Gordon moved away from the Shakespearian theme with guitar solos by Sanz and Murcia, like Sian, managing an exquisite fade into silence whilst retaining the tone of his guitar. I just hope that Sian's increasing opera experience allows her to retain the ability to sing this repertoire, and the later Baroque repertoire, with this degree of excellence.

Brecon Baroque's concert focussed on music by Bach, opening with a movement from the Easter Oratorio arranged (I gather, the night before the concert) for four violins who gurgled away merrily with occasional interjections from the oboe and flute. This was one of those Bach pieces that could easily have continued playing for ever. I imagine Bach realised this, which is why he gave it one of his frequent sudden 'I've had enough of this' endings – it just sort of stops. Rachel Podger and Bojan Čičić gave an excellent performance of the Double Violin Concerto, although what was most revealing to me was that their balance and delicacy of tone meant that the prominent contributions from the 3rd and 4th violins (Johannes Pramsohler and Sabine Stoffer) were audible, giving a far more balanced reading than is often the case. Alison McGillivray's cello contribution should also be mentioned, alongside the lively harpsichord continuo playing of Marcin Swiatkiewicz. Rachel's solo spot was the G minor Concerto (after BWV 1056), a spirited and inventive reading. Playing in the dry acoustic of the Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon Baroque produced an extremely effective, unforced and well-balanced tone. A more established Welsh soprano, Elin Manahan Thomas (also known in Wales as a radio presenter) joined the band for two cantatas that also gave oboist Alexandra Bellamy and flautist Claire Heaney prominent solo spots, including the extended wedding cantata *O holder Tag, erwünschte Zeit*. Curiously, given her performing experience, Elin Manahan Thomas seemed a little ill at ease on stage, both vocally and visually. Incidentally, at the start of this concert I was reminded of one of my very early concert reviewing experiences at a concert with Catherine Bott during the Spitalfields Festival. I was told that I would be escorted to my reviewing seat right at the front next to another "VIP", who turned out to be Catherine's own mother! On this occasion, one of Rachel and Tim's charming young daughters insisted that several people change seats so that I could sit next to her. There were no obvious attempts at bribery (or from Rachel's mother, who was sitting just beyond her), although she did introduce me to a rather nice flavour of Welsh ice cream during the interval. Both the Cronin/Podger girls managed to completely upstage their parents when they bounded on stage to present flowers at the end of each of the concerts.

The weekend of concerts opened with the concert 'Hamburg Baroque' given by the Welsh Baroque Orchestra (made up of staff, students and alumni of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama), illustrated by slides. They opened with Telemann's kaleidoscopic

Hamburger Ebb und Flut, a tour around the Gods of the water and weather followed by selections from Handel's take on water. Telemann's Concerto in E minor for flute and recorder featured Owen Morse-Brown and Claire Heaney as soloists. However, the main focus was on two dancers, Katy Sinnadurai and her daughter Josie, the very touching choreography reflecting the fact that one was approaching the end of her successful professional performing career, the other just starting out. The movements of the Telemann piece were mirrored by the five movements of the dance – Care, Teach, Release, Remember and Care, the last a reversed reflection of the first, danced to a reprise of the opening *Largo*. Although it inevitably took some of the focus away from the fine instrumental soloists, I am all in favour of adding dance to music. The evening finished with CPE Bach's turbulent and dramatic Symphony in D 'a 12' (Wq 183/1). There were fine performances from cellist Claudine Cassidy and oboists Belinda Paul and Vanessa Hammond. The horn players made a magnificent contribution to the Handel Water Music suites although, for some reason, the conductor failed to even acknowledge their existence let alone pick them out for special applause as they deserved. As far as I am concerned, period horn players should be worshipped as minor deities, so this was an unforgivable breach of normal conducting etiquette for which I will name the horns players (Steve Macallister and Paul Sawbridge) but not the conductor.

The final concert of the extended weekend featured the core players Brecon Baroque and the expanded Brecon Baroque Festival Orchestra, with the excellent soprano Sian Winstanley making another appearance for Handel's motet *Saeviat tellus*. As with her earlier solo concert, this was a stunning performance of one of Handel's showpiece Italian works, with Sian's breath control being particularly impressive, as was the clarity and tone control of the wide ranging arpeggios in the opening aria. She is a singer to watch out for. Rachel Podger's skills as a violin teacher were evident in her choice of fellow violinists, all former pupils and named above, who featured in three of Vivaldi's concertos for four violins from *L'estro armonica*. Alison McGillivray gave a delightful performance of Vivaldi's Concerto for Cello in G (413) while Rachel Podger took the solo role in Vivaldi's curious Concerto in A from *La Cetra* (Op 9/6), the *scordatura* tuning of the violin producing pairs of A and E strings and resultant additional resonance. The second half opened with the youngsters of the South Powys Youth Orchestra, part of South Powys Youth Music, a musical trust (set up in lieu of a county music service) run by volunteers under the musical direction of Tim Cronin.

This is a delightful little festival in superb surroundings in the foothills of the Brecon Beacons. Like many of its type, it relies on many local volunteer supporters and people willing to accommodate musicians, and reviewers.

INNSBRUCKER FESTWOCHE DER ALTEN MUSIK

The 2011 Innsbruck Festival of Early Music stretched from 10-28 August and featured a wide range of concerts and operas and an international singing competition in the stunning mountain setting of this historic town. I was invited to review the final week of the festival, arriving in time for Cavalli's 1651 opera, *La Calisto*, a production by 'Barockoper:Jung', a project set up to feature singers from last year's first Cesti International Singing Competition, and forming part of the prizes along with engagements in a number of other opera houses. The opera, an everyday story of Gods and Goddesses and various nymphs and hangers on, took place in the open air courtyard of the University's Theology Faculty (20 Aug), and the production made full use of the surrounding building, with singers appearing at the first and second floor windows as well as around the stage, which enclosed the orchestra with a narrow strip of stage in front as well as using the arcades behind. The youngsters had been given the chance to work with experienced opera singers and directors, and gave very convincing performances in a work that demands musical and emotional virtuosity. Shorn of props and overly clever staging (but with extravagant costumes), the audience had the chance to focus on the musical and plot development in a well thought out production by Hinrich Horstotte (director, stage design & costumes) with Andrea Marchiol conducting. The instrumentalists were the impressive B'Rock Barockorchester Gent. Amongst the singers who particularly impressed me were the winner of last year's Cesti competition Anna Gorbachyova (Calisto), Francesca Lombardi-Mazzulli (Giunone) and Benno Schachtnner (Endimione), with Anna Alàs Jové (Diana), Jeffry Francis (Giove) and Simon Robinson (Mercurio) also giving fine performances. Considering the importance of the constellations (Calisto is turned into Ursa Major at the end of the opera) it was only a shame that we couldn't quite make out the Great Bear in the skies above the courtyard.

The following evening (21 Aug) we had a mini-opera in the imposing Spanish Hall of Ambras Castle, nestling in the woods on a hill above Innsbruck. Telemann's delightful little intermezzo *Pimpinone, oder Die Ungleiche Heirat* (Pimpinone, or The Unequal Marriage) was written as an interlude for a performance of Handel's opera *Tamerlano* in Hamburg in 1725. The story is of the 'old rich man (Pimpinone) takes fancy to poor young chambermaid (Vespetta) who ends up in complete control of the old duffer' genre, also used by Pergolesi in his *La serva padrona* a few years later. The story line might be a bit of light-hearted fun, but the performances by the two protagonists was outstanding, first from Renato Girolami as the old duffer and particularly from the outstanding young German soprano Marie-Sophie Pollak, one of the singers in the 2010 Cesti Singing Competition that most impressed me, although, surprisingly, she didn't win any of the prizes. I found this curious, as I felt that she has the

perfect voice for music of this period, clean and articulate with an impressive range of colour and tone. She is also an inspiring young actress – in this production she managed to transform herself from a stroppy teenager into a vampish sex-kitten. She will go far! Aided by some inspired direction from Christoph von Bernuth, she had many chances to display her charming coquettishness – I am sure the lucky young man in the audience whom she invited to zip her dress up is still in a state of recovery. The players were Private Musicke, directed by Pierre Pitzl.

The next concert (23 Aug) took place away from Innsbruck in the Collegiate Church of Stams Monastery, with its extraordinary baroque Tree of Life high altar. It featured the Bavarian Tölzer Knabenchor, directed by Gerhard Schmidt-Gaden, and a programme of ten motets from Schütz's 1648 *Geistliche Chor-Musik* and two Bach motets. I was very unsure about their performance of the Schütz, the frequent abrupt changes in volume making it a bit of a choppy journey as well as being stylistically anachronistic. Perhaps I have been spoilt by the high standards of English cathedral boys choirs (although I am not always a fan), but I thought the Tölzer boys sounded a bit rough and ready. They came more into their own in Bach's *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied* producing a much more coherent sound.

I returned to the Ambras Castle (24 Aug) for a concert by the first and audience prize winner in last years Cesti Singing Competition, the Russian soprano, Anna Gorbachyova, currently studying in London. Her programme, *Der Tyrann des Herzens* (The Tyrant of the Heart) was made up of cantatas by Handel and Scarlatti with instrumental suites by Handel and Telemann played by the local group "moderntimes_1800". I had a few concerns over Anna Gorbachyova last year, not least that her voice seemed to me to be rather more suited to a later repertoire than the competition promoters were to be aiming for. Her performances in *La Calisto* and in this solo concert rather reinforced these feelings. Although she has a very impressive stage presence and a fine voice, her relatively rapid and persistent vibrato at all volumes can cause problems with intonation as well as being unstylish. She also struggled a little in her higher register where her tone became a little strained, although her encore, an aria from Cleopatra, showed a far better upper range. She has a very sound and rich lower register. She also came up with some good *da capo* elaborations and ornaments.

The following day (25 Aug) included one of the weekly lunchtime concerts given in the rather noisy surroundings of the open-sided Music Pavilion in the Hofgarten by the three young musicians of Ensemble 392, former students in Trossingen. Given the surroundings, I wouldn't have chosen an ensemble of gamba, theorbo and harpsichord, but there we go. Their programme of French music was stylistically impressive and they did well not to be put off by a very distracting young lady, wearing an official festival badge, who wandered around the audience, and

close up to the musicians, taking flash photographs throughout the concert. They also managed to overcome the awkwardness of the flower presenter coming on stage after their penultimate piece. The same evening saw the final of the Cesti Singing Competition, reviewed below.

The tiny St. Nicholas Chapel in Ambras Castle was the venue for a lunchtime concert (26 Nov) with the Innsbruck harpist Reinhild Waldek playing music by Rossi, Frescobaldi, Luzzaschi, Mayone, Storace and Trabaci. What was particularly interesting for me was that most of the works are assumed to have been, at least notionally, written for keyboard, so it was fascinating to hear them played on a harp – particularly Frescobaldi's enormous *Cento Partite sopra Passacagli*. Toccatas by Luzzaschi and Rossi showed the change in style from composers two generations apart. The one specifically harp piece was Mayone's *Recercar sopra il Canto Fermo di Constantio Festa e per Sonar all 'Arpa*. Reinhild Waldek's playing was sensitive and musical, her resonant harp sounding well in the small space.

As well as the Barockoper:Jung production of *La Calisto*, Innsbruck also fielded two fully staged operas, with Telemann's *Flavius Bertaridus*, *König der Langobarden* at the start of the festival and Hasse's *Romolo ed Ersilia* at the end (in the Tiroler Landestheater, 26 Aug). The Hasse work was a particularly appropriate choice for Innsbruck as it was written for an earlier incarnation of the Tyrolean State Theatre. Empress Maria Theresia, who viewed Hasse as her favourite composer, commissioned the opera for the wedding of Archduke Leopold to the Spanish Princess Maria Ludovica. The glamorous first performance took place in Innsbruck's then baroque opera house in 1765. Metastasio, poet to the Viennese court, based his libretto on the Roman legend of the abduction of the Sabine women. Hasse's opera is intended as a wedding entertainment, and does not place much of a drain on the intellect. Musically it is rather difficult to place – it is not really Baroque, not true Rococo and not quite Classical. Hasse uses a large orchestra, producing a range of colour. The role of the trumpets was interesting, being used as an addition to orchestral colour in addition to their bombast and, in the Overture (which starts with two 'knocks'), providing a pedal point. The staging consisted of a series of large box/containers in five groups around the stage, around and in which the protagonists strutted their stuff. The boxes were reduced to their structural framework for the last Act. Red ribbon was a prominent prop at the end of the first Act. I particularly liked the singing of Netta Or as Ostilio, but was also impressed by Paola Gardinia, Eleonore Buratto, Robin Johannsen and Johannes Chum. Marina de Liso (Romolo) suffered from rather too much vibrato for my taste, and Attilio Cremonesi conducted the orchestra, Café Zimmermann, taking the recitatives at a sensible speed – several of them approached an *accompagamento* style. The youngish chorus produced an attractive blend of sound.

After a day-long battering from thunderstorms, leaving snow on the mountains that Innsbruck nestles beneath, the festival finished with a bit of harmless, if slightly anarchic, end-of-term fun from the two principal opera conductors, Alessandro De Marchi and Attilio Cremonesi, who according to the promotional blurb have been "perfectly attuned to one another as a duo for many years". They took part in a very friendly battle of the harpsichords in the Giant's Hall of Maria Theresia's Imperial Palace (27 Aug), ending each piece with mutual hugs and animated chat and (I assume) jokes between themselves. Playing two of the most grotesquely monumental harpsichords that I have ever seen, they battered our ears unmercifully with works for two (much smaller) harpsichords by the likes of Mattheson, Schaffrath, Graun, Krebs and WF Bach alongside a transcription of a Telemann concerto. The only moments of repose came in the *Largo* of Graun's Sonata and the lyrical *Affettuoso* of Krebs long-winded reinterpretation of Bach. I was not convinced that any of the works really gained from, or took advantage of, the two harpsichords, or whether the odd-looking Hapsburgs that line the walls would have put up with a concert of such extraordinary bombast.

Although not part of the Festival, one other Innsbruck event worth a mention was the lunchtime organ recital on the internationally important 1558/61 Ebert organ in the Innsbruck Hofkirche given by Reinhard Jaud, the organist, who knows this instrument better than anybody and was responsible for its restoration. His programme of music dating from around 1475 to the early 17th century from the Buxheim and St Gall organ books, the Lublin tabulature and works by Merulo, Stephani and Sweelinck perfectly demonstrated the extraordinary range of colours on the remarkable instrument.

The 2nd International Singing Competition for Baroque Opera: Pietro Antonio Cesti

This annual singing competition, started in last year's festival, attracted applications from around 94 singers from 34 countries in five continents. It is aimed at female singers born from 1980 and men from 1978. There were two preliminary rounds before the final, which took place as a public concert in the concert hall of the Tyrolean State Conservatory (25 Aug). As well as an audience prize of €1,000, there are three main prizes of €4,000, 3,000 and 2,000, together with a Young Artists Award of €1,500 as well as special prizes from the Vienna Resonanzen Festival, the Musikfestspiele Potsdam-Sanssouci, the Theater an der Wien and the Baroque Opera:Young project of the 2012 Innsbruck Festival of Early Music. The repertoire comprised arias and scenes from baroque operas by Handel, Monteverdi, Purcell, Cavalli, Cesti and Vivaldi, with a focus on *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, the Baroque Opera:Young work for 2012. The judges were Alessandro De Marchi, artistic director of the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music, Sophie de Lint from Zurich Opera House,

Claude Cortese of Angers Nantes Opera, Alan Curtis, Paolo Monacchi (artist manager), Joshua Winograde from Los Angeles Opera and Sebastian F. Schwarz from the Theater an der Wien. I managed to hear about two-thirds of the singers during the preliminary rounds, and was impressed by many of them. One encouraging thought for them must have been the fact that some of the young singers in *La Calisto* had not made it into the finals of the 2010 competition. The winner was the 25-year-old Hungarian soprano Emöke Baráth, who also won the audience prize. The 2nd prize went to the 29-year-old Israeli soprano Tehila Nini Goldstein, the 3rd prize to the 29-year-old Italian mezzo-soprano Romina Tomasoni. The 22-year-old Italian Anna Maria Sarra won the Atle Vestersjø Young Artists Award and the special prize from the Wiener Konzerthaus (an appearance in a concert during the 2012 Vienna Resonanzen Festival) was awarded to the 24-year-old countertenor from Great Britain, Rupert Enticknap. Other special prizes were not announced at the time. Other singers who made the final but were not main prize winners were Giuseppina Bridelli, Sharvit Hagar, Benedetta Mazzucato, Filippo Mineccia and Martin Vanberg. Singers from the earlier rounds that I particularly liked included Paulo Lopez, Dana Marbach, Stefanie True (a winner of the London Handel Festival Singing Competition) and Amanda Flodin. The singers were accompanied by the Italian group Academia Montis Regalis with players from their youth orchestra, who I thought made a better job of it than some of their seniors.

L'ARPEGGIATA IN GREENWICH

This was the only concert I attended at the Greenwich International Early Music Festival & Exhibition (the 10th anniversary in this location) – the title definitely needs an acronym. Omitting the International would at least give a pronounceable abbreviation – how about GEMFEX? Compared with my previous live experience of the ensemble, this was disappointing. My big mistake was not to sit in the gallery: music-making like theirs benefits enormously from vision, and needs a platform and proper sight-lines. (They played at floor-level when I saw them at Tewkesbury a few years ago, but I was near the front and the musicians played more on their feet then). This tarantula-based programme was at least ten years old (the date of the note) and somehow needed a bit more substance – but please, not the incompatible King's Singers again! Individual performances were brilliant, but the show only came to life with the encore and the interacting dialogue the amazing singer set up with the audience. I chatted to the harpist next morning and asked about the extent the music is improvised. She said that it was a new programme for her, so she didn't have the usual freedom. It was, despite listening with my eyes shut, a brilliant event. But I'd love to see them letting their hair down in a more informal context.

CB

MONTEVERDI

Laudate Dominum (1650)

a basso solo [ovvero due bassi]

editorial second bass part by Peter Holman

MESSA A QUATTRO VOICI, ET SALMI A Una, Due, Tre, Quattro, Cinque, Sei, Sette, & Otto Voci, Concertari, e Parte da Cappella, & con le Letanie della B.V. DEL SIGNOR CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI Gia Maestro di Cappella della Serenissima Repubblica di Venetia... IN VENETIA Appresso Alessandro Vincenti. M DC L.

The posthumous 1650 edition was issued in 9 part-books: Canto, Alto, Tenore & Basso for both Primo and Secondo Choro, and Basso Continuo. Only the two settings of *Dixit Dominus* are for double choir; the Secondo Choro books include instrumental parts when necessary. The music by Monteverdi comprises the Mass *A 4. Voci. Da Capella*, a selection of the most common Psalms for Vespers, and a Litany. The fact that one by Cavalli is included presumably implies that none by Monteverdi was available.

This setting of Psalm 116 (117) is the only piece for a solo voice. The *Basso Primo Choro* part has the 'Basso Solo' part; the *Basso Continuo* part has both parts in score. It is, however, suspicious that the continuo part is so active. When he recorded it 30 years ago, Peter Holman reluctantly added a cello to the organ part because of its independent melodic activity, but it seemed likely in retrospect that this melodic aspect of the continuo are signs of a missing *Basso II* and no cello is needed. The *Basso continuo* partbook has *Organo* printed at the top right corner of the odd pages up to page 35, and I doubt whether the subsequent omission was deliberate. It is a plausible assumption that a stringed bass instrument was only played when there were violins. Subsequently, Peter Holman prepared this version with a second bass, avoiding the need for a cello. It seems that the printers of both the *Selva morale* (1641/1) and the posthumous 1650 collection were working from folders of individual parts and didn't always receive everything that they should have.

