

Early Music

REVIEW

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MICHAEL THOMAS (1.11.1922 – 14.3.1997)

Many of us owe our first close acquaintance with early keyboards to Michael. Born in Cambridge, a pupil of Paul Hamburger, Dorothy Swainson and, perhaps more importantly, Mary Potts, he became a player, maker and an avid collector. At his *Harpsichord Centre* in Chiltern Street (near Baker Street Station) we could go and play on some quite remarkable historic harpsichords and contemplate purchasing a reasonable-priced new one or a kit. He was also most generous in lending even some of the most precious items of his collection. It is good that he made sure the more important instruments have ended up in approachable homes such as the Bate Collection and the Cobb Foundation.

A musical player and perceptive critic, he would generally appreciate the positive aspects of anything or anyone – as readers of these pages know. In conversation he could be both humorously entertaining and exasperating; his studied gaze into the distance, a deadpan silence before reacting with: 'I see ... Yes ... Mmm.' would leave you with the impression that he hadn't listened to a word. But maybe years later you might be surprised to find that he had remembered every detail of what you had said.

He chose to spend the last ten years or so in the South of France. He liked a congenial house with plenty of space for instruments, though he spent many hours quietly playing the clavichord in his bedroom. This was his preferred instrument. His view – usually all too hastily dismissed today as 'old school' – that the clavichord has still to be developed remained with him to the end. He had just got his latest design made up when I visited him in December. It was obvious, he would declare, that no-one had ever found a really satisfactory tone – that was why, for instance, each one of Hubert's known instruments had been constructed in a slightly different manner.

He did not enjoy good health latterly, but with somewhat aristocratic defiance, unhindered by his appalling French, he muddled his way through triumphantly. A lovable character has left us. Our sympathy goes to his companion Pauline McSweeney and their two young sons, Eoin and Alex. *Christopher Stenbridge*

Books and Music

Clifford Bartlett

BYRD

John Harley William Byrd, *Gentleman of the Chapel Royal* Scholar Press, 1997 xvi + 480pp, £45.00 ISBN 1 85928 165 6

We can now head our Byrd programme-notes and editions with the new birth-date: not, alas, a simple 1540, since the evidence is not precise (on 2 October 1598 Byrd described himself as '58. yeares or ther abouts') nor does it inspire complete confidence in its accuracy. But it is better than the 'nowe in the Eightieth yeare of myne age' of a will dated 15 November 1622, since the will may have been drafted earlier. So c.1540-1623 is as precise as we can be.

John Harley will be known to readers for his two volumes from the same publisher on *British Harpsichord Music*; those who struggled with their poor typography will be relieved to learn that there are no such handicaps to easy reading here. It is not, however, possible to write a fluent life of Byrd. The evidence of his life comes almost entirely from legal documents, and these concern chiefly property and recusancy. Neither tell us much about Byrd the musician, except for deductions that can be made from the names of people with whom he had dealings. I still find it difficult to understand how he can have survived as a catholic in a state so hostile; or was the income from fines on catholics so valuable that they were more useful taxed than dead? The book covers the documentation thoroughly (though footnotes hint that there are more details still to emerge), but of the Byrd that matters to us there is only the music.

Of the body of the book, about 100 pages are devoted to life, 150 to music. Although the sections are separate, the latter is also given a chronological framework. This is logical in a study whose approach is essentially biographical, but it does mean that much of the discussion is taken up with points of chronology, whereas most readers would, I suspect, have preferred to read more on their favourite works. Are we now too eager to relate every mournful text to the Babylonian Captivity metaphor; if Byrd was writing for private singing, I suspect that most one-to-a-part ensembles prefer miserable texts to sad ones, and the litigious Byrd might anyway have favoured melancholy humours. I pass on a point suggested by Hugh Keyte: was the catholic liturgical music intended as repertoire for the Chapel Royal when the true faith returned? If so, the current tendency to treat it as domestic liturgical music may be inappropriate. Harley is more impressive on the two-thirds of the music for which he has Kerman and Neighbour to back him. But this should act as a replacement for Fellowes's outmoded study for some years. Did that really cost the equivalent of £45.00 when it was new?

MISERERE

Gregorio Allegri *Miserere mei for nine voices...* revised from the Vatican MSS and edited by Ben Byram-Wigfield Ancient Groove Music, 1996. 12pp, £3.00 (from The Steps, Foley Terrace, Great Malvern, WR14 4RQ)

So far there have been two options with regard to this notorious work. If you follow the earliest sources (Vatican Cap. Sist. 205 & 206 from the mid-17th century – I've jotted c. 1655-1667 on my copy, but can't remember where the dates came from), you produce something that will disappoint singers and audiences and which gives no sense of why the work became so famous. Alternatively, you can use the standard top-C version of the Rockstro/Ivor Atkins/George Guest tradition. This edition takes a different course, using the 18th-century recasting of the chorus a5 for SSATB (Allegri wrote for SATTB) but with a new version of the chorus a4 with embellishments from British Library MS 31525 which are presented there as for the Bai setting but seem in fact to belong to the Allegri. What is not made clear is why, since the editor states that the MS also includes embellishments for the chorus a5, they are not included as well. He may fear that they may seem to gild the lily, but there are enough verses for a degree of gilding to be welcome. So this publication provides a middle course, and gives a version of the piece that may be nearer to that which Mozart transcribed from memory (which is sadly not extant). No top Cs, but they are the consequence of an editorial mistake anyway. The edition is nicely produced, and bulk copies are cheaper.

I am less happy with a pamphlet the editor has produced on the subject (available from the same address). That he begins with the old fable of Allegri writing a proto-string quartet (see the curious article for ALLEGRI in Cobbett) does not inspire confidence, and it won't do merely to state 'Mendelssohn and Goethe are both said [*sic*] to have commended the piece'; Mendelssohn's account of what he heard is an essential source for study of the performance practice of the *Miserere*. He seems to think that it was sung with boy trebles rather than castrati, and does not make clear to the readers that, as far as is known, both choirs were sung by solo voices (the layout of voices makes that virtually self-evident for the a4 choir). The main obstacle to understanding, however, is his protestant, if not puritanical attitude. 'Would such an austere occasion be marked by such frivolity as italianate frills?' is hardly a question an Italian could put? Of course an Italian singer will sing in an Italianate way, and good singing was inseparable from good embellishment from the time of Allegri until the last years of the Sistine choir.

PRB VIOL

Another batch of viol music from PRB begins, chronologically, with three Fantasies a5 (TrTrTTB) by John Milton – not the man who should be living at this hour, but his father (PRB Viol Consort Series 30; \$15.00/£10.00). The editor, Rita Moray, does not make any great claims for them, but they look pleasant to play. No 31 in the series (\$19.00/£12.00) comprises the 5-part consort music of William Cranford: two Fantasias, an *In nomine* and a setting of *Go from my Window* that is unasccribed in its only source, where it is labelled a6, though the extant five parts seem fully sufficient; this last is for TrTrTTB with a wide range (both trebles have top Cs), the others for TrTrTTB. All except the *In nomine* have been available from the Viola da Gamba Society, but there are advantages in a coherent set with score as well as clear parts, and there is a bonus of St Paul's and The Globe from Visscher's Panorama of London on the cover. The music is a notch above the Miltonic level.

A version of Vivaldi's *Seasons* for concertante harpsichord, transverse flute and gamba has no ancient pedigree but has been arranged by Joseph Kimbel somewhat after the manner of Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concert* (Baroque Series 14; \$25.00/£17.00 for score and two parts). The concept of such a transcription is quite Parisian, so the use of a seven-string viol seems appropriate, as does a flute rather than a recorder (which I would have thought more in keeping with the pastoral subject). The problem seems to be the harpsichord part, which at times looks unidiomatic and at others could well drown the flute and gamba. I'm not sure if I would want to listen to this, but it would be fun to play. Poor linguists will welcome all the indications of what the music is imitating being in English. My guess is that PRB's next arrangement – Brahms for viols – will be more successful as concert music.

GABRIELI TO VIVALDI

Eleanor Selfridge-Field *Venetian Instrumental Music from Gabrieli to Vivaldi* Third, revised edition. Dover Publications, 1994. xxvi + 411pp, \$13.95 [£11.95 in UK]. ISBN 0 486 28151 5

I happened to order a copy of this for a customer recently and noticed how it had changed from the original 1974 edition. I'm sure that any reader interested in the subject will know the book in its earlier state, so need only draw attention to the additions. These comprise 38 pages of addenda to the main text, a list of the Doges' *piffari*, 14 more pages of bibliography and a separate index to the new material. It is odd that the indexes could not be combined since the main index has been re-set. The list of new editions includes a variety of old-fashioned Albinoni ones but the facsimile list omits the King's Music op. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, & 9 as well as our Vivaldi, of which we have op. 3, 4 & 6-12. When I first read the book, I was disappointed that it was not focussed on the performance-practice issues with which I was mainly concerned. I have, however, subsequently warmed to it and it is a bargain in this paperback version.

OXFORD GLORIA

Antonio Vivaldi *Gloria* (RV 589) Full score edited by Paul Everett. Oxford University Press, 1997. xix + 83pp, £29.95 ISBN 0 19 338455 8 Vocal score £4.50 ISBN 0 19 338454 X

Oxford used to sell the Carus edition, which of late I have generally recommended as the best available one. In terms of price (at least with the currently-favourable exchange rate), Carus wins hands down for the full score, which at DM 22.00 works out at well under £10.00. Their vocal score is a pound or so more expensive (DM15.00), but they compensate with chorus scores at DM6.60 (under £2.50) and sell orchestral material; OUP only hires the parts. A bonus in the Oxford full score is an appendix printing the double-choir *Cum Sancto Spiritu* by Ruggieri from which Vivaldi filched his last movement, though that is more of academic than practical interest; it might have been more helpful for performers to have included the appropriate *introduzione*, *Ostro picta* (RV 642); perhaps that will be published separately. I find the Oxford printing more elegant, though I can imagine that some conductors might find the large Carus note-heads more legible on the rostrum.

The chief benefit of the Oxford edition comes from the employment of a Vivaldi scholar with an extensive knowledge of the whole body of his manuscripts. Although there is only one source this work, I have been learning from editing a variety of concertos over the last few years that Vivaldi manuscripts can be quite complex and not as obvious as one might expect. The editor does, for instance, show that the autograph is a composing score, not a fair copy. I wonder, though, whether the detailed argument, with its table of the make-up of the MS, might have been better separated from the more general introduction and remarks on performance and placed with the commentary. I suspect that conductors who need to be told about the meaning of Vivaldi's *fs* and *ps* will have given up long before page x. I am not sure of the need to italicise underlaid text when there is absolutely no doubt what is intended. This is a form of wolf-shouting, removing the chance of showing the user when there really is doubt. Similarly, if the second violin part is marked *ut supra* and there is no doubt what the *supra* really is, then that need be recorded (if at all) only in the commentary. I wonder, in fact, whether it is necessary to record any but variants of substance, just as I am puzzled at who will use the list of notes that Vivaldi corrected. There is material here that belongs to the Collected Works rather than to a separate practical edition. (The hidden agenda in these remarks is to justify avoiding such details in an edition of another popular choral work that I am preparing for Oxford UP.) But we have the details here, and as long as they do not put users off, they do no harm and could be useful. The actual differences between the editions are in fact small. The new one is, however, a pleasure to use, has the full authority of its thorough scholarship (which has, incidentally, given us a fairly precise date to the work of c.1716) and is highly recommended.

