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I am puzzled about the way our media ignore Christianity. A few months ago a paper noted with barely-concealed glee that Church of England attendances on Sundays had dropped to below a million. But more than double that for nonconformists and catholics, and we have one of the largest interest groups in the country, comparable, I suspect, with that which plays or watches football on a Saturday. But apart from juicy stories about the latest *faux pas* of Britain's most tactless cleric, the Dean of Westminster, how often do religious events get reported or sitcom characters go to church other than for marriages and funerals?

How embarrassed were the reviewers of RSC's Christmas dramatisation of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (despite C. S. Lewis's Oxford career, no comma)! They wanted to praise it, but were reluctant to do so because of its Christian allegory. I assumed when I first read the book (not, alas, as a child) that Lewis was not using myth for evangelisation but to show that the pre-Anselm theory of the atonement was not as crude as theologians generally believed. A play featuring factions of Marxist thought would have been reviewed with due awareness of the intellectual background, but ignorance of theology is culturally acceptable. Christianity has been less discredited by Darwin, Einstein and Dawkins than Marxism by the demise of the USSR and the collapse of left-wing governments elsewhere. But why do those who control our culture, politics and entertainment favour one rather than the other? Whatever we believe – my concern is cultural, not religious – understanding of Western (and much black) culture and music is impossible without knowing its Christian context and roots. Next year we will be celebrating Bach's 250th anniversary; how many of the products of our secular education will have much idea of what most of his music is about?

On a Sunday-night TV sports programme recently replays of England's football World Cup defeat were accompanied by music which bears in the autograph score the inscription: 'Upon that place there stood a cross and a little below a sepulchre...' Has religion become a metaphor for football? CB

Books and Music

Clifford Bartlett

James McKinnon *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant* Ashgate (Variorum), 1998. xii + [300] pp, £49.50. ISBN 0 86078 688 9

I suspect that James McKinnon is less known to our readers than the other musical scholars who have been honoured by this series: Christopher Page, David Fallows, Richard L. Crocker and D. P. Walker. But if any journal arrives with an article by him, I turn to it first, knowing that he will deal with absolute clarity with matters that are often shrouded in hypotheses. His field, as represented here, is primarily the first millennium of Christian music; his work on later medieval iconography is mostly passed over. Readers will remember that the series is devoted to reprints of articles from journals; so if you have *Early Music History* to hand, most of the section on The Psalmody of Jewish and Christian Antiquity will be easily available. More scattered are the sources of the first section, 'The A Cappella Question'. One short article which I had not seen before should be required reading for all wishing to include instruments in medieval and renaissance church music: 'A Cappella Doctrine versus Practice: A Necessary Distinction', five pages of concentrated wisdom from the 1982 ISM Congress. I find it boring to have to voice my disapproval of inappropriate instrumental participation so often in reviews of medieval discs. The problem is not that the medieval church disapproved of instruments: rather that their performers did not fit into the church hierarchy and organisation and were irrelevant to it. There is an aside with a suggestion that in the 16th century, instrumental participation followed the practice of the use of the organ, alternating with rather than accompanying the singers: this needs further research, but is very plausible. The third section of the book comprises work leading up to a forthcoming book on the origins of Gregorian chant. There is a brief and incomplete index of names (Ramsey Abbey, for instance, is mentioned in the article on the Winchester organ, but is not indexed). An extremely useful compilation.

HILDEGARD

Hildegard von Bingen *Symphonia armoniae caelestium revelationum*. Vol VII: *Chants for Saint Ursula and Companions*. Vol. VIII: *Chants for Ecclesia*. [Edited by] Marianne Richert Pfau. Hildegard Publishing Company/Furore-Edition (39707-8), 1998. £10.45 & £5.25

