

# Early Music REVIEW

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This issue is being sent out at the end of July, though to avoid confusion we have retained September as its nominal date. The next issue, October, will appear at the usual time.

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I was intrigued by an interview in *Classical Music* (22 June) with David Fielding, director and designer for *Idomeneo* at Garsington Opera. He stressed the importance of knowledge: of Greek mythology and of the novel and play which lie behind the opera. Very sensible, it would seem. But then he continued with a paragraph which aroused my suspicion:

Electra's music presents her as a potential enemy from the word go and she's not exactly stable – don't forget she has been implicated in the murder of her mother. But it's important to try and diffuse this a little and present her as a potential fiancée. After all, she has been sent by her father, Agamemnon, as a legitimate potential queen-in-the-making for Idamante. And there is a bond between her father and Idomeneo which needs to be honoured. She is really quite wronged.

Surely what matters is how Mozart presents her. Fielding may wish he had made her a more subtle character; if so, he should get someone to write a new opera on the subject. If Mozart's audience knew the sources, or if there were current interpretations of the myth (as, for instance, with the Handel oratorios: see page 3-4), then they are relevant for the modern director. But knowledge that was not available or was rejected at the time should not be foisted on Mozart.

A typical example of weighing down with irrelevant knowledge was the *Tamerlano* at the 1993 Karlsruhe Handel Festival; a fine early-instrument band was assembled, a new edition commissioned; but the designer and director were not interested in what happened in 1724 but set the work in medieval Mongolia, very authentic for the historical Tamburlaine but utterly irrelevant to Handel. Handelian heroes may have been exotic, but they existed in a world that had clear limits. The function of a designer is to provide a setting in which their behaviour seems appropriate and in which the formal conventions of *opera seria* seem rational.

I was enthusiastic about the sign interpreter at the Coliseum's *Fairy Queen* (EMR 16, p. 9). Glyndebourne's *Theodora* goes a step further and makes the whole chorus sign their text – most distracting: I switched off the TV after a few minutes. Why stage an oratorio anyway? Glyndebourne has hardly exhausted Handel's operas! CB

## BOOKS AND MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

## LASSUS MOTETS

Orlando di Lasso *The Complete Motets* edited by Peter Bergquist (*Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance*, 102 & 103). A-R Editions, 1995

10. *The Four-Language Print for Four and Eight Voices* (Munich, 1573). xxiv + 125pp, \$48.00. ISBN 0 89579 323 7

11. *Liber mottetarum trium vocum* (Munich, 1575), *Novae aliquot, ad duas voces cantiones* (Munich, 1577). xx + 119 pp, \$48.00. ISBN 0 89579 327 X

At last! Although Lassus's motets were included in the *Sämtliche Werke*, they have not been readily available to singers and that edition has a grave disadvantage even to those who have access to it (sadly, it never attracted a cheap reprint) and can read the clefs, in that it is basically a scoring up of the posthumous collection of Lassus's works, the *Magnum opus musicum*, compiled by his sons in an order that disregards the music's original publication. So if, for example, you want to follow up Lowinsky's stimulating study on the important Antwerp first book (1556), you will need to consult seven volumes of the *Sämtliche Werke*, so it can hardly be seen as an entity (except in the Alamire facsimile). Having used the 1604 edition a few weeks ago, I can understand why scholars were seduced by its convenient monumentality: it is an amazing production, and one which should be available in facsimile (perhaps a project for Garland). I also found that for the work I was checking, *Timor et tremor*, it agreed entirely with the 1564 edition apart from two sensible corrections of underlay.

The new edition is to be based on the earliest printed sources, with consultation of other authoritative sources but no full-scale examination of all the early prints and MSS. This seems a sensible policy, in that the later and peripheral sources are unlikely to offer anything of value except for the study of the dissemination of the music. I hope, however, the *Magnum opus musicum* will be collated, if only to show why a reading in the new edition differs. The appearance of the first two volumes is pleasing and editorial policy is sound, with original note values, four-minim bars, and the preservation of all accidentals. But in a scholarly edition of this sort, is it really necessary to replace  $\mathbb{C}$  by 4/2? I'm not entirely convinced that Bergquist is right in rejecting the use of half-length bars for  $\mathbb{C}$  and I don't see why modern standards should be used for the orthography of the Latin texts; surely each book should be treated on its merits, and if there is a degree of consistency in the 16th-century printer's house-style, that should be respected? Bergquist seems to be the ubiquitous name in Lassus publishing at present, and on the evidence of these volumes, the series is in good hands.

Vol. 10 contains a sport among Lassus's publications, a collection of pieces in four languages, dedicated to four Fugger brothers. We reviewed a recording of the set in *EMR* 8: I wrote then that I would love to see an edition of the book, and here it is, and hearing the CD again with the score increased my admiration of it (CTH 2209). Vol. 11 comprises material that is primarily educational: tricinia and bicinia (including the dozen textless duets, which do seem to be slightly more instrumental in texture, though not so obviously that solmised performance is out of court).

## MORE RECENT RESEARCHES

Juan Vasquez *Villancicos i Canciones* edited by Eleanor Russell. (*Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance*, 104). A-R Editions, 1995. xxvii + 121pp, \$48.00. ISBN 0 89579 325 3

*Fourteen Motets from the Court of Ferdinand II of Hapsburg* edited by Steven Saunders (*Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, 75). A-R Editions, 1995. xxxii + 94pp, \$38.40. ISBN 0 89579 315 6

Jean-Marie Leclair *Sonatas for Violin and Basso Continuo Opus 1* edited by Robert E. Preston (*Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, 76). A-R Editions, 1995. xxvi + 177pp, \$62.40. ISBN 0 89579 324 5

The Vasquez volume completes the publication of his secular work with the music from his *Villancicos i canciones... a tres ya a cuatro* (1551): 19 pieces a3, five a4 and two a5; those for four and five voices were reprinted in his 1560 *Recopilación de sonetos y villancicos* and so are in the edition of that work by Anglés in MME 4 (1946). A dozen of the pieces appeared in Fuenllana's *Orphénica lyra* (1554) – modern edition by Charles Jacobs (OUP), a useful source for checking editorial accidentals; Russell distinguishes between those that are her own and those confirmed by the intabulations. This is a typically thorough A-R edition, with lengthy remarks about the music as well as biographical and editorial information. Texts and translation are better set out than in some previous volumes, and a useful additional feature is the noting of the modern equivalents of archaic words; the texts themselves have modern accents, punctuation and capitalisation but not spelling. There is a note on pronunciation. It seems a little naive of the editor to comment on the combination of voices required without first considering whether the relative notated pitches have any significance. Since it is clear that names such as *baxo* refer to the part-book or function, not range, it is pointless to say that that high texture of the *baxo* of no. 1 suits the range of a tenor better than a bass: it is in the C3 clef, so that is hardly surprising. She suggests that, taking the cue from Fuenllana, the three-part pieces can be sung as accompanied solos. Performers might have

welcomed advice on which part should be sung; Fuenllana singles out the top part. Musically, I can't say I am over-excited by the anthology, perhaps because my lack of affinity with the Spanish language. But it is good that this significant collection is available in a sound edition.

I welcomed Steven Saunders' *Cross, Sword and Lyre*, his study of music chiefly by Valentini and Priuli for the court of Ferdinand II in Vienna (Emperor 1619-37) a year ago (*EMR* 13, p. 3) and included a solo motet by Priuli as our musical item that month, one that is not duplicated in either the book or this new anthology. There are 14 motets here for varying numbers of solo voices and continuo; a pair of violins are added to a soprano (or tenor) in the concluding item by Arrigoni. It is disappointing that five of the items duplicate the substantial musical appendix of the book, differing only in larger type (not of very great importance now that virtually all photocopiers enlarge and reduce) and in the retrograde step of printing a realisation rather than adding editorial figures (as is done in the Strozzi edition mentioned below or in many King's Music publications). It is nice to have a few more pieces, and I would have no quarrel with the edition if the book did not already exist; but the overlap is a pity.

In the 25 years since A-R began publishing Robert E. Preston's edition of Leclair's violin sonatas our attitude to the original editions has changed completely. Then, facsimiles were few and expensive, generally confined to the reference shelves of libraries; now they are cheaper than modern editions and aimed primarily at players, who seem to buy them far more willingly than libraries. So although it is excellent that the edition is now completed with op. 1, it has to complete with two facsimiles (Fuzeau has the original edition of 1723 and the Société de Musicologie de Languedoc an edition of 1743) each costing rather less than this edition and each more likely to appeal to our readers. The editor argues rather too strongly that it is unpractical to play from them. Most of the characteristics he mentions seem fairly normal ones which the experienced player will take in his stride, and the figures are anyway a guide to what the player hears and anticipates rather than the only source of harmonic information; I would be interested to hear if anyone has had problems with it. The Languedoc facsimile (I don't own a copy of the Fuzeau) is quite small and sometimes congested, so there are distinct advantages in reading from A-R's clear engraving, even if its print is much smaller than in the earlier volumes. I have only seen a score, but parts are also available.

#### TELEMANN

If you hear a Telemann solo or trio sonata, there's a fair chance that it will be from his *Essercizii Musici*. (An example is the recording reviewed in p. 17 of this issue, with four out of its seven items from the *Essercizii*.) With modern editions often running to £10.00 per trio sonata, the new facsimile from Performing Facsimiles (PF 140; £37.50) is excellent value for a dozen solos – i.e. solo instrument and

continuo, except for two solos just for harpsichord – and a dozen trios for various combinations of violin, recorder, flute, oboe, obbligato harpsichord and continuo. (The Alamire catalogue lists a rival facsimile at a lower price which will be available this autumn.) A table on the cover and prefaced to part-book 1 supplements the deficiency of the original and supplies an index; a pity it does not also add TWV numbers for the benefit of pedantic programme and magazine editors like me. Telemann published the set himself in Hamburg around 1740. It is rather more legible than some of his earlier publications, if a bit squashed.

Fuzeau have issued a set of six trios published in 1718 (No. 5152; FFR105). All have one violin part and a figured bass; the second part is different for each piece: oboe, recorder, flute, violin, bass viol and bassoon/cello. A folder contains the three parts together with a fourth booklet containing editorial matter; I would have thought that users of facsimiles would not need an explanation of *Adagio*, *Allegro*, etc, especially since Brossard's Parisian definitions, which are here given, may need modification for Frankfurt, where the Trios were published. There is some note of variants between copies and the publisher is specific about redrawing of stavelines to cover the deletion of the library stamp, and in compensation the stamp itself (from the Peters Library, Leipzig) is reproduced separately. The TWV numbers should have been given. Legibility is good – rather better than Telemann's Hamburg productions.

#### HANDEL & THE OLD TESTAMENT

Ruth Smith *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*  
Cambridge UP, 1995. xiv + 484pp, £45.00. ISBN 0 521 40265 4

This has been occupying my reading time for most of the last month. It is not an easy book, not because it is poorly written or lacks interest, but because it is so packed with ideas – though the lack of a narrative or progressing argument did make it difficult to keep the reading impetus alive. It is an important book in that it corrects the wrong impression that most of us probably have of the Augustan age as a secular one. The Old Testament in particular had a significance that it is difficult for us to imagine. The author quotes from Fénelon, via William Stevenson (1722), 'everything in scripture is connected' (as the marginal references in many bibles demonstrate). The Old Testament is important not just in relationship to the New (crucial in *Messiah*, less so in the other oratorios) but through the identification of the Israelites with the British (or perhaps the English). In many ways, the despised Victorians understood the oratorios better than us, since they believed the Israelite history which underlies them. We find the slaughter of the Amalakite in *Saul* wantonly barbarous and wonder why it is included at all; Smith makes clear that we need to approach with a different set of values.

She has read a vast quantity of religious, moral and political theory and propaganda (sparing the over-worked musicologist from having to cover the same ground). Most of the

stories Handel set had a resonance in current controversy. What particular points Handel's librettists were making is not always clear. The time lag between writing and performance was generally too long for immediate topicality. Future writers will need to consider in the light of this book what emphasis Handel himself puts on the texts he sets. I suspect that Smith underestimates Handel's own input to the libretti, in outline if not verbally. He was, after all, generally their commissioner and was financially responsible for the whole enterprise, an unusual situation for a composer of his time. Even in terms of the libretti, Smith avoids aesthetic questions. Jennens' magnificent opening to *Belshazzar*, for instance, is quoted for its content, not its manner and the pithiness of some of Handel's best choruses, in which words and music together seem to echo Pope's 'What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd'.

On a more trivial note, there is a magnificent book title, far too long to quote, on page 407, note 62, on the topic of memorable earthquakes with a preface 'Seriously Address'd to All Christians of Every Denomination'. It is one example of the vast amount of reading that lies behind the book. We cannot turn to it to look up a simple set of allegorical identifications for the characters and situations in each oratorio. But a wealth of potential meaning is uncovered here which will enrich the work of future scholars.