This edition preserves original note values (except that the final long is transcribed as a semibreve with

pause) and time signatures. Both parts are notated in the F4 clef. Barring follows the *Basso Continuo*, which is a score including Bass I; the *Basso* part has considerably fewer barlines. Barring is regularised by the addition of dotted editorial barlines. All original accidentals are retained except on consecutive notes.

The work was also included in *Raccolta di motetti a 1, 2, 3 voci di Gasparo Casati et de diversi altri eccellentissimi autori novamente stampate*, Venice, 1651. I have not consulted this, but the edition by Malipiero (vol XVI, pp. 519-523) shows that it gives a simplified version of the vocal embellishments. It confirms the editorial flat figures in bars 90 and 91.

The copy of the 1650 edition used as source is at the Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, Wroclaw (I am grateful to the Librarian for supplying a microfilm). Sharps in the voice parts in bars 45 and 89 are added by hand in both the *basso* and the *bc* copy and confirmed by the 1651 edition, so have been included here. That edition also confirms several corrections of misprints marked in the 1650 copy. The natural before the B in bar 12 note 2 is omitted. Editorial supplementation of text in response to the customary *ij* is not shown, since there are no doubts concerning underlay.

*Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes,
laudate eum, omnes populi.
Quoniam confirmata est super nos misericordia eius
et veritas Domini manet in aeternum.
Gloria...*

Praise the Lord, all ye nations,
praise him, all ye peoples.
For his mercy to us has been strengthened
and the truth of the Lord endures for ever.
Glory be to the Father... *Psalm 116 (Protestant 117).*

At San Marco this psalm was sung at Vespers on Mondays and was among the set called the 'cinque Laude' used at a variety of major feasts.

Clifford Bartlett, February 1994/November 2011



The Early Music Company Ltd

The New House, The Fen, Fenstanton,
Huntingdon, Cambs, PE28 9JT, UK

Monteverdi: Laudate Dominum, a due bassi

Lau - da - te, lau - da - te Do - mi - num o -

Lau - da - te, lau - da - te Do - mi - num o - o -

Bass figures editorial
not necessarily exact

*Bass figures editorial
unless encircled*

10

lau - da - te, lau - da - te, lau - da - te _____ e - um o - - - -

da - te, lau-da - te, lau - da - te e - um

5 6

23

confirma - ta est su - per nos mi - se - ri - cor - di - a, mi - se - ri -
am confir - ma - ta est su - per nos mi - se - ri - cor - di - a,
confir - ma - ta est su - per nos mi - se - ri - cor - di - a,

30

-cor - - - di - a e - - - ius et ve - ri - tas Do - mi - ni
mi - se - ri - cor - di - a e - - - ius et ve - ri - tas Do - mi - ni ma - net, ma - net in ae -
cor - - - di - a e - - - ius et ve - ri - tas Do - mi - ni ma - net, ma - net in ae -

37

ma - net, ma - net in ae - ter - num, ma - net, ma - net in ae - ter - num et
ma - net, ma - net in ae - ter - num, ma - net, ma - net in ae - ter - num et
ma - net, ma - net in ae - ter - num et

44

ve - ri - tas Do - mi - ni ma - - - - - net, ma - - - - -
ve - ri - tas Do - mi - ni ma - net, ma - net in ae - ter - num, ma - net in ae - ter - num,
ve - ri - tas Do - mi - ni ma - net, ma - net in ae - ter - num, ma - net in ae - ter - num,

51

net in ae - ter - num. Glo - ri - a, glo - - - - -
net in ae - ter - num. Glo - ri - a, glo - - - - -
net in ae - ter - num. Glo - ri - a, glo - - - - -

59

ri-a, glo-ri-a, glo-ri-a Pa-tri, _____ glo-ri-a Pa-tri et Fi-li-o
 - ri-a, glo-ri-a, glo-ri-a Pa-tri, glo-ri-a, glo-ri-a Pa-tri et Fi-li-o et Spi-
 4 3 6 4 3 6 4 3

69

et Spi-ri-tu-i San-cto. Si-cut e-rat in prin-ci-pi-o, in prin-
 -ri-tu-i San-cto. Si-cut e-rat in prin-ci-pi-o, in prin-
 6 5 5 6

78

-ci-pi-o et nunc _____ et sem-per, nunc et sem-per et in sae-cu-la sae-cu-lo-
 -ci-pi-o et nunc _____ et sem-per, nunc et sem-per et in sae-cu-la sae-cu-lo-
 6 6 4 6 6 6 4 6

85

-rum. A - a - a - a -
 -rum. A - a - a - a -
 6 6 4 6 6 6 4 6

89

b - - - - men.
 b - - - - men.
 (b) 6 b b b

CD REVIEWS

MEDIEVAL CHANT

Canticum amantissimi: Gregorianischer Choral aus Messe und Officium, Orgelmusik des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts
Schola Resupina, dir. Isabell Köstler, organist Helene von Rechenberg 56' 17
Gramola Vienna 98907

Schola Resupina was founded by Isabell Köstler in 2004 as a school for women studying Gregorian chant, though it has also turned to early polyphony. Members of the ensemble are Kinga Földéyi, Doris Hintersteiner, Bomi Kim, Isabell Köstler, Joanna Kucharko and Sylvia Urdová. The recording took place under the auspices of The University of Music and Performing Arts in St Ursula's Church Vienna.

The singers blend well and the soloist, Bomi Kim produces a warm, pure sound, sometimes alternating with the organ. In the booklet notes Isabell Köstler observes how the Judaic texts of the Old Testament were adopted into Christian liturgy. Most of the music in this recording was based on verses from Psalm 44 [45], a song for the royal wedding, praising the king's appearance and grace, the perfumes and stringed instruments in his palace, and the richly coloured robes of the bride. There is detailed explanation of how this psalm was adapted for Marian feast days. Listeners are guided through *Speciosus forma, Diffusa est gratia, Specie tua, Propter veritatem* and *Vultum tuum* with attention drawn to liturgical significance, religious imagery, rhythm and musical features. *Vidi speciosum* from the Song of Solomon is added, as further illustration of a love theme contributing to Marian songs. The organ pieces are by Paul Hofhaimer (*Salve Regina*), Girolamo Frescobaldi (*Recercar* and *Hymnus Ave maris stella*) and Juan Bautista Cabanilles (*Ave maris stella*), and illustrate progressive degrees of complexity between 15th and 17th century styles. Renderings by Helene von Rechenberg and the singers of the familiar *Ave maris stella* were particularly joyful. Diana Maynard

MEDIEVAL

Anima mea Sacred Music of the Middle Ages
Ensemble Cosmedin 64' 39"
Naxos 8.572632

The Ensemble has two members, Stephanie and Christoph Haas, who specialise in

medieval and modern sacred music. Stephanie concentrates on vocal technique and Christoph uses his experience of world music to combine traditional and innovative elements in his composition and arrangements. One of his own compositions, *Salutatio Beatae Mariae Virginis*, based on a text by St Francis of Assisi, mingles unobtrusively with anonymous music from the 13th century and earlier. In the booklet notes Christoph argues a case for instrumental accompaniment, in early Christian domestic worship if not under the auspices of clerics in church. He accompanies Stephanie's alto tessitura with subtle instrumental sound, mentioning psaltery, the long-necked lute, bowed string instruments and bells as precedents arriving in Europe from Central Asia.

The programme includes an early Christian hymn, *Christe qui lux es et dies*, first documented before 534 in Milan; in its rendering with prolonged vowels and xylophone-like accompaniment it does indeed convey changes of light. The other pieces are less programmatic. The Ensemble gives a first performance since rediscovery of *Adorna thalamum, Immutemur habitu* and *Exaudi nos, Domine* from the Erfurt Ritual MS, which is dated 1301 and contains music associated with the Dominican mystic, Master Eckhart. Additional sources are St Gallen (after 1000), Paris (after 1150), Notre Dame (after 1200) and Regensburg (after 1250) for the canticle *Magnificat*. No such programme would be complete without Hildegard von Bingen's *O viriditas digitum Dei*. All are skilfully sung, and in one case recited, by Stephanie and one is left with the impression of extended Latin vowels on groups of notes and a timeless world of devotion.

Presentation of such specialist recordings is always problematic, when economy and scholarship must be balanced against each other. I had to don my special magnifying spectacles to read the cryptic notes with any ease, and I should have appreciated something more expansive. How important for listeners to Christian chant is translation of the Latin into English and German? Is the space allotted disproportional? But then, when the Latin itself is difficult to follow because of the extended vowels and the music is only a little differentiated in expression, where was and is the meaning to be found? Listeners may be able to supply the answer. Diana Maynard

15th CENTURY

Japart Le Maitre de "Fricasée": Secular Music of Jean Japart Lex Flamboyants, Michael Form 62' 15"
Christophorus CHR 77353
Busnoys, van Ghizeghem, Josquin, Obrecht, martini, de Vigne & anon

Jean Japart cuts an enigmatic figure in the musical world of the late 15th century. Although only minor instrumental pieces, often eccentrically quirky in style and purpose, and some chansons have survived, Japart appears to have won the respect of several of his august contemporaries, including Josquin. Whether a more ambitious sacred component to his musical output has gone missing or whether his frequent references to the music of others in his compositions endeared him to his fellows – a sort of early Renaissance networking – remains a mystery in the almost total absence of biographical details. These lively performances of his complete surviving works juxtaposed with works by his more famous contemporaries plays heavily on their quirkiness, but the impressive virtuosity of Les Flamboyants and in particular their vocalist Els Janssens-Vanmunster carries the day.

D. James Ross

Josquin Des Prez Missa Pange lingua The Choir of Westminster Cathedral, James O'Donnell 75' 40" (rec 1992)
Hyperion Helios CDH55374
+ *Planxit autem David, Vultum tuum*

Missa Pange lingua was the first Josquin mass I heard, getting to grips with it thanks to *Das Chorwerk*, that pioneering German series which began in 1929 with this Mass (now online). It is still one of the most popular, perhaps because the hymn melody is familiar, but also because of the clarity of the setting: there are few masses of the period where the listener is so aware of what is happening, aided by the transparency of the performance. Sometimes boys' choirs blend too closely with the men; here the different sound makes the lower parts more audible, and being sung up a minor third doesn't make the trebles too shrill. The other two pieces – David's lament for Saul and Jonathan and a series of nine motets performed simultaneously with the Mass in Milan – don't have the "handle" of a hymn tune, but

Planxit especially is worth hearing (and singing). This was and still is an outstanding recording: buy it if you don't have it already. And I really must make available the editions of *Planxit* and *Vultum* that I prepared for the recording nearly 20 years ago!

CB

Oswald von Wolkenstein *Fröhlich, zärtlich, lieplich...* Love songs Unicorn, Michael Posch 71' 17"

Raum Klang RK 2901

The disc opens with an accompaniment that suggests the band might be called "The Ministry of Silly Noises", but the jews' harp isn't omnipresent and the singers give Oswald's songs a fine performance. It strikes me odd that, although when borrowing from elsewhere, Oswald tends to reduce the number of parts, the director adds a third and even a fourth part to the two-part writing of the authoritative sources. The music relates to his role as lover rather than soldier, and the picture on the cover makes his face seem more attractive than usual – perhaps the right eye is winking! (I don't think the face has been touched up, but the superimposed flowers have some effect.) I wonder why the pitch of A=520 is significant or convenient. If you haven't had your fill of Oswald, this is certainly worth buying.

CB

Ballare et Danzare: Dances of 15th century Italy Mediva, Ann Allen dir

DHDS

This contains 21 dances, mostly from Domenico da Piacenza and Guglielmo Ebrea of Pesaro. The booklet has a page each on The Music and The Dances; for further information, you must wait for the forthcoming book of instruction based on the music on the CD. DHDS stands for Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society – I confused it with DFDS, by which we've travelled to the Continent. The early dance world used to be very factionalised when I had dealings with it some decades ago: I hope relationships are less fraught now. The music is certainly in good hands with Ann Allen's sextet, which manages to encompass both *haut* and *bas* and completely outshines the tapes that dancers used in the 1970s & '80s. I assume that the breaks and changes of tempo match the choreographies. The disc is available from DHDS Publications, 75 Bridgewater Road, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 1JB at £12 + £1.20 p & p; there's no information yet on www.dhds.org.uk

CB

In Mani dei Catalani: Music from Italian and Spanish songbooks from the mid-15th to the mid-16th century La Caravaggia, Lluís Coll i Trulls 67' 11"

Musiepoca MEPCD-002

The title of this CD refers to the Italian backlash against the ascendancy of Spanish influence in Italy through the Kingdom of Naples and the election of Borgias to the Papacy. This consort of wind instruments, cornetts, sackbuts, recorders, shawms and percussion raids a number of songbooks to provide a varied programme imaginatively interpreted, just as one could imagine wind players at the time would have done. The playing is of a very high standard and infectiously involving. Alongside big names such as Isaac, Encina and Escobar are a host of little-known but highly competent masters and many anonymous works. Delightfully, the recording is not shy about including the breathing of the players and the occasional mechanical click from a recorder key, which only adds to the charm and realism of these interpretations.

D. James Ross

such a comprehensive treatment being afforded our own musical heritage, although Edinburgh University's recent exhibition devoted to the Wode Partbooks with informative catalogue and accompanying CD is to be warmly applauded. D. James Ross

16th CENTURY

Eccard Fröhlich will ich Singen: sacred and secular songs Staats- und Domchor Berlin, Lautten Compagney Berlin, Kai-Uwe Jirka 58' 10"

Carus 83.449

I thought I was playing the wrong CD when I heard a drum leading into *Ein feste Burg* – there is not enough tonic and dominant in the second half of the chorale for it to make any sense, irrespective of whether it is appropriate anyway. In other respects, though, the mixture of instruments and singers works well, though I get the impression that the performers are being just a bit too obviously well-drilled; single voices would feel more comfortable in this mixed context and some of the detached singing sounds a bit too jaunty. But it's an interesting and varied programme beginning with settings of four familiar chorales, followed by eleven secular pieces and concluding with three more church pieces. If you are playing the CD without following the texts, don't be blame your player at the lead-in to track 12. There is music that deserves to be known by singers outside Germany; strangely, Carus-Verlag has a list of cheap individual items by Eccard, but none overlap with their CD: no doubt that will have been remedied during the 400th anniversary of his death in 1611!

CB

Eccard Preussischer Festlieder Vocal Concert Dresden, Capella de la Torre, Peter Kopp 66' 47"

Carus 83.265

+music by Stobaeus

The publication of the collection *Preussischen Festlieder* by Johannes Stobaeus in 1642 featuring music by himself and his teacher Johannes Eccard, himself a pupil of Lassus, is a remarkable testimony to the singing skills of North German congregations, as this ambitious part-music was intended to be sung in churches up and down the Duchy of Prussia. This catchy repertoire, performed here using voices and a range of wind instruments, including delightfully skittish cornetts, helps to sketch in the musical context of

greater talents such as Heinrich Schütz but is also of musical value in its own right.

D. James Ross

Parsons Sacred Music The Cardinall's Musick, Andrew Carwood 70' 07" Hyperion CDA6784

Ave Maria, Credo quod redemptor, Deliver me from mine enemies, Domine quis habitat? Holy Lord God Almighty, Libera me Domine, Magnificat, O bone Jesu, Peccantem me quotidie, Retribue seruo tuo, Solemnis urgebat dies

Parsons is best-known for his *Ave Maria*, which I first sang in the late 1960s a decade before it was published. It is, sensibly, the closing piece here: it sounds rather more modern (or perhaps more continental), at least until the Amen, than his other Latin works, as, to a lesser extent, are the two English anthems. His known working life ran from 1561/1 to 25 Jan 1571 (Byrd succeeded him at the Chapel Royal a month later), but most of the Latin music presumably dates from before 1560. Some of the texts, however, were set by several composers and may have been intended for social music-making; three of the works survive in the secular Dow Partbooks (see *EMR* 138, p.2) The other work I know well, *O bone Jesu*, doesn't stand out quite as much as it used to, but it's a magnificent composition. Much as I like clashing accidentals (which are abundant and mostly acceptable) I'm not convinced by the solo D D[#]CDA opening, which produces a sharp/natural clash for a semibreve when the other four voices are added. The singing is confident, but some of the pieces with less obvious incidents feel a bit rushed. New editions are provided for the music (so don't expect to hear the reconstructions in *ECCM* 40, Paul Doe's edition of the nine Latin works). Strongly recommended for the music as well as the performance, and the booklet note, by the conductor, is excellent. CB

Schuyt Madrigals, Pavanes & Galliards Camerata Trajectina 60' 18" Globe GLO 6068

A man lauded as "the greatest musician Leiden ever produced" may perhaps hardly seem worthy of attention, but in recording this collection of songs and instrumental works by Cornelis Schuyt (1557-1616), Camerata Trajectina has opened a revealing window on the corporate arts in Renaissance Holland. The musical equivalent of the vivid Dutch paintings of this period of lacemakers' guilds and town councils, Schuyt's music served the mundane purpose of entertaining the local dignitaries

and celebrating their achievements. However, like the paintings, Schuyt's music is not half bad. Having trained in Italy and then working the rest of his life in the heart of a region which for a century and a half had produced the finest composers in all of Europe, he clearly knew a thing or two about composition. His madrigals are fresh and imaginative, his instrumental dances highly competent and original. In short, this occasional musician more than earned his handsome fees by producing music of a very high order. The performances by Camerata Trajectina's singers are sensitive and expressive, while the recorder and viol consorts are also beautifully tasteful. D. James Ross

Victoria Missa De Beata Maria Virgine, Missa Surge propera, Salve regina Westminster Cathedral Choir, Martin Baker 67' 58" Hyperion CDA67891

The Victoria quatercentenary would not really have been complete without a contribution from Westminster and here they are with two lesser-known masses and two complementary motets, one of them the model on which the second mass is founded. The virtues of their singing are well-known and many – rich tone, a great feeling for line, fine blend and near-flawless intonation (though one final chord is less than beautiful). The biggest vice is that of the all-male cathedral choir as an institution – the choral sound is top heavy. I also retain reservations about the presentation of renaissance masses as 'a straight-through sing'. The *Missa De Beata Virgine* works better in this regard because of the varied modes of the plainchant melodies on which it is based. The inclusion of some chant propers amid the movements of *Missa Surge* would have been to its advantage, I feel. The booklet is Hyperion's usual thorough and informative job, though the printing on the back of the review copy is a bit smudged. David Hansell

Our Lady: Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks The Byrd Ensemble, Markdavin Obenza

Scribe Records SRCD 001

Merbecke Ave Dei patris filia, Ludford Salve regina, Pasche Magnificat, Tallis Ave rosa sine spinis (from www.scribemusic.com/records)

The four pieces here come from the Henrician set of partbooks at Peterhouse, Cambridge's oldest college – there are also two 17th-century sets. They were written

for Canterbury Cathedral as part of the choir's refurbishment when the monastic establishment was replaced by a secular foundation. Unusually, this was musically a positive reformation, resulting in a full musical establishment, even if the music itself mostly came from Oxford. The repertoire wasn't the four-square, four-part style that was to come a few years later but the lavish and exuberant masses and antiphons of the first part of the century.

The set of part-books is incomplete, but the gaps can mostly be covered by other sources or skilful patching by sensitive editors, as Nick Sandon has done here. In the excellent booklet (except that white on blue doesn't work in all lights), he gives a clear introduction and thorough notes to each piece, using the extra space available from the absence of non-English notes – I suppose it's unlikely that many people who don't understand English will buy this anyway. Nick raises the question of whether the significant composers (Tallis and Ludford) are necessarily better piece-by-piece than the "lesser" ones – something the listener might think about. Tallis's *Gaude gloriosa* is generally thought superior to *Ave rosa sine spina*; but is there any need to make a direct comparison when listening to it? If *Gaude gloriosa* didn't exist, would *Ave rosa* still be found wanting! Pasche may be an unfamiliar name and Merbecke perhaps still known only for his Anglican plainsong. But these four tracks are all immensely impressive, and the singers as good as the Seattle singers I used to praise. The Tudor Choir, directed by Doug Fullington. The only complaint: there is enough space on the CD for some Fayrfax or Taverner. CB
The biog of Nick Sandon must be a very old one: when was there last a Test Match on the BBC Light Programme? My memory is vague, but the Wikipedia dates of 1945-67 seem right.