I wrote about this series last May (*EMR* 40, p. 14). These are the last two volumes in the series. Like the rest of Furore-Edition, they are now available in the UK through A. Kalmus. Something seems to have happened to the

numbering system, since the list of volumes on the back gives items 59-71 in vol. VII (instead of 61-65) and 72-75 in vol. VIII (instead of 66-69), explained in part by the grouping of eight antiphons for lauds under a single number in vol. VII; the contents themselves are unchanged. I described the principles of transcription previously: it represents the original more precisely than others available. A footnote to the introduction of vol. VII gives a reference to a facsimile of the MS in Wiesbaden published in that town last year, so now both sources are available (the Dendermonde MS is published by Alamire). Vol. VII is devoted to liturgical pieces for the office of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins of Cologne. The thorough introduction does not say whether their derivation from a misreading of an inscription is a protestant rationalisation or true, but is otherwise extremely helpful, with comments on the liturgy, the poetry and the music. The introduction to the four songs to Ecclesia is useful in explaining how Hildegard saw the Church, though the modern reader would welcome some explanation of how the personification can be both virgin and mother without being heretical. It is a pity that there are no translations of the texts, but with the increasing number of recordings in circulation, they are easily accessible elsewhere.

I have just received a catalogue from the Hildegard Publishing Company (Box 332, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010, tel +1 610 649 8649, fax +1 610 649 8677) listing a vast amount of music by women, some of it their own publications, some from elsewhere (including Furore). While I have considerable doubts whether sex of composer is a particularly helpful way of categorising music (some, of course, might have similar doubts about the chronological categorisation that *EMR* implies), there is certainly much useful repertoire listed there, including performance material for vols. I-V of G. K. Hall's series *Women Composers: Music Through the Ages*, which cover the period up to 1799; seven further volumes will carry the series through the next two centuries. (Price \$100 per volume, \$90 if you place a standing order.) Most of the early music in the catalogue, apart from Hildegard, seems to come from that source.

Incidentally, I have just been reading an article by June Boyce-Tillman in the latest *Musical Times* (confusingly called Winter 1998 – does that mean the last or the first issue of the year? – and infuriatingly for any library that binds it, redesigned to a different size from the rest of the year) written from a feminist viewpoint that unwittingly could seem to be justifying its odd thesis that logical thought is a male, not a female characteristic by its own abysmally lack of logic. The author claims, for instance, that the silencing of Hildegard's voice for failing to obey the bishop's instructions is 'a fine metaphor for what patriarchal cultures have attempted to do to women throughout history', as if the church hierarchy had not attempted to silence people of both sexes throughout its history (take Galileo as a familiar example). Special pleading by feminists can only do Hildegard's reputation a disservice. They can't even claim to have rediscovered her, since with respect to her music, in the UK that honour belongs to Christopher Page, his BBC producer Hugh Keyte, and Ted Perry of Hyperion (and thanks, Ted, for so promptly sending me a copy of the Gothic Voices CD after my hint in the last issue).

NUOVO ANTICO

Jerusalem: Vision of Peace Edited by Christopher Page. Antico Edition (AE37), 1998. xiv + 38 pp, £10.00.

Hugh Sturmy *Exultet in hac die* William Whytroke *Sancte Deus* Edited by Nick Sandon. Antico Edition (RCM 117), 1997. vi + 13pp, £5.00

John Taverner *Missa Mater Christi, Mater Christi santissima* Edited by Nick Sandon. Antico Edition (RCM 116), 1997. viii + 39pp, £8.50

New editions from Antico are always welcome: one can be confident of good music, thorough introductions and reliable transcriptions. I mentioned *Jerusalem: Vision of Peace* in a note appended to Christopher Page's article in our last issue (*EMR* 46, p. 18): no-one has taken up the challenge of the little exercise in textual criticism that I posed. It contains a dozen pieces: three French monodies, chant and conductus, these last sensibly treated with an open-minded approach to the rhythm of untexted sections. I hope that everyone who buys the CD will also buy the edition.