#### BACH MOTETS

If you want a good edition of Bach's motets, you are likely to turn either to Mösele or Bärenreiter. Until recently, both supplied editions of the separate items, but Mösele had the field to themselves if you wanted an affordable volume of the whole set, with a bound volume at DM58 (roughly £25.00). Bärenreiter has now produced an octavo-size reprint of NBA III/1 (BA 5193; £13.50) that is very good value though has quite small print as a consequence of its reduction from a page-size that is considerably larger. 'Reprint' is, in fact, not quite the right word. The original pagination is not preserved, so anyone conducting from the NBA score needs to use bar, not page numbers. The omission of the doubling instrumental parts from *Der Geist hilft* is reasonable, though the continuo part should have been retained. *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht*, shown by Melamed's recent study to be clearly within the motet tradition (cf *EMR* 16, p. 5), is omitted, as is the no-longer-spurious *Ich lasse dich nicht* (as, indeed, they are from the Mösele edition). I have sold several sets of the Mösele edition in the last year or two, but don't have a copy at hand for direct comparison; but since one of the two Mösele editors is Konrad Ameln, who is also the Bärenreiter editor, there is unlikely to be much difference of substance. Both editions are supported by instrumental material. Bärenreiter wins on price, and has the benefit of an up-to-date introduction; but a serious student of Bach's music needs the NBA, so a study score of that would be welcome. Since I imagine that a fair proportion of Bärenreiter's sales are Anglo-American, it would have been an asset had translations been appended.

#### 18TH-CENTURY CHAMBER MUSIC

Fuzeau have produced a folder containing three sonatas including oboe by Vivaldi (No. 5012; FFR74). RV 53 is a *Sonata per Oboe Solo in C minor* with a continuo part that is imposing in the first of the four movements and imitative in the third; it is reproduced from a well-copied score in Dresden. RV 81 is a Sonata in G minor for 2 oboes and *Basso* (again unfigured) in a less bold but still clear hand from Lund ascribed to *Sigr. Wivaldi*; there are parts, no score. RV 779 (listed after RV 88 in Ryom's big catalogue) is reproduced from the autograph score at Dresden. Its title page gives *Violino, Oboe et Organo obbligati* as instrumentation, but the headings on the score are more varied, offering *Salmoë* for the organ bass and also a different quartet instrumentation of 2 violins, oboe and *basso*. The names of the original performers (presumably from the Pietà) are given along with the instrument names. Unlike the other two sonatas, this is not suitable for performance as it stands, but it is a fascinating document. It is regrettable that the foliation has been removed from the autograph. Peters publish a modern score. There is again a leaflet with some pedantic but also textual information – perhaps we should be pleased that those not accustomed to the notational conventions of the period are being encouraged to use facsimiles. I'm sure that all baroque oboists will want to buy the package, which is remarkable cheap at around £10.00.

Alamire offers a package of four flute sonatas by Quantz (IV 13; BEF 500 or US\$16) from the Brussels Royal Conservatory MS WQ 5584 in MS score. The introduction (in the illegible silver on maroon of the series) says nothing about the MSS themselves. The handwritings are a bit straggly, but mostly legible.

Bärenreiter's latest revised edition of the Zelenka set of six trio sonatas for two oboes & bassoon is No. 2 in g minor (HM 272; £16.50). As with Sonatas 4 & 5, the surviving autograph score and partial-autograph parts presents a degree of confusion which the previous editor had not properly untangled: the parts, as one expects, derive from the score. But first the parts were revised, and then some changes were made to the score; but neither set of changes were completely copied into the other. So the editor needs to use some discretion and offer some alternatives. The very opening tempo indication, for instance, can be either *Andante* or *Adagio*. One weakness of the new edition is the failure to show as editorial added dynamics, etc. in the parts: the wind players have as much right to the information as the harpsichordist. And is it really necessary now to add (*f*) at the beginning of each movement? Otherwise, well worth acquiring, and the release of the sonatas one by one makes it more likely that players will be able to afford to buy them gradually.

Two publications by William Shield provide useful fodder for violinists lacking the lower half of a quartet or a keyboard, or for teaching: *Six Duettos* op. 1 (1777) and *Six*

*Duets* op. 2 (c. 1780) for two violins, no. 6 of op. 1 being for flutes or violins (PF 188 & 189, each £17.00).

Recent issues in the Universal Recorder Edition have included nos. 5-6 of Dieupart's *Sonatas* (UE 19 934; £9.50) and Vitali's famous violin *Chaconne* (UE 19 934; £9.50), both for treble recorder and continuo, and de Fesch's *Six Sonatas Op. 9* transposed for two trebles (UE 30 249; £8.95). The Vitali, in its Ferdinand David arrangement, used to be a standard hurdle for fiddlers in the days before the baroque violin was re-invented, but seems to have dropped out of the repertoire, though I think I will find hearing it on a recorder disconcerting. The de Fesch duets are standard flute repertoire and will be useful for recorder players, and the completion of the Dieupart edition is welcome. I'm not sure whether the Corelli op. 5 will feel right on the flute, but if you want to try, the Universal Flute Edition has the first pair of *Six Sonatas op. 5* (UE 30 273; £11.90) for flute and continuo from a Paris edition of c. 1740 which, as well as being 'ajoutée à la Flûte Traversière' has been enriched by the addition of seventh chords to the figuring.

#### MARIANNA MARTINES

I have mentioned Marianna Martines (1744-1812) twice recently (*EMR* 20 p. 20 & 21 p. 3). I noticed some editions of her music on a stand at the Regensburg exhibition, wrote to the publisher and now have three scores before me – the *Dixit Dominus* and Italian *In exitu Israel* that were on the CD I reviewed and her *Quarta Messa* of 1765. Furore-Edition (Naumburger Str 40, 34127 Kassel, Germany, tel +49 (0)561 897352, fax ... 83472) specialises in music by female composers (German has a word for them: *Komponistinnen*), mostly modern, but with some earlier ones. These three works of Martines are substantial pieces; their musical quality I mentioned in connection with the recording. Here it is appropriate to welcome the publications. They are compactly set and clearly legible even if some pages look as congested as those I produce. The Mass (Furore-Edition 530; DM 98.00) and *In exitu* (528; DM 75.00) require SATB soli & chorus, *Dixit Dominus* (529; DM 98.00) has divided choral sopranos. The normal orchestral of strings (no violas) and oboes (who need to double flutes in *In exitu*) is supplemented by a pair of horns in *In exitu* and trumpets in the other two pieces (both are in D). Timps are specified in *Dixit*: should they be added to the Mass? While these pieces may not match mature Mozart and Haydn, they are certainly worth hearing, and are clearly not the work of a part-time dabbler. Congratulations on their publication: I hope there are many performances. (Performance material is available on hire – I presume that 'on loan' is a mistranslation – with cheap chorus scores on sale.)

I also received from Furore an edition of Barbara Strozzi's cantata *L'Astratto* (554), printed in vol. 5 of the Garland Italian Cantata facsimiles but rather easier for most singers to cope with here. It is an anticipation of the mad song genre popular in England at the end of the century. The introductory material includes the text in Italian, English

and German. There is no realisation, but figures are added – a sensible solution. It is odd to print the frequently-changing tempo markings above each stave; there isn't even the excuse that the MS is written thus. Two extra unbound scores are included. The price: DM 18, about £8.00.

Congratulations on Furore's enterprise; the scores are a bit expensive, but libraries should certainly acquire copies, and sopranos (or tenors) will enjoy the Strozzi.

#### NEW SCOLARS

*Records of English Court Music. Vol. IX (Index)* compiled by Andrew Ashbee. Scolar Press, 1996. vi + 238pp, £29.50. ISBN 1 85928 274 1

David Fallows *Songs and Musicians in the Fifteenth Century* Variorum, 1996. £49.50. ISBN 0 86078 561 0

Peter Giles *The History and Technique of the Counter-Tenor: a study of the male high voice family*. Scolar Press, 1994 [1995]. xxiv + 459pp, £45.00 ISBN 0 85967 931 4

Two hits and a miss here. Of the first two items there is little need for lengthy discussion. That a cumulated index was required for *Records of English Court Music* was self-evident. That what we have is not just a cumulation but the product of fresh thought and care is typical of Andrew Ashbee's devoted labour. Any academic library that does not have the whole set should spend £250 on the nine volumes right away.

The Fallows book is a collection of 14 essays reprinted from publications dating from 1977 to 1993. Their original appearance is preserved (including pagination – most useful for chasing or making citations); an index of names, places and MSS is added (but not of topics). Most of the contents are quite accessible (nine of them are in volumes I have on my shelves), but the anthology remedies the big disadvantage of publication by article: it brings interrelated material between a single pair of covers. And it also helps us see what a distinguished scholar Fallows is. Even at quite a young age, the adjective 'magisterial' felt appropriate – perhaps his deep voice helped. This collection fully justifies it, and our readers will be particularly grateful for his continual concern for the needs of performers. Congratulations to Variorum (a firm linked to Scolar) for including this in their series; two other volumes of interest to our readers have articles by Peter Dronke and by D. P. Walker.

The confidence one feels in when reading any of the Fallows articles vanishes in the presence of Peter Giles. This is a rewritten and expanded version of a book *The Counter Tenor*, about which I could find little complimentary to say on its publication in 1982. The new book has smaller type and larger pages – twice as many of them – but shows little signs that the author has understood the basic scholarly skill of weighing up evidence, and what he writes is so often embarrassing because he dives after facts he thinks relevant while ignoring or misunderstanding the context from which he drags them. I could fill this issue

with a blow-by-blow account of examples; instead I will make just one general point and one specific one.

Giles jumps naively from using 'counter-tenor' as the name of a part-book, as the name of a part (with no necessary implications as to voice type) and as the name of a voice type. No argument is possible without separating these very clearly. Indeed, it is far safer to sort out tessituras without reference to voice-names. Whether or not one believes in a precise clef code, clefs are a useful guide. To establish a likely absolute compass for one part, one needs a thorough analysis of the notated ranges of all parts. A lot might be discovered concerning changes in alto tessitura by inspecting choral ranges, provided that all parts are taken into consideration. A sudden shift of tessitura in all parts, for instance, is likely to show a change of pitch standard whereas the change in one part only may indicate a different type of voice. Giles lacks awareness of non-vocal research on pitch. He rejects out of hand, for instance, a Purcellian pitch of A-395, though it is perfectly plausible that French wind instruments demanded French pitch. Throughout, his motive seems to be to justify the counter-tenor against its enemy, the crump-tenor. The fact that I disagree with him is not my reason for finding the book unsatisfactory. As a piece of scholarship, it just won't do.

Now the specific example. On page 258, he reprints the first page of *Musick for a while* from an unspecified 18th-century edition in C minor with the voice part in the treble clef and headed 'Alto Ten: all 8<sup>va</sup>'. He points out (twice, since the line is dittographed) that the late-seventeenth century original was written in the alto clef. Probably true, though no 17th-century sources survive. But there is nothing at all odd about songs being in the alto clef in MSS and treble clef in printed editions. One of the differences in Purcell performances last year was the realisation that some songs that were previously allocated to high sopranos were meant for men, and Giles does not point out that, far from being unusual, the use of treble clef for this song goes back to its first edition (1702) in *Orpheus Britannicus II*.

What the book is useful for is its mass of data on individual countertenors and for generating the feeling that the author is part of a living tradition. There is a large amount of useful detail here; I hope that innocent readers will detect the querulous tone and not take his statements as gospel.

#### SCHUBERT CHAMBER

*Schubert Sämtliche Kammermusikwerke. Studienausgabe in 3 Bände* Bärenreiter (BVK 1281-3), 1996. 1860pp in 3 vols, £90.00 ISBN 3 7618 1281 7, ... 1282 5, 1283 3

Bärenreiter cannot follow up their complete (or almost complete: I was disappointed not to have the orchestrations of Handel) Mozart in study score of 1991 with a complete Schubert for 1997, since the *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* is far from finished: indeed, it is not scheduled to be complete until 2015. Instead, they have assembled all the chamber

music into three volumes. The volume numbers only appear on the page opposite the title page or are deducible from the ISBN or ISMN. Vol. 2 contains the string quartets, vol. 3 chamber music with piano; Vol. 1, *Chamber Music with Varied Instrumentation*, has the octet, string quintet, string trios and various other pieces. Through pagination has been added to the pages of the three or four volumes which are joined together for the reprints and there is a contents list for each of the three volumes; a list of contents on the back cover would have offered the quickest way for the user to locate the work he was looking for.

An improvement over the Mozart edition is the use of more substantial paper and the greater amount of editorial information. Introductory information is in English as well as German and the critical commentaries are included. As for the need to consult these new editions rather than the old ones, a spot check of the beginning of the String Quintet reveals a difference at the fortissimo chord at bar 24: the new edition has a slur that is not in the old. The most obvious change in this work is the notorious diminuendo/slur on the last chord. Here there may be little ambiguity, but deciding what Schubert meant (and what to print) when he wrote what may be a long accent or a short hairpin is not always simple.

These are attractive books, perhaps a little expensive – but sadly the CD-buying public does not buy scores as well, so the massive sales that could justify low prices are not feasible. Serious performers of the repertoire will need them on their shelves. The Deutsch thematic catalogue is also on offer in paperback at £45.00. Apart from being the source of the standard numeration of Schubert's works it contains a wealth of information for those prepared to ferret it out.