Tabarinades Les Boréades, Francis Colpron 59' 00" Atma Classique ACD2 2658

Music by Arcadelt, Beaulieu, Boësset, Caietain, Caroubel, della Casa, Créquillon, Dumanoir, d'Estrée, Guédron, Lupo, Planson, Péchon, Praetorius & Ruffo

This is a throw-back to the old days of the early instrument revival when the new sounds and newly investigated repertoires were shown off in programmes which sometimes consisted of a vast multitude of very short pieces to which, if in interpretative doubt, a fast and high 'improvised' recorder descant and assorted percussion could be added. This programme is not quite like that, but that is its

underlying spirit. The recital explores music that could have been heard in the Parisian street theatres of the early 1600s, though I doubt that the arrangements (a key word, used by the artists) were ever this sophisticated (more *Carols for Choirs* than *New Oxford Book of Carols*) or, in the case of the more delicate versions, would have been audible in the street. But it makes for agreeable listening if not necessarily a representation of anything that ever actually happened in early 17th century Paris or anywhere else. *David Hansell*

17th CENTURY

Biber *The Sacred Mysteries* Leah Gale Nelson vln, Daniel Swenberg theorbo, Dongsok Shin org 125' 38" (2 CDs) Lyrachord LEMS 8079

After having to review several versions of these monumental pieces with kaleidoscope continuo sections, Leah Gale Nelson's take on the "Mystery Sonatas" is refreshingly straightforward. She only uses two violins (reserving one for the extremely awkward tunings of sonatas 7-9 and 12), and is accompanied by an organ which gives the harmonic support and a theorbo whose bass strings help lend the continuo line definition and whose upper registers supply linking passages and some harmonic interest. Don't imagine for a moment that this "return to basics" means that the interpretations are dull and characterless – nothing could be further from the truth. The theorist is not afraid to strum his strings when required, and Nelson does not shy away from vibrato and other improvised ornaments. The organist has no room for display, but reveals his insight into the music by the way he allows phrases space to breathe – no holding notes for 100% of the given note value here! All in all, though Walter Reiter's performances still remain to be bettered, this set is very impressive and I can imagine returning to it in the coming months. *BC*

Good to see Dongsok 's name on a CD: he and his wife were the first people I met in the USA – I stayed at their flat – but I've had more contact with Gwen, including the Berkeley Vespers event 18 months ago.

Buxtehude *Opera Omnia XIV Vocal Works* Miriam Meyer, Siri Karoline Thornhill, Bettina Pahn, Dorothee Wohlgemuth, Bogna Bartosz, Jörg Dürmüller, Klaus Mertens SSSSATB, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra, Ton Koopman 71' 19" BuxWV 9, 38, 39, 44, 45, 55, 57 & 58

The cast list for this CD is longer than normal because the performances were recorded between 2007 and 2011. There are never more than three singers per work: there are two solos for bass (the inimitable Klaus Mertens in fine voice), and two for soprano, two trios for a pair of sopranos with bass and two more for alto, tenor and bass. All are accompanied, mostly by a pair of violins, but also pairs of cornetti and trumpets, and once by that harmonically supercharged Buxtehude specialty – three violins. Personally I find his music satisfying when he confines himself to a ground bass; in spite of what lesser composers might think a limitation placed on their imagination, Buxtehude (like Bruhns and Pachelbel) finds a seemingly limitless number of ways to build up a beautifully contrapuntal texture above it, which is both melodically and harmonically satisfying. I have wanted so much to be rapturous about this series, but I have not been able to reconcile the wonderful instrumental playing with the choice of solo voices – none of the sopranos is particularly to my taste (especially having heard some of the pieces with Swedish soprano, Anna Jobrant). Occasionally, too, there was too much input from the continuo player – I can understand why one might want to add sevenths to the harmony of a ciaccona as it progressed, but doing so near the beginning (and thereby drawing attention away from either the singer or the two violinists) is slightly dubious (to me!) *BC*

Cavalli *La virtù de' strali d'Amore* Giacinta Nicotra Caprice, etc, Gemma Bertagnolli Pleasure, etc, Juan Sancho Pallante, Christiana Arcari Erabena, Roberta Invernizzi Cleira, etc, Marco Scavazza Jupiter, etc, Filippo Adami Meonte, Monica Piccinini Cleandra, etc, Filippo Morace Darete, etc, Roberto Abbondanza Saturn, etc, Donatella Lombardi Ericlea, etc. Europa Galante, Fabio Biondi 110' 04" Dynamic 2.110614-15 (DVD 2 discs)

Premiered at Venice's San Cassiano theatre in 1642, *La virtù de' strali d'Amore* is the first of the ten operas Cavalli produced to a libretto by Giovanni Faustini. A complex plot involves the amours of both humans and gods, manipulated as ever by a mischievous Eros, who is himself taught a lesson before all is resolved. It's a scenario that provided Cavalli with plenty of scope for the insidiously sensual melodic writing at which he excelled, although initial impressions are that the piece is perhaps not as strong as other

Faustini operas that have achieved modern revival, *Giasone* or *Ormindo*, for example.

The present DVD stems from a production given at the Teatro Malibran in Venice in October 2008. It transpires to be yet another of those dreary trawls through the murky and cliché-infested waters of contemporary opera production. *La virtù* is set mostly in Cyprus. So what do we see? Pleasing Mediterranean vistas sparkling with sunlight? Wrong. We see one of those fashionable minimalist white cubes, with lighting so dim it would cause an outcry in an underground car park. The setting seems to be vaguely 1920s, so there's lots of flapper dresses, shoulder holsters from which guns are produced every time the subtitles refer to a sword, and, oh yes, épées replacing Eros' arrows. Among other delights is a gin swigging Psyche, and also... but why bother?

On the performance side things are better, although some of the acting would raise giggles at a village hall drama, and too much of the singing is either inadequate or unidiomatic (or both). The latter criticism also applies to the heavily accented legato string playing under Biondi, whose band also includes cornetts, trombones and recorders, none of which are likely to have been employed by Cavalli. Odd rays of light do penetrate this metaphorical and literal gloom, above all the presence and singing of Roberta Invernizzi as the haughty Cleria and a beguilingly sensuous Venus, and Monica Piccinini as the wayward Eros. But ultimately, I fear, the pleasures provided by such contributions sink beneath a Venetian swamp of banality and mediocrity, inducing a yearning nostalgia for those Glyndebourne Cavalli productions of Peter Hall all those years ago. *Brian Robins*

Joan Baptista Comes *Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae* Victoria Musicae, Josep R. Gil-Tarrega 50'49" La Ma de Guido LMG 2099

Of all the excellent Spanish composers of the 17th century, Comes relies most heavily on the use of polychoral techniques, and these settings of the Lamentations are no exception. The most spectacular of the settings deploys eleven voices in three choirs (SAT SSAB SATB), making available a rich pallet of contrasting textures. As with Victoria in his three-choir *Missa Laetatus sum*, Comes makes free use of voice groupings, uniting on one occasion the four sopranos from his three choirs and on another the three altos. Even the smaller-scale four- and five-part settings have the richness of sound, which is very

much Comes' trademark. The performances, in which the voices are accompanied by double bass, organ and Spanish Baroque harp are spacious, beautifully paced and completely convincing. *D. James Ross*

Danyel Songs to Mistress Anne Greene *A Garden of Eloquence*, Katherine Hawnt voice, Ziv Braha lute, Uri Smilanksy bass viol (guests Evelyn Tubb S, Dino Lüthy & Dan Dunkelblum TT, Alexandra Polin tenor viol, Michal Gondko bass lute) 57' 37" Etcetera KTC 1423

To begin, I will stick my neck out – this is without doubt the finest recording of a book of English lute songs, by any performers, that I have ever heard. And it represents a Rubicon moment for performance practice. Soprano Katherine Hawnt (credited modestly as 'voice', matching the title page of the book) and her colleagues have produced something very special here.

There is currently a very welcome trend towards performing lute songs by employing a less-than-completely-projected voice – put simply, singing using less volume, deliberately making the vocal line sound less forced, creating a more natural-sounding voice, making a closer match with the intimate sounds and volume of the lute, and therefore allowing a much more expressive delivery of the text.

As we all know, thanks to the expectations and standards of modern concert conditions, today's jobbing singers are obliged to perform almost everything in the vast repertoire, a far wider range of music than was expected at any period before. One day it might be Schubert, or Vaughan Williams, the next Tallis, then Schoenberg, Handel, Mahler, Bach, Britten, Verdi, then back to Byrd and so on. To accommodate this, the style of singing and presentation adopted for nearly all chamber music has inevitably evolved into a kind of all-purpose Academy Lieder voice. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach, of course, but so often it can result in star-singer syndrome¹, and many singers have been reluctant to scale down, even by a small amount, for lute song lest they lose their hard-won trademark beauty of tone quality. Consequently (as an extreme example), something like Dame Janet's high-octane performance of Dowland's 'Come again' becomes more like a command than an entreaty!

I am delighted to be living at a time when a complete re-thinking of how these songs may have been performed is taking place. It really is quite a radical shift in

approach, and I realise that it may not be entirely to everyone's taste at first, but the result heard in these Danyel performances is stunning. The text is allowed to be expressed clearly, with every nuance of the often complex poetry given proper weight and balance – indeed, sometimes the effect sounds much closer to normal expressive speech than song. This is surely more appropriate than mere belting, no matter how beautiful the sound. There would be no necessity to project lute songs in a normal, everyday Jacobean context – where would they need to project to? They didn't do the Wigmore Hall back then.

'Ah, but', the singing teachers will say, 'you still need to produce a properly supported and beautiful tone to woo your audience'. Well, she does. It's lovely. Nevertheless, these wonderful songs (which, heretically, I consider to be the very best – even better than Dowland) are very demanding vocally, and Miss Hawnt occasionally has to pull out a few extra stops to tackle some of the songs – but what a technique!

One can never just croon through Danyel, but this lighter approach serves the music so well that it is difficult to see how any serious singers can continue with the 'one size fits all' louder Lieder style of singing for lute songs after this release. Yet this recording is certainly not *'Lute Song Lite'*. There have been other successful pioneers of this subtler approach recently, such as Donna Stewart and Ron Andrico, Jenny Melia and Chris Goodwin, and, of course, the often unfairly-maligned Mr. Sting (who is credited as executive producer of this disc); but I certainly hope that this more intimate, conversational approach will now enter the mainstream of lute song performance, not just on disc, but in concert performance too. Miss Hawnt's accompanists Ziv Braha and Uri Smilansky on lute and viol respectively deserve equal praise for their parts in this ensemble project. That recording this book is clearly a labour of love for the trio shines through every song.

Because I know this songbook from the very inside, as it were, I do have one or two minor quibbles, but they are very trivial and excusable. There are a couple of mis-readings of notes, for example. A Garden of Eloquence have clearly employed the facsimile of the songbook, which demands a lot of interpretative decision making, although I was a little surprised by their choice of syllabic underlay in a few places. But all these tiny details are their decisions, working from Danyel's often ambiguous printed score, and they have

made them boldly, and more importantly, have arrived at each of them only by a lot of trial and effort in rehearsal. It is certainly not as easy working from facsimiles of lute song books as is often suggested! The Danyel book, more than most others, contains a lot of awkward details and contradictions in the 1606 printed musical text, all of which need to be resolved before it can be performed. Several times they perform exactly what is printed, even when it is clearly a textual misprint,¹ because that is what an early 17th century singer would probably have done. So it's 'warts and all'. The only available modern edition of the Danyel songs (Stainer and Bell, 1970, ed. E.H. Fellowes, revised by David Scott) is a real bungle, riddled with errors and poor editorial decisions, making it virtually unusable, so using the facsimile is the only possible approach. Full marks.

For some reason the Eloquent Gardeners chose to present the final vocal ensemble item in the book as a duet, rather as Fellowes arranged it in his 1926 edition, and not in the more effective 4-part version that Danyel intended. This is puzzling, since they employ their guest singers for the one other 'choral' number. But all these are very trivial nit-pickings in such a wonderful reading of a very important indeed English song collection.

When reviewing the recent re-issue of the Consort of Musike's Danyel disc in *EMR*, I foolishly stated that it was 'difficult to imagine these songs performed much better than they are here'. Got that one wrong, didn't I?

David Hill

and another, corroborating review

Regular readers who are used to me wittering on about vocal vibrato will not be surprised that I was thrilled to hear a delightful 'early music' voice – that of soprano Katharine Hawnt who, with Ziv Braha, lute, and Uri Smilansky, viol, make up the group 'A Garden of Eloquence'. They were formed in 2006 specifically to perform the music of the surprisingly little known John Danyel at the Three Choirs Festival to celebrate the 400th anniversary of his birth. Their musical connection dates back to studies in the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, that power-

¹ In one instance (no. 19) the final words of the poem don't actually rhyme in the alto and bass setting, but GoE's singers deliberately sing these wrong words against the two Canto lines singing the *correct* printed words! This may be going a teeny bit too far, for surely Jacobean performers would have quickly spotted the mistake and corrected it?

house of early music learning. Danyel was music tutor to Anne Grene, the daughter of an Oxfordshire family, and these songs were written for her. As Anthony Rooley points out in his booklet note, the pieces may well have been written as a form of 'song cycle' building on the story of Apollo and Daphne – and many of the songs contain references to her surname, not least in the frequent appearance of Chloris (Greek for green). John Danyel's accompaniments are particularly noteworthy, with advanced writing for both lute and viol, played here with musical sensitivity. But for me, it is the exquisite singing of Katharine Hawnt that really sells this CD. Singing with perfect intonation and a beautifully clear and direct tone, she brings an impressive emotional depth to Danyel's touching texts. She is joined by some guests for the last couple of tracks. The CDs producer is Anthony Rooley, and the executive producer is Sting – a rather nice pairing.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Muffat Armonico Tributo, Florilegium Primum Ars Antiqua Austria, Gunar Letzbor 140' 38" (2 CDs)
Pan Classics PC 10253 (rec. 2000/1998)

This is a very welcome re-packaging of two excellent sets from the end of the last century. The difference between the two recordings is interesting. In the earlier (the not very often heard *Florilegium Primum*), the violas are far more prominent and the five-part textures clearer – in comparison, the violins are far more the focus in *Armonico Tributo*. Don't misunderstand me – both sets are beautifully played (though I'm not entirely convinced that I wanted suddenly to hear a recorder in one piece) but the sound worlds in which they exist are oddly different.

BC

M. Praetorius Christmas Music Westminster Cathedral Choir, The Parley of Instruments, David Hill 49' 13"
Hyperion Helios CDH55446 (rec. 1986)
Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen, Nun helft mir Gottes Güte, Nun komm der Heiden Heiland, Puer natus in Bethlehem, Quem pastores, Vom Himmel hoch, Wie schön leuchtet & dances from *Terpsichore*

Well worth reissuing. The music lies between the simple settings of chorales, of which Praetorius published so many, and the large-scale, multi-choral pieces like the 20-parts + six trumpets *In dulci jubilo* and the virtuosic *Wachet auf*. This is immensely attractive and pleasing music, fit for any Christmas listening or performing. And

hearing two groups of dances from *Terpsichore* so stylishly played on strings is still, after a quarter-century, rare. Under 50' seems bad value, but the programme feels right at that length.

CB

Purcell Hail! bright Cecilia, Who can from joy refrain? The Choir of New College, Oxford, The King's Consort, Robert King Hyperion CDH55327 76' 56" (rec 1989)

The 1692 ode was a set work for my Scottish A Level equivalent exam way back in 1979, and still I can sing along with all the movements (often embarrassingly, if truth be told); my fingers twiddle along with "Hark, each tree" and "The am'rous flute" still has a most beguiling effect after all these years. I have no recollection at all of the performers we were required to listen to, but I do remember it being my introduction to the counter-tenor. There was, of course, no notion of the "high tenor" in those days. Here at least that is addressed. Though the timbre of various voices are not entirely to my tastes, I cannot but admire the quality of the performances – both the singing (solo and tutti) and the playing is marvellous. St Cecilia and Purcell would be delighted, I'm sure – as was the Duke of Gloucester with his 1695 birthday ode – less well-known music, perhaps, but certainly no let-up in the high class rendition.

BC

Ferveur & Extase Stéphanie Oustrac ms, Amarillis 64' 18"
Ambronay AMY027
Cavalli, Fagioli, Falconieri, Biagio Marini, Monteverdi, Purcell, Luigi Rossi, Alessandro Scarlatti & Barbara Strozzi

Like all Ambronay issues, this lovely disc has its genesis in a concert given at the eponymous festival, although in this case it is not a live recording but one made shortly after the concert in 2010. Not the least of its attractions is an intelligently planned programme, in which vocal items are interspersed with apposite instrumental pieces. Thus when the fantasy on Luigi Rossi's *Les pleurs d'Orphée* steals in on the end of the almost unbearable poignancy of d'Oustrac's whispered, barely heard 'a Dio' at the conclusion of the lament from Cavalli's *La Didone*, it seems more than just a perfect complement to what we have just heard, but a part of it. The fervour and ecstasy of the CD's title applies to the twin theme: Dido and the Virgin as seen through the eyes of 17th century composers, although it has to be said that Dido and fervour take much the

lion's share, especially as one of the only two pieces devoted to Mary is Monteverdi's *Il pianto della Madonna*, itself a sacred *contrafactum* of the lament of another deserted lady, Arianna, and as such rather more fervent than ecstatic.

Stéphanie d'Oustrac is one of the brightest stars among the glittering constellation of current young French singers. Not only is her rich mezzo, sumptuous yet pure across an evenly produced range, a wondrous instrument in itself, but she also brings to all she sings an intensity born of the drama training she received before becoming a singer. This makes her ideally suited to articulate long 17th recitative texts such as those of Monteverdi and Cavalli mentioned above. But she is also highly effective in cantabile arias such as Alessandro Scarlatti's 'Caro nome', one of several pieces from his *Didone delirante* (1696), an opera unknown to me, but on the evidence here well worthy of further exploration. Finally d'Oustrac gives us Purcell's *Dido*, singing the lament so affectingly that she should be snapped up for a complete *Dido and Aeneas* without further ado. I try to be very sparing in my use of the much-devalued word 'great'; this disc unavoidably warrants the epithet.

Brian Robins

An alternative review is worth printing, particularly for the last sentence.

This programme is a strong but complex conceit and conception which the presentation could do more to project. The track list at the start of the booklet does not make it clear where successive items are movements of the same work (this is handled better in the text/translation section) and the rather burbly notes should have included specific references to tracks to give them a bit more focus and us a bit more comprehension. But the music is all very thoughtfully performed. Stéphanie d'Oustrac is a fine dramatic singer and even though some of these pieces sound a little on the low side for her she gives them her all. This ensemble has won prizes and they are certainly very polished in the instrumental items if sometimes just a little bland. Perhaps perversely, one area I really don't like may be an attempt to de-bland – the fidgety and unlikely changes of continuo instrumentation. All of which brings me to the reason I will never play the last track of the disc again. Dido's *Lament* is sung with great involvement and then we get to the climax – the instrumental postlude. The decision to add a recorder to the top line of this miracle of harmony

and counterpoint may be the worst interpretative decision anyone has ever made.