Taverner's *Missa Mater Christi* and its source-motet have been published before (EECM 36 & 25), and various recordings have been based on independent transcriptions and completions. The motet survives complete, and is one of the composer's most appealing works. Nick Sandon uses the same sources as EECM (the Peterhouse MSS which he is publishing complete, with the tenor supplied from Bodleian MSS Mus. e.1-5), but sharpens a few more leading-notes, which is fine by me. He also retains original note-values (EECM halves them) and has nice long bars, a bit like TCM but without their annoying irregularity. The increase in page size enables EECM's 14 pages to be reduced to 7, with the first two turns coinciding with double-bars, making the shape of the motet more visible. Editing the mass is more of a problem, since the tenor part is missing. This is the editor's second attempt at it, and he has also benefitted from the EECM version by Hugh Benham, which he has sometimes incorporated. Apart from the unorthodox numbering of the pages with evens on the right, it could serve as a model for courses on editing: I hope it is also used by singers.

Sturmy and Whytroke are far less familiar names, and solid information only exists about the latter. Both pieces lack the tenor part, but there is no difficulty in completing Sturmy's *Exultet in hac die*, since it is an equal-note *cantus firmus* using the chant to which the text is sung as a Magnificat-antiphon for St Augustine of Canterbury. Whytroke was connected with Cardinal College and St Paul's Cathedral. The editor had problems in supplying a tenor 'chiefly because of Whytroke's technical limitations, in particular his cluttered counterpoint, erratic dissonance treatment and weak sense of line'. Consequently, the part has a wider range than usual; the other three pieces fit SATBarB, but here the fourth part goes up to G. The quotation is not a strong selling pitch, but the Sturmy may be rescued from obscurity if a piece connected with Augustine is required.

TRABACI VERSETTI

Giovanni Maria Trabaci *Hundert Versetten... Cento Versi sopra li otto Toni Ecclesiastici*, 1615 edited by Rudolf Walter. Doblinger (*Diletto Musicale* 1231), 1998. 55p, £19.95

Coming to this after the Bach Epiphany Mass (see p. 23), with its unsatisfactory inter-line interludes in the hymns, makes me long for as interesting a model for them as this provides for short *alternatim* verses a century of so earlier. 100 short pieces of, mostly, less than 12 bars may sound a bit of a bore, but they are extremely varied, and useful models to be studied by organists needing to improvise settings for liturgical (or mock-liturgical) performances of church music of the period. They are all strictly in four parts (originally notated on four staves, but on two here) and are often quite ingenious. It is interesting that rallentandos are sometimes marked, using the phrase *allarga la battuta*.

FORD

Thomas Ford *Lyra Viol Duets* (*Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, 90) A-R Editions, 1998. ciii + 82pp, \$39.95. ISBN 0 89579 412 8

Thomas Ford *Musicke of Sundrie Kindes...* Performers' Facsimiles (PF219), £14.50.

A-R's interest in tablature viol music is welcome, and this new issue represents one of the group of publications which appeared in the first decade of the 17th century (which also includes editions by Jones, Tobias Hume, Ferrabosco and Corkine). The introduction is briefer than usual in the series, but adequate except for the absence of any information about the tuning, especially since Ford gives no tuning code. The edition avoids the conventional practice of placing the transcription beneath the original notation. In the past, lutenists and violists have complained of this, since it produces frequent and often impractical page-turns. But the separation here still has awkward turns in the tablature (it doesn't matter in the transcription, since that is just for study). Players will need convincing that it is worth paying something like £25.00 when they can get a facsimile for £14.50 (or even less: the former Scolar Press version is reprinted by Brian Jordan at £13.65). There are mistakes in the tablature, though not more than could be listed on a short errata sheet; players will at least find the commentary of the new edition useful for correcting their facsimile. The collation with other sources is a bit of a luxury, since they probably derive from the print, though the editor takes comfort from the fact that they agree in making the obvious correction in *And if you do touch me ile cry*, despite the challenge of the title! The titles are, in fact, an interesting feature of the collection. The transcriptions, on four staves, look extremely spacious: I wonder whether the old-fashioned way of printing lute music for guitar on single octave-treble staves might have been more compact: the polyphonic content is hardly complex. The edition only includes the viol duets from the 1607 publication; the