#### FONTES

Most issues of *Fontes* are primarily concerned with matters of interest to music librarians; sometimes these are also of interest to users of libraries, sometimes not. I suspect that I still receive it (by retaining membership of the International Association of Music Libraries) only from nostalgia for my involvement in that organisation (I did once decline the editorship of *Fontes*). But some issues relate to the areas in which I still have an active concern, and the latest one (43/1: Jan-March 1996) provides a useful survey of current Italian library and bibliographical activity. Anyone working on Italian topics should at least glance at a copy to see what is going on. Not all of Italian librarianship, however, is quite as progressive as this implies, and I cannot resist reporting a conversation I had recently with someone who had wanted access to quite a well-known North-Italian library for research on a bibliography of a particular repertoire (offering in return to supply the library with identifications, concordances, etc) and was led to understand that access depended on offering a back-hander of several hundred pounds. Perhaps we need a 'rough guide' to music libraries which will give us that sort of information.

## Hildegard of Bingen - O magne Pater

Transposed up a fifth

O ma - gne Pa - ter, in ma - gna ne-ces-si - ta - te su - mus.

Nunc i - gi - tur ob - se - cra - mus, ob - se - cra - mus te

per Ver - bum tu - um, per quod nos

con - sti - tu - i - sti ple - nos qui - bus in - di - ge - mus.

Nunc pla - ce - at ti - bi, Pa - ter, qui - a te - de - - cet,

ut a - spi - ci - as in nos per a - diu - to - ri - um tu - - - um,

ut non de - - fi - ci - a - mus,

et ne no - men tu - um in no - bis ob - scu - re - tur;

et per i - psum no - - - men tu - um, di - gna - re nos

a - diu - va re. Eu o u a e.

## La confusione di Poppea

### Anthony Hicks

Monteverdi [et al.] *L'incoronazione di Poppea* Sylvia McNair *Poppea*, Dana Hanchard *Nerone*, Anne Sofie von Otter *Ottavia/Fortuna/Venere*, Michael Chance *Ottone*, Francesco Ellero D'Artegna *Seneca*, Catherine Bott *Drusilla/Virtù*, Marinella Pennicchi *Amore/Damigella*; Bernarda Fink, Roberto Balconi, Constanze Backes, Mark Tucker, Nigel Robson, Julian Clarkson. The English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner. 190' 47" 3 CDs  
Archiv 447 088-2

This recording was made at public performances at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in December 1993. Gardiner has recorded the major Mozart operas for Archiv in similar circumstances with excellent results: his *Idomeneo*, for instance, is a fine performance of a full text, with significant variants included in appendices. The same team could have been expected to devote equal care and attention to *Poppea*, especially given Gardiner's early interest in Monteverdi. It is something of a shock to find that they do no such thing. The new Archiv set comes with claims of high musical-logical rectitude, but these turn out to be largely bogus, and are in any case fatally undermined by the nature of the text actually recorded. The result is yet another *Poppea* which fails to give the listener the simple satisfaction of an uncut performance of the opera as it might have been heard around the time the extant sources were prepared. Such comments require justification, and it will therefore be necessary to explore what happens on these discs in rather more detail than usual and to challenge some of the points made in the accompanying notes.

Nothing is definitely known of the music of the opera produced in Venice in 1643, the year of Monteverdi's death; only a printed synopsis survives from that date. Two manuscript scores broadly corresponding to the synopsis exist, one in Venice (known as V) and one in Naples (N), but both appear to date from the early 1650s. N has a close correspondence with a Naples libretto of 1651, suggesting that it relates to a performance in that year. There is also a Venetian libretto of 1656, apparently prepared purely as a literary document by its author, G. F. Busenello. (Other librettos exist in manuscript but are not helpful.) Despite several differences, major and minor, the two scores have much in common, including a few corruptions which must go back at least two levels in the *stemma* of their lost antecedents. It may well be that much, if not all, of the music that appears in both MSS was also heard in 1643, and it may be that most of it is by Monteverdi, but there are no certainties. Even in 1643 the music of *Poppea* may have been supplied by several composers, with Monteverdi simply contributing the odd scene here and there. Such a notion may come hard to those who want to see the opera

as the master's great swansong, but there is nothing improbable about it. Shakespeare ended his career, not with *The Tempest*, but helping out John Fletcher with a few speeches for *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.

A modern performance of *Poppea* has to be based on one or both of the two MSS, and in deciding which readings to adopt or which sections to use, it is futile to guess what might have happened in 1643, since no-one can be sure what music, if any, survives from that production. To us, *Poppea* can only be the opera represented by the 1650s scores, and in particular by the music common to both. A text including all the music found in both scores, and containing an informed choice from the music that is unique in each, can reasonably be said to represent the opera known as *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and form a basis for performance; the question of how much of it is by Monteverdi is interesting, but of no practical importance.

The entire contents of V and N, and much other relevant information, are now easily accessible in the edition of Alan Curtis (Novello, 1989), in effect a full *variorum* edition and the culmination of his long interest in the work; many will have followed the progress of his thoughts through his recordings of 1966 and 1980, the latter currently available on CD (Fonit Cetra CDC 76). Not everyone will agree with his choice of readings for performance, however, and it is perfectly proper that every production of *Poppea* should start with a fresh text prepared directly from the source material. No editor is named for the text recorded here, and editorial policy has to be gleaned from the notes contributed by several distinguished scholars, notably Tim Carter, Peter Holman and the late Thomas Walker (to whose memory, in a kindly gesture, the recording is dedicated). Less kindly is the absence of any reference to Curtis's work – his name is never mentioned – though his scholarship clearly underlies various points made in the notes, such as the confident statements that parts of the opera are by Francesco Sacrafi.

Walker stresses the significance of the Naples score: 'It offers several elements which may be original and which are not to be gleaned from another version... [it] is a fascinating source which offers us the vision of a unique moment in the history of *Poppea*'s reception; in addition it affords some dim but most suggestive glimpses of how the opera might have appeared at the outset.' Carter, who with a perhaps incautious 'we' declares himself part of the editorial team, builds on Walker's remarks:

*In contrast to previous readings of the opera (mostly following the Venice score or presenting a conflation), we opted early on for the*

Naples version. This has the merit of likely deriving from a specific performance we know took place... Some musicologists might claim that the Venice score sometimes contains better readings – although this can sometimes be disputed – but its status is much less secure and its relationship to the opera as heard in 1643 remains open to question. Of course the last point also applies to Naples: we do not know what has been added or what taken away. But close analysis suggests that here is a text that does indeed work in plausible, indeed persuasive contemporary and modern terms. However, as regards the short instrumental sinfonias and ritornellos which, for the most part, were clearly written by an inexperienced hand, we have felt free to have them reworked [by Holman] so that at least the upper parts fit with Monteverdi's (we assume) bass lines... Some would say that in this we have compromised, like all our predecessors. But perhaps we have come closer than them to one integral text, and one that permits the opportunity of hearing significant amounts of music too often ignored.

A modicum of special pleading may be tolerated in a sleeve note, but this is more like a shovelful. It is worth noting immediately that there is nothing new about giving weight to the Naples score: Curtis mentions the accuracy of its readings as against V in the notes to his 1966 recording, and both his recordings (and others) include passages found only in N. Carter's 'close analysis' of the N text should make compelling reading if it is ever published. N may represent a 'unique moment' in the history of *Poppea* if indeed it is exactly what was performed one night in Naples in 1651. Even this is not certain: the 1651 libretto does not end, as N does, with the famous duet, but with a chorus *a quattro voci* beginning 'Felicissimo di', for which no music is extant; but it is still manifestly a score to which several composers have contributed and has no better claim to integrity than V (presumably also prepared for a performance, albeit undocumented).

The further claim that the Naples text works 'in plausible, indeed persuasive contemporary and modern terms' is to my mind equally specious, and cannot be validated by the performance because of several cuts: the supposed integrity did not impress Gardiner, it seems. Among the more striking passages found in N but not in V are two soliloquies for Ottavia in Act II, the texts of which, unlike most of the other material unique to N, are not in Busenello's 1656 libretto; they were probably added for the Naples production and are unlike anything else in the score. Nevertheless, we must presume that Carter's close analysis shows how they 'work' as part of the 'integral text', and they clearly form part of the 'significant ... music too often ignored', so it would be wonderful to hear what Anne Sofie von Otter would make of them; but unfortunately they have been ignored again for this recording. The general policy towards cuts is quite baffling. Perhaps the most bizarre cut is the first, a passage of 14 bars (about 40") clipped from Seneca's part in I/6, beginning at the words 'Tu dal destin colpita' with voice and bass in a typically Monteverdian cross-rhythm: its omission loses the second half of a sentence ('The flint that's not struck cannot send

out sparks; you, under the blows of fate, emit from your very self the bright splendours of vigour and fortitude, glories far greater than beauty'). I wondered if a careless tape edit had been made, but the omission seems on a par with other odd cuts in the scenes for Seneca and Nerone, including Nerone's arrogant 'La legge è per chi serve' speech in I/9 (surely important for characterisation) and Seneca's reply (26 bars); again the passage is convincingly Monteverdian in style.

The treatment of the sinfonias and ritornellos is also curious. Holman notes that the instrumental music in V is mostly in three parts, whereas that in N is in four, and suggests that the upper parts in V were written by Cavalli, while those in N were written for the Naples production 'in a rather later style and are generally very poor in quality'. At Gardiner's invitation, therefore, he composed new ritornellos in five parts 'using the original bass lines', following the model of the sinfonias in *Il ritorno d' Ulisse*, the aim being 'to produce something closer to what Monteverdi would have expected or tolerated'. This means, *inter alia*, that the memorably tuneful treble line of the V ritornellos for Ottone's solo in the first scene of Act I disappears, as does that for his dialogue with Poppea in I/11; but nevertheless, Holman fulfils his dubious commission well. Of more significance is what happens at the start of the opera and in the Coronation Scene of Act III. V and N have entirely different opening sinfonias. That in V is a three-part version of the five-part sinfonia that opens Cavalli's *Doriclea* of 1645 (but may of course have been taken from an earlier work). The Naples equivalent has no known concordance, and is unlikely to be by Monteverdi; Holman calls it 'clumsy'. So even though N is to be the prime text, there are several reasons for rejecting the 'clumsy' sinfonia and using that of V instead: it's good; it's by Cavalli, Monteverdi's talented pupil and successor; it had become associated with the opera within a decade of the first production; and it's the one everybody knows and loves. The opening sinfonia of *Ulisse* is therefore used.

A link missing there from the chain of logic? I thought so too, but eventually realised that the gap can be filled by understanding Carter's statement 'we... opted for the Naples version' to mean that N was taken as the sole source for the music, V being disregarded. Even with this premiss, it seems unnecessarily confusing (and a mite lazy) to begin Monteverdi's last opera with the opening of its extant predecessor, giving purchasers the initial impression that they have got the wrong opera. (Another *Ulisse* sinfonia, not mentioned in the notes, pops up later in Act I.) Moreover it is plainly unmusical to leave the *Ulisse* opening in its original tonality. Both the N and V sinfonias are in A minor, which, with the usual major third at the close, leads naturally to the A major chord at the start of the Prologue; the untransposed *Ulisse* sinfonia means Fortune has to enter on a C sharp with D major sounding in her ears.

Not that transposition is despised elsewhere. In the Coronation Scene N has merely the instruction *Ritornello si piace* where V has the brash sinfonia in B flat major, a good

evocation of a public procession and another memorable passage to which many listeners will look forward. But because it is only in V it cannot be used, and Holman has another argument for rejecting it: 'In the Coronation Scene we know that the instrumental pieces have nothing to do with Monteverdi; they come from Francesco Sacrati's opera *La finta pazza* of 1641'. Not quite. Their bass lines appear in a recently discovered score of *La finta pazza*, but, according to Curtis, the MS 'represents a "road-show" version, not the original 1641 score'. Even if they were in the 1641 *La finta pazza*, that would not mean they could not have been heard in *Poppea* in 1643; and if the whole of the Coronation Scene as performed in 1643 and as we now have it is by Sacrati, as is perfectly possible, the rejection of Sacrati's own *sinfonias* becomes particularly perverse. Anyway, Holman uses instead Monteverdi's brief five-part *sinfonia* from the prologue to *Maddalena* to introduce the Consuls and Tribunes, duly transposing it from G to B flat. Its plain serenity is quite wrong in mood, and the whole effect of the scene is further debilitated by the reduction of the earlier exchanges for Nerone and Poppea to a few lines for Nerone alone (losing about 5 minutes of music and the last words actually written for Poppea by Busenello). The transposed *sinfonia* then reappears before and after the first *coro d'amori*, where a D minor *sinfonia* (as provided by V) is required. Disaster threatens as the ritornello closes and one expects a nasty semitone drop to A minor for Amore's solo 'Al nostro volo', but our intrepid editors rescue matters in the nick of time by transposing the solo up a fourth. The next solo also goes up a fourth (the chorus having resumed written pitch meanwhile), and written pitch is restored again at Amore's 'Madre, madre'.