LOVE TRIUMPHANT

Dirck Buysero & Carel Hacquart *De Triomfeerende Min: Vredespel... 1680* edidit Pieter Andriessen & Tom Strengers (*Monumenta Flandriae Musica 1*). Alamire, 1996. liii + 79pp, BEF 1200 (\$US 38.00)

This first volume in a new series from Alamire is a solid, hard-back volume selling at a remarkably cheap price of just over £20.00. Acknowledgement is made to the Belgian national lottery: *Musica Britannica*, take note! This first Dutch opera (more in the English than the Italian sense of the word) is something I have heard of rather than actually know, so it nice to have it in front of me. Not that I can read the Dutch text of the play, but at least all the preliminary material is bilingual. Information on the historical background and the literary aspects are by Tom Strengers, while Pieter Andriessen (the authority on Hacquart) has provided musical information and a transcription. The 1680 edition included such music as was specific to the text, but left other music to be supplied, presumably from the theatre band's repertoire. Andriessen adds mostly movements from Hacquart's *Harmonia Parnassia*; I would have thought that instrumental music from French operas might have been more in keeping with the author's tastes, though Hacquart is always worth hearing. The work was probably never performed (and the composer not paid); the premiere may have been as late as 1920. The edition seems reliable, though I am puzzled at suggestions for continuo. Would Dutch theatres have had an organ and double bass in 1680? It is a short piece; perhaps it could share a programme with Blow's *Venus and Adonis* from a couple of years later.

ALAMIRE FACSIMILES

Alamire has issued two sets of German (?) gamba sonatas. The question mark refers to Schenck, who was born in Amsterdam to German parents and later worked in Germany. I am puzzled by *Tyd en Konst-Oeffeningeen* op. 2, 1688 (ISBN 90 6853 095 X; BEF 550, \$US 17.00 – about £10.00), since I already have an Alamire facsimile of it issued in 1986. I'm not sure if the glossier paper is an improvement. The new issue comes in a folded stiff cover rather than a slip-case and Piet Stryckers' introduction is printed on that (in English only) rather than in a separate part. What element of the publication is © 1997 rather than 1986? There are 15 quite difficult sonatas in a somewhat squashed engraving, with a continuo part in a separate book. I don't know whether the next title is really new: I haven't space to keep any except current publishers' catalogues so can't check with old Alamire ones. August Kühnel's *Sonate ô Partite ad una ô due Viole da Gamba con il Basso Continuo* was published in Cologne ten years after the Schenck (ISBN 90 6853 096 8; BEF 765, \$US 24.00 – about £14.00). This has six sonatas for 2 gambas and bc (the last replete with echos) and another eight for solo and bc. The status of the bc part varies: in some works it is essential, in others it merely supports a self-sufficient texture, so is probably intended for keyboard or lute, not another viol.

The engraving is somewhat spidery but with fewer notes left to the player's imagination than in the Schenck. These are vol. 23 & 22 of the *Facsimile series for scholars and musicians* (mutually-exclusive like 'singers and musicians'?)

Telemann's *Essercizii Musici* comes as No. 12 of Alamire's series of reprints of items at the Brussels Conservatoire, with the three parts enclosed in the characteristic maroon folder which looks nice but is a poor background for the editorial text. There is already a version from Performers' Facsimiles; but that costs £37.50, so at BEF 1250, \$US 39.00 (about £23.00) this is better value, though I am again puzzled at the choice of shiny paper: I can imagine it catching the light wrongly and causing embarrassment at a concert.

IFIGENIA IN MANNHEIM

Gian Francesco de Majo *Ifigenia in Tauride* edited by Paul Cornelson (*Recent Research in the Music of the Classical Era*, 46). Madison: A-R Editions, 1996. lxx + 379pp, \$148.80 ISBN 088579 375 X

Majo is merely a name to me and Mannheim's reputation has been chiefly for its orchestra. But like most orchestras of the period, its existence was dependent on opera. The introduction to this edition clearly sets out the institutional and aesthetic background. Most of the prelims are taken up by an edition and translation of the libretto; an interesting feature is the description of what happens during the overture. Despite the general remarks on editorial policy, there seem to have been few problems here in reconciling the two major sources, a non-autograph copy of the score and a printed libretto from the 1764 premiere; rarely is anyone likely to benefit from the variants in the three-page commentary (though it has, of course, to be there). The problem with the music is that it needs a lavish performance before its worth can be evaluated, and the chance of any opera house taking on such a work is slim – and the German state opera-houses, the most likely to undertake such a project, are not into period-style stagings. A contemporary report of the first performance notes that there were '16 changes of scenery, many of which were very magnificent and in an entirely new style'; even if the work were revived, we would not see these. The music also suffers by comparison with Gluck and, especially, Mozart, whose *Idomeneo* was written when the Mannheim court and opera company had moved to Munich. But it looks interesting enough to warrant a recording; perhaps it would be a more profitable enterprise than another star-studded *Don Giovanni*. It needs the canonical Metastasian six soloists, a male chorus and a full classical orchestra.

COMPUTING IN MUSICOLOGY

No space for any details, but readers might be interested to hear that vol. 10 (details from ccarh@netcom.com) contains articles on *Dissonance and Genre in Corelli's Trio Sonatas* (op. 1 differs from op. 2), *Modality vs. Tonality in Bach's Chorale Harmonisations* and a guide to what is available on the Web.

GEORGIAN GALLERIES

Clifford Bartlett

The Gallery Tradition: Aspects of Georgian Psalmody... edited by Christopher Turner. SG Publishing & Anglia Polytechnic University 1997. xi + 109pp, £26.00 ISBN 0 9529336 0 8

Available direct from the publisher, 8 Wheatlands Close, Ketton, Stamford, PE9 3RX for £18.50, post free UK, + £5.00 (USA, Canada), £6.50 (Australia, New Zealand). Advance payment by cheque (GBP only), Visa or Mastercard.

Vital Spark: Music of Death and Resurrection from English Parish Churches and Chapels, 1760-1840. Psalmody, Essex Baroque Orchestra, Peter Holman St Mary's Church, Boxford

We did not print a full report of the International West Gallery Conference held at Clacton in August 1995, since the papers were going to be published. Here they are, neatly presented in double-column A4-format in a firm black binding, perfect except for the lack of an index. I won't try to summarise them, since anyone interested will need to borrow or (preferably) buy a copy.

There is a far wider variety of viewpoint here than at a normal musicological conference. Most scholars at such events tend to start from roughly the same place. But this is a new subject and much of the work has been done by amateur enthusiasts from a variety of backgrounds. One might compare it with the world of the viol consort when I first encountered it in the 1960s. Some of the amateurs dropped out as professionals moved in, others (most notably Gordon Dodd, whose catalogues are essential for any research on the English repertoire) continued to work alongside the professionals at the highest possible level. But there were problems, and there had to be a palace revolution (not related to any amateur/professional rift) in the early 1970s to solve them.

Here, the amateur input derives from the delight many have found in singing the sort of repertoire associated with Thomas Hardy's carollers in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. This is mostly in the form of strophic hymns, and has been augmented by American shape-note tunes (though not the more lengthy Billings anthems). Conference publications always miss the feel of what they are recording by omitting the extra-curricular activities. Here, the inevitable absence of the late-night singing-sessions means that one element is underemphasised. Some of us felt that what would emerge from the Conference would be a greater feeling for the continuity of music throughout the social strata of 18th & early 19th-century England. Although an isolated Dartmoor village might sing completely different music from the choir at Exeter Cathedral, there was a continuous line between the two and, while the extremes might be incompatible, much of the music was part of a common culture. Another area of disagreement was between the 'early music' approach (trying to find what music was performed then imitating it) and the 'folk' approach in which, while it was interesting to be able to trace the

history of a tradition, what mattered was the state in which it now survived. Do we prefer *Old Foster* with the precise orchestration with which John Foster published it around 1820 or as bellowed now in a Yorkshire pub? Can we say that one is better than the other?

With his Christmas CD and this concert performed on Easter Sunday for the Suffolk Villages Festival, Peter Holman has taken the former line. I was perhaps a little over-critical of his Christmas record; in fact, we played it rather more than the Westminster Abbey one I preferred in my review. What works with his approach is the more civilised end of the repertoire, especially the anthems, and the concert was extremely effective. I don't know when I went to one that had so little music that I knew but which I enjoyed so much. The players were a mixture of amateurs and professionals, much like the music teachers and amateurs who would have taken part in Music Clubs and performances of Messiah and played anthems in church or at concerts in the more prosperous parts of the country. For the forthcoming recording a professional band will be used; ears grow more critical when listening to discs, though at the concert it sounded fine.

But there are problems in applying the normal rules of musicality to the simpler sort of congregational strophic psalmody. One only has to see *Songs of Praise* to hear this: the principle is the same, even if the musicality exercised there is different from that of a period band. I was struck by a sentence in Alan Bennett's diary (30 June 1984); 'Never read the Bible as if it means something'. When I played for services (before I was concerned with baroque performance-practice), I eventually came to the conclusion that it was naive to vary dynamics for the verses of hymns. Hymn-singing is like Bible reading (at least of the Authorised Version) and while there may be a slight difference of tone between 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine' and 'When I survey the wondrous cross', the *Ancient and Modern* style of dynamic variation is inappropriate; a congregation is not a choir and sings at a constant volume and tempo. Recorded hymns must almost by definition be either boring or false; the CD will not, as at the Easter concert, be able to avoid the problem by audience participation for the hymns, though the texted *Dead March from Saul* and orchestrated *Gopsal* will probably work in an art-music style anyway. The late-night singing at the Conference showed the 'modified shout' (to use Michael Morrow's term) to be entirely suitable for some of the repertoire, especially when the harmony is based on fifths rather than triads. Perhaps there are clear breaks between the repertoires after all.

The second conference will take place on 29-31 August; details from Christopher Turner, Colchester Institute School of Music, Sheepen Rd, Colchester, Essex CO3 3LL; tel +44 (0)1206 718000

THE CANTATAS OF ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI

a personal view by Rosalind Halton

It was during the final months of my D. Phil thesis on the classical symphonic repertoire, that I went into Christ Church College Library, Oxford, in search of cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti. After a lengthy involvement with works of the 1760s-70s which were beyond my resources to perform, I was keen to find previously unperformed music that I could immediately put into concerts by myself and Kate Eckersley. Kate's wide vocal range and ability to evoke solitude and melancholy came easily to mind when I opened a volume and saw one piece after another with the kind of chromatic recitative we revelled in; arias with sinuous lines, both more concise and less symmetrical in phrasing than the Handel cantatas we knew; arioso passages that invited the singer to engage in counterpoint not too far removed from singing the lines of Palestrina.

Several years and many transcriptions later, the BBC invited me to provide some editions for a programme entitled *Lost and Found*, which included a magical performance by Nigel Rogers with the Taverner Players of a substantial work with violins, viola and continuo, the cantata *Nel silenzio commune della notte*. Though this delighted me, I was mystified by the approach of the programme, which appeared to consider that it was putting the music on trial: was this a repertoire unknown today because it was intrinsically dull and boring, or for some other reason (that the programme would reveal)?

Fifteen years later Alessandro Scarlatti's cantatas are still a virtually untouched repertoire, despite his fame, influence, and the size of his output. Is Scarlatti simply too intellectual a composer to attract widespread interest? Was Edward J. Dent exaggerating in claiming him as a significant forerunner of Mozart's operatic style? Why are his operas so little represented in the CD catalogue (as a recent correspondence on the Internet Early Music List revealed)?

It is not just Scarlatti's cantatas that are neglected in modern editions and performances, but rather the whole genre of the Italian cantata. Few of the cantatas of Stradella, Carissimi, Luigi Rossi - to mention only the big names - form a regular part of concert programmes. Whereas interest and forces can usually be raised to put on an opera or oratorio by the above, the solo cantata excites few concert promoters. I think a big part of the reason for this lies in the centrality of text to the solo cantata. It requires time and effort on the part of the audience to absorb the skill with which these composers illuminated the ideas of their poetic texts. It is as if we are prepared to make this effort in the Italian language for some key works of Monteverdi and then for Mozart's operas, but the sheer size of the 17th-century cantata output makes it easier to

imagine that somehow it is less inspired, more run-of-the-mill. But can you imagine where our understanding of Schubert, Schumann, Wolf, (and indeed 19th-century musical style as a whole) would be if we discounted their output in solo song accompanied by keyboard?