facsimiles also have ten songs in standard lute-song format plus a duet for ST and two viols: it is a pity that the latter is not included here, since any performance is more likely to be instigated by violists than singers. The facsimile pages in the A-R edition are very murky compared with both the complete facsimiles, and the page of music seems to be upside-down. Regrettably, the PF facsimile uses the same copy as its predecessor: there would be greater point in duplication if the copy was different. It is nice to have the music available to those who cannot read tablature, though it looks less impressive on paper than it sounds. For those who can read the tablature, the value of the transcription, introduction and notes probably does not justify the extra expense compared with either facsimile.

FROM VIRGIL TO PURCELL

A Woman Scorn'd: responses to the Dido myth edited by Michael Burden. Faber and Faber, 1998. xiii + 290pp, £12.00 ISBN 0 571 17699 2 (pb)

Faber is one of the few general publishers to continue to issue serious musical books. They have done Purcell proud with the two previous books under Michael Burden's name, *The Purcell Companion* and *Purcell Remembered*, available cheaply as paperbacks (£12.99 & £9.99 respectively). This new book culminates in Purcell, but only two of the ten essays are devoted specifically to his version of the story.

It is strange that, although *Dido and Aeneas* is probably the most-performed and best-loved opera before *The Marriage of Figaro*, there still seems to be considerable doubt exactly what happens in it and how the characterisation works. Writers have enormous problems with the opera, while audiences seem to accept it with no difficulty. It could be a test case for a discussion on the relationship between scholarship, performance and public reaction – a suggestion for Burden's next collection of essays, perhaps. Burden's account is stimulating, but seems to me just a bit too clever, though his comments on the weaknesses of previous writers are valid. Most of them were misled by giving undue weight to the false assumption that the work was written for a girls' school. A problem for the producer can be to keep the serious tone and prevent giggles at possibly inappropriate places. Andrew Pinnock's contribution on travesty versions of the story (parodic rather than transvestite, though there is room for at least one transvestite character in the opera even without the girls' school setting) shows that to be a false problem, though leaves it to performers to decide where the comic bits lie. There is obvious potential in one significant piece of stage business: the phallic monster's head on Aeneas's spear. The mention of Venus's huntsmen must surely be intended to link with a previous show (both at court and at Chelsea), Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, where the huntsmen may as well be considered to belong to Venus as to Adonis; there may have been some stage business with a boar's head as they entered to entice Adonis to join them, giving Venus a little respite from her indefatigable lover. There, however, the hunt is an alterna-

tive to, not a symbol for sexual activity. Michael Burden might like to explain the difference between a construct and a construction, apart from one being a verb used as a noun. The problem of the relationship of musicology to music is also relevant to the long chapter by Wendy Heller on Cavalli's *La Didone*. From her account, it should be an outstanding opera; but I listened to a recording recently and, even discounting the quality of the performance (see *EMR* 46 p. 21), it is difficult to square Heller's enthusiasm with Cavalli's music. Even from the examples printed here (some with barely-visible staves and bar-lines), Cavalli's rhythmic simplicity shows up: there are none of the cross-half-bar ties which so confuse most modern singers and which are so much part of the musical language of *Poppea*, written a year or two later to a text by the same author, Busenello. Heller does show how subtle a librettist he was, but Cavalli lacked Monteverdi's ability to subvert his librettist's intellectualism by his own humanity.

There is a typically brilliant introductory chapter by Roger Savage, and the other essays thoroughly expound the ambiguities of the Dido myth and the contradictory meanings it was given in the 16th and 17th centuries, not just in literature but in art (with a chapter by Jennifer Montagu, formerly of the Warburg Institute). There is some repetition, and it might have been sensible if the less accessible classical sources had been printed as an introduction: it is easy to find Virgil and Ovid, but it needs a well-stocked library to trace the rest. For readers of *EMR*, it is the chapters on the Cavalli and Purcell settings that will make this essential reading; the other essays, although primarily of interest to those concerned with literature or in the way in which classical culture was treated in later periods, also illuminate the background to the operas.