A self-denying ordinance of shutting V out of consideration also seems to account for the adoption of several unexpected N readings elsewhere. They are seldom advantageous and occasionally calamitous, as at Nerone's outburst of rage against Seneca in I/9 ('Tu mi sforzi allo sdegno'): the N reading is half-a-bar shorter than the familiar version in V and lacks the *concitato* semiquavers in the bass; as a consequence, one of the most chilling moments in the opera goes for nothing. Yet this fanatical devotion to N was not unbreachable, because every now and then a reading from V creeps into the performance (as early as bar 14 of the Prologue, in fact, where Fortune sings the first two words of 'Et in mio paragon' as in V (*a', b'* where N has *e'', d''*). In the Ottone/Ottavia scene of Act II, four whole bars not present in N (31-34, part of the 'Che uccida chi? - *Poppea*' exchange) are mysteriously reinstated from V. So the 'integrity' of N is again compromised, making the recorded text a trimmed conflation of V and N, like all its predecessors on record, mildly adulterated with some skilful 20th-century pastiche and a few snippets of genuine but irrelevant Monteverdi.

The performance itself has the merit of accompaniments mostly realised with the modest instrumentation of single strings, harpsichords and lute-family instruments that seems to have been the norm for public opera of the period;

the organ and regal are, as often, intruders (we are neither in Mantua in 1607, nor in hell), but they are used with reticence. There is also a strumming guitar (the new continuo sound of the 1990s - had you noticed?) but again not too obtrusive. Some critics tend to make a lot of this matter, because of the contrast with the specially composed orchestral accompaniments added in their different ways by Leppard, Harnoncourt and René Jacobs; but it is these which are aberrant, and Gardiner's avoidance of such trappings should merely be noted with approval. Yet at times I was struck by the uneasy thought that the performance needed something which extra accompaniments can provide in their annoying way: a sense of theatre. The concert-for-recording concept may work well for late baroque or classical opera, with big set-piece arias shaped and supported by the orchestra. Here it falls short: *Poppea* is essentially a sung play demanding responsive interchange among the characters, to which the continuo players must also be alert. This could be achieved in a well-rehearsed studio recording, or of course in an actual stage performance; but in a concert the tendency will inevitably be for the singers to stand and deliver; and that happens too often here, especially with the principals.

Von Otter, with her three roles, is clearly the star of the show, and leaves no doubt about it. Casting Ottavia as a mezzo is actually neither necessary nor imaginative, since it virtually predicated the usual 'offended matron' interpretation; but if that is what you want, von Otter brings it off magnificently: Nerone and the gods are cursed with all the vehemence of Ortrud summoning the darker powers. McNair's Poppea is more subtle, finely sung, catching both the allure and cunning of the character. Chance, as Ottone, always maintains a true musical line and great beauty of tone, but with little variety of mood; his second soliloquy in Act II ('I miei subiti sdegni'), potentially an opportunity to show other aspects of the character, is another of the cuts. The complex role of Nerone seems beyond Hanchard: her slightly husky voice here displays a narrow range of emotions, and she often seems insensitive to the detail of the verbal text. D'Artegna makes a dreary Seneca, over-concerned with showing off low D's and C's. Much more pleasure comes from the lesser roles, led by Bott's delightfully alert Drusilla. Her scene with Nerone and Ottone at the start of Act III is instructive: two singers and one singing actress. Fink's Arnalta has a lovely worldly ripeness, and Backes and Pennicchi clearly enjoy themselves as the Valet and Midservant: their Act II duet, complete in the Naples version, trips along very happily, a highlight of the performance.

Individual points of excellence notwithstanding, this *Poppea* is a botched job, with the bits you specially look out for mostly removed in favour of bits you probably never wanted to hear anyway or which you recognise from somewhere else. It is hard to believe that anyone actually planned the textual compromises and cuts in advance; what presumably happened is that Gardiner initially agreed with Archiv to record *Poppea* 'in the Naples version' without

either party being fully aware of the implications. A studio recording no doubt being out of the question, a tour of concert performances leading to a recording was devised. But when the problems of presenting an opera in a version playing for over three and a half hours started to appear, cynical cuts and quick fixes became the order of the day. The cynicism can of course be justified on the grounds that mainstream reviewers will seldom concern themselves with textual matters and will take the claims of the annotators at face value: 'Gardiner steers a middle course between performing only what's fully authenticated [...] and wholesale speculative elaboration... a triumphant union of scholarship and imagination with musical and dramatic intuition' – George Pratt, *BBC Music Magazine*, July 1996, p. 74 (but he does rebuke a 'slightly weighty violone'). Those who know the opera from the sources or the published scores – or indeed from previous recordings, or such performances as those given in the 1970s by Kent Opera under Roger Norrington – are unlikely to be so easily satisfied by this set, plainly at odds with the ethos of the

Archiv label. So mangled a text could never have been the basis of an ideal *Poppea*; but perhaps that, like the music actually heard in the Teatro di SS Giovanni e Paolo in 1643, will always remain elusive.

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*I was involved in the preparation of edition for this recording to an extent to which Anthony Hicks was unaware when he wrote this review. (My contribution is uncredited at my request.) I was commissioned to supply the Naples version, and took this to mean a version including all the Naples music but incorporating readings from V when, in accordance with standard editorial principles, I judged them preferable. However, John Eliot Gardiner rejected that and insisted on a transcript of the Naples MS; Anthony has spotted a few places where I carelessly allowed the superior readings of V to stand. The edition that I supplied was complete. I was under the impression that, although a shortened version would be performed in concert, the rest would be added for the CDs, and was surprised to find that this had not happened.*

CB

#### HANDEL'S HOUSE

It seems that the restoration and preservation of Handel's house in London from 1723 until his death, 25 Brook Street, near Bond Street, is going to happen. The Handel House Trust is acquiring a 999-year lease, along with a 99-year lease on No. 23, enabling 25 to be restored and the adjoining house to be used as a museum. One idea for fund raising is the 1996-7 'Sing for Handel' scheme (details from Bridget Whyte, 4 Lucerne Court, Abbey Park, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1RB, tel 0181 639 0060, fax 0181 658 6261).

Also on Handelian matters, I recommend *Handel and the Harris Circle* by Rosemary Dunhill, an account of him as seen through the correspondence of James Harris, father of the first Earl of Malmesbury. The handsome A4 pamphlet costs £1.75 including post from the author at Hampshire Record Office, Sussex Street, Winchester SO23 8TH.

#### ARS NOVA ON COMPUTER

We received an interesting leaflet about Ars Nova, a new computer font for late medieval and Renaissance music notation. Not a complete music programme as such, it operates within word-processing packages on the Mac and (soon) PC. I would imagine that it would be somewhat labour intensive to use it for, say, a complete diplomatic transcription of the works of Machaut, but it could be extremely useful for those writing articles with music examples or needing notational symbols within the text. Details from its designer, Dr Ronald Woodley (who readers may remember for his writings on Tucke and Tinctoris), Dept. of Music, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster LA1 4YW, UK, tel +44 (0)1524 594597, fax ... 593939, E-mail: r.woodley@lancaster.ac.uk

It's nice to see old traditions surviving: this occurs in the introduction to *The Sacred Harp*, 1991 edition, p. 23.

*Certain keyboard instruments and almost all desktop computers allow musical composition with recording, playback and easy editing, providing promising opportunities for the Sacred Harp composer.*

#### Pezenas Exhibition (Languedoc)

Michael Thomas will be organising an exhibition of harpsichords from his collection in the museum

July to November  
Concerts every week

Celini 1661 – Catalan & Narbonsiensis

Donzelagne 1710(?) – Aix & Lyon

A. Vater – Paris & S. France

A. Kirkman 1758 (?) – England

Hitchcock – England, copy

Walter (?) fortepiano c.1785

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## RECORD REVIEWS

## MEDIEVAL

**Hildegard von Bingen 1. Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations** Sinfonye Celestial Harmonies 13127-2 61' 49"

A major problem for most performers of Hildegard is that they come to the music with different expectations from those of someone whose experience of music will have been predominantly of chant. Those who try to compensate for that tend to apply to the chant every possible method of elaboration described by theorists within several centuries of her life-time. But I would guess that for her words came first, the notes as chant second, and any further embellishment by drones, improvised polyphony, etc. would have been a rare intrusion; they do not necessarily 'recreate the imaginative spirit of this remarkable composer', though in other respects these performances succeed in that. The singing is impressive, and the Oxford Girls Choir are outstanding. My negative reaction comes from irritation that everyone who performs Hildegard's songs (her music crops up several times this month) feels obliged to impose something on them, and I would prefer a complete edition to be a little more neutral in that respect; there are, after all, enough problems in deciding how to sing a monophonic melody anyway. But don't read this as a disrecommendation; not everyone is as cynical as me, and the performances are both knowledgeable and moving. CB

**Angeli: Music of Angels** Ensemble P. A. N., Tapestry & others 69' 14"

Telarc CD-80448

Hildegard *O gloriosissimi lux, O vos angelii*; Notre-Dame MSS *Gaude Maria, O lilium convallium, Sanctus Christus yerarchia*; Worcester MSS *Salve virgo virginum, Te Domine/Te Dominum*; + pieces by the performers & Patricia Van Ness

Two angelic discs this month: presumably the quantity will accelerate until Christmas. This mixes some effective performances of medieval pieces with settings of modern texts in a Hildegardic style translated into Latin and given soaring music by Patricia Van Ness. I find the performances a little more exhausting than those of Sinfonye (the two Hildegard items are also on the disc reviewed above), and think that both groups solve the problem of the wide vocal ranges wrongly: try female tenors, not Queens of the Night. (Incidentally, why the tendency to associate angelic music with sopranos? Two possible misconceptions: that angels are female, or that those who know that they are sexless assume that they must sound like castrati.) There are also some pretty pseudo-medieval instrumental pieces: most of what Shira Kammen and Crawford Young play regularly is their own work anyway, so it is nice that they are credited as composers for once. An intriguing anthology, well sung and recorded. CB

**Daniel: opéra sacré médiéval** Ensemble Venance Fortunat, Anne-Marie Deschamps l'empreinte digitale ED 13052 71' 00"

As a dramatic performance, this is most impressive: the listener is made aware that there is more to the work than what he can hear. I am, however, suspicious of it as a representation of how the play might have been performed in Beauvais c. 1230. Thanks to the extremely detailed notation of the Office for the Circumcision in the same MS (which the booklet does not mention), we are surprisingly well-informed about what happened there on Jan 1st. The occasion was the day when the subdeacons could let their hair down (though Margot Fassler has argued that the play itself was part of an attempt to keep their frolics under control); the rubric to the play itself mentions that it was written by the youth of Beauvais. It is disappointing that there is no attempt to relate the play to the Feast of Fools and that instead time is wasted on a French reading of the Book of Daniel. The singing is utterly convincing, and the rhythmic interpretation works (I don't have a facsimile to check the claim that there are notational indications of durations) but I find it difficult to believe that if there had been the extensive addition of instruments or composed polyphony (not just improvised organum) that we have here, it would not have left some trace. Some of it sounds plausible, but at times I was reminded of Britten's *Burning Fiery Furnace!* The need for such additions seems to me to be a modern one, and not how the medieval church musician would have thought, even on a holiday. But those who do not share my suspicions will enjoy this, and even those who do will find much to impress them. CB

**Dante Musique au temps de Dante: Lo mio servente core** Ensemble Lucidarium, dir. Avery Gosfield & Francis Biggi 72' 41" l'empreinte digitale ED 13051

Another disc with spoken interludes; this seems to be the latest trend, since we have four of them this month. I feel that, irrespective of the listener's knowledge of the language, he is likely to want to hear the speech rather less often than the music. It is easy to skip tracks, but those who demand the maximum music for their money may resent paying for something they don't want. The notes on interpretation included in the booklet are a fine and succinct statement of the problems of creating music out of our almost complete ignorance and of the dangers of the ethnic approach, though the CD itself sounds less free from the conventions of the last two decades than one might expect. I hope lecturers on Dante don't use only this to illustrate music in Dante's time. It is, though, well worth experiencing, even if the vocal vibrato sometimes spoils the perfection of the intonation. CB

**Musica humana: rencontres de musique médiéval de Thoronet** Various ensembles l'empreinte digitale ED 13047 58' 36"

This is a souvenir of an annual gathering of medieval experts who assemble at Thoronet (a village about 20 miles inland from St. Tropez just north of the A8 motorway), introduced by its artistic director, Dominique Vellard. There is information on the festival, but only a listing of the music. The 17 tracks, each by a different group (including Anonymous 4, Ensemble Organum, Ensemble Gilles Binchois, Gothic Voices & The Hilliards), make a satisfying anthology and provide a fascinating demonstration of the different paths available to those performing medieval and early renaissance music. If anyone attending this year would send us their impressions, we would love to print them. CB

**Visions from the Book** Sequentia, Sons of Thunder 73' 46"

deutsche harmonia mundi 05472 77347 2

*A deserto veniens, Dolorum solarium, Liber generationis, Omnis caro peccaverunt, Samson dux fortissime, S'onques hom, Syon egredere*

Sequentia has had unrivalled experience in performing medieval lais and similar long poems and approaches them with a dramatic freedom that brings them to life to a modern audience without going beyond the bounds of what we can imagine to be an authentic style. Comparison with Mary Berry's version of *Samson dux fortissime* is interesting; the two performances perhaps mark out the parameters within which revivers of such works can legitimately operate. But they sing the genealogy of Christ from the Christmas liturgy with a convincing restraint. The single vernacular piece is a 24-stanza summary of the Bible, whose opening could almost be translated in the phrase familiar to those of an age to have listened with mother: 'are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.' An essential purchase for all lovers of Latin song. CB

## RENAISSANCE

**Byrd Mass for Five Voices; Propers for Corpus Christi** Winchester Cathedral Choir, David Hill 72' 48"

Hyperion CDA66837

This partial liturgical reconstruction of Mass using Propers from Byrd's *Gradualia* and the Ordinary in his setting for five voices is very effective, certainly more so than Hyperion's 1990 'mix-a-mass' version of the *Gradualia*. David Skinner's programme notes will spread a few rings across the tranquil waters of Byrd scholarship. In addition to flagging Jonathan Harley's forthcoming study of Byrd, he points out that much of Byrd's catholic music would have been sung one-to-a-part and perhaps by a mixed vocal

group, and having heard the Hilliard Ensemble's 1984 version, I can't help thinking that this is indeed the way that works best. Certainly, the idea that Byrd would have had the sound of the Chapel Royal in mind when composing rings a little false. Having said that, Winchester Cathedral Choir's singing is pleasant, if occasionally a little bland for my taste, and the performance has the convincing air of a working mass.