Editing Scarlatti's cantatas to satisfy scholarly criteria is a big job, even though the task of surveying a large number of works and establishing their authorship has been done comprehensively by the American scholar Edwin Hanley, whose *Bibliographical study* (Yale Ph.D, 1963) remains the essential tool for anyone working in the subject. It remains necessary to work through the manuscript sources, gradually building a profile of copyists whose text and occasional mention of a date can be trusted. The main work in identifying Roman copyists and paper has been done in the field of Handel research, by scholars such as Keiichiro Watanabe and Rudolf Ewerhart. Ursula Kirken-dale's major article 'The Ruspoli Documents on Handel' (JAMS 1967) contains a wealth of material that has yet to be worked through with regard to the resident Italian musicians who figure as copyists, orchestral and continuo musicians and rival composers in the Handel story. And then there are the Neapolitan sources - few copyists here are identified as yet; and what about the transmission of Scarlatti's cantatas in Paris, sometimes presumably in the hand of a French copyist?

Essential material for the Scarlatti scholar is located in the Santini Collection Münster, said to contain the bulk of the collection of manuscripts belonging to the Roman artistic patron Prince Ruspoli, including some Scarlatti and Handel autograph manuscripts. Yale Library holds the other important autograph source of Scarlatti's solo cantatas, the so-called *cantata diary* of 1704/5 which has been described in detail by Reinhard Strohm¹. The presence in British libraries of many Roman manuscript copies of impeccable credentials from the composer's 'workshop' is evidence of the particular fascination of English collectors and Grand Tourists of the 17th-18th centuries, including Charles Burney (presumed owner of the *cantata diary*), and the Old Pretender, who regularly frequented the Roman opera and academies ca.1715-30.

The comparatively small number of dated copies and autographs means that great numbers of Scarlatti's cantatas cannot be assigned an exact year - is this a stumbling block to the genre of the scholarly edition, I have often wondered? And yet plenty of chronological data is available to construct a history of Scarlatti's cantata styles. Right from the early pieces of the 1690s, he moved within a wide tonal orbit (F sharp minor and G flat major within consecutive

recitatives, for example); the chromaticism that pervades his later music is already a notable feature, as well as his predilection for repeating words and phrases in recitative, in sharp distinction to most of his contemporaries.

Yes, the *da capo* form does settle down in his music about the late 1690s (this is one of the few facts most musicians know about Alessandro Scarlatti, and one that seems to put him in the 'historical figure' category, alas). The arias of this period show a style of great melodic clarity and beauty, which is not always to the fore in the expanded *da capo* arias of his later work. Recurrent subjects are *lontananza* (distance or separation, symbolically death perhaps), night and solitude, the traditional pastoral subject of the shepherdess in flight from her lover, and female characters named and unnamed, abandoned or made frantic by jealousy. A singer important to Scarlatti was the dedicatee of most of the *cantata diary*, the castrato Andrea Adami (member and later maestro of the papal choir), who is documented as a fine performer of Stradella's cantatas as late as the 1690s – an important link between the two generations, we may suppose.

The modern listener will probably always be most attracted to the cantatas with obligato instruments, which are the subject of forthcoming editions by me and Steven

Campbell. Further research is needed to establish whether Scarlatti regularly expected those with strings to be accompanied one to a part or with a bigger group (again, most of the evidence so far stems from Handel research). Meanwhile, the performer and listener prepared to make the extra effort with the poetry will be rewarded by entering the realm of the solo cantata with basso continuo, to which Scarlatti entrusted arguably his most profound and entertaining music. A remarkably eloquent performance of the piece *Per un momento solo* by soprano Cristina Miatello and harpsichordist Guido Morini (in Venice, August 1994) convinced me that this repertoire in the hands of sympathetic performers is capable of moving us as profoundly as the songs of Schubert, even when we may not follow every single word.

¹. Reinhard Strohm, 'Scarlattiana at Yale' in *Haendel e gli Scarlatti a Roma* ed. Nino Pirrotta and Agostino Ziino, Firenze, L.S. Olschki, 1987: 113-152.

Rosalind Halton now teaches at the University of New England at Armidale, New South Wales. I first met her at Urbino in August 1994 (presumably just before the performance mentioned in her last paragraph) and again in Sydney last summer. Her edition of Alessandro Scarlatti's cantata *Olimpia* is published by King's Music: score £6.00, parts for vln 1, 2, vla & vlc each £2.50 (set of 2 scores and 5 parts £20.00) CB

MUSIC IN LONDON

Shane Fletcher

A pleasant Easter holiday sadly involved my missing a few concerts in London, but I am delighted to have been back to catch two classical treats in one week, both under the direction of Anthony Halstead. The Wigmore Hall has been a regular venue for trios, quartets – even octets – but nowadays its stage also squeezes in Haydn symphonies. Numerically, Haydn's C minor work, no. 52, could be said to stand at the mid-point of his career, though in fact it belongs with the *Sturm und Drang* works of the early 1770s. On April 10th, the Hanover Band gave an appropriately tense account of this extraordinary work, the small forces giving added prominence to the uncannily high horn writing. In the first half of the concert the string playing had not been so confident nor so well tuned and so the orchestral version of Haydn's *Arianna a Naxos* had not fared quite so well. Catherine Bott, unfamiliar to me in this repertoire, was splendidly expressive in the recitatives, with shades of Janet Baker's articulation, but the arias were not sufficiently atmospheric. The most enjoyable work of the evening was what had seemed in prospect the least attractive: a *Symphonie Concertante* by J. C. Bach with Anna McDonald and Sebastian Comberti as the violin and cello soloists. There was a wonderful sense of fun here, with a stratospheric cello part being confidently surmounted by a player with a head for heights.

Two days before at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Anthony Halstead directed the wind players of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in two Mozart serenades. The first half consisted of the E flat work K375 in its original sextet version: two each of clarinets, bassoons and horns. This is demanding when played any an octet; with just a sextet it becomes a wind-players' marathon, far more demanding than, say, a Mozart concerto. The opening movement is one of the most fascinating of the large number of sonata allegros by Mozart in this key and, like so many others, it takes a special delight in the key chord. The balance was good and everything, even the lowliest figure, was played with tender expression. The second half of the concert was the *Grand Serenade* for thirteen players, which I have never heard on period instruments. Every sonority was a revelation; in particular the oboes did not topple the texture as they so often do in modern instrument performances. Every shift of colour from minuet to trio was a delight and the central *adagio* with its three soloists was wonderfully eloquent – a treat from three of the very finest early-wind players, Anthony Pay on the clarinet, Anthony Robson on the oboe and Colin Lawson playing a wonderfully mellow basset horn. This concert cannot be allowed to be a one off; with such a wonderful repertoire it must be the first of more.

ROME IN' AN' OOTA THE GLOAMIN'

Brian Clark

It was almost a staff holiday recently when four of EMR reviewers took part in a week's singing in the Italian capital (March 15-22). The Edinburgh University Renaissance Singers (or at least half of them plus various guest stars), under the direction of Noel O'Regan, an authority on Roman music in the age of Palestrina, also visited Assisi, Città di Castello and, surprise, surprise, Palestrina.

I dropped in on *EMR* Central Office both on the way out and on my return journey. Indeed, as Clare and John are both avid fans of Heathrow, I was lucky enough to be chauffeuse-driven to and from the airport, which was just as well really, as I had a suitcase, a violin, a rucksack and a red academic gown to carry – as well as my music for the various concerts [along with some Leclair Concertos and Scottish fiddle music he borrowed from me CB].

Things got off to a hairy start with one passport having been left in Edinburgh (by one of the few undergraduates on the tour), another being put away in a rucksack destined for the aircraft's hold (fortunately this was retrieved just in time to allow Mark to travel with us!) and then the inevitable lost suitcase at Fiumicino.

Our abode for the first few days was a Franciscan convent within a stone's throw (although we wouldn't have dared!) of the Vatican, complete with television room and roof garden. The nuns were mostly without habit, of American origin and genuinely very nice and helpful people – not at all put out by our 'beautiful singing' (even if this comment was referring to an impromptu Scots folksong or two in the wee hours of the morning from the aforementioned roof garden).

Our first engagement had been a mass to be celebrated by the Pope. Unfortunately, he is apparently not a fan of ancient polyphony (a circumstance confirmed by a sighting of him enjoying a dance performance on a huge video screen erected near St Peter's), so we sang at a mass in S. Clemente instead. Another slight hiccup was the fact that the Rome marathon was in progress so we had to take a rather roundabout way of getting there. It was worth the effort though: not only is the church well worth seeing (there is an ancient temple in the crypt as well as the tomb of St Cyril), it was very interesting singing within a proper liturgical context, even if we were the only music and the priest's accent was so thick that it was a strain to understand anything extra-liturgical.

Next day we visited Palestrina's house, which has been converted into a centre for the study of his music, complete with microfilm of all published sources, an exhibition of his

life story and a not-very-well-stocked library, which will be happy to receive any duplicate copies of textbooks anyone may have. The Palestrina Society has published works by Foggia and Giovanelli, as well as various compositions of the man himself. After our tour and the Society's presentation to Noel for his on-going Prentinian activities, there was the now-unavoidable walk up the steep hill to view the plain below (and yet another baroque palazzo built on Roman foundations), we split up and headed for the various cafes which, when promenade time struck suddenly became livelier than a Saturday morning market, then made our way to the Duomo for the concert. If the audience was primarily members of the congregation locked in after mass, they certainly seemed to enjoy hearing our repertoire, which ranged from standard Italian Renaissance motets through some early Scottish pieces (mercifully not by Carver!) to three psalms for three choirs by Palestrina which were receiving their Italian premieres in Noel's new edition [typeset by BC]. Although there was not much space for real separation of the individual choirs, the pieces worked extremely well. Particularly impressive was *Beati omnes*, which had two 'solo' choirs and a large tutti chorus, where the solo voices cut through the textures beautifully.

The next stop was Assisi. We endured the No. 64 Bus ride to Termini Railway Station, then amazed ourselves by finding almost enough room in one carriage for the entire choir. It wasn't long until we left the urbanity of Rome behind and enjoy mountainous countryside, the lower slopes playing host to vineyards and assorted orchards, the upper reaches still dotted with snow. We trekked the short way to our Franciscan home for the two days we'd be there. We got off to a tremendous start with a cheap and very healthy lunch and then we had some time for sightseeing before our next concert. The upper basilica with its renowned frescoes is a truly amazing construction, with a very noticeable change of acoustic quality which seemed related to the pillars that support the massive roof. As well as our Renaissance offerings, the ladies of the choir sang Bliss's *Prayer of St Francis of Assisi*, which sounded absolutely stunning. The concert had been organised by the local tourist office and was reasonably well attended. The thing about concerts in Italy – at least in our experience – is that there is no notion of sitting for the duration. People get up and walk around, take photographs of the marvellous carved choirstalls, even leave, though there is no suggestion that this has anything to do with the quality of the performances. Indeed, at a later rehearsal in Rome, we were treated to a young woman entering during Victoria's *Versa est in luctum*. She strolled to an appropriate praying mat, let her small dog off its leash, said the requisite

number of appropriate words, then rounded up the mut and marched back out of the church as if all these strange people in red gowns singing their hearts out were invisible. One of the tenors took ill suddenly after the concert (he'd been complaining about being cold earlier), so another tenor, who is unfortunate enough to be 'doctor about wherever is necessary at times like this' accompanied him back to the hotel, while the others went off for one of the three most amazing pizzas that week. I ran down the hill later with a pizza for Dr Alastair, having failed to find a taxi in the whole of Assisi, to find my roommates in the opposite state to which I had expected: Alastair was sound asleep while Mario had recovered somewhat and had little difficulty polishing off most of the pizza - apart from the anchovies.

The next day was primarily sightseeing again: yet more churches, another trip to the church built into the Temple of Minerva (which really is stunning!) The highlight for me, the Roman forum; highlight, that is, apart from the ensuing meal when we had the most mouthwateringly scrumptious lunch ever! We had to be back at 4 pm, when we were picked up by a minibus for the journey to Città di Castello. This time hosted by a choir, we gave our concert (after a rather foolhardy trip to a pub beforehand that had some interesting - if not fatal - side-effects) and were then fed and entertained with *Yesterday*, various Neapolitan songs and other clever arrangements of popular music (all sung with remarkable enthusiasm, clarity and from memory), which we repaid with Scots folk songs, arranged by one of the Edinburgh faculty members, and some fiddle music and kilted dancing. (One of the 'Italians' - she turned out to be East German - seemed more interested in the kilt than anything else that night.) This concert certainly attracted our most excitable fan - he roared and cheered at the end of each piece (particularly the three Scottish pieces) and even conducted the applause: keeping our attention on Noel that evening was quite tricky.