David Hansell

Il labirinto della chitarra Guitar music from 17th-century Italy Private Musicke, Pierre Pitzl 59' 04"

Accent ACC 24239

Music by Calvi, Corbetta, Foscarini, Granata, Matteis, Pellegrini, Sanz & Valdambrini

Most of the music of this enjoyable CD was originally published for guitar solo. However, taking their cue from Giovanni Battista Granata, who included some ensemble music in his guitar collections, and from Francesco Corbetta, who is known to have toured with an ensemble of musicians, the members of Private Musicke join in with other instruments. At first I felt that the heavy beat from the various percussion instruments, the solid bass notes from a theorbo, violoncello and colascione (tracks 9, 25 and 30), and the thicker texture from two extra guitars (track 9), would drown the delicate tones of Pierre Pitzl's baroque guitar. However, they play with suitable restraint, adding plenty of oomph, and creating an interesting variety of textures. The five pieces by Gaspar Sanz, including his evergreen *Canarios* (track 30) benefit from the group's carefully orchestrated accompaniment, with deep notes from the colascione and lots of enthusiastic strumming. Equally jolly is the *Canarios* of Carlo Calvi, punctuated by occasional pings from a tiny little bell. Pitzl is left more to his own devices in pieces like Corbetta's charming Sarabande (track 18) and Giovanni Paolo Foscarini's attractive Passacaglia (track 19). Most impressive is his virtuosic performance of Corbetta's *Caprice de Chaconne*, an entertaining showpiece with sparkling scales and exciting rhythms. I felt it was a pity the others joined in noisily towards the end of this piece, but no doubt it would go down well in performance. Three pieces by Granata, including a dramatic Tocatto, are played as solos. Pitzl plays a prelude and two arias by Nicola Matteis from *Le False consonanze della musica*, published first in Italy c.1680, and reprinted as *The False Consonances of Musick* in England in 1682. The first two are played as solos, but the second aria was published with an optional figured bass, an invitation too good for Pitzl's friends to refuse. Other composers represented in the CD are Domenico Pellegrini and Fernando Valdambrini. Pitzl's playing is neat and expressive, enhanced with beautifully executed ornaments and

well shaped phrasing. On a personal note I was amused to see that Jesus Fernandez Baena's theorbo was made by Martin Bowers in 1984. So was mine. Stewart McCoy

Il pastor fido Madrigali amorosi Il Complesso Barocco, Alan Curtis 65' 56"

Pan Classics PC 10257 (rec. 1993)

Music by d'India, Marenzio & Monteverdi

This highly conventional collection of madrigals, recorded in 1993, is very much of its time. Featuring the three big names in the Italian madrigal firmament, Sigismondo d'India, Claudio Monteverdi and Luca Marenzio, the CD contrasts settings of the same texts, several from Guarini's *Il Pastor fido*, by the three masters. Employing a consort of six voices with violins, cello, triple harp, theorbo and harpsichord, it recalls similar recordings made in the '90s by the Consort of Musicke and the Taverner Choir. The singing and direction are expressive and eloquent, although I found Alan Curtis's omnipresent harpsichord a little grating. D. James Ross

L'Arte del Violino in Italia c. 1650-1700

Ensemble Aurora, Enrico Gatti 136' 59" Glossa gcd 921206 (2 CDs)

Music by degli Antoni, Berardi, GM Bononcini, Cazzati, Colombi, Gabrielli, Jacchini, Guerrieri, Mannelli, Pandolfi Mealli, Torelli, Uccellini, Vitali & Viviani

These two discs, which are packed with interesting music by composers who are all too rarely heard, were recorded in 1990 and 1992. I have been unable to establish if this is their first commercial release. In any case, I have no hesitation in recommending them whole-heartedly. The range of music is astonishing, and it is really interesting to listen to it having absorbed the information from the booklet, which argues for a broadening of our understanding of "the Italian style" as simply a competition for supremacy between Venice, Rome and Naples; there were many more centres of excellence, all with their own champions. On the first disc, Gatti is joined by Hendrike ter Brugge, Mara Galassi and Guido Morini (cello, harp, and keyboards respectively), while the ensemble on the second includes Odile Edouard, Alain Gervreau and Guido Morini (violin, cello and keyboards). I have little to say about the performances, except that they are without exception excellent – beautifully recorded in a warm acoustic that captures the fine balance between all the performers. Perhaps the single most interesting piece of the set is Colombi's

Scordatura à violino solo senza basso (Ciaccona), which Gatti plays (like two pieces by Giovanni Maria Bononcini) on violino piccolo, though with no explanation of why in the booklet. Colombi certainly sounds like a composer worth investigating. BC

La Belle Danse: Ballets Anciens & Modernes, Capriccio Stravagante, Les 24 Violons, Skip Sempé

Paradiso PA0010

Overtures and Dances by Lully, Marais, Muffat, Brade, Praetorius, Rossi

This somewhat amorphous collection is organised into four 'suites' – the first of overtures and dances by Marin Marais and Lully alternately, the second entirely of Lully's music, the third dances by Brade, Praetorius and Rossi, and the last by Lully and Muffat. The ensemble consists of the true five-part French band: *dessus de violon, haute-contre de violon, taille de violon, quinte de violon* and *basse de violon* (6.4.4.4.6), with flutes (i.e. recorders), oboes and bassoon where appropriate, and theorbo and harpsichord continuo. The French string band, with its single melodic line, three different sizes of 'viola' and the larger bass violin, gives an altogether richer timbre than the Italian texture that were more used to hearing. Two fine chaconnes conclude the second and fourth collections. The third takes us back some years to the world of the early seventeenth century – a *Paduana* of William Brade, some short French dances from *Terpsichore* and a *Fantasia* by Rossi. The Lully suites contain two short operatic excerpts, but no texts and translations are to be found in the booklet notes, nor did the notes give any information about the music itself. As a 'taster' of the true rich sonority of the French instrumental texture, this is an excellent disc, though the listener will have to follow the track listings carefully to fully appreciate the items being played.

Ian Graham-Jones

Mythos 116 : Psalm 116: compositions from the 17th and 21st century Calmus Ensemble Carus 83.366 59' 37"

The inspiration for this CD is the decision by the Jena merchant Burckhard Grossmann in 1616 to commission settings of Psalm 116 from 16 composers. These included pieces by Schütz, Schein and the less well-known Nicolaus Erich, all of which are recorded here. In 2010 the Calmus Ensemble revived the commission, and have also recorded here settings of Psalm 116 by two contem-

porary composers from central Germany, Bernd Franke and Steffen Schleiermacher. They both make interesting and inventive use of the five voices, and by alternating contemporary and historical settings and linking them with plainchant verses from the psalm the Calmus Ensemble provide a varied and challenging programme. They have a rather processed sound, singing quite close to the microphone, which perhaps suits the modern works rather better than the earlier pieces, but you soon get used to it. It would be interesting some time to hear a recording of all sixteen settings from 1616 – or do we have to wait until 2016? *D. James Ross*

Tromba Hispanica Batallas y Canciones
Barocktrompeten Ensemble Berlin, Johann
Plietzsch 66' 09"

Raumklang RK 2906

Biber *Sonata à7; Cabezón Pavana con su glosa;*
de Heredia *Pange lingua espagnol; Kapsberger*
pieces for theorbo & Bc; Murcia *La Tarantella;*
Sanz *Folia + seven pieces under the title "Clarines y Trompetas" + anon.*

I was a bit worried by the prospect of 66 minutes of music for trumpets with timps and plucked and organ continuo. But it is a much more varied disc than it might appear, with plenty of continuo improvisations on grounds, sometimes with delicate trumpet involvement. Had I not just reviewed *Hombres de Maíz* (p. 48), I would have been even more excited. Much of the trumpet music is arranged from "proper" music, and the Biber is scored for seven (symbolic number?) trumpets, so this isn't a parade of fanfares but a coherent programme. I still think it'd a bit long for continuous listening, but so what, you can turn it off or Hoover your house. The grounds work better here than in *Hombres de Maíz* because they sometimes include proper melodies. I'm just slightly worried that the trumpet/continuo balance is a bit artificial. The booklet is very informative. *CB*

LATE BAROQUE

Bach Cantatas 49 Ich habe meine Zuversicht
(Cantatas from Leipzig 1727-29) Rachel
Nicholls, Robin Blaze, Gerd Türk, Peter
Kooij *SctTB*, Bach Collegium Japan,
Masaaki Suzuki 72' 07"

BIS-SACD-1891

BWV 156, 159, 171 & 188

This set of cantatas in Suzuki's great recording project are linked by the common theme of Picander texts, but

only the fourth – 171 – has anything like what we have come to regard as a conventional structure with an opening chorus, a succession of arias interlaced with recitatives, and a concluding chorale. The best known is probably 159, *Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen Jerusalem*, which opens with a dialogue between Jesus (B) and the Soul (A); I was taken aback slightly at the very *inegales* semiquavers in the otherwise admirable Peter Kooij's singing here, but the other dialogue movement, an alto aria with a soprano chorale, is splendidly balanced, and the famous *Es ist vollbracht* aria has the bass and oboe beautifully matched. But does the tempo have to increase when the semiquavers start? Is it not possible to find a tempo where the quavers of the oboe lament feel slow enough, but the semiquavers feel right? One of the discoveries we made when we first began working on Bach Cantatas in the very early days of period instruments was not only did the voice and obbligato instrument balance naturally like a trio sonata, but that the tempi set themselves, and could run through a whole aria with different sections unchanged if you got singer and players to listen carefully to how phrasing and breathing worked for each other.

But the balances here are as good as usual from Suzuki, and that is certainly helped by the admirably matched quartet of single voices, who are expanded to twelve for the concerted numbers with a string section of 3:3:2:1:1. The playing is so perfect – like the opening sinfonia to 156 – that I caught myself almost missing some of the inequalities of the natural oboe scales. Going back to listen to the same cantatas on the Harnoncourt/ Leonhardt pioneer recordings of the 1970s and 80s, with their sometimes exceedingly 'natural' tuning, I found a degree of excitement and unpredictability which I rather miss from these very perfect recordings. As an illustration of what I mean, listen to the first and last movements of 171, a cantata for New Year's day 1729, which has trumpets and drums. Of course, if you use discrete finger holes, the trumpets play perfectly 'in tune'; but you lose some of the fundamental resonance that builds up acoustically in the gap between the high tromba parts and the low timpani when you play the actual natural harmonics, (see Mike Diprose's article in the October *EMR* which was arguing for this kind of approach). I'm not saying one is right and the other wrong: there are swings and roundabouts here. But in a very controlled 'modern' period perfor-

mance as Suzuki's are, the general impression is sometimes a little bland, and I long for some of the tensions that occur in the best live performances of these difficult works, which are tricky to perform convincingly unless they emerge out of their liturgical context.

But it's a fine series, and has challenged us all with its clarity, musicianship and balance. *David Stancliffe*

Bach Weihnachts-oratorium Rachel Harnisch, Anke Vondung, Maximilian Schmitt, Christian Immel *SmSTBB*, Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin; Peter Dijkstra
BR Klassik DVD Video 900502 (2 DVDs)

This is a DVD of a live performance in the Herkulessaal of the Residenz in Munich, given in December 2010. Each of the six parts is preceded by a shot of an 'Old Master' painting accompanied by a narrator reading the appropriate biblical narrative. The camera then gives shots of the orchestra – focussing on obbligato players, solo singers, sections of the 32-strong chorus as they make fugal entries and of course the conductor – whose fluent, clear upbeats start the players cleanly and whose rapport with his chorus makes their good working relationship evident. While most of the performers wear conventional evening dress, some men have distractingly odd neckwear!

You may like seeing it all: it is interesting to gauge the personality behind the players (though there is some very distracting waving about from the first flute!) You can see the trumpet player drawing attention to her finger holes like mad, but just when you want to see how the violins are articulating a passage – bar 55 in the opening movement of Cantata 5 (where the arpeggios are notoriously difficult to tune), for example – the camera tends to switch to another group. It was interesting to see that both the organ and harpsichord were playing off worked-out continuo parts rather than scores, from which they could have followed the vocal and instrumental lines. [Surely the order of competence descends from single-line figured bass, which is what Bach's players would have used, via full score to two-stave bass with realisation! *CB*] Sometimes the harpsichord was a bit over-percussive on every beat of the bar: the theorbo was better [though Bach wouldn't have expected to hear one. *CB*]

The sound is good and seems evenly mixed, but the placing of the single voices (only the tenor sits among the instru-

ments) tends to make for a 'solo with accompaniment' model, rather than give the chamber music feel, where voice and obbligato instrument are balanced like a trio-sonata. The soprano is a bit wobbly for my taste, but then she is conscious of being 'a soloist' with all the facial gestures that go with it; I liked the mezzo's approach – and voice – better. The tenor has a light voice and articulates his runs with the flute in *Frohe Hirten* (Cantata II) cleanly. Just occasionally you sense that a studio recording would have re-run a passage where it isn't quite together – like in *Flosst, mein Heiland* (Cantata IV), where the gentle 6/8 sometimes gives long phrases which run over several bars and tax the congruence of the different rhythmic patterns in voice, oboe and bass line. The bass is good, with real resonance in the lower register and yet a fluent, light quality in the higher tessitura. Most of the playing is of a high standard, and the Sinfonia that opens Cantata II was a delight, with splendid playing from the Oboe band; but I found the rubato of the first violin in *Schliesse, mein Herze* (Cantata III) too extreme – he was sometimes difficult for the singer and bass line to follow.

I sense it was the chorus and their choir director who are substantially centre stage in this performance. The singing from such a comparatively large group (8, 8, 8, 8), who presumably don't specialise in early performance techniques, was largely clean but not contrived. They would not stand up to the Sixteen or the OAE chorus in clarity, or in experience of working with a period instrument band – though I sensed some real give and take in *Ehre sei Gott*, the opening chorus of Cantata V, for example. But the phrasing in choral and instrumental lines was not always so complementary, though in terms of encouraging choral societies who have older singers in the upper parts, it shows what can be done. The close-up shots of the sections of the chorus reveal some discrepancies in breathing together, and in sensing the shape of phrases, which you can hardly detect, knowing only that it could have been a touch more fluent. Only very occasionally did the tempo rock slightly – the trumpets clipping the third beat of the bar in the opening chorus of Cantata VI slightly once or twice. But it's a notoriously difficult piece to get just the right tempo for, and comes at the end of a long performance when concentration begins to flag.

These are some of the downsides to a single 'take' of a live performance. But if

you like that slightly old-fashioned, small choral-society-with-the-soloists-out-front feel, and find the visual experience less of a distraction than I did, you will enjoy an honest and wholehearted performance with some good, rather than outstanding, performances from singers and obbligato instruments.

David Stancliffe

Bach St John Passion Charles Daniels *Evangelist*, Stephen Varcoe *Jesus*, Stephan Loges *Pilate*, Yorkshire Baroque Soloists, Peter Seymour dir. 106' 43" (2 CDs) Signum Classics SIGCD209

I must declare an interest in this disc: I was an undergraduate at York University, where Peter Seymour was one of my teachers. To listen to it is to be transported to one of the Yorkshire Bach Choir's concerts, without having to endure the hard pews in St Michael-le-Belfry (the choir's usual concert venue in York). It features a vibrant and enthusiastic team of vocal soloists (mostly York alumni) while the role of the Evangelist is expertly paced by Charles Daniels. Compared to other recordings, a much smaller string section is used (basically solo strings), giving extra prominence to the woodwind and adding to the incisiveness of the string lines in an aria such as 'Ach, mein Sinn'. Also noteworthy is the choir's contribution: the chorales are sung with vigour and with an awareness of an underlying dance metre, thus contributing to the momentum of the Passion narrative. This disc is testimony to the achievements of the Yorkshire Bach Choir and should extend its reputation to those who have never yet been able to hear it in concert.

Stephen Rose

Bach Organ Works Hubert Meister (Mathis organs in Eichstätt, Germany (1966), Nafels, Switzerland (1980) and Ried im Innkreis, Austria (1978)) 64' 21" + 72' 59" MDG Scene MDG 606 1708-2 BWV 541-4, 546-8, 552, 564, 582, 622, 668/688a

The Bavarian organist and musicologist, Hubert Meister died last year, and MDG have released three of his early 1980s recordings in a double CD set in his memory. The three organs used are by the Swiss organ building firm, Mathis Orgelbau and were built between 1966 and 1980. They all feature the unequal temperament and flexible winding that Meister considered so important for the performance of Bach. Hubert Meister's lively playing reflects his interest in musical rhetoric and the use of speech rhythms. There are several fascinating and thought-

provoking interpretations, starting with the opening Präludium in B minor where he adds something of a swing to the musical momentum, and accelerates some of the little motifs and, at the beginning of CD 2, a rather surprising reading of a key trill in the Fantasie in G minor. All perfectly acceptable, in my view, and making for interesting listening. His early studies in philosophy and theology are revealed in these thoughtful and musical interpretations. The sound quality is excellent, and the organs impressive, although the succession of well known pleno works on this re-release makes for slightly heavy listening.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Sonata No 3 Partita No 3/Barry Guy Lysandra Maya Homberger vln 55' 27" Maya Recordings MCD1101

This is the third disc in Maya Homberger's survey of Bach's unaccompanied music. It features two of my personal favourites (not that I can play either), the C major sonata with all its chordal complexities and, possibly the widest known of all, the E major partita. Sandwiched between them is a modern piece by Barry Guy, which I won't comment on – I'm sure it will be covered elsewhere (*The Strad*?) As I've said before, Homberger manages to play all the notes, convey a sense of all the layers in Bach's music (melody, bass line and filler harmonies, whether the notes are actually played or not) and yet manages to retain a sublime sense of calm. The joy in the final gigue – perhaps a very well-deserved sense of achievement? – and there is much to enjoy throughout the disc. I shall return to these recordings often – when I need beautifully crafted performances of this complex music without showmanship or overegging.

BC

Bach Orchestral Suites 2 & 4 Four Centuries of Bach Ensemble dir. John Abberger Analekta AN 2 9945 52'57"

Casually picking up this CD one might think that this is yet another recording of two of the four Bach orchestral suites, though the picture of the baroque oboe gives a hint of its period instrument performance. Only on the back, in small print, does it give a clue that this is the suites "in their original instrumentation" – i.e. No. 2 transposed down a tone with oboe replacing the flute, and No. 4 without the addition of the three trumpets. The case for the former seems

somewhat sketchy, where Joshua Rifkin has proposed the theory based on a few corrected errors in the only two existing parts of the accepted B Minor version in Bach's hand. The case for the latter, however, is on firmer ground, as the overture exists as the opening movement of an earlier cantata. That said, I found the version with oboe in this performance very convincing. With one player to a part, the oboe line was very much to the fore, though the use of the double bass throughout did tend to muddy the complex contrapuntal textures of the Suite. Abberger gives a competent and assured performance, particularly in the virtuoso solo movements such as second *Bourrée* and the *Badinerie*. Expecting a lack-lustre sound in No. 4 without the accustomed trumpet chorus, I found there was no lack of grandeur in this performance, with the three oboes substituting brilliantly in the brisk movements such as the *Bourées* and the *Réjouissance*. I would thoroughly recommend this recording as an addition to a Bach collection.

Ian Graham-Jones

J. L. Bach *Funeral Music, Motets, Cantatas, Missa Brevis, Three cantatas* Rheinische Kantorei, Das Kleine Konzert Hermann Max dir 211 54" (3 CDs)
Capriccio C5080

Scant attention is often given to the music of the 'lesser' Bachs, so it is good to have this excellent re-issue of a 1998 recording in a 3-CD pack of some of Johann Ludwig's sacred music, excellently performed by this chamber choir with period instrument orchestra. All the works date from the early part of the 18th century, when he was isolated as Hofkapellmeister at Meiningen, where he worked until his death in 1731. The double-choir *Trauermusik*, with full instrumental band with 3 flutes, 2 oboe and bassoon, with 3 trumpets and timpani in certain choruses, is perhaps the most impressive work in the collection, with its harmonic twists and varied instrumentation in the solo arias. The eight motets occupying disc 2, all for double choir and organ continuo, have some solemnity and seriousness in their writing. The Mass on *Allein Gott in der Höh sie Ehr* with strings only (disc 3) is an exciting work, with some impressive short solos, duets and choruses. This disc concludes with three cantatas, the first two with oboes and the third unusually with horns and strings. All follow the typical German pattern of recitatives and arias or duets sandwiched between two choruses, the latter incorporating the chorale melody.