D. James Ross

**Gombert Eight-part Credo, Motets** Henry's Eight, Jonathan Brown 69' 55"

Hyperion CDA66828

*Credo* a8, \**Haec dies* a5, *Lugebat David Absalon* a8, \**Media vita in morte sumus* a6, *O beata Maria* a5, *Qui colis Ausoniam* a6, \**Salve Regina Diversi diversa orant* a4, *Vae Babylon* a4 [\* = preceded by chant]

This disc starts and ends with two wonderful eight-voice pieces from a 1564 anthology, marvellously sung here. Gombert has been almost completely neglected but finds very persuasive advocates in Henry's Eight, the latest group to come out of the Oxbridge choral foundations. Even the densest polyphony (and Gombert can be pretty dense) is beautifully handled, with the aural spotlight continuously picking out different voices. Most fascinating of all is the liberal addition of *musica ficta* to produce false relations, in effect English cadences. This is in accordance with recent research by James O'Donnell who has prepared the editions used. It certainly sets the mind going: Gombert was, after all, master of Charles V's Flemish Chapel which Philip II brought to England in 1554. There are reminders of Tallis's music here, too, for example a cadential figure which features in his *Lamentations*. Highly recommended.

Noel O'Regan

**Robert Johnson Laudes Deo and other motets** Capella Nova, Alan Tavener 75' 54" ASV Gaudeamus CD GAU 154

Johnson was a Scottish composer who came south; details of his career are sketchy, but it may be significant that his catholic liturgical music (most of which is included here) survives in English sources. It is at present mostly unpublished, though a complete edition by Kenneth Elliott (writer of the CD notes) is promised in *Musica Scotica*. Perhaps with score in hand there will be more point in having the two related settings of *Domine in virtute*. This includes most of Johnson's motets, and Capella Nova's performance makes us wonder why they have been so neglected for so long.

CB

Mantuan choirbooks. Singing is by soloists, with organ accompanying the polyphony. All this is correct and worth hearing, but the end result is not convincing. Both plainsong and polyphony surge continuously in lozenge-shaped notes such as used to be favoured by period string players. Cadences invariably have a long general pause before the final chord. This mannered style becomes very wearisome, especially in the plainchant, which is sung almost entirely by the falsettist. The polyphonic sections are all very similar (this is not really Palestrina at his most inspired) and I'm afraid that my boredom threshold had been passed well before the third mass. A pity, because there are occasionally some beautiful moments.

Noel O'Regan

**Palestrina Missa de Beata Virgine** (a6)

Escolania de Montserrat, Capella de Música de Montserrat, Dom Ireneu Segarra 65' 13" Koch Schwann 3-1796-2

Also includes motets *Ave Maria* a4 & a5, *Beata es* a8, *Nigra sum* a5, *Sicut lilium* a5, *Salve Regina* a8 & *Surge propera* a4.

My reaction to this disc is the same as that to the present-day Sistine Choir: here is a choir with a fine tradition but which has stopped listening to itself and is stuck in a time-warp. There is some dreadful tuning and at times the singers are simply competing with each other in the shouting stakes and going through the motions in a way that gives this music a bad name – and reminds us of how far the other choirs have come. Not all of it is so bad and there are occasional moments that remind one of the much better singing of which this choir was capable in the not too distant past. There is a far superior recording of this mass from Westminster Cathedral Choir (Hyperion CDA 66364) and the Montserrat disc is not worth getting for the motets, certainly not for the two rarely-recorded eight-voice motets which are given particularly gruesome performances.

Noel O'Regan

**Tye The Music of Christopher Tye** Cambridge University Chamber Choir, Timothy Brown Guild GMCD 7121 73' 17"

*Missa Euge bone, Christ rising again, Deliver us good Lord, From the depth I called on Thee, Give alms of thy goods, Gloria laus et honor, I lift my heart to Thee, In pace in idipsum, Nunc dimittis, Omnes gentes, Quae sumus omnipotens, To Father Son and Holy Ghost*

This disc features an enterprising cross-section of Tye's choral music, even if it includes the Mass *Euge Bone*, which has been recorded frequently before – and I fear sometimes to better effect. The opening sections of the Mass are entrusted to soloists (unidentified and therefore presumably members of the choir) and unfortunately there is a lack of blend and an occasional air of insecurity about a number of these crucial moments. The full-choir singing is adequate, but in choosing this mass Timothy Brown has entered a crowded and highly competitive field and his group loses out on polish and expressiveness to the Oxford Camerata on Naxos 8.550937. The bulk of the pre-Reformation music is also entrusted to solo voices, resulting in similar

shortcomings – a great pity as this sounds as if it should be most interesting music. The singing is at its most effective in the later vernacular pieces, where the full choir sings with more passion and confidence.

D. James Ross

**All the King's Men: Henry VIII & the Princes of the Renaissance** I Fagiolini & Concordia Metronome MET CD 1012 64' 43" England: music by Cornish, Fayrfax, Henry VIII, van Wilder; Spain: Alonso, Ancheta, Cabézon, Encina, Flecha, Vasquez; France/Netherlands: Gombert, Josquin, L'Héritier, Ninot le Petit, Richafort; anon. publ. Mainerio

A nice collection of music that is popular or that deserves to be, mostly from the early 16th century (two Mainerio dances feel out of place in the company of Josquin). The longest item is Flecha's onomatopoeic Christmas storm *La bomba*, given a suitably lively performance. There is a certain air of respectability and politeness (maybe too Oxbridge College-ish), but I'd probably object even more strongly to performances more extravagant! It deserves to sell well at places like Hampton Court; it is appealing without distorting the music to give a meretricious vulgarity. There is some delightful singing, and it is refreshing for such an anthology to have strings, not recorders and crumhorns.

CB

**Consort songs** Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet, Connor Burrows boy soprano Channel Classics CCS 9106 50' 45" Music by Byrd, Cobbold, Dowland, Ferrabosco II, Jenkins, Mando, Nicholson, T. Simpson, Tallis, Wightorpe & anon.

I started listening to this with great misgivings, fully intending to unload it onto another unsuspecting reviewer. I'm not too keen on complete discs of recorders (despite having written notes for Loeki CDs) or on solo trebles. But Connor Burrows has a refreshingly firm voice with none of the fragility that attracts some to solo boys but which sounds twee for early repertoire. Moreover, the recorders are at a suitable octave and avoid the impression that they are playing music for a doll's house. Many of these consort songs (the notes quote Leighton as the source of the term, but his use is ambiguous) were written for boys, and it is refreshing to hear them so well sung. Occasionally concentration slips and the odd syllable is lost; but the general standard is as good as I have heard from a boy. I'm not sure if this is the best possible selection – it has few of my favourites – but it is an attractive one. The chatty noise in the middle of the texture puzzles me.

CB

**The Golden Age Magnificat**, Philip Cave Linn CKD 052 57' 05"

Allegri *Miserere*; Gesualdo *O vos omnes*; Guerrero *Ave virgo sanctissima*; Josquin (?) *Absalon fili mi*; Lassus *fustorum animae, Timor et tremor, Tristis est anima mea*; Palestrina *Stabat mater*; Rebelo *Panis angelicus*; Victoria *Ave Maria, Versa est in luctum*

This is a lovely disc. Philip Cave sings with the Tallis Scholars, as do several of his ensemble and here the very high standard

A potentially interesting record of three *Beatae Mariae Virginis* masses composed by Palestrina for Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga. These are alternatim masses: plainchant and polyphony alternate phrase by phrase in *Gloria, Credo* and *Sanctus*. The mensurally-sung plainchant is taken from contemporary

of singing and recording set by that group is matched and combined with the passion some of that group's recent recordings have lacked. A compendium such as this inevitably includes some over-recorded material (Ruth Holton must feel about Allegri's *Miserere* as Pavarotti does about *Nessun Dorma*, although here she allows herself some spectacular and very effective ornamentation). There are also less familiar pieces, and I have rarely heard any of the music sung better. Magnificat cope confidently with Gesualdo – and Lassus anticipating Gesualdo in *Timor et tremor* – and the male voices are splendid in *Absalon fili mi*. Both the format of the programme and the anonymous notes seem to be aimed at the non-specialist listener, but the performances are guaranteed to refresh even the most jaded palate. D. James Ross

**Mirabile Mysterium** Duodena Cantitans, Capella Rudolphina, Petr Danek 61'44 Supraphon SU 0192-2 231

Apart from some atmosphere from church bells, this begins with Luython's *Missa super Filiae Jerusalem*, a compact piece done with rich instrumental doubling, though much of the rest of the programme (including its source-motet by Monte) is purely vocal. I took a few minutes to warm to the singers, but eventually found their sound pleasing. The last motet, a highly-chromatic piece by Gallus which gives the disc its title, sounds as if it was recorded on an unsteady tape. There is a high ratio of words to notes, since the Mass is concise (despatching the *Agnus Dei* in little more than a minute) and Pinello negotiates a lengthy *Benedictus Dominus* without losing musical interest. The tour de force is Regnart's setting of a Litany of the Virgin, which skilfully sustains attention through its repetitive text for nearly ten minutes. The booklet has Latin texts and Czech translations; I would have welcomed Latin versions of the three Czech items: *Zpival jazyk* seems to be *Pange lingua*. A fascinating recording for those who have got beyond golden-age anthologies. CB

## 17th CENTURY

**The Buxtehude Project vol. II: Harpsichord Music** Gavin Black 70'54" PGM 105 BuxWV 230, 233, 235, 247, 250

After an impressive start with the cantatas, vol. II of the Buxtehude Project presents the harpsichord music. The cover boasts the sub-title 'Musical and technical Quintessence'. It is certainly musical, in that it is largely well-played. On the technical side some questions arise. The harpsichord used for the recording is a copy of the transposing Ruckers with two keyboards which each play 8' and/or 4' at different pitches (the lower keyboard is a fourth lower than the upper). Although Gavin Black does vary the sound by playing on the solo 4', sometimes an eighth down or using the buff, in the end we are left frustrated by the lack of the rich sound of two 8' stops together or two 8' + 4' for this music. Actually some of the music

from the Ryge MS, especially pieces marked *d'amour*, cries out to be played on the clavichord where one can make a beautiful shape with one note predominating and singing instead of the more even and regular attack of the harpsichord. The recording ends with the long variations on *La Capricciosa* and their interest is sustained by changes in tempo and style and some with great brilliance; I like variations 25, 28 and 29 with their simple spread chords. Also very enjoyable are the Variations on *More Palatino*. But the question remains – has this recording gained from using a harpsichord which was already considered out of date in Buxtehude's lifetime? Michael Thomas

**Hume The Spirit of Gambo** Emma Kirkby, Laybrinto, Paolo Pandolfo 78'05" Glossa GCD 920402

I had intended to send this out to Robert Oliver in New Zealand, probably the only person who can sing Hume's *Tobacco* and accompany himself with the rich, six-note chords on the gamba. But I started listening to it and could not stop. David Pinto's notes have an apologetic tone, but, amateur or not, Captain Hume's music entrails. The words of *Cease leaden slumber* and *What greater griefe* are conventional enough; but it is not only the special quality that Emma Kirkby gives them that makes them moving. There are three songs here (no *Tobacco*); the other 25 tracks are for viol(s) and reveal Hume to have a rare gift for both melancholy and humour. Titles are not translated, so non-anglophone listeners might miss the point of the sequence following *Fain would I change that note*; explanation would have been more relevant than remarks on the King of Denmark. If you have not yet succumbed to the Spirit of Gambo, don't miss this opportunity. CB

**D'India Ottavo Libro di Madrigali** Insieme Vocale Daltrocanto, Dario Tabbia 50'46" Stradivarius STR 33418

D'India's Book VIII a5 (1624) is short, with only a dozen madrigals, but is one of the most impressive examples of the intertwining of monody and madrigal. It begins with five connected settings of Guarini's *Il pastor fido*: I was most impressed the first time I heard these (at a recording session in the BBC Concert Hall: Denis Stevens conducted while the producer, Basil Lam, and I chatted away in the control room to the editor, Glenn Watkins, while the studio manager got on with the recording) and am still impressed nearly a quarter of a century later. The singing is passionate yet controlled, with a fine feel for rhythmic flexibility. The words are read before each madrigal in an appropriate declamatory style. The accompaniment lets the disc down: far too much cello (a pity Nicola Mosca doesn't play her other instrument, the harp, a lot more of the time), the harpsichord often sounds irrelevant, while one misses a theorbo or two. Nevertheless, this is well worth buying; even though it may seem poor value in terms of the amount of music on the disc, its quality is extremely high. CB