An early start was needed next morning to get the only decent rail connection back to Rome, where we had a concert to give in S. Salvatore in Lauro. More modest, perhaps, than some of the places we'd sung in, it is still a magnificent building and one which lent itself particularly well to the three-choir Palestrina. Noel was rather anxious about the whole thing, because he expected his musicological colleagues to be there in large numbers. In the event, although some did turn up, a large part of the audience was prevented from attending by a one-day bus & underground strike - apparently something you get used to in Italy. The standard of the concert was much higher from a singer's point of view as Noel now had the confidence in our abilities to stop conducting in the sense of drawing individual entries of line and instead concentrating on overall musical shapes, subtle links and nuances here and there. For me, it was a particularly enjoyable evening.


It was followed (as day is by night, you'll by now be saying to yourself) by a trip to the local pizzeria - Aubergine and

pea was the selected option this time: thoroughly excellent it was, too!

The rest of the time was spent ticking off even more of the historic sites of this astonishingly varied city and occasionally bursting into song (Durufle's *Ubi caritas* in the Pantheon and Pearsall's *Lay a Garland* - almost everywhere! - stick in my mind). We also fitted in visits to two branches of Ricordi Mediastore (a sort of Italian Virgin Megastore), though there selection of almost everything was bigger than anything I've seen in the UK. I picked up some material from little-known Italian companies, which CB has reviewed earlier in this issue, but was thwarted in my effort to pick up anything else when we were virtually thrown out of the first store due to the lunch hour and the other store's dwindling stock.

All in all, it was an interesting and rewarding week. I'm not a typical tourist: I go places because I have specific things I want to do. I didn't get up extra early to queue to see the Sistine Chapel roof, I wasn't all that disappointed that I didn't have the necessary paperwork (or kudos) to get into the Vatican Library (where I'd love to look at the Rossi manuscripts and try to find some reference to Charpentier!) and I am quite sure there are hundreds of things one ought to do in Rome that never even crossed my mind. If I had done, though, I might have missed zucchini-flower pizza, or spotting my first live lizard, or making some wonderful new friends.

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J. Pachelbel – Mag ich Unglück nicht widerstahn


[Treble]  Mag ich Un -
so weiss ich

[Alto] 

[Tenor] 

[Bass] 

7
-glück nicht wi - der - stahn, muss Un - gnad
doch, es ist__ mein Kunst, Gotts Huld und



14
han, der Welt für mein recht
Gunst, die muss man mir er -



21
Glau - - - ben. Gott ist
-lau - - - ben.



28

— nicht weit, ein klei - - - - - ne

34

Zeit er sich ver - - - birgt, bis er er -

39

-würgt, die mich seins Worts be - - -

45

-rau - - - - - ben.

Pachelbel's organ Chorale Preludes, with their consistent part-writing and slightly antiquated style, lend themselves well to performance by viol consorts. This would also work with recorders (if a great bass is available) and for cornett and three sackbuts. Solo voice with three viols or sackbuts or with two sackbuts and a curtal would be effective. Players may feel free to ornament their line beyond the markings in the organ original and might consider adding a continuo instrument.

RECORD REVIEWS

CHANT

Historia Sancti Eadmundi: de la liturgie dramatique au drame liturgique La Reverdie, Roberto Spremulli 62' 00"
Arcana A43

I don't know what to make of this. The six female singers are delightfully fresh, and musically this is very enjoyable. But the learned commentary does not explain the music, apart from implying that this is no attempt to recreate a performance of any particular period, which is presumably why there is such an instrumental contribution for texts that are monastic or at least clerical. There could well be an enterprising music-theatre show lying behind this; but as a CD the totality is less rather than more than the sum of its parts, some of which are extremely good. It is shaming that an Italian group is the first to make a CD honouring one of our East Anglian saints. CB

Was Ramsey Abbey, famous for its 10th-century organ, really so little (notes p.40)? It certainly looms large in the medieval history of our region, and has even (with a change of function) survived to the present; my wife went to school there.

Mass of the Annunciation Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, James O'Donnell organ, Mary Berry dir. 53' 15"
Herald HAVPCD 189

This is not a liturgical reconstruction but an actual celebration of High Mass. The setting is England, just pre-Vatican II, with a fine small choir singing chant in the best current manner. The ordinary is accompanied (Mary Berry is more broad-minded than the purists). James O'Donnell also plays Redford and Frescobaldi and improvises delightfully without the usual failing of giving the impression that he is looking for the lost chord. We used to be worried about services being recorded even for a single broadcast. Do we now not fear that an automatically-repeatable act of worship might perhaps be sacrilegious? I'm sure that Mary Berry has pondered the matter deeply, and it may be more worrying to protestants than catholics. There is an appealing variety of chant here, excellently sung and all the better for being in context, but users should be warned that, being a service, clerical speech and action may be a distraction. It is instructive for those who have no concept of what happens at a Roman mass, even if to follow it, it is necessary to read in two different places in the small-print booklet at once. CB
A review of The Martyrdom of Saint Thomas by the same performers will be included in *EMR* 31

Paschale Mysterium: Gregorian Chant for Easter Aurora Surgit (Women's Voices), Alessio Randon soloist & director 73' 29"
Naxos 8.553697 £

No problems here, just an enterprising and generous anthology of chant for Holy Week

and Easter beautifully sung by a female choir with a male cantor (presumably a situation that arose in many female religious establishments). I was initially less struck by the sound of Alessio Randon's voice; it is certainly not beautiful, but after a while I recognised a character that suited the music. The notes, despite considerable detail, do not make clear when describing the origin of individual chants whether they are part of the current corpus or not; in view of the considerable differences from my 1957 *Officium hebdomadae Sanctae*, I suspect that a lot of research lies behind this selection. The church recording provides a suitable resonance for this appealing disc. CB

MEDIEVAL

Fleurs de vertus: chansons subtiles à la fin du XIV^e siècle Ferrara Ensemble, Crawford Young Arcana B 40
Alanus, P. de Caserta, Reynau, Robert, Solage, Suzoy & anon.

Marvellous music, good singers (and most performances are voice only, despite there being more players than singers listed) who can get their voices round this complex music with apparent ease. But I was bored. There is none of the excitement that I would get from the same music sung by Gothic Voices or Mala Punica (even if the latter group might irritate more). For another view, from a reviewer with whom I usually agree, see the May *Gramophone*. CB

Missa Cantilena: Liturgical Parody in Italy, 1380-1410 Mala Punica, Pedro Memelsdorff Erato 0630-17069-2 60' 24"
Matteo da Perugia, Zaccara da Teremo & anon

This is an absolutely amazing disc, but I'm not sure that I believe it. I can't imagine any circumstances in which an ensemble like this would perform sacred music in so secular a way with high sopranos and instruments. Perhaps a Pope or Antipope preferred the best secular music to be adapted to sacred words for his private delectation. I won't bore you with the list of a dozen general questions on performance practice I jotted down while listening, since I still recommend buying this CD. It opened my ears to late 14th-century Italian music in as revolutionary a way as did the singing of Esther Lamandier of a slightly earlier repertoire a decade or two ago. I tried to make the group's name mean wicked punishments, but Latin grammar got in the way. Yet Carthaginian Apples (pomegranates) have infernal connotations in the Persephone myth; listen with delight but fear of the unknown! CB

En attendant: L'Art de la citation dans l'Italie des Visconti, 1380-1410: MS: Mod, Est. α. M. 5,24 Mala Punica 53' 05"
Arcana A 23

One piece each by Philipoctus de Caserta, Conradus de Pistoia, Anthonello de Caserta,

Bartholomeus de Bononia, Anthonello de Caserta, Johannes de Janua, Johannes Ciconia & Conradus de Pistoria

I have been copying the details of this disc from the master-file of one issue of *EMR* to another for months, hoping that it would emerge from whatever nook or cranny conceals it. Sadly, it is still missing. My apologies to Arcana and Mala Punica; I'm sure that it is worth hearing. CB

Musik der Engel: italienische Musik des Trecento für Alta Capella und Perkussion Les Haulz et les Bas 61' 55"
Christophorus CHR 77194
Music by Bartolino da Padova, Ciconia, Landini, Pierre des Moulins, A. Zachara da Teramo & anon dances

Who would have thought, even five years ago, that we would so soon be able to hear a group of shawms playing sophisticated music by Ciconia and make it sound as musical as Gothic Voices, with marvellous intonation and, in a different way, full respect for the effect of the melodic lines? This disc has its fair share of the BL add. 29987 dances sounding as if a crusader had press-ganged a few Turkish players on his way home (and most impressive they are), but before that there is exciting and fully-convincing playing of complex polyphony on an ensemble I would have expected to sound utterly inappropriate. We are warned on discs of clavichord music not to turn up the volume; the reverse is necessary here: an alta capella must sound loud, even if you can only take a few pieces at a time. My recommendation of the month. CB

15th CENTURY

Il Codice di Staffarda secolo XV Daltrocanto, Dario Tabbia 53' 33"
Opus 111 OPS 30-162
Brumel *Missa A l'ombre d'ung buissonnet*
Engarandus Juvenis *Missa pro defunctis*

This is part of Opus 111's *Treasures of Piedmont* series and includes two masses from a MS of the late 15th century now in Turin that came from the Abbey of Santa Maria in Staffarda, a small town on the Po, SW of Turin (near Saluzzo, whose Marquis features in a popular song of the time). The Requiem is notable for pushing back by a few years the first polyphonic setting of the *Dies irae*, but is made to sound dull by the slow tempi adopted. The Brumel is better music and receives a more lively, though still old-fashioned, performance. CB

16th CENTURY

Carver Mass: Dum sanctum mysterium, Magnificat, O Bone Jesu The Sixteen, Harry Christophers 68' 07"
Collins 14782

I thoroughly enjoyed this excuse to revisit Musica Scotica's *Complete Works of Robert*

Carver. The ten-voice mass is a magnificent achievement and sounds glorious. Harry Christophers evidently has a great feeling for Carver's magnificent music, but I would find the performances stronger if his heart was not quite so near his sleeve. It seems a bit too relaxed to me. Taverner's *O bone Jesu* lasts 11' 08" and doesn't seem at all rushed; the augmented Sixteen (it needs 19 voices) take 12' 41". The Taverner recording slightly overdoes the highlighting of interesting bits of movement in the texture, but much detail in the new disc is submerged. I was puzzled why only the top voices in the Mass were doubled, since that overshadowed the voices immediately below them. Nevertheless, Carver is of such a stature that he deserves a choice of recordings, and some will prefer the more romantic approach. CB

The excellent notes are by Isobel Preece, who died suddenly from a stroke on 23 January. She was a formidable scholar, whose thesis was on the Carver Choirbook. Her death at the age of 41 is a great loss to Scottish medieval and renaissance scholarship.

Tallis The Complete Works vol. 1 Chapelle du Roi, Alistair Dixon 71' 52"
Signum Records, SIG001

Alleluia Ora pro nobis, Ave Dei patris filia, Ave rosa sine spinis, Euge celi porta, Mass & motet Salve interemerata (+ chant Kyrie Deus creator)

An ambitious undertaking. The Tallis Scholars began their career with a massive series of his music, but have eschewed systematic recordings. Chapelle du Roi issued the first of their CD series to coincide with the end of their concert survey of the music, anticipating the potential rival for our pockets of the complete Byrd sacred music beginning soon from ASV. Whether all Tallis's music can be coherently arranged into a chronological sequence remains to be seen, but this disc is devoted to his earliest works, some perhaps less polished than other music of the 1520s and 1530s (Nick Sandon's thorough notes wisely do not overpraise) but still certainly worth knowing. An interesting feature of the performances is the soprano sound: not boys, but women who adopt the characteristic fragility of the boy treble which (unlike the sopranos of the Carver CD reviewed this month) does not conceal the parts beneath them. At times the listener can feel the strain of the long and exposed lines and some may find the cadences a bit abrupt (though I am perfectly happy with them). A good start to what will surely be an invaluable series. CB

Annual subscriptions (£36.00) for three CDs together with reductions for Chapelle du Roi's concerts and information are available from Lindum Records.