The soloists, too numerous to name, are varied in quality, but all stylish. The booklet is informative and this collection can be thoroughly recommended: it opens our ears to at least one of the many Bachs whose works are tucked away in libraries somewhere. There must be a wealth out there.

Ian Graham-Jones

The Carus-Verlag catalogue includes a considerable quantity of editions of the "lesser" Bachs, including the eight motets on disc 2. CB

F. Benda *Violin Sonatas (with original ornamentation)* Hans-Joachim Berg vln, Naoko Akutagawa hpscd 72' 29"
Naxos 8.572307
Sonatas no. 10, 14, 23, 28 & 32

How admirable of Naxos to release such an esoteric recording – normally more associated with orchestral programmes that will appeal to the masses or the collector, it is commendable that the company has stood behind these very fine performers. Franz Benda was, of course, one of the most eminent violinists in the second and third quarters of the 18th century, though modern concerts simply do not reflect his importance, both as a virtuoso and as a composer of huge influence. Each of the five pieces on the CD has three movements, the first three start with the slow movement, while the final two place it centrally. When the disc arrived, I wondered if perhaps a cello would have helped with the balance, but there is no question that Berg and Akutagawa had found instruments which negated this "problem" – neither overpowers the other, and the rich bass of the harpsichord has no difficulty in providing the necessary melodic foundation. I hope there are more volumes to follow. BC

Campra *Gli Strali d'Amore Divertimento Immaginario* Roberta Invernizzi S, Cyril Auvity haute-contre, Salvo Vitale B, Risonanza, Fabio Bonizzoni 65' 46"
Glossa GCD921512
Recitatives by Angela Romagnoli / Fabio Bonizzoni, Interludes by Clérambault

Thanks to François Couperin the concept of *les goûts réunis* is familiar, but less known are Italian works composed by French composers at the end of the 17th and early part of the 18th century. Back in the summer, I was introduced at the Göttingen Handel Festival to Montéclair's splendid *La morte di Lucrezia* (it has since appeared on Emma Kirkby's Montéclair CD), one of several Italian-texted cantatas to come from arguably the finest of all

French cantata composers. Now here is *Gli strali d'amore* by André Campra, a composer whose interest in Italian music is unsurprising, given that his father was born in Turin. Not that you will find *Gli strali* in any Campra work list, for it is a pastiche, or 'divertimento imaginario' as Glossa term it, constructed from Italian pieces included in other dramatic works by the composer, most notably *Le Carnival de Venise* (1699). To this Fabio Bonizzoni has composed linking recitative to newly written texts to provide an agreeably lightweight piece about the vicissitudes of love. As well as mostly very brief *da capo* arias, there are also a number of duos and trios.

Stylistically, Campra wears his Italian outfit convincingly: there's an effective *aria di furia*; several tender arias that reveal a gift for affecting Italianate melody; and humorous numbers that provide a reminder that we are on the cusp of *buffo* style. As we have come to expect, La Risonanza's performance is excellent. This sort of thing is meat and drink to the experienced Invernizzi and Vitale, and if tenor Cyril Auvity sounds a bit tight voiced at times, he certainly doesn't let the side down. The chamber ensemble of La Risonanza provides excellent support, in addition to interspersing instrumental interludes drawn from sonatas by Clérambault, thus creating perhaps *goût mixte* rather than *goûts réunis*. Brian Robins

Couperin *Concerts royaux* Bruce Haynes ob, Arthur Hass hpscd, Susie Napper gamba Atma Classiques ACD2 2168 55' 02"

Without first reading the booklet notes, listeners may well be taken aback by the quality of the oboe sound and the 'interesting' intonation on certain tracks in particular. Haynes explains that this recording is designed to give the listener the opportunity of hearing the sound quality of an instrument in private hands made by Pierre Naust about 1700. The instrument can only be played for short periods of time, and therefore Haynes uses this only on certain tracks, and a copy of a Hotteterre instrument on the remaining ones. Interestingly, especially to wind enthusiasts, is that the same reed, modelled on dimensions described in original sources, is used with both instruments. Listeners may be aware of the vibrato on certain notes in some of the movements, no doubt indicated by the composer (though I don't have scores to hand). Susie Napper plays a Barak Norman viol, though the harpsichord is a modern copy of French models. This recording is

not, as implied by the title on the front cover, of the four *Concerts Royaux*, but is of only the 3rd of this set, suites nos. 7 and 11 of *Les Goûts Réunis*, the 5th Prelude from *L'Art de Toucher le Clavecin* and the three movements of the 15th harpsichord *Ordre* where Couperin requires additional players. Written possibly for the delectation of the ageing Louis XIV, the three suites do not specifically give the oboe as the melody instrument, and some may be played on flute or violin. The booklet notes should be read before this CD reaches the turntable, though some of the technicalities will only be appreciated by period oboists. The stylish contribution of harpsichord and bass viol, rather too much in the background on the recording, should not be forgotten. *Ian Graham-Jones ATMA has reissued this CD in memory of the Canadian oboist Bruce Haynes, who died last May.*

Durante Neapolitan Christmas

see *Christmas with cpo*, p. 49

Fasch Concertos for various instruments
Il Gardellino 57' 50"
Accent ACC 24252
FWV L: c2, D1, D3, D9, G11 & hi

This is an enjoyable mixture of "well known" Fasch (the celebrated trumpet and bassoon concertos) with the exotic (the composer's only concerto for two flutes and strings, and a concerto for pairs of oboes da caccia, violas and bassoons and continuo) and two relative rarities (a fine violin concerto, first recorded by the London semi-pro group, Linden Baroque, and a charming piece in B minor for flute and oboe with strings, i. e. Il Gardellino's default line-up). As one would expect from this group, these are no workaday performances – they really get into Fasch's music, and go beyond merely playing the notes. Even in the glittering trumpet concerto and the big piece for solo violin (which has a full complement of three trumpets and drums), there is a feeling of this being essentially chamber music; there's never a hint of any solo/tutti dichotomy. There are more Fasch concerti for flute and oboe, as well as works by Heinichen and Stölzel for that combination – I look forward very much to THAT disc! Meanwhile, this recording won't be straying far from my CD player for the foreseeable future. BC

Fasch Orchestral Works, Volume 2
Tempesta di Mare 74' 12"
Chandos CHANo783
FWV K: a1, L: D5, G13, M: g1

As I have written previously in these pages, *Tempesta di Mare* is one of the world's leading exponents of Fasch's music; for the past few seasons, they have devoted whole concerts to giving modern premieres of works from the famous Schranck II collection in the Saxon State Library in Dresden, edited by one of the group's directors, Richard Stone. For the present recording, they have selected two concertos, an overture suite that combines dance movements and more abstract arias, and one of Fasch's four movement sinfonias. The range of musical ideas is enormous, and illustrates the oft-quoted notion that Fasch was some sort of bridge between the Baroque and the early Classical styles – certainly his use of wind instruments to colour textures is novel for the period. The G minor sinfonia even has pre-echos of C. P. E. Bach and the *Sturm und Drang* world – the three heavy knocks on the door at the very opening, for example – but it also features a more Baroque fugal movement, and concludes with the traditional minuet. Throughout the disc, the performances are first rate, from the gloriously rich opening of the Violin Concerto (D5) with its pairs of horns, flutes, oboes and bassoons, through to the end of the G major concerto "per molti strumenti" there is a palpable energy that only comes from enjoyment of the familiar. The disc is all the more remarkable for being taken from live performances. Start saving now for the projected Volume 3! BC

George Gebel Jr Christmas Cantatas
see *Christmas with cpo*, p. 49

Handel Apollo e Dafne Andrea Lauren Brown, Dominijk Wörner, Cantus Firmus Consort, Andreas Reize 74' 41"
cpo 777 228-2
+op. 3/2, Overture HWV 336, Suites 352-4, Chaconne from *Terpsichore*

Apollo and Dafne is a popular choice for recordings but its length requires it to be combined with (an)other work(s), with varying success. No apologies are necessary in this case, however, as the inclusion of the concerto grosso op. 3/2 (HWV 313) and Suites in B and G major (HWV 352-354) works musically and is justified very convincingly in the booklet notes. The concerto grosso provides an extended overture and the Overture HWV 336 and Suites separate Parts I and II, with the chaconne from *Terpsichore* providing a fitting close. While this may appear rather butcher-like, it must be remembered that

Handel himself regularly did just this with his own works in performance. The booklet notes are excellent not just for their scholarly justification and explanation of the choice of repertoire but also for their contextualisation of Handel's setting of Ovid's story, furthermore giving examples of his interpretation of the central themes within the story. Superb performances by the singers and players add further to the appeal of the disc.

Amanda Babington

Il caro Sassone: Handel in Italy Lucy Crowe S, The English Concert, Harry Bickett 74' 33"
harmonia mundi HMU907559

As I have pointed out previously, the sheer size of Handel's oeuvre means that compilation recordings of his music rarely overlap. This said, they still need to follow the other golden rule of compilation, which is to have a sensible *raison d'être*. Compositions from Handel's time in Italy (1706-1710) are a good choice, containing some lesser-known works, and David Vickers's excellent notes present the reader with an engaging and detailed overview of Handel's time in Italy. This is one of several English Concert recordings with a single voice and, with a judicious amount of instrumental input, I find this works as a concept, especially when the voice is as engaging and varied as Crowe's. Inclusion of more than one movement from most selected works helps to keep the listener's attention and only 'Lascia la spina' (*Il trionfo del tempo*) stands out as a 'greatest hit'. The playing of English Concert is as delectable as usual. Excellent both for English Concert/Lucy Crowe fans and Handel enthusiasts unfamiliar with his Italian works. Amanda Babington

Handel Nine German Arias & Gloria Dorothea Craxton S, Fredrik From, Hanna Ydmark vlns, Kjeld Lybecker Steffenson, cello, Lars Baunkilde, violone, Leif Meyer kbd 65' 52"
Naxos 8.572587

Handel's *Nine German Arias* have been recorded many times in the last 20 years with varying success. Their apparent simplicity can fool even seasoned musicians and the most successful recordings tend to be those that treat them as serious sacred works rather than frivolous arias. Craxton and the musicians on this disc appear to have grasped Handel's intent, for their rendition is beautiful without being too showy. Handel's *Gloria* (rediscovered in

2001 at the Royal College of Music) forms the second half of the disc and provides an excellent foil to the arias. Unfortunately, the quality of the music is not matched by the booklet notes, which are at best generic and at times misleading.

Amanda Babington

Handel Complete Violin Sonatas Ensemble Vintage Köln (Ariadne Daskalakis, Rainer Zipperling, Gerald Hambitzer) 77' 23" Naxos 8.572245

HWV 358, 359a, 361, 364a, 368, 370-373 + 408, 412

As a violinist, I am ashamed to confess that there were movements on this CD with which I was totally unfamiliar. I thoroughly enjoyed the sonatas that I did know, mostly because Daskalakis has a brilliant technique and yet manages to sound totally relaxed. The continuo team support well – the cellist engaging in dialogue when Handel permits, and the harpsichordist filling out the chords and improvising neat little links. Of the pieces that I didn't know, there was one passage in the Sonata in G HWV358 that struck me as very odd – a sudden leap into the stratosphere. Initially, I wondered if the recording equipment had had some problem and picked up the harmonics instead of the sounded notes, but it was the same for the repeat, so I can only assume that Handel (or whoever edited the piece) intended it thus: it reminded me of the first time I heard someone play the last Violin 1 solo of Vivaldi's B minor concerto for four violins (op. 3 no. 10) an octave higher – I think I leapt from my seat! Whatever the correctness of the situation, this is a very fine recording of some first-rate violin playing. I shall look out for more from Ariadne Daskalakis. BC

Terence Best, in the first publication of HWV 358 (Faber), wonders whether the high notes "may be some sort of joke". CB

Porpora Cantatas Iestyn Davies cT, Arcangelo, Jonathan Cohen 78' 04" Hyperion CDA67894

Nos 7-12 of 12 Cantatas to His Highness Frederick Prince of Wales (London, 1735)

The six chamber cantatas recorded here form half of a group published in 1735 with an extravagant dedication to Frederick, Prince of Wales. All are scored for alto and continuo, Carlo Vitali's notes suggesting they could have been composed for Porpora's former pupil Farinelli, who frequently enjoyed music-making sessions with Frederick. The pastoral texts dealing with Arcadian love,

sometimes seriously, sometimes with light-hearted irony, are by the young Metastasio. The music is mostly moderately paced and, in the manner increasingly familiar from Porpora's operas, unfailingly elegant, with many a gracefully turned cantabile line.

It is to this natural melodic ease that Iestyn Davies responds most naturally and tellingly. In the past two or three years Davies has deservedly been building a reputation for highly musical singing and an attractive, mellifluous countertenor voice. Such assets are much in evidence throughout this disc, as immediately becomes obvious from the brief but ravishingly lovely adagio opening to *Or che una nube ingrata* (No. 8). On that level, these are performances that will give much pleasure. But for me there is a downside, too, since at the same time as enjoying the sounds Davies is making, he rarely gives me the impression that he has engaged with the texts at more than the most superficial level. I wanted to hear him taking risks, living the life of these lovelorn shepherds a little more dangerously. There are also a number of question marks hanging over continuo playing that is often too busy and self conscious, especially on the part of Jonathan Cohen's cello and that of the usual suspect, the lutenist. So, an agreeable disc, but it might have been rather more than that. Brian Robins

Rameau Platée Paul Agnew Platée, Mireille Delunsch *La Folie*, etc., Yann Beuron *Thespis*, etc., Vincent Le Texier *Jupiter*, Doris Lamprecht *Junon*, Laurent Naouri *Citheron*, Valérie Gabail *L'Amour*, etc., Franck Leguerinel *Momus*, Orchestra and Chorus of Les Musiciens du Louvre - Grenoble 150' Arthaus Musik 107 335

This performance was recorded live in Paris in 2002 but is apparently only now released on DVD. *Platée* was one of only two *comédies lyriques* completed by Rameau and is by far the better: in fact, the general level of musical invention is astonishing. We may feel less comfortable with the plot, in which the ugly nymph (or is she a frog?) *Platée* is humiliated by the gods, who trick her into a wedding with Jupiter which is interrupted by a furious Juno and then cast her back into the swamp from which she came. As usual, there were topical resonances (the Dauphin had just married the none-too-attractive Spanish Infanta) and Rameau, who modified the original libretto quite substantially, takes

every opportunity for extended *divertissements* – some of his very best. To my eye, these are a weak area of the production. The modern choreography is not a happy companion for Rameau's music, right from the on-stage nonsense during the overture and some of the later goings-on strike me as just plain silly. The mainly-modern-dress costumes are more tolerable, not least because of the huge *panache* with which *Mercure* (Yann Beuron) carries off both his glam-rock look and his music. *La Folie* (a scarcely veiled representation of Italian opera) is also a source of good fun, as well as vocal virtuosity. But inevitably Paul Agnew in the travesty *haute-contre* role of *Platée* herself is the real star (after Rameau) alongside the orchestra. His expertise in the more haughty areas of the French Baroque we now take for granted. However, here he shows a real gift for comedy – often in his reaction to other characters and the general situation – as well as singing brilliantly no matter what moves he is required to make. On balance therefore, the ups outweigh the downs in the performance though just once it would be nice to see a major opera house throw its resources at a re-creation of the spectacle that was baroque opera. The booklet provides a cast list, synopsis and essay. In the last of these I was amused to see a linguistic nonsense in the (original) German faithfully translated into English but tacitly corrected in the French. Not for the first time, where was the editor?

David Hansell

Rameau Pièces de Clavecin Viviane Chassot accordion 67' 12" Genuin GEN 11216

Suites in G & A (1728), *Les Cyclopes* & *Les Soupirs*

No, your eyes are not deceiving you – it really does say "accordion" in the heading. Now, I beg your indulgence before you skip to the next review – you remember last issue's Genuin recording of Biber and Bach when I had to eat my hat when the Russian violinist more famous for playing Shchedrin and Shostakovich revealed himself to be an outstanding HIP fiddler, too? Well, don't dismiss Viviane Chassot before you have heard her! She's so mainstream she has her own website (www.viviane-chassot.ch) and there you can hear extracts from her previous (universally praised) release of Haydn keyboard sonatas, and I can tell you now: this CD is likely to bring her even more plaudits. To be completely frank, there are a couple of interpretational things that I do not agree with (there is a delayed bass

note in the first phrase of *Les Menuets* from the G major suite of 1728 that I *really* don't like), but almost everywhere else, these are wonderful realisations – and as a fan of the musette, who is to say Mr. Rameau himself would disapprove? Technical difficulties of transferring the music from one instrument to the other notwithstanding, this is brilliant music making – Chassot's control of dynamics and voicing is astonishing; her change of colours equally so. And who was a greater colorist of this period than Rameau? If you fancy a trip outside your comfort zone this Christmas, ask a friend to buy you this!

BC

Schieferdecker *Musicalische Concerte* (Hamburg 1713) Elbipolis Barockorchester Hamburg 72' 36" Challenge Classics CC72531 Concertos 1, 5, 6, 8, 10 & 13

I'm sure many of our readers are familiar with Telemann's bubbly concerto for three violins, three oboes and continuo. But I wonder how many of them know many more pieces for that combination? This excellent recording will go some ways to redressing that situation. Schieferdecker's approach is slightly different, in that it pits a four-part wind band against a four-part string band. It's a sound world with which we are familiar through French opera (and some of the tremendous choruses in Purcell's *King Arthur*, of course) and there is a very gallic feel to the whole enterprise. I remain unpersuaded by the place of percussion in such music – perhaps in the theatre, it adds some exotic colour and the mind is as diverted by visual entertainment in any case that the music becomes, in effect, just one layer of many, but when I'm sitting listening to these orchestral suites (I think Schieferdecker intended his publication's title to imply "concerts" rather than "concertos"), I only want to hear what he wrote. I've been enthusiastic about previous Elbipolis releases and, extraneous sounds aside, I am happy to recommend this, too – their sense of pacing and phrasing is immaculate, as is the balance between instruments and the beautiful sounds they make together.

BC

Telemann: Time: Travel Sonatas & Trios Passacaglia 68' 37" Boar Cottage Records bcro06

Isn't it amazing the range of music that is out there for three players? And all by Telemann! This lovely CD includes two

sonatas for recorder and continuo, one each for voice flute and flute with continuo, two for flute, obbligato harpsichord and continuo, and one for flute, gamba and continuo. Annabel Knight, Reiko Ichise and Robin Bigwood have played together for many years now, (two of them used to review for *EMR*) and there is an effortlessness about the sound – no matter which combination of instruments is involved, there is never a sense of one striving to take the lead; rather, the voices balance one another, which I especially liked in the flute and obbligato harpsichord pieces, in which the trills were all perfectly matched, too. If you ever hear anyone making derisory remarks about the quantity of music Telemann wrote and questioning its quality, just recommend they buy this CD – the man's capacity for invention is nothing short of amazing, and these finely crafted performances from a star line-up should put them right!