**Jean de La Fontaine Un portrait musical** Isabelle Desrochers, Bernard Deletré SB, Christian Asse récitant, La Simphonie du Marais, Hugo Reyne 78'08" Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45229 2 5 Charpentier (*Les Amours d'Acis et de Galatée*), Colasse, F. Couperin, E. Gaultier, Lambert, Lully, Nyert

This is an anthology of songs and instrumental pieces interspersed with extracts from the writings of La Fontaine – letters, poems and fables. Most of the items are very short (45 tracks altogether), the most substantial being a pavane by Chambonnieres and Couperin's *L'Astrée* sonata. There is also a suite of a dozen numbers from Charpentier's *Les Amours d'Acis et de Galatée* (H449). How much you enjoy this disc as a whole could depend on how well you understand and appreciate the sound of the French language, as there are no translations, although the full texts are given. I found it irritating to be constantly flipping between the texts and the front of the booklet in order to discover exactly what I was hearing. Personally, I am not convinced that the 'words and music' format works on disc, though I can imagine that this programme made a brilliant concert – everything is certainly most tastefully performed and overall continuity is good. Recommended especially to teachers (such as myself) of related A-level French and Music topics. David Hansell

**Lalande Leçons de Ténèbres** Isabelle Desrochers S, Mauricio Buraglia theorbo, Nima Ben David gamba, Pierre Trocellier kbd Auvidis Astrée E 8592 73'05" + tombeaux by L. Couperin de M. de Blancrocher, Marais pour M. de Lully, de Sainte-Colombe, de Visée des Mesdemoiselles de Visées

Brief observations on Lalande's *Leçons* may be found in *EMR* 12, p.20. This recording frames and separates the three lengthy vocal settings by four fine tombeaux (which on their own make this a desirable disc), a brilliant idea which provides contrast without distraction. The same cannot be said, however, for the constantly changing instrumentation of the continuo which strikes me as being over-elaborate, unnecessary and, in the case of the brief harpsichord contributions, inappropriate. All of which is a shame, for Isabelle Desrochers is a persuasive interpreter of the vocal line, seldom becoming bogged down in the detail at the expense of the overall phrase. The booklet contains an admirable essay by Lionel Sawkins and full text and translations. On the disc, some internal indexing of the *Leçons* would have been welcome. David Hansell

**Monteverdi Ballo delle ingrate, Combattimento** Cappella Musicale di S. Petronio di Bologna, Sergio Vartolo 75'31" Naxos 8.553322

Vocally, this is among the most convincing performance of these works I have heard; full-blooded yet stylish. But enjoyment is frustrated by the misguided accompaniment and direction. Apart from the unrelenting

presence of a string bass, the variety of texture is as fussy as an old-fashioned organist changing stops every few bars. Had I not been reviewing it, I would have turned it off before the end of the Sinfonia (borrowed from *Altri canti d'Amor*), so slow is it played. Comparison of the duration is revealing: 49' 15" for the *Ballo*, while the Hyperion/Holman performance takes 32' 05"; the relative figures for *Il combattimento* are 25' 47" and 19' 21". Worth getting for the singers; I'd love to hear them with a less indulgent director. Two criticisms of the packaging: there are no index points within the two works, and Naxos's normal practice of separating the English texts from the Italian is inconvenient and frustrating in music where the words matter so much. CB

**Monteverdi** *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*  
John Eliot Gardiner Archiv 447 088-2

See review-article by Anthony Hicks on page 8

**Muffat Armonico tributo** Ensemble 415, dir Chiara Banchini, Jesper Christensen 69' 08" harmonia mundi HMC 901581

'Our principal aim in this recording of the *Armonico tributo* has been the restitution of the sumptuous sonorities of the Roman orchestra of 1682' says Jesper Christensen at the end of his contribution to the booklet on performance practice. In that, Ensemble 415 has been extremely lavish: they use 29 string players and three lutenists as well as two keyboards and, rather sparingly, a pair of oboes and bassoons. In this connection, I would have thought it more likely that the wind players would have played complete concertos rather than isolated movements, but that has little relevance to my overriding impression of the recording, which is one of wonder. This is magnificent music – sumptuous really is the only word! – and Chiara Banchini's orchestra capture its essence perfectly. On reading the notes, however, one is left to wonder (in the absence of scores) whether one is listening to the 1682 or 1701 version at any particular point: references are made to both so frequently, but not to one categorically. Whichever it may be, I hope the ensemble continues its exploration of Muffat's instrumental music. BC

**Sanz Instrucción de Música sobre la Guitarra Española** Hopkinson Smith 64' 18" Auvidis Astrée E 8576

Strumming a guitar is often seen as an easy way to make music with little effort; it's supposed to be simple, and countless millions of teenagers can't be wrong. How odd then that most baroque guitar discs are disappointing precisely because the trademark strum is often reduced to one finger flailing back and forth in a pale imitation of the intricate Baroque polydactyl strumming patterns. A disc such as this, with lavish ornamentation and virtuoso strumming, is a rare delight to be savoured. Hopkinson Smith is clearly very much at home in this repertory; he makes it all sound easy (which it isn't) and his enjoyment is infectious. Sanz

is one of the most important Spanish contributors to the baroque guitar repertory; these pieces are all from his 1674 tutor. Today he is best known to the general public for supplying the raw materials for Joaquin Rodrigo's *Fantasia para un gentilhombre*, some of which can be heard in their original form on this disc. He was also the composer of some highly developed variation sets as well as lighter character pieces and exhilarating dances, here brought vividly to life like early flamenco. A great introduction to the Spanish baroque.

Lynda Sayce

**Schein Israels Brünnlein, Opella Nova II**  
Cantus Cölln, Konrad Junghänel 75' 29"  
deutsche harmonia mundi 05472 77359 2

Those who know Schein primarily for his instrumental dances or simple chorales will have a shock if they listen to this (and I hope they will). *Israels Brünnlein* (1623) is a highly expressive collection of sacred madrigals requiring a one-to-a-part ensemble with great vocal skill and imagination to achieve successful performance. (I have sung some of these in a small choir, but I'm sure that soloists were intended). Try as a sample *Da Jakob vollendet*, with its marvellous setting of 'und verschied' and 'weinet'. Variety is provided by pieces for voices and instruments from *Opella Nova II* (1626). My previous experience of Cantus Cölln has been disappointing, but now I can see why others are so enthusiastic. This is music full of character which the singers seize upon and interpret accordingly. My favourite record this month. CB

**Schmelzer La Margarita: Music for the Court of Vienna and Prague** Armonico Tributo Austria, Lorenz Duftschmid 70' 00"  
Arcana A 33  
*Balletto a cavallo* 1667. Sonatas 1, 4 & 12 (*Sacro-profanus Concentus Musicus*, 1662), 8 & 9 (*Duodenae Selectarum Sonatarum*, 1659). *Die Fechtschule, Lamento sopra la morte Ferdinandi III*, various dances 1666-1680 and a song, *In jenem Gefilde* (Mieke van der Sluis, S)

'La Margarita' is the ill-fated Hapsburg Empress Margarita Teresa, a Spanish teenager who married her Austrian cousin Leopold I in 1667 and died in 1673. Their marriage ceremonies included an exceptionally lavish equestrian ballet in which Leopold himself played the leading role (of course!), involving over 1700 performers, who had practised their sets for over a year (there was plenty of time for such forward planning as the marriage was a desperate political attempt to hold the Hapsburg empire together and to produce a legitimate heir to the Spanish throne). The music which opens the CD is for this celebratory event and the notes mention Armonico Tributo Austria's involvement with live recreations (albeit on a much less lavish scale). The music was published twice; one of the editions includes diary references and several engravings, of which a sample is handsomely reproduced in the booklet. The other music ranges from a simple strophic aria with violin ritornelli (which will fox non-German speakers, as no translation is

provided, though we are told the text is 'moralistic') to large-scale sonatas (with some outstanding trumpet playing) and dance movements (with some unusual effects and percussion.) I have often heard such things criticised because, over time, they become irritating: in this case, I can understand the point. One other small fault in the booklet: a *violino pifferato* is listed in the instrumental listing, but there is no indication of where it is played. And what is it anyway? The music is attractive; the playing is very neat and is ideally suited to Schmelzer's music. I would like to hear more of the *Sacro-profanus concentus musicus* from them. BC

**Schütz Auferstehungshistorie** Peter Schreier, Dresdener Kreuzchor, Martin Flämig, Capella Fiducinia, Hans Gruss 49' 54"  
Berlin Classics 0092052

Around 1985 East German musicians occupied themselves with the tercentenaries of Bach and Handel and, like Western performers, paid but scant attention to Domenico Scarlatti. However, they made quite a point of the Schütz quatercentenary and this digitalised reissue represents but a small part of East Germany's considerable recorded achievement at that time. The real character of Schütz's music is the middle ground between commemoration and enlightenment, and maybe a blend of the two in East Germany's postwar culture invested these performances with the dignity and discipline which so movingly illuminates this beautiful but often misunderstood little masterpiece. I found the congregational hugeness of the Kreuzchor overpowering and out-of-proportion at the end, and it is true that some of the solo singing lacks in confidence and style some of what, for me, it gains in naturalness of expression. All the same, this is one disc that I hope to enjoy hearing repeatedly. Stephen Daw

**Stylus phantasticus und Liedvariationen bis**  
Bach Gerhard Gnann 77' 36"  
Fermate FER 20012

Bach *O Gott du frommer Gott* (BWV 767). *Toccata in C* (BWV 546); Böhm *Jesu du bist allzuschöne*; Bruhns *Präludium in G*; 'Mons. Brunth' *Präludium con Fuga ex G* [i.e. g]; Buxtehude *Toccata in d* (BuxWV 155); Sweelinck *Mein junges Leben hat ein End, More palantino*

Excellent playing – wonderful pieces – a fine organ: what more could one want? The programme is based around Bach; the major influences on Bach – Bruhns, Buxtehude, and Böhm; and the major influence on them – Sweelinck. The Sweelinck variations are given sensitive and musical performances, with an imaginative use of registration and articulation. Further variation sets by Böhm and Bach enable Gnann to display the variety of colour stops on the organ. Major Preludes and Toccatas by Bruhns and Buxtehude justify the title of the CD – *Stylus phantasticus* – that unrestrained and free style of playing and composing described by Mattheson in the eighteenth century but dating back to the Frescobaldi era. Apart from the opening two pages, I am not sure if the 3-movement

Bach Toccata in C is really a *stylus phantasticus* piece, but it is given a rollicking performance. Gnann is clearly familiar with the rhetorical nature of the pieces written in this style, and plays with conviction, delineating the dramatic changes of mood to stylistic effect. The organ is the 1991 Rieger & Friedrich instrument in St Martin, Riegel, built in north German style. Programme notes are adequate, though with no registrations; but don't let that stop you buying this disc. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

## LATE BAROQUE

**Bach Complete Cantatas vol. 2** Barbara Schlick, Kai Wessel, Christoph Prégardien, Klaus Mertens SATB, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir, Ton Koopman 182' 29" Erato 0630-12598-2 3 CDs  
BWV 12, 18, 61, 132, 152, 172, 182, 199, 203, 524

This second set of three discs not only adds delightful new material from Bach's early years but also includes two secular oddities – the fragment known as the *Quodlibet*, with its obscure, semi-nonsensical text and racy music, and the here delightfully-achieved *Amore traditore*. Each benefits hugely from Koopman's enthusiastic contribution on the continuo harpsichord; perhaps one should write that it is harpsichord *OBBLIGATO*, since here at last we have been shown exactly how this kind of music should be played.

The cantatas are treated with varying success, the best (like 199 *Mein Herz schwimmt im Blut*) very beautifully played and sung, the less successful (e.g. 152 *Tritt auf den Glaubensbahn*) curiously inept, and at the start even confusing in sound. Also, in this 'complete' series, why haven't we been presented with more than one version of 199? It is, after all, the only cantata which Bach performed during his Weimar, Köthen and Leipzig periods. This is a strange mixture of the excellent, the quirky and the questionable, but still affording us some very good work indeed, with a generally high standard of singing and playing. *Stephen Daw*

**Bach Cantatas 54, 82, 170** Nathalie Stutzmann, Hanover Band, Roy Goodman 60' 15" BMG (RCA Victor Red Seal) 09026 62655 2

Nathalie Stutzmann is a contralto of great taste and vocal skill whose sound is quite close to that of some male altos, but much stronger in the low register – the low Cs heard several times in BWV 82 hold no fear for her and are, indeed, very roundly sung. Her voice is attractive and warm in those cantatas where Bach seems to be examining the aspects of Christian heroism – heroism in depth of belief and in trusting discipleship, that is. The Hanover musicians accompany with admirable warmth and accuracy throughout, with superb contributions in *Vergnügte Ruh* from Anthony Robson (oboe d'amore) and from Roy Goodman himself as solo organist. Tovey's statement that this cantata is among the hardest of all to perform seems centuries away. Indeed, the only worry here seems to be that it all sounds just a little too modern! *Stephen Daw*

**Brescianello The 18 Sonatas for Gailichone** vol. 1 (nos 1-9) Terrell Stone gailichone 73' 06" Dynamic CDS 151

It's good to know that record companies can still find room in their catalogues for the truly obscure! A gailichone, also known as a colachon or mandora, is a type of lute which was popular in Italy and the Habsburg areas of central Europe in the early 18th century, where it was widely used for the continuo, ensemble music and solos. It lacks the extended basses of most other baroque lutes, and often resembles a renaissance lute, which has led to it being frequently miscatalogued by museums and largely ignored by the period instrument revival. This is the only recording on one to the best of my knowledge. The sonatas of Brescianello (d.1757) are an important and attractive section of its repertory, falling stylistically somewhere between Weiss and Zamboni. Stone plays them with wit and style; the performances are technically secure and there is some imaginative embellishment. The booklet gives a brief biography of Brescianello and a very brief description of the instrument in four languages, but has a good bibliography for those who want more information. My only quibble is that the sound quality could be better. The tessitura is quite low and the acoustic rather boomy, and the sound engineer has chosen to include a lot of acoustic at the expense of treble clarity. However a fascinating disc which I enjoyed very much. I look forward to volume 2.