All Souls' Vespers: Requiem Music from Córdoba Cathedral c. 1570 Orchestra of the Renaissance, Richard Cheetham 57' 52"
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45203 2 7
Music by Cabezon, Cebellos, Gombert, Guerrero, Josquin, Morales, Pérez, Vasquez

The darkly meditative tone of this recording reeks magnificently of Spanish religiosity, captured with great clarity by the Veritas engineers. An excellent line-up of male vocalists blends with the brass and reed instruments of the 'Orchestra' to produce

an impressively dolorous sound. These instrumental *ministriles*, whose central role in Spanish church music is only now gradually emerging, provide interludes and also a processional framework in the form of Gombert's appropriately garrulous *Je prens congie*. Music familiar and unfamiliar by Spanish composers is effectively juxtaposed with Flemish material and relevant plainchant in a very convincing portrayal of a service, which Richard Cheetham and Kate van Orden admirably clarify in an informative booklet note. With its unrelentingly funereal atmosphere, this is not for the naturally melancholy of disposition! D. James Ross

Birds and Harmony from Janequin to Monteverdi Ensemble Terpsichore 61' 40"

Koch Discover International D1CD 920388
Music by Agricola, Bateson, Byrd, Cornysh, Dowland, Eccard, Gervaise, Henestrosa, Holborne, Janequin, Marenzio, Merula, Monteverdi, Morley, Schein, Simpson, *Wert & anon

This is a charming programme of music based on birds and birdsong by mostly 16th-century composers of different nationalities. There is a mixture of recorder consort, reed consort and voices with these instruments. On the whole, the playing is spirited but not really first class. Suspect tuning is the main problem, mainly in the upper recorders, which are often flat, and the reeds could sometimes do with more puff. There are several lapses in togetherness and some especially ragged cadences. A Byrd Pavan and Galliard mixes recorders and reeds to impressive sonorous effect but the ambience is unclear. What really brings this release down is the singing. The soprano is wavery and also needs more support to counteract flat high notes. The tenor sounds untrained (not necessarily a bad thing), is nasal of tone and lacks finesse. Generally this disc is not unpleasant but the vocal efforts leave a lot to be desired. Angela Bell

*Wert's name is given consistently as West: no wonder the booklet compiler could not find his birth and death dates.

Baldassar Castiglione: Il Libro del Cortegiano Douce Mémoire, Denis Raisin Dadre dir

Auvidis Astrée E 8604 67' 31"
Music by d'Ana, Bossinensis, Brochus, Dalza, Fogliano, Isaac, Martini, Nicolo Pifaro, Rosinus Mantuanus, Tromboncino & anon.

I heard this a couple of times before reading the notes, so although it recalled fond memories of a few days in Urbino in 1994, I did not place the music quite as precisely into its location as I should have done. There is no specific sense of place in the music, but it helps to have the setting and function in mind. The performances are impressive, with a fine control of embellishment from the players. The singing is plainer, probably correctly, since at least some of this music must have been for a noble lady-singer with professional players. But I heard this just after Les Haulz et les Bas and the Monteverdi *Ghirlande sacre* discs, and the wind playing of one and the soprano singing of the other overshadowed it. It is certainly worth hearing, and it is refreshing to find an anthology that avoids the well-known *frottole*. CB

El Misteri d'Elx Ensemble Gilles Binchois, Dominique Vellard 84' 57" 2 CDs
Virgin Veritas 4243 5 45239 2 2

Two CDs in a single box with no space for the excellent 42-page booklet, which I have been unable to squeeze back into the jewel-case. The running-time is barely beyond what could be fitted onto one CD; I would happily have sacrificed 5 minutes of monody or the Cabezon organ interludes to get the music onto one disc and halve the price. The Elche plays still take place, but this is a studio performance by French musicians. It is no doubt a lot more polished than what is sung by local amateurs, though perhaps some of the spirit has gone. Also missing is the visual element. Three machines are described; could pictures not have been included? This fine recording enables those of us who have never visited the church of Santa Maria on 14 and 15 August to hear the music, and I suspect that those who have attended will welcome a chance to hear it from performers more attuned to earlier styles. The embellishments of the first polyphonic piece are fascinating: a pity the rest is sung more plainly. An intriguing though not entirely satisfying set. CB

Salve festa dies: Musik der Reformationszeit Bläser Collegium Leipzig 53' 27"

Raum Klang RK 9501
Music by Buchner, Finck, Adam von Fulda, Gerle, Hofhaimer, Josquin, Luther, Othmeyer, Stölzer, Walther & anon.

The ensemble comprises 2 cornetts, three trombones and organ, supplemented here by tenor, shawm and percussion. The repertoire is centered round a MS compiled in Leipzig around 1500 by Nikolaus (misleadingly named Leopold in the English and French notes) Apel. It gives a feel of the musical world known to musically-sensitive students of the period, such as Martin Luther. The general effect is perhaps a little drab, not helped by the singer, whose voice needs a harder edge to stand out against the instruments. But the playing is impressive and most of the repertoire is unrecorded. Congratulations to Raum Klang for using an alternative to the fragile plastic jewel-cases – at the time of writing, four of the boxes of CDs reviewed above have broken. CB

17th CENTURY

Cardosa Missa Miserere mihi Domine; Magnificat II toni Ensemble Vocale Européen, Philippe Herreweghe 52' 10"
harmonia mundi HMC 901543

These are very competent performances of some rather lovely music by a capable ensemble and an experienced director. Having said this, I have several reservations which emerged when I compared the disc to recordings of similar repertoire by English ensembles. There is some loss of clarity in rapid passages, there are a couple of audible edits and rather a lot of heavy breathing, and the booklet note is lamentably cursory and occasionally misleading – can Lobo, Cardoso and Magalhães really

still be described as 'neglected'? And with a duration of only 52' 10", the recording cries out for some sort of plainchant context for the rich polyphony. This may sound like a grudging reception for a perfectly enjoyable disc, but contrary to the suggestion in the notes, this is an increasingly crowded corner of the market and the Ensemble are up against some stiff opposition. *D. James Ross*

Charpentier *Te Deum* (H147); *Mass* (H1); *Canticum Zachariae* (H135) (*Sacred Works Vol. 3*) Le Concert Spirituel, Harvé Niquet
Naxos 8.553175 57' 06" £

Yet another French disc from Naxos crediting its sponsors, in this case a pharmaceutical company and a Paris City Council – the English equivalent might be ICI and the city of Newcastle giving us a disc or two of Avison. Be warned (or, better, relieved): the recital does not open with the Eurovision *Te Deum* but an altogether more modest setting of the text for soli, choir and doubling strings, who are allocated just one short ritornello on their own. The initial intonation (if that's the word) is one of the wackiest I've ever heard. Play it to your friends and ask them to predict what happens next – Arabic chant would be a reasonable guess. A cultured performance of characteristic Charpentier is actually the answer, though not for the first time the good intentions and thorough preparation of this ensemble are undermined by their disregarding or misunderstanding of the composer's rubrics. On the one hand, the *Mass* is given a quasi-liturgical character by the insertion of three appropriate motets, yet on the other his requests for organ interludes and, sometimes, for solo singers are ignored. This is disappointing when so much, not least the music, is very fine indeed. Naxos have improved the general presentation of their early music discs: this booklet includes two different essays (in English/French and German) and the complete Latin texts with a parallel English translation. In the end the genius of Charpentier and the great affection these interpreters feel for the music triumph over minor irritations.

David Hansell

Dowland *Lute Lessons* 1 Nigel North
Arcana A 36 71' 45"

The proximity of this release to that of Lindberg on BIS and O'Dette's complete works on Harmonia Mundi may lead many readers to wonder if there is room for another. North's version is so radically different that the answer has to be a resounding 'yes'. He uses a 17th century technique and a 10-course lute*, as Dowland's Jacobean colleagues would have done, which contrasts markedly with the predominantly 16th-century technique and instruments of other versions. This alone would make it welcome, as this is a legitimate and much neglected practice for much of the 'Golden Age' repertory. North's readings are more spacious and rhetorical than most; there are no dizzy diversions, as the versions chosen are not the most virtuosic ones surviving, but there is much original ornamentation

and a subtlety of timbre which more than compensate. Dowland was the most celebrated exponent of melancholia, and this performance has a poignancy which captures this magnificently. This project is a courageous venture by one of our finest baroque lutenists into repertory with which he is not normally associated. Initially I was startled, then spellbound, and I strongly recommend it to anyone with even a passing interest in the lute. *Lynda Sayce*

*made by one of our subscribers, Ray Nurse.

Lawes Royall Consort Suites, II The Greate Consort, Monica Huggett 68' 14"
ASV CD GAU 147
Suites 2, 4, 5, 8 & 10

Writing of Volume 1 (*EMR* 17) Robert Oliver found the performances by The Greate Consort less than totally convincing, his preference being the Purcell Quartet's Chandos recording. My response is rather different, for whilst to have two fine complete versions of these superb suites is indeed a luxury, were I forced to make a choice it would be for the ASV discs (Vol. 1 is on CD GAU 146). The playing captures the wayward and capricious temperaments of Lawes with marginally more character, the noble eloquence of the opening Pavans (at slower tempos than the Purcell Quartet) being just that degree more expressive, whilst the dance movements have an irresistible verve not quite matched by the rivals. Ultimately neither recording will disappoint and true Lawes enthusiasts will (or should!) want both. *Brian Robins*

Monteverdi *Ghirlande* Claudio, *ghirlande profane* Accademia Claudio* Monteverdi, Hans Ludwig Hirsch 57' 08"
Arts Music 47143-2 ££
Motets *Ego flos campi, Exulta filia, Fuge anima mea, Jubilete, O beatae viae*: songs *Et è pur dunque vero, Quel sguardo sdegnosetto, Si dolce è il tormento*: duets *Non è di gentil core, O come sei gentile, Romanesca*: trio *Su pastorelli vezzosi*

Marvellous singing, marvellous music, but I feared from the first track, *Exulta filia Sion*, that the organist would annoy too much by his attention-seeking performance. Ornamentation is primarily the province of the singer, who should certainly not have to hang around for the accompanist to show off. The only prominent vocal ornament, a vulgar scale up the octave on the last note, showed her catching her accompanist's vice. But matters improve and this really is an enjoyable anthology, though I was less on-edge for continuo solecisms during the latter, secular part of the programme. *CB*

Moulinié *Airs avec la tablature de luth, Premier livre* (1624) Suzie LeBlanc, Stephen Stubbs 74' 21"
Musica Viva MVCD 1095

Familiar artists, but, for most of us, unfamiliar repertory. In theory, the syllabic underlay, homophonic textures, binary forms and strophic repetitions of the *air du cour* could make for dull listening: that they do not is an enormous tribute to the commitment of these artists and the beautiful

sound they make (even if the acoustic may not be genuinely 'authentic' for the music). Moulinié must also be allowed some of the credit, of course! There are several pieces here which Dowland would have been delighted with, such as tracks 12 and 25-27, and these may provide the best access points for those approaching the *air* from the lute song. I would urge all those who love that repertoire to seek out this disc, and, a few tracks at a time, wallow in its loveliness. It will take something pretty spectacular to prevent this from being my disc of the year. *David Hansell*

Provenzale *Dialogo per la Passione* Cappella della Pietà de' Turchini, Antonio Florio
Opus 111 OPS 30-194 69' 47"
Also includes Neapolitan music for Holy Week by Giovanni Carlo Cailò, Giovanni Salvatore & anon.