BC

Telemann [A journey through literature] Les Esprits Animaux 69' 20" Ambronay AMY302 TWV 40:108 (Gulliver Suite); 42:C1 (Introduzione à tre from *Der Getreue Music-Meister*), 50:10 (Conclusion in E minor from *Musique de Table*), 52:a2 (Concerto for 2 flutes), 52:er (Concerto for flute & recorder), 55:G10 (Burlesque de Quixotte)

There are some CDs which you just know are going to become irksome after you've heard them a few times – there is something about the performances that are entertaining the first time you hear them, but repeated listening is never recommended. This is *NOT* one of those – the young players of Les Esprits Animaux have found a way to play some of Telemann's wittiest music without ever overstepping the bounds of good taste. There is even some note-bending involved, so regular readers will know how difficult it is for me to recommend this approach! There is simply no denying, though, that Telemann was a wit – and some of the musical ideas in the pieces with sub-titles related to Don Quixote and Gulliver that look so odd on the page can only ever come to life if the players get into the spirit of the joke, which is precisely what happens here. In order to be able to afford themselves the luxury of such antics, though, they must be absolutely at the top of their game. The group was formed pretty much spontaneously in the coffee bar of the Hague Conservatoire a mere two years ago and this disc is a (self-confessed) wager on the part of the

record company arm of the Ambronay early music establishment that Les Esprits Animaux will make a big noise in the commercial world. I should like to be the first to say that, if they continue in this vein, this simply must become a reality. So thank you for introducing me to a piece of Telemann I had never previously heard (the A minor concerto for two flutes, albeit played on flute and recorder), and congratulations to all concerned on what is definitely my record of the issue! BC

Vivaldi Flute Concertos Barthold Kuijken fl La Petite Bande, Sigiswald Kuijken dir & vlc da spalla 66' 12" Accent ACC 24241 RV 428, 433-5, 437, 439, 533 & 783

With the exception of RV435 which appears to have been specially composed, the opus 10 concertos for solo flute on this CD were all arrangements by Vivaldi of some of his chamber concertos, made for publication by Le Cène in Amsterdam in 1729. Barthold Kuijken describes how this was done in the booklet which accompanies this elegant recording. Most of the concertos, which include *La tempesta di mare*, *La notte* and *Il gardellino*, will be well known to readers in either these or their original chamber versions. Kuijken also writes about the violoncello da spalla played by his brother. This instrument was still in use in Italy at the time and the suggestion is that this is what Vivaldi meant by *violoncello*. It is thicker but not much longer than a viola, but tuned to the same pitch as a cello. The playing position in front of the body instead of between the knees makes it more resonant, and the shorter scale length allows it to be fingered diatonically like a violin instead of chromatically like a cello, making some passages which are difficult on the cello much more natural. The two non-opus 10 pieces on this recording are the solo concerto RV 783 which was found in the Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek in Schwerin in 1991 and the double concerto for two flutes RV 533 from the Turin library where most of the scores of the chamber concertos are also to be found. In the latter, Barthold Kuijken's playing is perfectly matched by Frank Theuns on the second flute.

Victoria Helby

Vivaldi Concerti per fagotto II Sergio Azzolini, L'aura soave Cremona 77' naïve OP 30518 RV 470, 472, 483, 490, 496, 499 & 504 *Tesori del Piemonte* Vol. 48 / *Concerti per strumenti a fiato* Vol. 6

Unlike the Et'cetera recording I reviewed last time around (and I owe the performers on that disc an apology – I inadvertently mixed up the conductor, Pieter Dirksen, and the brilliant bassoonist, Frans Berkhouwt, in the body of my review), this issue is exactly what it says on the packaging – the brilliant Sergio Azzolini performs seven bona fide bassoon concertos. Reviewing CDs in this series, one always feels obliged to pour scorn on those later composers who disdainfully dismissed Vivaldi's repetitive output – and there is such a wealth of variety of melodies, accompaniments, harmonies and, indeed, emotions, that it is utterly bemusing that they could have imagined their criticism serious. Diego Cantalupi directs L'aura soave of Cremona in finely nuanced readings, adding another wonderful recital to this most worthy project. BC

Vivaldi Gloria, Stabat mater, Dixit Dominus Alessandra Gardini, Cristina Paolucci, Gloria Banditelli, Mario Cecchetti, Paolo Macedonia SSATT, Enrico Gatti vln, Coro Canticum Novum, Accademia Barrocca Hermans, Fabio Ciofini 70' 21"
La Bottega Discantica 169

This is an impressive disc. The programme runs exactly as the title, so the two larger works frame the extended solo piece. The soloist in that, alto Gloria Banditelli, is outstanding. Her tone is even across the entire range, and there is a warming vibrato that nourishes the note without affecting its pitch – many a professional early music singer could learn a thing or two! The choral pieces need no introduction. The Coro Canticum Novum is a well balanced ensemble with fine clarity from all sections. The soloists also blend well – there is no sense of competition between them, or the remotest hint of diva tendencies. All in all, in fact, this is possibly the best choral Vivaldi I have heard come out of Italy for a long time. Recommended. BC

Vivaldi/Cage 8 Seasons Baroque Orchestra B'Rock, Rodolfo Richter (2 CDs)
Et'cetera KTC1429

Combines Vivaldi's Four Seasons with John Cage's String quartet in four parts (One disc has them alternate, the other has the four Vivaldi concerti followed by the Cage piece.)

Two reviewers have written about this.

This might seem a strange bundling of repertoire (and perhaps an even stranger way of marketing it) but, in the event, I think it works. If you were to look at some

of Vivaldi's "impressionist" slow movements, you might well find some of the harmonies John Cage uses in his music. The only slightly odd sensation was the "rhythm" of listening to the Four Seasons was altered – the fast-slow-fast pattern became a succession of slow-fast pairs. Somehow, though, it all seemed to work out well enough and, of course, you can always opt for Disc 2 if you prefer your Vivaldi as writ. No prizes for guessing that Rodolfo Richter's renditions are first class and, as B'Rock are fast making themselves a reputation as one of the more exciting baroque orchestras on the continent, their contribution is every bit as lively and attentive. There are minor quibbles – the first two ripieno entries after the arpeggios in the last movement of Winter, for example, are loud and heavily accented, but they can't repeat it the third time as the soloist plays through and goes on – that is all they are; thought-provoking moments. BC

This CD contains Vivaldi's Four Seasons and John Cage's String Quartet in Four Parts, the latter arranged for a small baroque orchestra. On the first CD the four movements of the Cage work appear separately after each of the Vivaldi Concertos – a second CD has the two sets of works grouped together. The background to the pairing and the arrangement of the Cage Quartet for a period band was the instructions that Cage gave in the score for the *String Quartet in Four Parts* to "play without vibrato and with only minimal weight on the bow". The Vivaldi is given an invigorating performance, full of atmosphere, with some exquisite violin playing from Rodolfo Richter. The feeling of getting up close and personal with Vivaldi is enhanced by the relatively close miking of the violin (but in a generous background acoustic) and the resulting audible sounds of the player's breath. Rodolfo Richter and B'Rock produce the perfect balance between being too predictable and over-the-top sensational – not only with this CD delight on first hearing, it will also repay repeated listening.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Zelenka Magnificat in D, Missa Nativitatis Domini, Dixit Dominus Katia Plaschka, Anne Bierwirth, Christian Dietz, Markus Flraig SATB, Marburger Bachchor, L'arpa festante, Nicolo Sokoli 57' 07"
Genuin GEN 11213

This is a welcome addition to the Zelenka discography. The Magnificat in D has been

recorded several times before (most notably, in my opinion, by the Bach Collegium Japan with other settings of that text), while the Mass and the *Dixit Dominus* settings will be less familiar to our readers. The former is of especial interest to me, because a set of parts for the first few movements survive among the remnants of the court music collection from Zerbst, where Fasch was Kapellmeister. Jan Stockigt, the doyenne of Zelenka scholars, thinks that set would have been of vital importance in giving at least one copyist's interpretations of Zelenka's score – anyone who has worked on this composer's music knows that it is full of shorthand annotations and *colla parte* markings which are often not a little unclear. Be that as it may, Sokoli draws out very fine performances from his four soloists, a choir bright of timbre and a lively orchestra. I hope they will explore more of the Dresden Hofkapelle repertoire. BC

Virtuoso Baroque Michala Petri rec, Lars Hannibal archlute 67'48"
Naxos 6.220604

J.S. Bach BWV 1033, Chédeville Sonata in g (RV 59); Corelli *La Folia*; Handel HWV 377; Tartini Sonata in g; Telemann Sonata in d (*Essercizi Musici*); Vitali: Chaconne in g

Michala Petri used to have a reputation for speed and not much else. This recording, which celebrates the twentieth anniversary of her musical partnership with her husband, Lars Hannibal, shows how much her playing has changed for the better. She makes a powerful and distinctive sound on a variety of recorders, well balanced by the archlute continuo. Her breath control is remarkable, though this occasionally leads her to run phrases together which might have been better separated. Her technique makes the most difficult passages, including the transcription of Tartini's Devil's Trill, seem effortless, and her ornamentation shows considerable imagination. Many performers seem reluctant to add much in the way of ornamentation to Bach, but Michala Petri obviously has no such fears in the flute sonata in C major, transposed to F major, and I like the way she has turned the repeats of the second minuet and the da capo into a *double*. A lot of this music was not originally for recorder but it all works very well, though I rather wish she hadn't chosen to play the well-known *pastorale* from the Chédeville (originally attributed to Vivaldi, hence the RV number) on the bass. The archlute continuo is always spot on and I never felt the lack of a melodic bass instrument or harpsichord. This

probably isn't a CD for the specialist, but I'm sure a lot of people will enjoy it.

Victoria Helby

Du angenehme Nachtigall: Vogelarien und Liebeslieder des Barock Collegium "Flauto e voce" 69' or

Carus 83.344

Baroque bird arias and love songs by Guzinger, Keiser, Lully, Montclair, Torri, von Wilderer, Vivaldi, Hart, Fedeli, H. Purcell, Telemann & Kusser. Loeillet: Sonata in B min for 2 flutes, 2 recorders & bc

This recording explores the role played by the recorder in vocal music, mainly opera, during the last twenty years of the seventeenth century and the first third of the eighteenth. The quality of its sound made the instrument particularly suitable to portray love and its related emotions as well as birdsong and other pastoral themes. This still allows for a wide range of effects in this selection of arias from Germany, France, Italy and England. Instrumental combinations specified by the composer include not just the more common obbligato solo or pair of recorders but larger numbers, sometimes in combination with the transverse flute. Montéclair specified four high recorders with bass recorder continuo to represent the streams in *Ruisseaux qui serpentez* from his opera *Jephé*. There are five recorders with obbligato harpsichord in Keiser's *Ihr fliegenden Sänger* from *Orpheus*, while Lully's *Tout ce que j'attaque se rend* from his opera *Le Triomphe de l'Amour* is set for soprano, transverse flute, tenor, bass and great bass recorders. Both singers make a beautiful sound, distinct from but blending perfectly with the recorders, and the addition of the Sonata in B minor by a composer only named as Loeillet in the manuscript from the collection of Crown Prince Friedrich Ludwig of Württemberg seems a little superfluous. The recording company, Carus, is also publisher of more than half of the music in their series *Flauto e Voce*. The excellent booklet provides a page of facsimile of two of the pieces, the words of all the songs with translations and full information about the instruments used.

Victoria Helby

For various Christmas recordings
see pages 48-50

We wish our readers a happy
Christmas and prosperous new year

CLASSICAL

J. C. F. Bach *Die Kindheit Jesu A Biblical Picture* Barbara Schlick, Hilke Henning, Hein meens, Martina Lins, Almut Kirchner, Harry van der Kamp, Rheinische Kantorei, Das Kleine Konzert, Hermann Max
Capriccio C5104 (1989/2011)
Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme

Christmas with the Bach-Family Barbara Schlick, Martina Lins, Hilke Henning, Wilfried Jochens, Vokalensemble Frankfurt + Concerto Köln (Ralf Otto), Rheinische Kantorei + Das Kleine Konzert (Hermann Max), Dresdner Kammerchor + La Stagione Frankfurt (Michael Schneider)
Capriccio C5105 (compilation 2011)
Extracts from works by JS, JCF, JL, CPE, WF & JE Bach

These two reissues of music by the Bach family are largely drawn from recordings by Hermann Max with the Rheinische Kantorei in the late 1980s. They have, I suppose, a seasonal appeal, and the first, of music by J.C.F. Bach, features an extended cantata cum Oratorio *Die Kindheit Jesu* dating from 1773, scored for two flutes, two horns, strings, continuo and voices, and the motet *Wachet auf* for four-part chorus and continuo from around 1780. *Wachet auf* – a curiously old-style motet which reminds me a bit of the Latin motet *In exitu Israel* by Samuel Wesley, and certainly feels more like Mendelssohn or Brahms than a classical composer – was on disc 3 of the large 5 disc compilation of Bach family music I reviewed in August, and so were a couple of movements of the oratorio which gives the present disc its title. The performances are perfectly acceptable, though not exciting, and if you want the whole thing, then here it is.

The second disc is a Christmas miscellany, largely drawn from the same sources, but including four disconnected numbers from a recording of the Weinachts-Oratorium by JSB performed by Concerto Köln under Ralf Otto (which I happen to know was made in 1995, though you wouldn't find that out from the meagre booklet). The pleasant surprise for me in an otherwise rather dull disc – who is it meant for? – is some movements from a rather good Magnificat by J.C. Bach, performed by Elizabeth Scholl and the Dresdner Kammerchor with La Stagione Frankfurt under Michael Schneider. The rest is bits from Hermann Max – with a movement from the *Wachet auf* by JCF

that seems to be on every disc of these reissues.

The performing styles of the three groups together with the wide variety of types and styles of music make this disc in particular an unsatisfactory experience. Unlike even those anthologies of carols which might conceivably make up a programme for a concert or a carol service, these pieces couldn't be played together. There is the question of pitch, and even if the strings had brought instruments at 415 as well as 429 to play with the different period woodwind, what would you do about the keyboard instruments? But more important, what does this snipping out of sections of different pieces, even when performed by the same group and taken from the same set of recording sessions, achieve musically? It does nothing more for me than add to the impression that the publishers are pandering to the musical wallpaper style of easy listening.

David Stancliffe

J. C. Bach *Missa da Requiem* Lenneke Ruiten, Ruth Sandhoff, Colin Balzer, Thomas Bauer SATB, RIAS Kammerchor, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Hans-Christoph Rademann 74' 55"
harmonia mundi HMC90209

All the music here dates from 1757, the year the young Johann Christian Bach established himself in Milan. Both harmonia mundi and Peter Wollny's notes treat the Introitus and Sequenz as a single work, a Requiem Mass, albeit one lacking settings of the other sections of the text we would expect from such a work. Such an assumption seems to me suspect. Although both employ an 8-part chorus, the Introitus and Kyrie is in F major, while the Sequenz is in C minor, an unlikely key for a continuation. The style of the two sections is also totally different, the Introitus being cast in strict old-fashioned polyphonic form, while the Sequenz is a large scale multi-movement work that includes solo arias and ensembles. It should also be noted that both Bach's cataloguers, Terry and Ernest Warburton, assigned separate identification to what I believe can safely be considered two works, not a unified piece.

Although the brief Introitus is an impressive demonstration of Bach's grasp of traditional contrapuntal skills, the Sequenz is not to my ears especially notable, for all Wollny's pleading to the contrary. True, this may have something to do with the somewhat lacklustre performance. Neither

the chorus nor soloists are especially impressive, while the Berlin Akademie's characteristically choppy rhythms are inherently unsuited to this of all members of the Bach family. Oddly enough, things look up for the *Miserere*, another work dating from 1757, and one I would rate more highly than the *Sequenz* movements. Here the chorus sounds more involved from the outset, while several of the solo and ensemble movements are impressive, not least the graciously flowing 'Cor mundum', which gives Lenneke Ruiten an opportunity to show off her attractive light soprano to advantage. The sound quality – the recording was made by German radio – is not up to the usual high standard of *harmonia mundi*. Brian Robins

Galuppi Keyboard Sonatas 2 Matteo Napoli piano 68' 12"
Naxos 8.572490
Illy 1, 2, 14, 24, 27, 34 65' 56

I have to confess that I asked for a review copy of this because I have recently become interested in this repertoire. Not played on a piano, perhaps, so it is one step removed from my normal experience, which is having it played back by Sibelius. Even so, I must say that I rather enjoyed both Galuppi's music and Matteo Napoli's playing of it. There was no sense of him trying to make the music something that it is not – it is essentially melody and bass, sometimes accompanying, sometimes in counterpoint (by which I mean more tossing themes back and forth rather than anything learned like canons, etc.) No, taken on its own terms, and perhaps given some dynamic as well as rhythmic shape, this is very agreeable music, which must have been very popular in the drawing rooms of late 18th-century Europe. BC

Grétry *La Jeunesse de Pierre le Grand* François Feroletto *Le Commissaire du Peuple*, Anne-Sophie Schmidt *Catherine*, Christophe Einhorn *Pierre le Grand*, Philippe le Chevalier François Lefort, Erick Freulon Georges, Céline Victores-Benavente *Caroline*, Valérie Suty *Geneviève*, Frédéric Mazzotta *Alexis*, Laurent Malraux *Menchikov*, etc., Philippe Durot *Notaire*, etc., Joël Thalmann *Mathurin*, etc., Orchestre de Chambre Olivier Opdebeeck, Chœurs de Chambre de Namur, Olivier Opdebeeck dir 90'
Disques DOM DOM DVD 11019

It's difficult to recommend this 2001 recording to anyone except Grétry completists fluent in French. The notes are minimal (and, almost as usual, poorly

translated and proof read), the plot and dialogue have been 'adapted to make the work more attractive', the music and performance are competent but no more and there are no sub-titles. David Hansell

J. Haydn Intégrale Concertos pour Violon
Orchestre de Chambre de Toulouse, Gilles Colliard vln
Integral Classic 20101/1
Concertos in C, G & A

This is nice enough recording on modern instruments. The bass section manages to avoid my *bête noire*, bar after bar of shapeless quavers. The soloist plays neatly – I enjoyed the "classical" cadenzas – and he is well supported, if the overall sound is slightly too rich for our readership. BC

Haydn L'anima del filosofo Orpheus et Eurydice Elena Xanthoudakis *Eurydice/Genio*, Andrew Goodwin *Orfeo*, Derek Welton *Creonte*, Craig Everingham *Plutone*, Cantillation, Orchestra of the Antipodes, Antony Walker
Pinchgut Opera POOR

When I first listened to this recording, I was astonished – how radical of Haydn, I thought, to start an opera with a chorus! It transpired that someone had put Disc 2 into the machine by mistake. However, this work continued to impress me. Time and time again we hear that Haydn hadn't the faintest idea about writing operas – the music is all very nice, but where is the drama? And where are the memorable melodies that flowed so effortlessly from Mozart's quill? Well, while there might be an element of truth to some of that, there is no denying that *Orpheus & Eurydice* has plenty of drama – and dramatic music to go with it! This is a fuller version of the story than those used to the Monteverdi version, and there are plenty of opportunities for the soloists of the cast to display their vocal prowess, which the principles in this Australian performance take with gusto. In fact, I was taken aback when suddenly there was a burst of applause from the audience – I had not realised that this was taken from a live performance. I only wish this were a DVD. Much as I enjoyed listening to the music, I think the enterprise would have been even more successful with a visual element. BC

Mozart Piano Concertos Nos. 24 in c K491
5 in C K503 Ronald Brautigam fp, Die Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens 55' 29"
BISSACD1894

This is a thoroughly enjoyable disc, pairing two contrasting but somehow complementary works – the profundity and mysterious drama of one being replaced by the eternally youthful effervescence of the other. Brautigam, of course, is a master of this repertoire and knows just how to keep the listener on the edge of the seat – not that Mozart doesn't give him a little help in this. The mysterious opening to K. 491 sets the scene. K. 503 is not without an inner darkness of its own – the added sevenths and the sudden drifts into the minor are all very unsettling; the orchestral opening seems to last a little too long – just when you expect to hear the soloist enter, off they go with a new melody and then, when he finally does join in, it's not at all when expected. I love Mozart's orchestration in these works – the way the strings support and the woodwind are more dialogue partners. Willens and his orchestra are wonderful – and the woodwind tones balance with the keyboard perfectly. If I were to have a small gripe with this disc it would be the length – surely another 20 minutes' of music could have been found somewhere? Mind you, with performances of this standard, perhaps filling the disc would be over-egging the cake? BC

Mozart Divertimento K. 334 & Oboe Quartet K.370 Scottish Chamber Orchestra Ensemble, Alexander Janiczek dir/vn
Linn Classics CRD 376 63' 48"

I listened to this for the first time while baking apple strudel cake – I had been slightly puzzled that, having been sent it, Clifford had opted to send it to me for review. Linn are "Record Label of the Year" and we have praised all of their previous recordings (without exception, I think), but I wondered if modern instrument Mozart really was for these pages. As it happens, however, this is very much a 21st-century HIP performance – the forces are minimal and my ears detected the natural horns in K. 334 before I read about them in the notes. In fact, my ears also picked up the finely played (and recorded) double bass line, perfectly complementing the exceptionally clean and graceful playing of the upper strings. It should not have surprised me, I suppose, because the Scottish Chamber Orchestra has always taken the HIP approach to "Beethoven and before". If I am never going to be a fan of the sound of the modern oboe (sorry to the player concerned!), I must admit that the reading of the Oboe Quartet is as fine as the Divertimento, and

I have no doubt that this disc will be editor's choice in many other magazines and get lots of air time. If only all the world's chamber orchestras had this approach!