*Lynda Sayce*

*Lynda added a PS to her review, not really for publication, but readers may be interested.*

By an extraordinary coincidence I've just ordered an instrument like this; it's half built at the moment, so I have just read through all the articles written on the subject. It was great to hear one (and even better for the maker to get some idea of what I'll be playing on it!)

**Corrette Les Delices de la Solitude** Badinage Meridian CDE 84325 73' 22"

Paul Carroll (who probably still has despairing memories of an 'eventful' B-minor Mass I conducted him in at St Paul's, Covent Garden, in 1983) is something of a baroque musician – he plays not one but four instruments on this sampler disc of Corrette's vastly diverse output. I have to confess that the extent of that diversity has coloured my opinion of his music (without much personal experience, I must shamefully add!) I was, therefore, surprised to learn that much of what is recorded here dates from his 20s and is indeed worthy of note, particularly the two sonatas for written-out harpsichord with flute accompaniment. I most enjoyed the solo harpsichord pieces, *Les Etoiles* (a Rondeau) and *Le Sabotier Hollandois* (a set of variations). This is not to criticise Paul Carroll's playing: even if his projection is not entirely consistent on all four instruments, his performances are never less than stylish. *BC*

**Couperin Messe pour les Couvents; Titelouze 4 Hymns** André Isoir organ 74' 38 Calliope Approche CAL 6908 (rec. 1973) Titelouze *Ave Maris stella, Exultet coelum Pange lingua Veni Creator*

The title of this re-packaged CD is Couperin although, for me, there is as much interest in the four hymns by Titelouze as in the *Messe pour les Couvents* of Couperin. Isoir's flamboyant and inventive style of playing is ideal for the French classical period – as far as I am concerned his *gout* is always *bon*. His use of ornamentation and rhetorical amplification of the musical text is entirely appropriate to the repertoire, and his interpretation of the Titelouze has conviction. This is a reissue from 1973. The recording and performance retains the vitality, colour, musicality and sheer joy. Buy it.

*Andrew Benson-Wilson*

**Locatelli Concerti Grossi op. 1, nos. 1-6** Capella Istropolitana, Jaroslav Krecek Naxos 8.553445

Over the past few months there has been intense interest in Locatelli's music. From Musica ad Rhenum's chamber music sets to Libby Wallfisch's monumental *L'arte del violino*, hardly a major piece remains unrecorded. Capella Istropolitana, from Bratislava in Slovakia, have recorded the first six pieces from his Op. 1 set of concertos. In addition to the normal pair of violins and cello in the concertino, Locatelli adds one and sometimes two violas. This richer sound is particularly telling in contrapuntal movements. Although there is no indication that this is the first volume of a set, the notes seem to indicate that a second volume will follow (the remainder of the set consists of two older *da chiesa* style concertos – including Locatelli's *Christmas concerto*, an obvious tribute to Corelli – and four three-movement Venetian-style pieces). The playing is very good: accelerating trills with upper appoggiature and a marked absence of autopilot vibrato point to a certain awareness of style and the music bounces along, full of energy. Thoroughly enjoyable. *BC*

**Mondonville Pièces de Clavecin avec Voix et Violon** op. 5; op. 3/3 in Bb Linda Perillo S, Kenneth Weiss hpscd, Walter Reiter vln. Meridian CDE 84302 66' 19"

Following their recent Boismortier disc (EMR22), Meridian now illuminate another shadowy corner of the French baroque with a highly enjoyable programme drawing on Mondonville's innovative publications of 1738 and 1748. The music is variable in quality although always enjoyable: at its best it is easy to suspect that one is listening to Rameau. Apart from a very occasional rhythmic unsteadiness, the performers more than do Mondonville justice. Linda Merillo's voice is bright and clear, with the flexibility to cope with her often elaborate part, though she is a little under-powered in the lower register and inclined to sacrifice diction for tone. Her colleagues contribute equally to the success of the recital producing sumptuous and well-focussed

sounds from harpsichord (Rubio, after Taskin) and violin respectively. Warmly recommended.

David Hansell

**Telemann Solo, Trio & Concerto Ensemble**  
Fitzwilliam 70' 17"

Auvidis Astrée E 8561

*Concerto in a* rec, ob, vln, bc, *Solo in C* hpscd (TWV 32:3), *Sonata in D* vlc, bc (TWV 41:D6); *Trio Sonatas* in c rec, ob, bc (TWV 42:c2), d rec, vln, bc (TWV 42: d?), g ob, vln, bc (TWV 42: g5), a rec, vln, bc (TWV 42: a4)

Anyone familiar with The Chandos Baroque Players' recording of Telemann chamber music will know the majority of pieces recorded here, which are among the composer's best. Jean-Pierre Nicolas's dexterous recorder playing is matched by Paul Dombrecht's suavity of tone and Enrico Gatti's bright fiddling. The three instruments blend marvellously in the third movement of the A minor concerto and yet contrast very sharply in the concluding Allegro. The disc also includes a cello sonata from *Der Getreue Music Meister* and a solo keyboard sonata, an area of Telemann's output which has been overlooked by recording artists – it may be far from demanding on either player or listener, but certainly does not consist of mindless sequences. A balanced disc of quality baroque chamber music.

BC

**Telemann Trio Sonatas & Gamba Sonatas**

Trio Rameau (Karl-Heinz Passin fl, Siegfried Pauk gamba, Maria Bräutigam hpscd) 45' Berlin Classics 0021622BC (rec. 1981)  
Trio Sonata in G minor, Solo Fantasia in D (*Der getreue Music-Meister*), Sonata in e (*Essercizii Musici*), Concerto 2 in g for flute, concertante harpsichord and gamba (*Six Concerts & six Suites*)

This disc was recorded by what were three of the leading lights of the East German early music scene. They were, of course, pioneers and are to be praised for their attempts. But their performances were, unfortunately, affected by their isolation. The flautist, playing a fine-sounding instrument, has a steady vibrato and slightly airy tone, with modern trills. The harpsichordist is again a more than adequate performer; her problem is her instrument, a heavy, ponderous monster, totally unsuited to this repertoire (does it have a suitable repertoire?) The gamba is a rich, mellow instrument and its player accomplished in the art of continuo and ensemble; he makes rather heavy work of the unaccompanied suite, more through his conception of the piece (more 'weak Bach' than anything worthy of interest in its own right, I suspect!) than any technical insecurity. An interesting historical document but as a performance a qualified success.

BC

**Vivaldi Le quattro stagioni** (arranged for recorders) Marion Verbruggen, Flanders Recorder Quartet 38' 37"  
harmonia mundi HMU 907153

Paul Everett's notes justify this transcription for five recorders on two counts: that other people have done it successfully, and that great music will convey its emotional

essence no matter what the medium. The technique of the players on this disc is impressive: their tuning and ensemble are faultless, especially given the amount of expressive note-bending. They throw in special effects such as bagpipe drones and birds twittering so well that the music might have been written for recorders. There are wonderful moments, such as the humorously elegant hunt from *Autumn* and the pretty simplicity of *Winter's* slow movement. Indeed, this disc is most successful when the players are required to be elegant and sublime. I only wish Marion Verbruggen were less matter of fact in the solos. She ornaments tastefully but needs to caress the phrases more lovingly to be entirely winning. Recorders, I think, can be played excitingly; this group surely could have managed more élan. (The soloist is, again, more to blame than the quartet!) The sound is superb, carefully favouring the soloist when necessary. At full price for under 40 minutes, Joris van Grethem could surely have allowed 'transcription virus' loose on a few other concertos.

Angela Bell

**Vivaldi e il suo tempo** Musica concertiva Supraphon SU 3097-2 131 48' 18"

Lotti *Trios for rec & gamba and rec & ob d'am*; Vivaldi *Concerti for Rec, Ob & Bsn* RV 103, 106, for hpscd no RV number; *Sonata for rec, bsn* RV 86

**Vivaldi Concerto alla rustica and other concertos** Manfred Kraemer vln, Balázs Máté vlc, Jed Wentz & Marion Moonen fl, Peter Holtzman rec, Musica ad Rhenum 62' 20"  
Vanguard Classics 99026

These two recordings are very different in their approach to the music, but equally lax in their documentation. While the Czech recording leaves one to trace the source of the solo harpsichord piece, the Dutch group's note consists of an essay telling us how hot-bloodedly extravagant 18th-century Italian violinists tended to be and gives no catalogue references at all. This is frustrating, but the absence of RV numbers pales into insignificance when you actually listen to the music. Both groups are excellent. The inclusion of two pieces by Lotti is most welcome – the composer known today virtually exclusively through his ultra-dissonant Crucifixus (when was the last time you heard one of the Credos from which they come?) deserves much wider recognition. The combinations, too, are interesting. Musica ad Rhenum need no introduction to *EMR* readers: their recent recordings of Locatelli have been well received. My initial reaction to this particular set was that the passionate Italian streak had taken over – the *Concerto alla rustica* of the title is taken at a tremendous speed! Over repeated listenings, though, I came to believe that they had got it just right, even if there are momentary lapses on account of the effervescence. Both highly recommended.

BC

Next issue

Christopher Page reviews reissues of classic recordings by David Munrow.

## CLASSICAL

**Haydn Symphonies vol. 7: c. 1772** Academy of Ancient Music, Christopher Hogwood L'Oiseau-Lyre 443 777-2 160' 46" 3 CDs Symphonies 45, 46, 47, 51, 52, 64

Symphonies 45 & 46 were among those which first gave me a particular affection for Haydn. I haven't heard them for years and have not been keeping abreast of early-instrument Haydn recordings, so came to these fresh and reacted with enthusiasm. Musically, this is a fascinating group. The  $\text{F}^\#$  minor symphony (45, *The Farewell*) has received rather a lot of scholarly attention of late, including a whole book by the author of the excellent notes, James Webster; but the others all have their points of interest and show Haydn at one of the nodal points of his career. The performances are not as demonstrative as some ensembles would offer. My guess is that the Esterhazy court was so alert to the nuances of Haydn's style that phrasing should not be vulgarly over-stated – or perhaps I share with Hogwood a preference for a slightly understated, perhaps English approach. Singling out individual players is invidious, but the horns in No. 51, Anthony Halstead and Christian Rutherford, deserve particular praise. I intended to address the controversial matter of harpsichord continuo, but was distracted by the music and did not notice its absence, which is probably significant.

CB

**Haydn Five Sonatas for Fortepiano H, XVI, 35-39** Ingrid Haebler 67' 38"  
Philips 442 659-2 (rec. 1969)

Although this was recorded in 1969, the playing sounds so crisp and fresh that it could have been yesterday. Ingrid Haebler demonstrates the skills of the best pianists trained in Vienna; the music dances along and there is a real sense of dialogue. It is a great pity that the notes give no details of the forte piano – it has the qualities of an instrument by one of the great Viennese makers, and Ingrid Haebler exploits its dark colours in the middle register beautifully in the adagio of the  $\text{E}^\flat$  sonata, contrasting them with pianissimo silvery treble passages. These sonatas are not Haydn's most complex or profound works but this disc is so good in all aspects that one cannot fail to enjoy them.

Margaret Cranmer

**Michael Haydn [PartSongs]** Die Singphoniker 61' 16"  
CPO 999333-2

Any recording that lifts Michael Haydn out of the mighty shadow cast by his older brother is welcome. The Singphoniker – a kind of latter-day Comedian Harmonists with already an impressive discography behind them – is a group of five young German men, here augmented by a third tenor for some of the partsongs. The music they sing dates mainly from Haydn's later years; merry and moral texts, with saucy touches, imaginatively set, hardly inhibited by the normal strophic form. One or two of

the numbers are not found in the recent Sherman/Thomas Thematic Catalogue, but there seems no reason to query their authenticity. The performances are sturdy, witty and impressively accurate; the recording is close but clean. Good fun.