This is Volume 2 of Opus 111's *Treasures of Naples*. As well as Provenzale's Passion setting (which, apparently, was innovative for Naples in its use of solo aria and extended recitative), there are vocal and instrumental works by the leading composer of the preceding generation, Giovanni Salvatore, an anonymous setting of the *Stabat mater* first six lines and a lovely sonata for three violins and continuo by the obscure Giovanni Carlo Cailò. The Passion dialogue (in Italian) has parts for St John, Mary, a disciple and two angels. Two *sinfonie* (the opening one by Giuseppe Arianello, the other, preceding the final *coro*, by Antonio Farina) have been added. The performances are, without exception, excellent. The singing is passionate (even in the Salvatore psalms), the string playing compelling (there are some delightful ornaments flying around) and the overall pacing of the various works seems perfect. Highly recommended. *BC*

Love and Death in Venice: Baroque Arias and Duets Suzie LeBlanc, Derek Lee Ragin, Teatro Lirico, Stephen Stubbs 71' 55"
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45263 2 9
Music by Cavalli, Hasse, Handel, Legrenzi, Manelli, Merula, Monteverdi, Sartorio, Vivaldi

Unexpectedly, this magnificent recording begins, not with a vocal duet, but with a short, ravishingly-played trio sonata by Merula which gives a taste of the passion and beauty to follow. Throughout, the instrumental playing is superb, strongly led from the theorbo by Stephen Stubbs, whose entrancing sense of dramatic momentum is faultless. The limelight is shared by the violins and the gorgeously-singing bass viols, with the harpsichord and lutes judiciously used in inventive combinations. The two singers are well matched in tone and agility, as well as in their sense of drama. The duets alternate thrilling runs with calm, but never becalmed, outpourings of beautiful sound. One for the 'best ever' list is Sartorio's *Orfeo, tu dormi?*, which begins with a magical cushion of sound from lirone and theorbo, with Suzie LeBlanc's sweetest and most poignant silvery sound cutting through Orfeo's sleep like an angel in a wonderful dream. This leads into a *ciacona* of great intensity and wistful warmth, somewhere between Monteverdi and Strozzi. The

combination of works separated by as much as a century, and not even in chronological order, disturbs me slightly; it is quite a shock to return from Vivaldi (1713) to Legrenzi (1656) and the closing duet of *Poppea* (1642/3). I would have preferred long silences between these succulent slices of the richest chocolate cake. *Selene Mills*

LATE BAROQUE

Bach *St John Passion*, 1724 (including 1725 appendix) John Mark Ainsley *Ev*, Stephen Richardson *Jesus*, Catherine Bott, Michael Chance, Paul Agnew, Stephen Varcoe *SATB*, The Choir of King's College Cambridge, Brandenburg Consort (Roy Goodman), Stephen Cleobury 138' 12" 2 discs
Columns Classics 290241

This is generally an expressive and effective performance, with the choir responsive throughout, despite a risk of too much regularity in accentuation. John Mark Ainsley is (once again) a wonderful Evangelist, having just the right degree of detachment of attitude, and if I find both Stephen Richardson's *Christus* and Stephen Varcoe's *Pilatus* too emotional in a modern operatic way (rather than a baroque one) there are compensations from Varcoe as bass soloist and from an outstanding woodwind and continuo team. There are further good points, though also odd clumsy joins and moments here and there. But at least one is aware throughout that it is a real performance that has been recorded, valid as a considered interpretation. Particularly special is the fine set of movements from the 1725 variant version. When the choir of today's St Thomas's visited the UK in the Autumn of 1995 they sang this version in various centres, and those with the opportunity to record the BBC broadcast have come to know the music well. Some of it is better still here. My only regret is that it's all added at the end of disc 2, which makes the continuous playing of the 1725 version a more fussy operation than it need have been. *Stephen Daw*

Bach *Inventionen & Sinfonien* (BWV 772-801) Blandine Verlet *hpscd* (1624 Hans Ruckers II from Colmar) 67' 37"
Auvidis Astrée E 8603
Includes ornamented versions of BWV 772, 790, 791, 793, 795, 797, 799

Timely arrival, just as I am delving for my research into the implications of these works for their role in the musical upbringing of a keyboardist. Bach intended them not only as practice pieces but as samples of 'good inventions' necessary for general keyboard skills. Never have they been played with such panache; Verlet is a veritable Edith Piaf on the harpsichord, giving committed and colourful expression to each movement. There is some bending of rhythm, in the best possible taste (to those who are French). Maybe the deliberate inclusion of the audible prefatory gasps – at least she does not hum along like Glen Gould – contribute to the impression of a very individual interpretation, but I criticise the consecutive sampling

of movements chromatically (moving from B-flat major to B-minor affects my innards) and the characterful *ravallée* Ruckers (which requires two pages of notes on the instrument). *Kah-Ming Ng*

Bach *Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin* Elizabeth Wallfisch 132' 56" 2 discs
Hyperion CDD22009 ££

This set is a challenge to any reviewer. As a violinist, I have long had as my dream recording Sigiswald Kuijken's 1983 set for *deutsche harmonia mundi*. Though this remains my favourite, there were many aspects of Elizabeth Wallfisch's playing that provoked a strong positive reaction. She is very selective about the most important line in the music and sometimes merely hints at the accompaniment, which can be extremely effective. Her fugal playing is astonishing, not only in terms of the number of notes she can play seemingly without any effort at all, but also in her expansive overview of the movements' structure, and she has come as close as anyone to making the final movement of the G minor sonata sound as if it actually is phrased in groups of six! One peculiar quirk of the recording: if a low G sharp is struck loudly, the recording equipment also picks up the ensuing vibration of the open G string, which can be a little disconcerting. If your acid test for these pieces is the *chaconne*, you won't be disappointed – you may even be surprised. *BC*

Bach *Solo & Double Violin Concertos* Andrew Manze *vlr/dir*, Rachel Podger *vlr*, The Academy of Ancient Music 56' 41"
harmonia mundi HMU 907155
BWV 1041, 1042, 1043, 1060

Academy of Ancient Music is now working with Paul Goodwin and Andrew Manze as well as Christopher Hogwood as directors; this is the first of a series with Andrew Manze for *harmonia mundi*. It is something of a ground-breaking issue, since all four concertos are conspicuously played with challenging new imaginative touches. The two soloists are utterly distinct in tone as well as quite often in attack in the two double concertos, but best of all is the new approach to the music itself through a consideration of its textual origins. The manuscript remains of the E major solo Concerto come from the years of Bach's old age, and from a version that had been significantly revised by the composer around 1738 when he arranged it for concertante harpsichord. The source for the second 'double' concerto is a similar piece arranged a year or two earlier for two solo harpsichordists. Both cry out for new textual reconstructions. Well, they did, until now. The results are musical, and so is the playing. I am a little worried concerning whether or not Andrew Manze is aware of some post-NBA parts which turned up in Krakow, but at least these performances confronts us with some new aspects of Bach's violin concertos. Hundreds have failed even to consider these matters. How pleasant it is to hear good music coming from informed performers! *Stephen Daw*

Bach 4 *Orchestral Suites* New London Consort, Philip Pickett 116' 35" 2 discs
L'Oiseau-Lyre 452 000-2
Also includes *Concerto* from BWV 152, *Sonata* from BWV 31 & *Marcia* from BWV 207

These strike me as extremely good. Each Suite has a strong character of its own, each dance seems to have been thought through to represent its own character uniquely – which is surely really what style is all about: the exact individuality of each part of each place in each work by each composer should always address our attention. The first disc (BWV 1066 & 1068) especially delightfully highlights Rachel Podger with oboes as against an almost embattled David Staff and brass/drum colleagues heard against Pavlo Beznosiuk's unsentimentalised *Aria*. The second disc contains a spirited, long-trilled Overture to Suite 2 (sibling Besnosiuks in affecting alternation) and easily the most satisfying performance I've yet come across of BWV 1069. All this is wonderful, rewarding listening, but there's better to come in the 'filler' on each disc, which features instrumental preludes and a march from various Cantatas. These are mostly played at the low pitch (a' = 392); all of the extra participants have been well selected, and the sheer zest of the whole enterprise is completely infectious. Solo strings are used throughout – a complete revelation. *Stephen Daw*

Bach *Organ Works* vol. 5 Ton Koopman (G. Silbermann organ at Dom St. Marien, Freiberg). 124' 40" 2 CDs
Teldec *Das Alte Werk* 4509-98464-2
Clavier-Übung III, Canonic Variations

A double CD, and not cheap (just why double CDs cost twice as much as single CDs is beyond me), but buy it: it is one of the finest groups of Bach organ works, played on one of the finest organs in the world by one of the finest Bach interpreters. The Freiberg organ features in all discussions of the ideal Bach organ. Although only the second organ to be built by Gottfried Silbermann, its outstanding quality of sound and construction, in a superb acoustic, have encouraged its survival. Those saddled with perfect pitch will notice the very high a = 476 pitch. Unlike the North German organs so often used for Bach recordings in the '60s to '80s, the Silbermann sound seems entirely suited to the complex counterpoint of Bach. The mixtures shimmer their silvery tone, rather like bells, above the chorus, with none of the sharp tones of their northern ancestors (which incidentally, are entirely suited for the music that they were built for). Bach only published three volumes of organ music, and this double CD includes two of them. The organ volume of the *Clavier-Übung* (1739) is devoted to chorale versions of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* of the Mass, settings of Lutheran Catechism chorales and four duets, the whole framed by the massive *Preludium* and *Fuga* in E flat major. Ton Koopman's playing continues to impress; these pieces display his ability to portray grandeur and intensity as well as his characteristic enthusiasm. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Bach Sonatas & Suite for Oboe & Harpsichord Kurt Meier ob, Johann Sonnleitner hpscd 58' 41" £
Koch Discover International DICD 920483
Arrangements of BWV 527, 528, 997, 1032, 1038

This recording would not usually warrant inclusion here, since Sonnleitner's instrument has a very modern sound and his playing is somewhat pianistic, while all of the oboes are far from authentic tonally or in reed response. However, we include it because the playing is certainly expressive (very much after the slightly flexible-toned pattern of Holliger at his least Germanic) and the programme has been well put together indeed. This last is despite the absence of any genuine chamber music by Bach for oboe. If one has to make arrangements, then this is how I think it should be done. Incidentally, some of the music incorporated here is from Sebastian's pupils, with very little, if any contribution from the master himself. *Stephen Daw*

Boismortier Don Quichotte chez la Duchesse Stephan Van Dyck Don Quixotte, Richard Biren Sancho Panza, Meredith Hall Altisidore, Le Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet 60' 44" Naxos 8.553647 £

An imaginative collaboration between Naxos and the Regional Council of Lorraine brings us this spirited performance of Boismortier's witty *Comédie Ballet* to a libretto by Favart. I have not always admired Le Concert Spirituel in sacred repertoire, but here, ironically, they capture the capricious succession of mood changes in a production that has tremendous dramatic continuity as a major strength. The plot weaves in and out of the worlds of fantasy and reality (read the notes before listening), prompting Boismortier to create music which for colour and life stands in comparison with Rameau. As is often the case with the latter's dramatic works, the orchestra is given the starring role, and is rightly kept well to the fore in the aural perspective, even during the vocal numbers. There are a few gremlins in the booklet but at least we are given introductory notes (in three languages), a full libretto and a parallel English translation. Definitely worth a fiver! *David Hansell*

Carolan's Harp The Harp Consort, Andrew Lawrence-King 77' 51" BMG 05472 77375 2

Much of the music here would be difficult to place heard out of context. It is clearly Irish, but different from the image I have from current Irish folk-music (though Peter Holman tells me that there is some resemblance to The Chieftains). The range of expression and ensemble is far wider than I expected. We may perhaps doubt whether Carolan's own circle of colleagues extended to such skilful performers and whether he operated within the context of an ensemble. There is sometimes a tension between the simplicity of the material and the polished presentation. But this is likely to be as great a success as the *Luz y Norte* disc and makes most enjoyable listening. The Irish singer

Caitriona O'Leary is delightful and there are also songs from Nigel Rogers and Steve Player. The thorough notes (including full texts and translations) don't answer an obvious question: alas, the harpsichordist is not a descendent of the composer. *CB*
Although this is available in the rest of the world, release has been delayed in the UK. Copies are, however, available from Lindum Records.