BC

Nardini Six Sonatas for two German Flutes and a Bass Il Bell' Accordo Ensemble 70'00"

La Bottega Discantica Discantica 156

Nardini was born in Livorno in 1722, studied in Padua for six years with Tartini, then returned to Padua for a number of years before travelling to Vienna, Dresden and Stuttgart. He spent the last 23 years of his life, until his death in 1793, as music director at the court in Florence. He worked in Stuttgart between 1762 and 1765, where he was heard by Leopold Mozart, who praised his tone and cantabile playing. Burney heard him in 1770 and remarked on the expressiveness of his slow movements and his satisfying and pleasing but unsurprising playing. These qualities are reflected in his six sonatas for two transverse flutes, published in London by Bremner around that time. Despite their late date of publication these are trio sonatas in the galant style with a rather more interesting bass line than is often found at this period, and the group's decision to use harpsichord and cello continuo, which they feel the need to justify in the booklet, seems entirely appropriate. These charming pieces appear on a reissue of a CD which first appeared in 2007 and I am glad to have had the opportunity to hear them now.

Victoria Helby

de Nebra *Iphigenia en Tracia* Marta Almajano, María Espada, Raquel Andueza, Soledad Cardoso, Marta Infante, El Concierto Español, Emilio Moreno
Glossa GCD920311 96' 57" (2 CDs)

José de Nebra really did have a career of two halves. Born in 1702, until 1751 he was principally a composer for the theatre. However, he then returned to his roots as a church musician and as vice-maestro and first organist of the Real Capilla in Madrid he devoted himself to the composition of sacred music. This *zarzuela* of 1747 was his final complete stage work and he certainly went out with something of a bang. The musical style is a cross between Vivaldi and early Haydn and once I tuned in to the idiom I really enjoyed myself. Apart from anything else, there is some really fine singing from the exclusively female soloists who are in tune, stylish, have

controlled vibrato and generally sound as if they are having a great time. There is certainly the sense of performance one would expect in a live recording, especially in the ensembles. The booklet includes good notes in four languages though the Spanish libretto is translated only into English. Definitely worth considering for this month's off-piste treat. David Hansell

Philidor *Sancho Pança* Darren Perry
Sancho, Elizabeth Calleo Thérèse, Karim Sulayman Lope Tocho, etc., Meghan McCall Juliette, etc., Tony Boulté Don Crispino, etc., Eric Christopher Black Torillos, etc., Andrew Sauvageau Un paysan, Opera Lafayette, Ryan Brown 57' 11"
Naxos 8.660274

This is a piece of ephemeral froth from the 1760s. There is no really continuous plot, more a sequence of scenes in which poor old Sancho is generally teased and given the run-around by a succession of characters, at the end of which he declares a preference for the life of a farmer rather than that of a governor. In the title role Darren Perry has the measure of all the dramatic facets of Sancho, though in his more blustery moments his intonation is not always truly centred. Most of the other singers have at least two roles and carry them off capably though as with Sancho not everyone is always in the middle of the note. The orchestra is very good and Ryan Brown keeps events on the move. There is no libretto in the booklet though there is a full synopsis and a thorough essay on the opera and its background (English only). David Hansell

Ryba *Česká mše vánoční* Czech Boys Choir
Boni Pueri, Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice, Marek Štryncel cond
Arcodiva UP 01242-2 13 172' 12"

My recollections of Ryba's *Missa solemnis Festis Nativitatis D.J. CH. Accomodata in lingua bohemica* are not particularly favourable, even though one was directed by Andrew Parrott (I thought we'd typeset a version, but it's not on my computer) and the other was authentically Czech. But I was pleasantly surprised. It dates from 1796 – late enough for a phrase to have been borrowed from Mozart rather than vice versa. There are strong folk and pastoral elements, and the CD also includes a couple of Christmas pastorales by Ryba as well as pastoral symphonies by Johan Stamitz (to use his German name) and Václav Pichl. The Mass is popular in the Czech Republic, and this certainly

presents it as attractive. The edition is from a posthumous source of 1827 (Ryba's dates are 1765-1815) scored for quite a large ensemble, whereas (if it's the same piece), I remember a score with mostly two staves. The booklet is informative, but there are no texts and translations. There is a serious attempt at HIP performance, though the instruments are modern. CB

Wagenseil *Concertos for Harp, two violins and cello* Rachel Talitman harp, Sylvie Bagara, Marie-Danielle Turner vln, Emmanuel Tondus vlc 66' 17"
Harp & Company CD 5050-20
Concerto Nos. 1-3, 5, 6

Wagenseil's is a name I recall from discussions of the birth of the symphony, and this rather pedestrian music would seem to help to explain his relative obscurity. Perhaps more surprising is his relative celebrity during his own lifetime, particularly as he lived and worked in Vienna at the time of Haydn and Mozart. Although technically accurate, these performances on what sound to me like modern instruments are rather lackluster and probably of interest largely to fans of the harp or of Wagenseil. The production of the accompanying booklet is also rather amateurish, with a poor English translation and frequent typos, including embarrassingly in large print under his portrait "Wagesneil"!

D. James Ross

The Flute King: Music from the Court of Frederick the Great. Emmanuel Pahud fl, Kammerakademie Potsdam, Trevor Pinnock 146' 25" (2 CDs)

EMI Classica 5099908423023

Agricola Sonata in A; Anna Amalia of Prussia Sonata in F; CPE Bach Concerto in A, Hamburger Sonata in G, Solo Sonata in a; JS Bach: Trio Sonata from The Musical Offering; F Benda Concerto in c; Frederick the Great Sonata in b, Flute Concerto no.3; Quantz: Concerto in G

I was rather put off by the cover of this 2-CD set which shows Emmanuel Pahud dressed as Frederick the Great holding a modern flute, but from the first notes of the first CD I realised that I was going to enjoy it. Both Pahud and Kammerakademie Potsdam, a period instrument orchestra, play with great panache and style. The idea of the set is to explore the music written by and for the king, the 300th anniversary of whose birth will be celebrated next year, and to make audible all the various currents, musical aesthetics and new approaches at an important turning point in music. The first CD is of

concertos with orchestra while the second is of sonatas, mostly with basso continuo. Pahud's playing is matched by violinist Matthew Truscott in the *Trio Sonata* from the *Musical Offering*, composed after Bach's visit to Frederick's summer palace of Sanssouci in 1747. Trevor Pinnock and Jonathan Manson provide immaculate continuo support in this and the solo works, which include sonatas by the king himself and his youngest sister Anna Amalia. This is lovely music, beautifully played, which should persuade you that it can sound convincing even on a modern instrument.

Victoria Helby

19th CENTURY

David Les Quatre Saisons Ensemble Baroque de Limoges 86' 22" (2 CDs)
Labodie LC11

Yes, it's the Four Seasons, but not as we know them. These are a set of twelve absolutely delicious string quintets (standard quartet plus double bass) from the early 1840s. I wasn't surprised to read that Mendelssohn commended them as the general musical world is that of his *Songs without words* – flowing melodies with inventive accompaniments. The scoring facilitates varied textures – sometimes quasi-orchestral with cello and bass together but the presence of the bass also frees up the cello for melodic, counter-melodic and decorative duties. And the bass does occasionally get the tune as well. This textural aspect, as much as any other, keeps the ear engaged. It is obvious that the players really love the music and it is marvellous to have it with tang of period instruments. *Vibrato* and *portamento* (could have done with more of this, actually) are discreetly applied and the phrasing is exquisite. The supplied booklet is only skeletal, though we are promised full notes online. Go for it, but don't overlook the other Romantic *Kleinmeister* with whom I have been entrusted this month.

David Hansell

David Le Souvenir Christophe Coin, Jean-Jacques Dünki, Andrés Gabetta, Quatuor Mosaïques 78' 29"
Labodie LC12
+ music by Lee, Musard/Desgranges & Vieuztemps/Schuberth

This disc is more varied than *Les Quatre Saisons* with a piano trio, a string quartet, *Mélodies* for cello and piano and piano solos, and this may be an attractive feature for many. Félicien David really could write

a tune and to say that the players relish these would be a major understatement – Christophe Coin's playing in his solos is from another world. Another major factor in the success of the performances is the beauty of the period pianos used – not a hint of twang or rattle. I have enjoyed these David discs enormously, especially as an antidote to the renaissance polyphony with which I am surrounded in another life. As with the disc above, the booklet is only skeletal, though we are promised full notes online. The packaging is a triumph of origamic ingenuity.

David Hansell

Gross Bal(l)ade romantique Quatuor Mosaïques, Yoko Kaneko *Felix Groß piano*, Michael Dahmen *baritone*, Christophe Coin *vlc* 71' 42"
Labodie LC09

A third disc of gems exhumed from the early Romantic period's bottom shelf is almost too much for one month. Again we are offered a carefully chosen and varied programme, this time of songs, a string quartet and cello solos. (The composer was a renowned cellist in his time.) But this music is not just melodic froth. There is real drama in the *Ballade* (cello solo) and the quartet and the tonally agreeable baritone Michael Dahmen is a committed advocate of the vocal items. Again, the instrumental playing is very fine. The booklet is only skeletal, though we are promised full notes online. *David Hansell For all three of the Ladorie discs reviewed above I tried the link to the notes given on the packaging but none of them worked. Going in via the home page revealed where they should/ will be, but again I was unable to get access.*

Deux a deux: Harp and horn duets from the Age of Enlightenment to Romanticism Masumi Nagasawa *single-action harp*, Teunis van der Zwart *horn* 65' 38"
Etcetera KTC1430

When I volunteered to review this highly unusual CD I wondered what I was letting myself in for, but within moments of putting it on I was intrigued. The entire repertoire recorded here results from the very fruitful collaboration between the harpist François Joseph Naderman (1781–1835) and horn player Frédéric Duvernoy (1765–1838) whose charming fantasias and nocturnes expertly exploit the potential of both instruments. Nagasawa's single-action pedal harp from 1815 was actually made by Naderman, while Zwart's 1804 horn by Aineé is also perfect for this

repertoire. The music is lightly engaging and entertaining and the performances technically flawless and subtly expressive. The only disappointment is the decision to frame the programme notes in the guise of an imaginary correspondence between the two virtuosi, a rather arch and annoying way to present the information that can be gleaned about Naderman and Duvernoy. The rather silly modern *Fantasia Deux a deux* improvised by the two performers is also an unfortunate lapse in taste, but is mercifully short enough not to detract from the charm of the rest of the CD.

D. James Ross

Serenade: 19th-century trios for Flute, Viola and Guitar The Benavente Trio (Clare Beesley, Judy Tarling, Peter Lay) 63' 35"
Benavente BEN1101
Gaspard Kummer Serenade op.83; Joseph Küssner: Serenade op.4; Anton Bernhard Fürstenau Serenade op.10
available from www.benavente.org.uk

Though rarely heard now, the combination of guitar, flute and viola was a popular one during the first half of the 19th century when a large quantity of music was published for the guitar in combination with other instruments. The Benavente Trio was formed to explore this repertoire on period instruments. All three works date from the first half of the century, the Küssner published in about 1819 in Offenbach, the Fürstenau in Leipzig around 1822 and the Kummer in Offenbach in about 1835. None of the publications is dated so I have taken these dates from IMSLP, where you will find parts for all three pieces. The flute and viola are given some lovely memorable melodies while the guitar has a mainly accompanying role, though it does get the chance to show off in a couple of variations in the Kummer and Fürstenau. This is very attractive music and it is easy to imagine it being played in the drawing rooms of Europe. I particularly enjoyed the Küssner with its beautiful second movement and amusing Rondo Scherzando with Russian and Hungarian sections.

Victoria Helby

OLD & NEW

Hombres de Maíz L'âme italienne dans la musique mexicaine Ensemble Lucidarium K617 K617228 64' 23"

This is entertaining music, dominated by vigorous and tight rhythms which are more important than the actual bass-patterns, with treble lines stretching across the

beats. Stimulating at first, but there's not enough contrast for continued listening. Other such mixes wear better (eg Christina Pluhar). But try it at a party and see what lithe young dancers can do with it. There's a strong political element in the booklet that isn't predictable from the music. CB

TRAGÉDIENNES

Véronique Gens – *Tragédienne 1-3* Les Talens Lyriques, Christophe Rousset
Virgin Classics
(Independent issues: vol. 3 is 0709272)

It is over 15 years since I first heard Véronique Gens live at a QEHE concert. I recall being struck both by her imposing, statuesque figure and the size and range of a voice that was larger than expected from recordings, a voice that carried as much natural authority as the singer's appearance. It was not what we then thought of (and perhaps still do think of) as a natural 'early music voice', and yet at the same time the singing was wonderfully stylish, with crystal clear articulation and accurately turned ornaments allied to a minimal use of vibrato. The years that followed have borne out such initial impressions. Today Gens is at the pinnacle of a career that stands in the vanguard of a remarkable generation of French singers, with a richly diversified repertoire extending from Cavalli through Mozart to Verdi and Wagner's Eva, and encompassing not only soprano roles, but also several more often associated with mezzos.

It is just one part of that diversity that is featured on these three discs. Between them they provide a broad survey of two centuries of French music drama stretching from Lully to Saint-Saëns, demonstrating a clear line of succession extending through Rameau and Gluck to Berlioz. It is necessary to go no further than the opening tracks devoted to Lully's *Armide* to be aware of two of Gens's great strengths: the power and dramatic involvement the singer brings to any role she undertakes and her outstanding diction and projection. Moving on to the lovely air from Campra's *Le Carnaval de Venise*, "Mes yeux, fermez-vous à jamais", we meet a third prime asset in Gens' supreme ability to float an exquisitely-shaped melodic line. To the roles of Gluck's *Iphigénie* and *Armide*, Gens brings an elevated sense of noble grandeur, to his Clytemnestra (*Iphigénie en Aulide*) a blood-curdling intensity.

That the voice is more than capable of answering the demands of 19th century

grand opera is amply demonstrated on the final disc, above all in the great soaring climax of Elizabeth of Valois' 'Toi qui sus' from the original French version of Verdi's *Don Carlos*. Yet were I to be restricted to just one track from this third CD it would unquestionably be Gens' account of Dido's 'Ah, je vais mourir – Adieu, fière cité' from *Les Troyens*, an overwhelming, searing experience that burns itself on the mind. Throughout this remarkable voyage Rousset provides exemplary support in addition to interspersing a number of orchestral excerpts, a sensible idea given that no one in their right mind would want to spend uninterrupted time in the presence of these magnificent distract women. Brian Robins

OTTOMAN

La Sublime Porte: Voix d'Istanbul 1430–1750
Gürsoy Dincer, †Montserrat Figueras, Lior Elmaleh, Hespèrion XXI, Jordi Savall dir
Alia Vox AVSA 9887 79' 49

† For brief obituary, see p. xx

For those who follow Jordi Savall's releases with pleasure, this is a further treat. To buy one of these CDs with booklet is to gain a delicious slice of higher education in itself, besides an entertaining feast for the ears. Following on from *Istanbul: Dimitrie Cantemir 1673–1723 "Le Livre de la Science de la Musique" et les traditions musicales Sépharades et Arménienes* (AVSA 9870) the director has the opportunity to include more of the Ottoman music which Cantemir was able to preserve for posterity by means of his ingenious alphabetic notation, now transcribed into Western notation by Owen Wright in the School of Oriental and African Studies Musicology Series as *Demetrius Cantemir: The Collection of Notations Part 1: Text* (University of London 1992). Jordi Savall includes four pieces from Cantemir's MS, one of these, *Taksim & Makam "Büslik usûles"* by Cantemir himself and another by one of his music tutors in Constantinople, Tanburi Angeli, *Taksim and Makam Rehavi Çember*. Listeners who have access to Owen Wright's book can follow the bare bones of the monophonic outline upon which interchanging members of Savall's ensemble flesh out a satisfying and atmospheric series of performances in the traditional manner. Savall has already provided his listeners with a sample of Cantemir's notation based on the Arabic alphabet, to be seen inside the cover of *Orient – Occident 1200–1700* (AVSA 9848).

Besides works from Cantemir's MS *La*

Sublime Porte includes music from countries of the Ottoman Empire, some of whose people lived in richly cosmopolitan Constantinople. Cantemir himself was a Moldavian hostage who learned Turkish, Persian and Arabic. He was in contact with a flourishing Greek community, while Jews were among the many traders and scholars. Representing the wider Ottoman world, Savall's musicians bring their instruments from Armenia (*duduk*), Bulgaria (*kaval*), Israel, Morocco, Spain (*lira, vielle*) and Turkey to join the customary Middle Eastern ensemble of *kemençe, ney, oud, tanbur, kanun*, and percussion. Dimitri Psonis from Greece brings *santur* and *morisca*. Mostly, of course, these instruments are played solo or in varying combinations of unison. Much of the interest, therefore, lies in the varying tapestry of sound, with its virtuoso intricacies, the atmospheric mood-changes, and the rapid execution of lengthy rhythmic patterns in the Middle Eastern style.

I was delighted to receive this CD to review, as I had just finished reading Cantemir's amazing record of life under the Ottomans, *The History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire*, translated and published posthumously in 1735. I strongly recommended it for interest, humour and expansive footnotes to anyone who has a couple of weeks to spend in the British Library! Diana Maynard

CHRISTMAS

Christmas Concertos Neues Berliner Kammerorchester, Michael Erxleben 63' 56" Capriccio c10442
Corelli: op 6/8, Handel: Pastorale (*Messiah*); Locatelli: op 1/8; Manfredini: op 3/12; Molter: Concerto pastorale; Torelli op 8/6; Werner: Pastorella in D

If you like the full string sound of a 'modern', or should I say 'traditional', string chamber orchestra, complete with *molto vibrato* – and I suspect few readers of *EMR* do – then you might possibly appreciate this selection. The Molter and the Werner pastorales were new to me, but they are hardly of great musical worth, though charming enough. This is a re-issue of a recording made in 1992, though stylistically it belongs in the '60s. There are much more appropriate recordings of the pieces of musical worth, namely the Corelli, Torelli and Locatelli.