Peter Branscombe

**Monn Concerti** Rainer Zipperling vlc, Sabine Bauer hpscd, Mary Utiger vln, La Stagione Frankfurt, Michael Schneider 56' 29"  
cpo 999 391-2

Monn's is one of those names that regularly comes up in any discussion of that grey area between baroque and classical music, and yet we rarely, if ever, hear any of his music. Michael Schneider has sought to rectify that situation with a lively disc of four concertos, each with two vibrant allegros framing charming slow movements. The G minor harpsichord concerto is the composer's own reworking (*à la* J.S. Bach) of the cello concerto. La Stagione perform the latter with 16 ft bass only, which works extremely well. Mary Utiger's violin playing reminds me very much of Simon Standage (especially as the violin concerto is rather reminiscent of Leclair); her cadenzas are so well crafted they could be the composer's own. If readers recognise the name of the harpsichordist, it could be because she's a renowned recorder player! Her rhythmic suppleness is a particularly welcome aspect of her performances – she phrases like a woodwind player! I look forward to further recordings of Monn's music – if he achieved this by his death at 33, who knows what later life might have brought? BC

**Mozart Sonates pour piano et violon** Patrick Cohen, Erich Höbarth 75' 02"  
Auvidis Astrée E 8581  
Sonatas in C (K296), D (K306), F (K376);  
6 Variations 'Hélas, j'ai perdu mon amant' K360

Alert, fresh-toned accounts of these Mozart sonatas will make new friends for both the works and the performers. The one complaint I have is that the entire recording is so close that the ear can tire if the entire CD is played straight through at a normal volume setting. However it is worth persevering to find the most acceptable level, as the instruments – Anton Walter pianoforte of 1790, J. Guarnerius Filius Andreae violin of 1705 – have a beautiful tone, and are played with plenty of sensitivity and style.

Peter Branscombe

**Soler Sonatas for Harpsichord (complete)**  
vol. 1 Gilbert Rowland 71' 07"  
Naxos 8.553462  
1, 15, 18, 19, 54, 43, 85, 90, 91 (op. 4/1), 101, 110

Having enjoyed Patrick Cohen's recording of Soler Sonatas on the fortepiano, I found it difficult to listen to them on the less sensitive harpsichord. This is not a criticism of Gilbert Rowland's playing, which can be both brilliant and expressive, with nicely formed trills which end firmly and under rhythmic control. But a lot of Soler's music is simple in its melodic and harmonic construction, and whilst listening to a couple of sonatas as part of a mixed concert

programme is pleasant, having them all together is less interesting. This is recorded on a 1976 Rubio harpsichord in the French style, which has a clean and positive tone.

Michael Thomas

## 19th CENTURY

**Beethoven Sonatas for piano & cello** David Watkin cello, Howard Moody fp 69' 48"  
Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0561  
op. 5/2, op. 69, op. 102/2

There is no shortage of recordings of the Beethoven cello sonatas but this issue will be widely welcomed both for the use of period instruments and for the musicianship and poise of the performances. The only disappointment is the rather large and empty sounding acoustic. David Watkin (who also supplies a useful note with details of the instruments) is a neat, eloquent, if at times here thin-toned cellist. Howard Moody uses a Michael Rosenberger fortepiano of around 1800 for the earliest sonata and a Conrad Graf of 1826 for the two later works. Apart from some jangling in the op. 69 scherzo, both instruments made a very positive impression. The readings are assured, thoughtful, and with pleasantly witty touches. Most enjoyable. Peter Branscombe

**Myslivecek Violin Concerto in Bb, Viotti Violin Concerto No. 22 Schubert Rondo in A, D438, Spohr Violin Concerto No. 8 Elizabeth Wallfisch, The Brandenburg Orchestra, Roy Goodman 78' 39"** Hyperion CDA66840

I have known for some time of Libby Wallfisch's interest in Myslivecek's violin concertos and it is good to hear the results, especially when coupled with other rarities of the violin concerto repertoire. Myslivecek's 4th concerto is the earliest on the disc, dating from around 1772, and by Mozart's own admission made a tremendous impression. Viotti's most famous (22nd!) concerto dates from the very end of the 18th century and is cast in the familiar three movement form. Schubert's Rondo in A is one of three pieces he wrote for concertante violin, a relatively light piece of entertainment. The Spohr, entitled *in modo di scena cantate*, is one of his 15 concertos. The early 19th century is familiar territory for period orchestras and this exploration of the virtuoso violin technique of the time is most interesting. There could surely be few better exponents of the art – just listen to the cadenzas in the Viotti. Although it is still strange to hear fortepiano continuo, it is just one of the orchestral colours that a smaller band throws into greater relief (like the solo bassoon in the Viotti). I look forward to hearing more from this line-up. BC

**Schubert Quatuor D.87, Quatuor D.804**  
Quatuor Mosaïques 67' 52"  
Auvidis Astrée E 8580

The coupling of these pieces is not unusual; the rather grave presentation of the early work is. Here Schubert's apprentice efforts take on a sobriety and weight that make

D87 of 1813 seem close in period to the 'Rosamunde' Quartet of eleven years later. The beautiful instruments of the Mosaïques help make this an issue of special interest, and the recording, though marginally over-resonant, enables the details to emerge as clearly as the design; tempi are well chosen, and the phrasing and dynamics are both allowed to breathe. Very enjoyable and impressive.

Peter Branscombe

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Il flauto dolce: Italian Music from Three Centuries** Ashley Solomon rec, fl, Jan Spencer vlc, Terence Charlston hpscd, org. Meridian CDE 84292 69' 00"  
Bariolla Canzon 20 (1594), Barsanti op. 1/2, Corelli op. 5/4, Frescobaldi Toccata per Spinettina e vln, Radino 4 Gagliarda, Veracini op. 1/6, D. Scarlatti K281, B. Storace Ciaconna (1664), 'Vivaldi' op. 13/4

This anthology runs from the very late 16th to the middle of the 18th centuries, so subtitled it 'Italian Music from Three Centuries' is slightly naughty. That aside, the three players combine to produce some lovely sounds. The Corelli and Veracini transcriptions work well, though one has to ask why Solomon and co. opted for a transcribed and, by their own admission adapted, Veracini violin sonata rather than one of the composer's earlier works where the violin/recorder alternative was offered. The earlier pieces are far more heavily articulated, which works well, particularly in extended *passagi*. The keyboard pieces are cleanly phrased and clearly structured. A thoroughly enjoyable programme. BC

**Trav'ling Home: American Spirituals (1770-1870)** The Boston Camerata, Schola Cantorum of Boston, Brown University Chamber Chorus, Joel Cohen 61' 33"  
Erato 0630-12711-2

Is it coincidence that the last CD we had of similar repertoire (Paul Hillier's *Goostly Psalms* – see EMR 21 p. 14) was also directed by someone who has recorded medieval music from Provence? I'm much happier with the performances here. There is less of the Billings and mixed-voice hymn repertoire for missing octave doublings to annoy and the sound is more gutsy and vigorous. Much of the repertoire is of folk origin and some of the source songs are included as well – having been disappointed with the Collected Burns songs (EMR 21 p. 13), it was nice to hear an unaccompanied *Scots, wha ha'e*. Perhaps everything is done just too much in the best possible taste, and not knowing the sources, I wonder how much adaptation was required. But the beauty of the melodies is paramount. CB

Recent samplers include: *Anges/Angels musique vocale XII/XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (57' 23") l'empreinte digitale ED13050 (tracks by various groups). *Baroque* (61' 22") Auvidis Astrée E 8593 (with some quite recondite pieces: I don't know what the stick-on label 'Pub TV' signifies). *ten: Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment 1986-1996* (72' 58") Virgin Veritas OAE 1 (movements from Purcell, Bach, CPE Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Weber and Mendelssohn: I look forward to Mahler and Schoenberg in 2005).

## LETTERS

Dear Clifford

I resisted rising to the bate of your 'anti-Semitism' editorial, but after David Culbert's contribution to the debate I felt that someone from the other side ought to stand up and be counted. It is possible to defend taking out anti-Semitic references (I do so whenever I have the opportunity). Historical absolutists might like to reflect that early music gave us a hundred ways of changing texts when it suits us, from the *contrafactum* and the *parody mass* to the broadside ballad. Why was it acceptable then to change a text for religious, political or social reasons, but not now? This isn't sanitizing the past, it's trying to make the present just a little more civilised. But rather than blow my top now (I'm intending to blow it at length on the subject on another occasion), let me just say to all my Jewish friends and colleagues that the reason I 'improve' racist texts is that I find it very uncomfortable to sing them: it's just plain embarrassing and unnecessary. You can call this politically correct if you like. As far as I'm concerned, it's just being human.

John Potter

Dear Clifford,

Someone should speak up for Benjamin Britten following your editorial (no. 21) and David Culbert's letter (last issue). Anyone who cares for truth will oppose censorship and deplore attempts to re-write history. But if we laugh at the extremes of 'political correctness', this doesn't mean that it is OK to say hurtful things or to revive old hatreds.

Performance is a kind of celebration, and we do not, in the name of authenticity, have to celebrate the cruelties and stupidities of the past. Indeed, there are some things in our heritage that we are entitled – perhaps obliged – not to perform. The folk-tale referred to by David Culbert and the folk-song *Little Sir William* are not isolated cases but typical examples of the centuries-old and deeply-entrenched tradition of European anti-Semitism, as part of which Jews were falsely accused, again and again, of ritual child murder and other ludicrous and incredible excesses.

One such caused a pogrom in Kielce, Poland, in 1944, when 42 Jewish refugees, having survived the war and the camps, were beaten to death by a mob. Maybe this was in Britten's mind when he altered the text of *Little Sir William*, perhaps feeling that he had no desire to celebrate this particular living tradition.

In any event, why question a composer's right to deal as he wishes, in his lifetime, with his own work?

I hope you will allow me to say that I was grieved and shocked at your attempt to justify reviving these ancient and discreditable accusations by referring to recent events in the Middle East, however deplorable.

Now perhaps we can get away from politics, correct or not, and back to music.

Peter Bavington

Dear Mr Bartlett,

Being Jewish myself, I was most interested to read Prof. Culbert's letter in your July issue, and would certainly support his views against the negative effects of 'PC' in Early Music.

David Lass

Dear Clifford,

I was most amused by your reference to Lurciano (July, p. 17). It reminded me that last year I read a review of Handel's *Tesco*, and it was several paragraphs before the error was corrected to *Teseo*. Whatever next? Verdi's *Asda* or Lord Sainsbury's *Pavane and Galliard*?

Kathleen Berg

The Plainsong & Mediæval Music Society



The Society will hold a meeting on 26th October, 1996 at the Music Faculty, St Aldate's, Oxford. Non-members will be very welcome.

2.00 Reinhard Strom, the new Heather Professor  
 3.00 Tess Knighton, Editor, *Early Music*  
 4.30 Eamon Duffy, Magdalene College, Cambridge.  
 The meeting will end at approx. 5.30pm

The Society's AGM will take place at noon

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## AMERICAN HYMNS

A considerable part of American music is extremely faulty. European compositions aim at variety and energy by guarding against reiterated use of the perfect cords. Great numbers of the American composers, on the contrary, ... to accommodate their music for harsh singing, have introduced the smooth and perfect cords, till their tunes are all sweet, languid and listless; and yet, these very tunes, because they will better bear the discord of grating voices, are actually preferred, and have taken a general run, to the great prejudice of better music, produced even in this country, and almost to the utter exclusion of genuine European compositions. But it was the roughness of our singing that ought to have been smoothed and polished, and not the compositions of Madan and Handell. If there is ought of roughness or discord required in music, it should rise from the composition itself, and not from the voices of the singers: These should all be sweet, graceful and flowing. But sing the sweet-corded tunes of this country make in sweet toned voices, and they will immediately cloy, sicken and disgust.

This extract from Andrew Law's *Music Primer* (Cheshire, Conn. 2nd ed. 1794) [quoted from David P. McKay and Richard Crawford *William Billings of Boston*, Princeton UP 1975, p. 190] makes clear, all the more strongly because the point is being made as criticism, that the 'primitive' technique of using only root-position triads works if sung in a rough style but not if sung in a more refined way. (Thanks to Blaise Compton for the reference.)

## NEW BYRD

What was probably the first performance of the new Byrd piece printed in our June issue was given by David Culbert and a choir of 10 singers at the Saint James Episcopal Church at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on 30 June as part of a communion service. The music note in the order of service (not a feature of many UK services!) describes it as a lovely motet even if not necessarily by Byrd. David Culbert's covering letter is more succinct: 'If this *Haec dies* is by Byrd, I'll eat it!' If anyone would like to write a more formal stylistic analysis to justify the opinion (or argue so strongly the other way that we can print a picture of the music being eaten), we would be happy to publish it. I must confess that, when I displayed on screen the file of the new motet that Brian had input from a photocopy of the MS, I immediately thought that the opening looked far too geometrical to be genuine Byrd. Such apparently unmusical an approach to composer identification should not be scorned; I remember many years ago going into my office and glancing at the score my colleague had open (which was from my viewpoint upside down) and asking him if it was by Reger: it was.

## TEMPO AND DURATION

I happened to be glancing at the preface to the Hänsler edition of C. P. E. Bach's *Sanctus* a couple of months ago and was intrigued by the remarks in the preface over duration. Kirnberger heard a performance in Berlin in 1779 in which the fugue lasted 11 minutes. He wrote to the composer suggesting that 5 minutes should be the longest it should take; CPEB wrote back suggesting 3 minutes. With such a wide margin of possibility even during the composers' own life, how can we possibly guess right? CB

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