Couperin Music for Harpsichord Vol. 1: 1^{re} Ordre, 1^{re} & 2^{me} Concerts Royaux Laurence Cummings 71' 18" Naxos 8.550961 £

My first reaction to such a well-played and recorded disc at budget price is 'more please'. The uncomplicated sound of the Taskin copy is beautifully captured, and there is good value in the generous notes – three authors in three languages; noteworthy are the English notes acknowledging E. Corp's recent advances in Couperin research. Cummings gives flesh to the often enigmatic titles and makes the *doubles* sound utterly spontaneous. This disc was recorded in 1994; at the rate of one *ordre* and a bit per disc, we may not all stay the course until we can hear the 27^{me} *Ordre*. I would have preferred Cummings to have sunk his musical teeth in another suite or two, and left the *Concerts Royaux* until the third book, to which they were originally appended. *Kah-Ming Ng*

Fasch Concertos, Orchestral Suite The English Concert, Trevor Pinnock 59' 25" Archiv 449 210-2
Concertos FWV L: c2, D1, D14, B1; Suite K: g2

Brian Clark's booklet notes tell an anecdote about how Fasch, as a student, successfully passed off one of his own orchestral suites as one of Telemann's, an entirely credible tale when you listen to this sparkling disc. But Fasch has his own good ideas, and the concertos demonstrate his adventurous writing for wind. The trumpet, suitably martial, has an expressive *largo*, beautifully played by Mark Bennett. The chalumeau, its haunting sound suggestive of the wild woods, has a whole concerto, its first, again beautifully played (by Colin Lawson), with the bassoon (Alberto Grazi) an eloquent baritone, the horns exhilaratingly hedonistic, but also with an expressive *largo*, and throughout the silken phrasing of Paul Goodwin's oboe obligatos. It is good-humoured music, with beautiful melodies and expressive harmonies, deftly played with brisk rhythms in the galant allegros and spacious phrasing in the Handelian slow movements; you enjoy it more with each hearing. *Robert Oliver*

Three of the works are edited by BC and published by King's Music; of the other two, the trumpet concerto is available from McNaughtan (ed Tarr), the chalumeau Concerto from Novello (ed. Richard Platt).

Handel Water Music; Telemann Wassermusik Il Fondamento, Paul Dombrecht 72' 40" Vanguard Classics Passacaille 99713 ££

There is something instantly engaging about every recording by Il Fondamento that I have ever heard. Here, the overture to the Handel was so casually under-dotted,

the opening violin solo entries of the ensuing fugue so crisp and precise, that my attention was grabbed and the thought 'But why has it never been done like this before?' went through my mind. That we are talking about one of the standards of orchestral repertoire makes this an even more amazing aspect of Paul Dombrecht's interpretation. That he manages to sustain such fresh insight for a complete disc even more so! Sometimes it's simply a case of a more relaxed tempo than normal, sometimes the oboes are a little more prominent, at others it's a different phrase structure. The Telemann undergoes similar scrutiny and emerges more nautical than ever: the movement names somehow take on more importance when you can hear the water dancing. A revelation. *BC*

Pergolesi Sinfonie Orchestra da Camera di Santa Cecilia, Alessio Vlad 56' 10" Arts Music 47247-2 ££

Six of the *sinfonie* here are theatrical preludes, two others are from the Eastman Library, while a *Piccola sinfonia* survives in a Roman manuscript. They vary in length from just over four and a half minutes to just over nine minutes. The recording was made over a decade ago, using modern instruments and a very resonant acoustic. The most successful movements are those with oboes and punctuating brass. *BC*

Telemann Ouverture 'La Bourse' TWV55: B11, Suites g3 & C4 Il Fondamento, Paul Dombrecht 72' 33" Vanguard Classics Passacaille 99710 ££

Not even the most dubious of Telemann sceptics could fail to enjoy this disc. Paul Dombrecht and his band (Flanders is lucky to have such cultural ambassadors!) transform what must look extremely commonplace music on the page into an extremely attractive hour's entertainment. The eponymous suite dates from the composer's time in Frankfurt, when he lived above the stock exchange. After a truly majestic French overture, there are five character pieces, some more readily understood than others. *Le repos interrompu* is fairly graphic; *L'Espérance de Mississippi* [sic] less so. The G minor suite is an orchestration of a Partita published in 1716. Anyone who shared my enthusiasm for Dombrecht's recording of oboe (*d'amore*) concerti last year will love this! *BC*

Telemann Tafelmusik II (Excerpts), Trumpet Concertos Ensemble Pian & Forte, Gabriele Cassone tpt 73' 26" Arts Musik 47320-2 ££
Includes Overture, Trio & Conclusion of *Tafelmusik II*, Tpt Concerto in D & Concerto for tpt, 2 ob, vlc & bc in D

This is, in fact, a showpiece for trumpeter, Gabriele Cassone: and well he deserves showpiecing! Single strings sound just a little thin in the opening of the *Tafelmusik* Overture (though this is more the result of close miking than any technical fault in the playing!), but the remainder of the disc is a pleasure. As well as the three pieces from

Telemann's epic publication, there are two concertos for solo trumpet, one with wind accompaniment (I cannot hear the cello referred to on the back cover), the other, probably the composer's most well-known piece, with two violins and continuo. The violinists use a little too much vibrato for my liking (indeed, their playing in the *Grave* is thrown into relief by the stylish cellist – even though they do allow themselves an open string or two.) With only minor reservations (the Naxos recording of the last concerto is to be preferred), this is highly recommended. BC

Vivaldi *Concerti* Peter Wispelwey vlc, Florilegium 59' 26"
Channel Classics CCs 10097
RV 413, 422 & 424 + isolated movements.

My first reaction to this disc (apart from the initial eager anticipation of Wispelwey's latest disc, of course) was 'What a strange notion!' To combine 'proper' cello concertos with transcriptions of movements from other works didn't seem particularly a Florilegium sort of thing to do. The notes were of little help – Walter van Hauwe's general introduction to Vivaldi (is it that difficult to discuss individual pieces?) doesn't start until page 7. I wondered why the players had selected movements from violin concertos as fillers rather than turning to that much more criminally neglected repertoire, the operas. Surely Wispelwey could sing some of the outstanding arias on his violoncello piccolo? (Or have I given away the surprise of a subsequent release?) Either way, what is never in doubt is the supreme ease and artistry shown by the Dutch cellist and his predominantly English colleagues: you will be hard-pressed to find better string ensemble, and also to rival the sensuousness of Track 9, a simple Corellian *Adagio* from a string concerto, played on two cellos (one of them *piccolo*), violone and organ. The pizzicato introduction to track 11 is another highlight. BC

Vivaldi *Concerto* Ensemble Pian & Forte Arts Music 47131-2 54' 56" ££
RV 94, 100, 106, 541, 542, 554,

This disc contains three concertos for violin and organ with strings (RV 554 also has obbligato cello), two for that Vivaldian favourite, flute with violin, bassoon and continuo, and a concerto for flute, violin and continuo. The 1991 recording is vibrant and the playing extremely stylish. The notes list no players (though the Telemann CD above, which was recorded two months earlier, features Alfredo Bernardini and Paolo Grazzi on oboe) and are little more than a general introduction to Vivaldi; but at bargain price that really is an insignificant quibble – such exciting and well-executed performances are worth twice as much! BC

CLASSICAL

Haydn *L'anima del filosofo, ossia Orfeo ed Euridice* Cecilia Bartoli *Euridice*, Uwe Heilmann *Orfeo*, Ildebrando D'Arcangelo *Creonte*, Academy of Ancient Music,

Christopher Hogwood 124' 26" 2 CDs
L'Oiseau-Lyre 452 668-2

The history of Haydn's unperformed London opera is certainly better known than its music, and this period-instrument recording will surely provoke a welcome reassessment. It has always been regarded as a problematical work, with uncertainty surrounding both the musical text and the libretto – a rationalist reworking of the Orpheus legend that provides a commentary on the story itself and on earlier operatic settings. Ultimately this post-modernist stance does result in a curious lack of dramatic involvement, for all the highly-charged emotion of the musical set-pieces. The central focus of this recording is Cecilia Bartoli, who after a somewhat melodramatic opening produces alluringly beautiful tone in the love music and the most touching pathos for Euridice's last moments. In the second half Bartoli reappears as the Sibyl, Orpheus' guide, brilliantly despatching one of the most challenging soprano arias of the century. The part of Orpheus is equally demanding: Uwe Heilmann certainly rises to the emotional intensity of his big lament and to the virtuosic pyrotechnics, but occasionally his voice lacks truly centered intonation. Ildebrando D'Arcangelo brings a sympathetic nobility to the part of Creon and there is fine work by the chorus, variously onlookers, furies or Bacchantes, who receive some of the most vividly dramatic music of Haydn's imagination. Simon McVeigh

Mozart *Requiem* (Süssmayr version), *Kyrie* K.341 Sibylla Rubens, Annette Markert, Ian Bostridge, Hanno Müller-Brachmann SATB, La Chapelle Royale, Collegium Vocale, Orchestre des Champs Elysé, Philippe Herreweghe 53' 57"
harmonia mundi HMC 901620

This account of the *Requiem* is highly impressive and promises to wear well. Herreweghe prefers the Süssmayr completion and makes a strong case for his choice. His forces – solo, choral and orchestral – are very good, and the resonant, natural-sounding recording allows both the distinctive tone-colours of the instrumentation and the various levels of vocal writing to emerge with minimal sign of this having been a live concert performance (Montreux, October 1996). One of the strengths of the reading is the balance between the intimate and the grandiose, the consolatory and the awe-inspiring. The noble *Kyrie* in D minor, though (pace the note) surely written well before the *Requiem*, makes a splendid bonus. Peter Branscombe

Mozart *Sonatas* K 283, 284, 309 Patrick Cohen *Walther fortepiano*
Glossa GCD 920504

The D major sonata K. 284 is remarkable for its unusual sequence of movements and its depth of expression. Patrick Cohen's performance on a Walter fortepiano is carefully planned and none the worse for being generally slower than, for instance,

Mitsuko Uchida's recordings on a modern piano. Variation XI shows him at his best, with the ornamental passages expressive rather than ostentatious. The recording company is Spanish and has included an essay by Héctor Ortega entitled *Mozart was Silenus*, which could be a good cure for insomnia if it did not say that Patrick Cohen 'alone can offer us a Mozart that is neither true nor real...' – one is obliged to disagree.

Margaret Cranmer

Vranický *Concertante Quartets* 1-3 & 4-6 Martinů Quartet 56' 42" & 64' 10"
Studio Matous MK 0038-2 131 & 0039-2 131

These recordings by a modern-instrument quartet fall under our remit on account of their being world premieres. Vranický (and his older brother, Pavel) were violinist/composers most active in Vienna around 1800. The first four quartets each consist of three movements, those on the first disc in the fast-slow-fast (the last one a *rondeau*) form and the fourth fast-fast-slow (the last a set of variations), and the remainder in the standard quartet form (fast-slow-minuet-fast). I have had the privilege of hearing the Martinů Quartet live (yes, even in Dundee). They are one of the most balanced group on the circuit, playing in what seems a common continental configuration with the cellist next to the second violinist and the violist opposite the first violinist. These quartets have challenging moments for all four players and it is the Martinů's cellist who shines most radiantly here. Anyone interested in music from Beethoven's Vienna should definitely invest in at least one of these discs. BC

19th CENTURY

Beethoven *Sinfonia 'Eroica' Nr. 3; Coriolan Overture* Le Concert des Nations, Jordi Savall
Auvadis Fontalis ES 8557 52' 08"

Here is a fleet-footed *Eroica* coupled with a doughty yet lively *Coriolan* overture. The 45-strong period-instrument orchestra is on this evidence a reliable ensemble, well-balanced and with the desire to bite deep into the strings and blow boldly in the climaxes; the dissonances are truly striking, and some details come through with unusual clarity of definition (e.g. the close of the slow movement). Right from the rapid opening chords of the symphony Jordi Savall shows that this is going to be an exciting account; so it proves, even if at times the articulation only just avoids a scramble. In an interesting note the conductor argues that his tempi, 'with a reasonable margin of musical flexibility', are (apart from the *poco andante* of the finale, which he takes slightly slower) those indicated by Beethoven. The resulting performance is well worth hearing; indeed, it may well displace old favourites from one's top ten. Peter Branscombe

All CDs are, as far as we know, full price unless marked with £ (bargain) or ££ (mid-price).

ALDEBURGH EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Stephen Cassidy

We have in Snape a truly remarkable concert hall. As it hosts the fourth Easter Early Music Festival, its ability to support the performances of every possible genre is extraordinary. Pleasingly, audiences at this event have been growing each year.