Ian Graham-Jones

Concerto Köln: Christmas Classics Martin Hoffman vln & dir
Berlin Classics 0300276BC

This includes an interestingly wide range of music. They start with Charpentier's *Noels pour les instruments* (H. 534), then come a *Sinfonia pastorale* by Johann Stamitz (op 4/2), the ubiquitous Corelli (op 6/8), the less well-known *Sonata natalis* by Vejvanovsky, Vivaldi's *Il riposo – per il Santissimo Natale RV 270*, the *Sinfonia* to Part 2 of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, another Vivaldi concerto (for mandoline, two violins, strings and continuo RB 93, formerly pedalled as his "guitar concerto") and finally the equally ubiquitous Torelli op 8/6. For me the highlights are the fast outer movements of the Stamitz, where the group can let its hair down and play about with the pastoral motifs that are passed to and fro and the tiered dynamics with bucket loads of quickly repeated notes, although the swells in the final *Presto* made me feel a little queasy. I'm not a great fan of their Charpentier and I hope there is not another volume next year of them playing Corrette. Indeed, they would do well to stay away from 17th-century music, it seems – the balance between bright trumpets and not at all bright strings in the Vejvanovsky is not the best advertisement. Overall, there is too much continuo in the sound picture. The CD might be a 25th birthday celebration of the group's constant discovering of new repertoires; although this might be pleasant enough to have on in the background during Christmas games (or dinner?), I feel they would do themselves more justice (and the music-loving public a greater service) if they continued to explore the late 18th-century symphony repertoire of which their earlier recordings were absolutely first rate examples! BC

The Christmas Story Theatre of Voices, Ars Nova Copenhagen, Paul Hillier 65' 20" harmonia mundi usa HMU 807565

No – there's no Schütz here (unlike one listing in our Concert Diary entitled *Christmas Story* but with the Schütz piece normally called that in English given another title. Here, a solo group and a choir of 16 are joined by a plucker and an organ accompanying three 17th-century Italian narratives. The basis is the familiar nine-lessons-and-carols, which Paul has transferred to Denmark. Readings are not included, though he was tempted to use many languages: if that had happened, BC would have had to review it. But a

summary of the story is given, and the carols are grouped, as in the usual service. There is very little here that is completely familiar. Carols one knows are mostly arranged by Paul – differently, but not aggressively so. Novelties include a poem by Hans Christian Andersen set by Gade.* The authenticist in me reacts against a baroque guitar accompanying "We three kings from orient are" – it sounds fine, but to what extent should compositions, as opposed to traditional material, be respected? My feeling is that you can recompose but not tinker, but that's matter for a book! There's a substantial booklet, with full texts. Maybe not everyone's taste, but worth trying. CB

*I trust that this will be in Paul Hillier's *A Book of Carols* due next year: details will be at www.tov-edition.com.

Durante Neapolitan Christmas Roberta Mameli, Ursula Eittinger, Andreas Post, Stephan MacLeod SATB, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens 72' 51" cpo 777 571-2

Ad presepe venite, Mass "in Pastorale" in A, Litanie della BMV & 2 Magnificats

Francesco Durante was born in 1684 and died only two years after the younger Gebel. Michael Alexander Willens has produced performing editions of four of the five works on this recording. After the motet *Ad presepe venite* come two settings of the Magnificat, and Litany for the Blessed Virgin and a Kyrie-Gloria pairing in *Pastorale*. There is no chorus and the "orchestra" is very minimalist (pairs of horns and oboes, 22111 strings and organ), yet the sound is very full. The motet is in a slightly odd format – the opening chorus is followed by a recitative-air pair for the soprano and then the work ends with a recitative-duet pair for alto and tenor, although there is an air of this being Mary and Joseph and perhaps the idea is that we are flies on the wall of the Bethlehem cattle shed. The other music is more traditional Christmas fare, with pedal basses and 12/8 thirds and sixths, but that is not to say that Durante's music is either overly predictable or uninteresting; quite the reverse. This is not the treble, bass and precious little else of Neapolitan opera of the period; Durante writes proper counterpoint and properly fills out the harmonies of his instrumental accompaniments. Of the three cpo releases, this is the perhaps the only one that is instantly recognisable as Christmas music. I've enjoyed listening to it several times already.

Georg Gebel Jr Christmas Cantatas vol 1. Veronika Winter, Britta Schwarz, Andreas Post, Matthias Vieweg SATB, Les Amis de Philippe, Ludger Rémy 71' 01" cpo 777 610-2.

Gott Lob! mein Jesus macht mich rein & Verfolge mich, o Welt!

Georg Gebel Jr Christmas Cantatas vol 2. Gesine Adler, Britta Schwarz, Andreas Post, Matthias Vieweg SATB, Les Amis de Philippe, Ludger Rémy 60' 122" Vol 2 (same performers) cpo 777 611-2

Mein Jesu A und O Begebet eure Leiber zum Opfer

With a formidable reputation for new discoveries, the German recording company cpo from Osnabrück has not disappointed this year. There are two volumes in their on-going series of releases featuring the music of Georg Gebel, and a charming disc of music by the Neapolitan composer, Francesco Durante.

Vol. 1 of Georg Gebel der Jungere was already released in October, but somehow we missed it. Ludger Rémy has been at the helm for previous recordings of the music of the relatively short-lived cGeorg Gebel (1709-1753), which included a Christmas Oratorio. Here we have two lengthy cantatas for the 2nd day of Christmas and the Sunday after. In addition to the soloists there are another anonymous four ripieno singers. Gebel's cantatas are bi-partite (the two halves originally separated by the sermon), and each section is framed by chorales. The body of the works are recitative-aria pairs, although sometimes two solos follow one another. The arias tend slightly towards the galant style, and it is clear that Gebel had an ear for instrumental timbre – there is a lovely aria in *Verfolge mich* for Soprano, solo oboe, muted strings and continuo, and another in *Gott Lob!* for Bass and two horns, strings and continuo. At over 10 minutes in length, the former must be one of the longest arias in this repertoire.

Vol. 2 (cpo 777 611-2) has just been issued and again features two cantatas: *Mein Jesu A und O, der Anfang und das Ende* for New Year's Day and *Begebet eure Leiber zum Opfer* for the first Sunday after Epiphany. Soprano Gesine Adler joins the line-up of the previous release – not because Gebel suddenly requires an extra voice, but because the two works were recorded at different sessions. These are substantial pieces, too and retain the formal design from before, though the instrumental scoring of the later cantata is restricted to

strings alone. As one would expect for the celebration of New Year, Gebel requires trumpets, and he also employs a pair of flutes, which once again give the piece as modern feel.

CHRISTMAS WITH HARRY

A Christmas History & A Choral Christmas
The Sixteen, Robert Quinney org, David Miller lute/guitar, Harry Christophers cond, Simon Russell Beale presenter
Coro CorDVD5 COR16094

This DVD contains two programmes. First is a documentary on the history of the carol, focussing on individual examples. The earliest is one of the fragments excavated at a rubbish dump at Oxyrhynchus, the latest the young Peter Maxwell Davies (at the time, some listeners would have thought that his *O magnum mysterium* was also fit for the dump!) The second programme is one of The Sixteen's *Sacred Music* TV series, giving complete-ish performances of some of the items featured in the documentary. Reviewing this at the last minute, when I knew how much space I had to fill, my advice is not to do what I did: play the two programmes consecutively – there's too much repetition. Simon Russell Beale is an impressive narrator, but *Choral Christmas* would have been better with music only.

The documentary began with a second-century Egyptian hymn, which didn't impress me much – it may have been more convincing sung by an Egyptian. Comments on plainsong were a bit vague, and the first item that caught me was Heinrich Suso with *In dulci jubilo*, his enthusiasm for flagellation and his angelic vision. How neat to show a clip of the carol being danced by young women to a 1970s version by Mike Oldfield – the excerpts of his arrangement online were more recent and without the dance. I wondered what Suso would have made of an advert linked to one of them: "Sex in the UK. Find millions of willing sex partners. Browse for free."

I was impressed by the first purpose-built Lutheran church, with the organ perched high above the altar and the pulpit half-way down the church, not quite so high as the organ. I'm not sure if the Walter piece chosen was ideal since it gave Harry a chance to talk about polyphony, which he oversimplified by identifying it as catholic: a better example might have been a simple chordal setting in German of a Latin hymn, like Osiander's *Christum wir sollen* (*New Oxford Book of Carols*, 61).

Sally Dunkley managed to make one verse of Byrd's *Lullaby* appropriately aggressive. (Sally, incidentally, was at the Byrd conference mentioned on page 52, where conversation briefly touched on how the singer of consort songs expressed the text.)

George Whitefield was given more emphasis than he deserved, but I had forgotten the link with Waltham Abbey. The arranger of the Mendelssohn tune for *Hark! the herald Angel* was W. H. Cummings, who was organist there. The Abbey had appeared earlier in passing in connection with Tallis's *Christmas* (or was it really for Queen Mary?) *Missa Puer natus est nobis*. I'm not convinced that its style is particularly Christmasy – more likely it was elaborate to show off English ornate polyphony of the Spaniards present.

The section on *Stille Nacht* managed to include the myth as well as the recent discovery that the words antedate the tune by a few years. Has the idea that it was sung by the two men, with one also playing the guitar, also been superseded? Here it was sung by a few ladies, not featuring the conventional singing in thirds (like other songs of the period). Incidentally, *Away in a manger* should be sung in sixths, perhaps with a guitar as well: any four-part arrangement makes it sound sentimental.

Absolutely new to me was the portrait by her brother of the young Christina Rossetti in his *Ecce Ancilla Domini* of 1850. She was 20 by then, but had suffered mental problems in her teens (to use an anachronistic term) and despite the halo, the disturbing picture could represent any youngster horrified that she was pregnant. Her *In the bleak midwinter* is one of the most powerful carols, because it takes an almost mythological snowy Christmas and links it poetically both to a poor stable and to theological magnificence, all in simple language; the young Holst matches it brilliantly.²

The *Choral Christmas* was recorded at St Augustine's, Kilburn. (There's a strange personal coincidence in that, although I'm not a church organist, I've played continuo for *Spem in alium* both there and at Waltham

Abbey). The concert is fine in its way, but I wonder a bit about the consistency of sound. Harry creates a style that works well, but I'd prefer Byrd to sound different from Mendelssohn and from Howells. *A spotless rose* sounded beautifully right, but it should have sounded completely different from *Hark! The herald angels sing* which preceded it: that is a congregational hymn for unison singing (apart from a few high notes that can be doubled in thirds) and needs a congregation, not a choir. Byrd's lullaby was written four centuries ago, and the sound of the words would have been considerably different from now. There has been enough research on how to pronounce Shakespeare plays to have some idea of how Londoners sounded, or the *Lullaby* could have a rural Essex sound – perhaps it was sung at Stondon Massey by a servant. An object of the early music movement has been to make different sorts of music sound different, and sound is part of style. However, that seems to be a minority view!

The DVD is, however, well worth hearing and the script is well researched. Buy it and enjoy the skill of the singers and the snippets of history that are unfolded. CB



2. The narrator was perhaps exaggerating a bit to deny the possibility of snow in Bethlehem. Winter temperature get near zero, and Bethlehem is a hill-top town about 2400 feet above sea level. I'm pretty certain that snow is mentioned by T. E. Lawrence in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, who was operating a bit further east – not that it matters, since December 25th was an arbitrary date anyway.

EMMA in BYRDLAND

Richard Turbet

Byrdland Emma Kirkby, Unicorn Singers,
The Company of Viols
(Gillian Stevens, Jenny Curtis, Jane Francis, David Hatcher),
Stephen Marshall *conductor*.
Dore Abbey, 2 October 2011

If the prevailing culture in Britain were musical rather than literary, we would – or at least should – perpetually celebrate Byrd the way we currently – and rightly – celebrate Shakespeare. Anyone doubting this proposition would have had such doubts removed at the concert entitled “Byrdland”, which marked the quatercentenary of the publication of Byrd’s *Psalmes, Songs, and Sonnets*, performed by Dame Emma Kirkby, The Unicorn Singers and The Company of Viols under Stephen Marshall. The variety and profundity of the music are simply ... Shakespearean – in the way that the variety and profundity of Shakespeare’s plays and poems are Byrdian. No fewer than twenty of the 32 pieces were performed, some solemn, others joyful, all framed to the life of the words and, continuing to follow Byrd’s subtitle, fitted among voices and viols: Dame Emma chose eight to sing as solos, plus the verses in *Have mercy upon me*, the only work in the concert which she had sung before as a soloist, and joined the second sopranos and viols for a barnstorming *tutti* performance of the six-part *Praise our Lord*. Meanwhile The Company of Viols, a quartet, played the Fantasia a4, one of two fantasias included by Byrd within this otherwise vocal collection.

As Henry Peacham observed during Byrd’s lifetime, in one of the interludes spoken by members of the choir, Byrd was known best for sober music; but in this collection, bearing in mind that Byrd was over seventy when it was published, so many of the pieces are exuberant and exude a sense of sheer fun. When I first became attracted to Byrd’s music I was irritated by the early 20th-century critics who tried to make his music palatable to their contemporaries by claiming how close some of it was to jazz, but in a way they are right: the syncopations and slick sudden entries would indeed tax an Artie Shaw or even a Charlie Parker, the *onlie begetter* of the concert’s title. Looking at some of what Byrd composed when it relates to fellow composers, and remembering that there is no surviving record of any contemporary musician expressing dislike of him, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Byrd had a well developed sense of humour.

No praise can be too high for David Fraser’s erudite programme notes – one of The Unicorn Singers’ basses, he has recently identified in print the source of the texts for five of the works in this collection, has edited all of Byrd’s

repertory appropriate for the online Choral Wiki, and was asked by Andrew Carwood to edit the texts for the final three recordings in The Cardinall’s Musick Byrd Edition, the last of which was voted Recording of the Year for 2010. My own comments owe much to his insights. The achievement of this collection is perhaps best epitomized by *Arise Lord into thy rest* a5 and noted by David: the tonally unstable beginning (such ambiguity common to several other pieces in the collection); the judicious use of dissonance; the mercurial rhythms; the brilliant scoring; the masterful confidence of the counterpoint. What could have been no more than a domestic anthem with overtones of the Chapel Royal bursts into a transcendent narrative: framed indeed to the life – the operative word here – of the words.

And so it was with all the pieces. Each deserves an entire review to itself, and the collection a monograph to itself, but suffice to mention just a few more. *What is life* a4 consists mainly of the two upper voices posing difficult questions – such as the title – which are given gloomy answers by the two lower, before combining for a sober conclusion. *Come jolly swains* a4 fairly bursts out of the blocks, idealizing the sort of Arcadian existence which Byrd’s patrons would wish to enjoy, though one suspects that Byrd understood the hollowness of the facade when he concludes this mainly boisterous song with more sensitive music to accompany the thought that “others sigh repenting”. Some more repenting is counselled at the end of the delightful three-part pastoral *In winter cold* during which a wise ant wags a metaphorical finger at an irresponsible all singing and all dancing, and now wheedling, grasshopper.

Regarding Byrd and the madrigal, I have always thought that Byrd defiantly dished up the six-part version of *This sweet and merry month* (the four-part version of which was performed here by Dame Emma and the viols), felt he had proved he could do it better than anyone else in England (he seems to have been hugely ambitious and a classy networker, so one might guess that he was also competitive), and left the youngsters to it. That said, he was not averse to composing works that are madrigalian – not least with an eye to sales, one supposes – and came up trumps with *Awake mine eyes* a4; neither Morley nor Weelkes nor even Wilbye ever matched the sheer timing and placement of his illustration of “warbling” throats, and the tapering conclusion “echoes sending”. Some of the 1611 pieces are not entirely unfamiliar through recordings or performances, but Dame Emma and The Unicorn Singers severally favoured us with some true collectors’ items, so I must mention two unrecorded gems: *Let not the sluggish*

sleep a4 has a moralistic text but such is Byrd's sensitivity, his setting conveys through its kind and gentle counterpoint and harmonies later in the work an understanding of human vulnerability; meanwhile *In crystal towers a3* is both radiant yet pensive as Byrd seems to contemplate his retirement from the regal rooms of London to the simple cotés of rural Essex.

Stephen Marshall and The Unicorn Singers did William proud. Stephen spoke to me beforehand of slight compromises he had made with pitch, scoring and tempi to aid the choir, which is amateur and based in rural Wales. But none of these tweaks undermined the music in any way: rather they assisted the choir to interpret the music with real feeling, sensitivity and confidence. And Dame Emma was both regal and effervescent, radiating joy both through her voice and her presence. Since this is a review I am bound to observe that there were three or four occasions when the otherwise capable Company of Viols found a member offside, once involving a restart and once even momentarily confounding the best efforts of Dame Emma to lead the way back to Byrd's intentions; that said, they otherwise combined with her delightfully, and their performance of the familiar fantasia came up as fresh as the daisy.

The full house at Dore Abbey enjoyed a concert that was a complete pleasure. Byrd's range – from the very sober consort anthem *Have mercy upon me* (which I have recently suggested in print was originally composed for Anglican use three or four decades before and was recycled here for domestic consumption) to the uninhibited *Come let us rejoice a4*, via the bewilderingly varied *Sing ye to our Lord a3* which begins in an almost preoccupied way before giving way to exuberance then grandeur, and the radiant *Wedded to will is witness a5* in which, with its references to will and reason, Byrd must surely be having some fun with his own name and that of his longtime servant John Reason – ensured that a good time was had by all: just what Byrd would have wanted ... and good for sales too.

PS from Emma: "Byrd evening was exemplary, especially from the sweet choir and with David Fraser's programme notes – the booklet was a wonderful thing. The viols were nice and I enjoyed it all."

BYRD CONFERENCE

I managed to visit briefly a conference on William Byrd at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, on Nov. 26-27 – sadly, the need to finish *EMR* prevented a longer visit. I didn't count them, but I guess that there were about 25 people there, with a sprinkling of performers among the academics (I don't know where I fit in). It was a nice size, small enough to function informally if the tired format of formal papers and a few comments after each could have been replaced by a series of informed discussions based on circulated documents.

CB

MONTSERRAT FIGUERAS

(15-March 1942 – 23 November 2011)

Montserrat Figueras García was born in Barcelona, sang from an early age, and originally wanted to be an actress. She joined a local choir and became a member of Ars Musicae de Barcelona, a group that performed Catalan medieval music; Victoria de Los Angeles made her first recording with them in 1942, and in a later one (1967) the backing group included Jordi Savall and three people named Figueras, presumably relatives – Pilar, Andrés and Antonio. Jordi and Montserrat moved to Basel to study at the Musical Academy and the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. They married in 1968 and with Lorenzo Alpert and Hopkinson Smith formed Hespèrion XX in 1974 (updating it to Hespèrion XXI for the new century).

The ensemble changed over the years, especially with Jordi moving beyond his success as a viol virtuoso into wider and more imaginative territories. Complementary ensembles were formed: the vocal La Capella Reial de Catalunya and Le Concert des Nations. Montserrat sang with these groups whenever the repertoire was appropriate. Their children Arianna and Ferran are both musicians. She died in her home in Bellaterra, in the outskirts of Barcelona, on 23 November, aged 69.

"She can be dramatic or passionate, facetious or sorrowful; a young girl who wants her freedom and is only restrained with difficulty, and a saintly soul in a mystical union with God." (Mary Berry reviewing her performance in *Lux Feminae* [Alia Vox AVSAM9847] in 2006.)

Jacks, Pipes & Hammers, Lindum Records & Recorder MusicMail

Sheet music & CDs for all Early Music enthusiasts Facsimiles from Fuzeau, Minkoff, SPES and Broude Brothers always in stock

Send for our latest catalogues.

Fax: 01422 886157
Phone: 01422 882751

sales@jackspipesandhammers.com
www.jackspipesandhammers.com

Scout Bottom Farm,
Mytholmroyd,
Hebden Bridge HX7 5JS (UK)