The opening concert from the Orlando Consort was centred around the life of a Dunwich Friar of around 1200. Almost all of this hugely prosperous town has since been lost to the sea. The programme was unified with readings from a letter of a Franciscan friar, so well suited that it could almost have been written for this occasion! A visit of one of his associates to Notre Dame gave an opening to include polyphony by Perotin and the Notre Dame school. Passiontide plainsong was provided by the local Britten-Pears Chamber Choir. The performances of two-part writing were wonderfully free and expressive. The four-part pieces allowed us to hear motifs swinging from part to part very spaciouly. Someone was particularly moved by the first solo, since freak gusts of wind from across the marshes caused the Maltings' marvellous roof to creak worryingly and I wondered how much of what still survives of Dunwich would be left at the end of the concert. An excellently conceived programme with local interest woven in.

The film *Tous les matins du Monde* was shown as part of the festival. On Marin Marais' musical journey towards the enlightenment of his teacher we were made to consider whether indeed music speaks to us from birth and beyond the grave, or is simply a balm for besotted old men. The questions raised are so much more alive in the context of a concert series. Events other than concerts (there was also included a talk by the Artistic Director, Philip Pickett) add a lot to the concept of a festival.

The Palladian ensemble gave an extremely entertaining concert of Music from Purcell's London. This group has the ability to let the music play out its drama and turn many corners without being distracted by the notes. The rhetorical structure of Locke's Consorts provided an excellent vehicle for this approach. Breath, articulation, beat and bowing are all wonderfully integrated and entirely related to the interplay of the music rather than their own means of production. Catherine Bott joined the ensemble for the songs, all beautifully rendered – including the intriguingly circular and rippling *Creep softly, purling streams* by Raphael Courtville, and finishing with Purcell's *Night* – the only piece with no continuo – floating off ethereally, disconnected from the ground.

The young Trio Eroica presented a very neat and vivacious Beethoven programme. The audience was slightly smaller.

It was the last evening of the holiday. Some may have gone home. Perhaps dyed-in-the-wool Beethoven lovers are used to their music being served on a different acoustic platter; perhaps dyed-in-the-wool early music lovers have yet to embrace this repertoire *en masse*. I would recommend this group to both groups as it illuminates the music in a new way. The fortepiano playing was unbelievably sweet and shapely – now acting as a continuo, now giving shine to the melody. The tone quality in different regions of register and volume overlapped significantly with the cello and clarinet, providing a greater unity than we are used to. The lightness and transparency of the cello provided a new vigour to the quick mood changes. The clarinet, without keys to avoid cross fingering, had a reduced third harmonic content in those notes, brightening them, and avoiding the uniform seriousness of its modern counterpart. The constant breaks in momentum and mood of op. 11 felt influenced by Italian dramatic music, balanced by a more squarely Viennese op. 38. The cross-references to other musical forms were rendered wonderfully by this group, taking full advantage of their instruments.

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LETTERS

Dear Clifford,

Your comments on that top A in 'Fairest isle' raise some important questions of principle. At any time when a sol-fa system was in operation, that particular melodic line would demand an Ab under the 'one note above La returning' rule: that is, the Ab is not merely plausible but inescapable. The real question is, therefore, 'At what date would it be possible *not* to sing an Ab there?' My own tentative answer would be 'Not until the 18th century at the earliest', but a review of the objective evidence is needed.

The best objective evidence would be a natural in front of that note, since that would be the only way of ensuring an A \natural in a period when Ab was automatic. That this is not an issue suggests that Purcell intended Ab: and this is supported by the presence of Ab in some sources, presumably a cautionary accidental at a time when the sol-fa rules were weakened and about to die off. The 'objective evidence' is partly negative, then, but it suggests that Ab is the correct solution.

You invoke our 'feeling for what sounds better' as a means of deciding the question. This is always dangerous, and in this case (as often) will surely bring us to the wrong (or at least less likely) solution. Like many of my generation, I learned 'Fairest isle' as a 10-year-old (or thereabouts) at school. The song was probably chosen less for aesthetic reasons than for political ones – national solidarity – but its attractiveness as music ensured its popularity with us. A principal musical attraction, I think, is that very unusual interval that you get if you sing that A as an A-natural: it is wholly individual, and for many of us recalls the song as nothing else could. We learned it, of course, from an edition which (erroneously, in my view) accepted the majority reading in which the A is not flattened, so that our aural understanding of the song is through 19th century ears. Such a childhood memory makes an Ab version difficult to accept – which is a great pity, since it's likely to be correct!

Incidentally, the same question arises in *Greensleeves*: the fifth note of the tune ought to be a semitone above the fourth note, not a whole tone. Alas, I learned it as a 10-year-old at school...

Richard Rastall

I must confess that I deliberately avoided getting involved in solmisation, since that still leaves the question: when did musicians stop thinking like that? Since most Purcell sources mark most accidentals that are required, I don't think that musicians can be assumed to have been entirely reliant on old rules. The 'feeling for what sounds better' must, of course, depend on a thorough immersion in the style. As for Greensleeves, it is interesting that Chappell (1859/1965 p. 230) has a semitone, as does Stainer's setting of What Child is this, but that Vaughan Williams has a tone, in line with his concern for folksy modality. I doubt whether he was aware of the harmonic basis of the melody, which makes such an inflection even more improbable.

Dear Clifford

You may recall the scene in *Middlemarch*, when 'Will Ladislaw was stretched on the rug contemplating the curtain pole abstractedly, and humming very low the notes of *When first I saw thy [sic] face*; while the house spaniel, also stretched out with small choice of room, looked from between his paws at the usurper of the rug with silent but strong objection'

I take the song to which George Eliot refers to be Thomas Ford's *Since first I saw your face* from *Musicke Of Sundrie Kindes* of 1607. Not only is it a very hummable tune, but the unsung words:

*Since first I saw your face I resolved to honour and renown ye.
If now I be disdained I wish my heart had never known ye...*

would nicely reflect Ladislaw's state of mind at the time – his unspoken love of Dorothea. One therefore assumes that George Eliot's readers (in 1871) and characters (in 1831) would have been familiar with the song. Do you know of any evidence that this might have been the case?

Andrew van der Beek

*The Ford part-song had entered the glee repertoire by the 1790s, so was known out of the context of the lute song. The nearest version I have to Middlemarch (1871-2) is in The Song Book, words and tunes from the best poets and musicians, selected and arranged by John Hullah. London, Macmillan, 1866, where the melody (without accompaniment) appears on p. 36 along the with correct words; Ford's *Musique of Sundrie Kindes* is quoted correctly as source. The comment in the notes reads 'this is a Song, with an accompaniment for the lute, or three other voices. The parts for Alto, Tenor, and Bass usually published differ materially from those of Ford whose harmony, it must be admitted, is very inferior to his melody.'*

Dear Mr Bartlett,

I am very pleased to see the question of Bach's vocal forces being debated again. As a philologist I value the fine readings of the *Entwurf* and the conclusions drawn. It is gratifying to see that the conclusions now begin to influence the record reviews in your magazine, discreetly advanced in connection with performances that do not pay regard to these new ideas. The influence of these ideas on what is recorded is still very modest!

In my opinion, your reviewers must go on using the size of the choir as an active parameter – or else these ideas will die away again. We need a spirited debate with the advocates of both sides participating to make the issue stay alive; it is great pity that the opponents will not engage in one. It is my impression that the early music establishment does not dare face the facts – mostly due to the institutional inertia of the large choirs. Of course there is an economic factor too. It is much easier to gain sponsorship for a spectacular performance of the St John Passion than to get money for an experimental historical performance.

Another related topic concerns the types of voices and the education the boys received. How did the voices sound in Bach's time? Did Bach's boys just learn to sing the music in tune, time and phrase and was the singing technique left to nature? Perhaps we need a new ideal here too: less polished and more rhetorical. As Stephen Daw gently puts it: 'Perhaps Bach's performances... had less tidy detail and less beautifully-balanced overall effects' *EMR* 26, p17.

Helge Therkildsen

Yes, the issue is being shirked. I happened to hear recently of a record company rejecting a proposal for one-voice-a-part Bach despite the wish of the performing ensemble. Once choirs smaller than a hundred were thought too light-weight for Bach's sublimity; now choirs of 20 are acceptable, but not ensembles of four voices. We cannot expect our reviewers to mention the topic every time; but we do need to be aware both of the specific issue (how many individuals looked over one piece of paper) and of the more general one of what sort of sound they made, what training they had, and how that information can help us to approach a manner of performance that best presents the music Bach wrote.

Mr Therkildsen began his letter referring to himself as our only Danish reader: there are, in fact, five others.

Dear Clifford,

After reading your review of facsimiles in the April issue it occurs to me that something should be said about Fuzeau's 'cleaning' procedures. The *Fiori musicale* facsimile is quite appalling. I checked it recently against the Bologna original of which it claims to be a copy. Fuzeau were clearly working from poor photocopies and took no steps to check the original. I have found over fifty cases in which the so-called facsimile is musically unreliable. These include:

- black notes whitened
- white notes blackened
- rests omitted
- rests added
- tails added to crotchets turning them into quavers
- tails added to quavers turning them into semiquavers
- sharps omitted entirely
- other sharps made more clear than in the source.

It is totally invalid as a facsimile, and I gather that in other cases similar cleaning has had the same effect.

When we first started producing facsimiles, we had them printed from full-size bromides and I spent a lot of time with a paint-brush cleaning up the plates. Although the idea was primarily to get rid of background, the temptation to scratch out black filling to make poor images clearer was too great to resist. But it was difficult to know when to stop. I mostly had copies of the original to hand; it is easy to imagine mistakes arising if that is not the case. Subsequently, we have produced our facsimiles by photocopying, which is less elegant but which removes the temptation to clean up and improve. Very occasionally we have ruled in an illegible stave line, but we have avoided the sort of wholesale 'improvement' which leads to the result you describe. The moral is not to expect a facsimile to look too clean.

CB

MICHAEL THOMAS

I wrote my own informal memoir of Michael Thomas before the one printed on page 1 arrived.

We have all been very sorry to hear of the death of Michael Thomas. There was only one period of my life when I saw him at all frequently, just after he opened his Harpsichord Centre in Chiltern Street, near Baker Street. He wanted music to take place there, so invited Peter Holman and myself to run a session for all-comers one night a week. This was a bit of a tall order, since we were never quite sure what music might be appropriate. But some interesting people turned up, some of whom are still involved in various parts of the early-music business, such as Doug Wootton of The City Waites and Graham Wells of Sotheby's; and I suspect that it was there that I first met Andrew van der Beek. My only close encounter with Michael as musician was when somewhat foolishly I had agreed to play one of the solo parts in Bach's C-major concerto for two harpsichords at a small country-house concert. He heard me practising it, sat down at another instrument, and gave me an inspiring coaching session. Subsequently, he became a voice on the phone, a bit like Michael Morrow (though not so lengthy) in that he had a knack of phoning to chat about something as if we had last met a few days rather than several years previously. I was very pleased that he agreed to review harpsichord recordings for *EMR*, even if deciphering his handwriting involved quite a lot of guesswork. He was a very kind reviewer, with his love of the music and the instruments (especially the rare occasions when we had a clavichord CD) apparent in everything he wrote. It is a pity we have not kept any of the copy in his own handwriting that he faxed: they could have been used as the ultimate test for prospective typists and copy-editors.

His historical importance was as a pioneer in insisting that old harpsichords should be trusted at a time when most players were wedded to heavy, pedalled Goble or Pleyel machines. A large number of playable old instruments passed through his hands, and he understood how to play them as well as how they were put together. His main love as a performer was the clavichord. Basil Lam told me that, when he came to record for the BBC, he used to bring his clavichord under his arm, place it on a table and expect to start recording with no further preparation or tuning. He is probably very little known to the general public, but, despite occasional exasperation, a wide range of keyboard players remember him with gratitude and affection.

CB

Two American curiosities. A reputable dealer faxed us a request recently for Handel's *The waifs of Zion do mourn*. We were amused to see on the slip accompanying an invalid cheque from a customer the options, along with 'fictitious', 'counterfeit', 'mutilated' and 'account closed', of 'refer to Maker' or (even worse) 'dishonoured by Maker' – English banks are not so theological.