EASTER FUX

Johann Joseph Fux *Victimae paschali laudes für Soli* (SATB), *gem. Chor, Orchester und Orgel*. Erstdruck (Rudolf Walter). Doblinger (46 085), 1997. Score: 24pp, £9.50. Set of parts £15.70, extras £1.45, chorus score £2.65.

I normally associate Wipo's Easter sequence with sombre music, thanks to the d-minor implication of the chant. But this setting is in a bright C-major, with three trumpets (or more precisely, 2 *clarini* and a *tromba*), timps, two violins, SATB soli and chorus (more than just the soloists in ensemble) doubled by cornetto, two trombones, bassoon and continuo. It would make an arresting concert-opener, with enough tonal variety to sustain interest through 160 bars. I see little point in the comparison the editor makes with Byrd's setting: the only clear similarity, turning 'Dic nobis Maris' into a dialogue, is implicit in the text.

OBOE SONATAS

Venezianische Sonaten. Antonio Vivaldi *Sonata G minor*; Tomaso Albinoni *Sonata C major for Oboe or Violin and Basso Continuo*. Edited by Christian Schneider, Realisation of the

unfigured bass: Gerald Hambitzer. Universal Edition (UE 30 499 or 17 595). 1998. Score (20pp) and parts, £8.95.

I was initially puzzled by this: The short preface argues convincingly that RV28 is for oboe, not violin (the editor does not say that the source lacks instrumentation), and announces this as the first known oboe sonata by Albinoni. But the cover of the edition bears the heading *Für Violine und Klavier*. In fact, the edition exists in two versions, which seem to differ only in their covers, since the parts bear both edition numbers. The Albinoni isn't quite as obscure as the preface claims, since it is listed as *Mi* 4 in Talbot's catalogue, the *Mi* implying doubts about authenticity that are not addressed here. It is oboists who are most likely to welcome this coupling, though both sonatas will need a lot of breath.

BACH BIBLIOGRAPHY

Daniel R. Melamed [&] Michael Marissen *An Introduction to Bach Studies* Oxford University Press (New York), 1998. xi + 189pp, £28.50. ISBN 0 19 512231 3

This provides the neophyte with a useful guide through the vast quantity of Bach scholarship, while those like myself who are aware of various aspects of the subject and know fairly well what is available in English will appreciate its broad coverage of German material. Its intended user is obviously the scholar, despite the note on the blurb that it 'opens up the rich world of Bach scholarship to students, teachers, performers, and listeners' (OUP New York keeps the Oxford comma). The layout is clear, and while not setting out to evaluate everything that is mentioned, some differentiation is made between the useful and the questionable (though much of the latter is dealt with by omission). But before pointing out the limitations of the book for the latter two categories, I must first stress its value. What I expected to find here is duly listed, with the exception of the new edition of *The Bach Reader*: surely the editors knew of it by the time this went to press? There are three tables. Lists of BG and NBA, with the names of editor and publication date of each volume, will be useful to those needing to concoct full bibliographical references without having the volumes to hand (though whether footnotes need to be cluttered with such information is another matter). More important is a liturgical calendar giving the Epistle and Gospel and showing the cantatas Bach wrote for each Sunday and Feast, with a column each for pre-Leipzig, Jahrgang I, II, III and other. A paragraph on p. 40 sorts out the various Ernsts and Johanns at Weimar. On pp. 66-68 there is a list of Bach's main copyists.

A problem for most readers is that Bach scholarship is so predominantly German: perhaps the book should have begun with advice on the best way for musicologists to learn the language. There are key works which one would have expected to have appeared in English (Dürr's *Die Kantaten...* for instance). It surprises me how few cantatas have been discussed individually outside the commentary volumes of NBA. But they are all the subject of notes in LP

and CD booklets, which are sometimes written by the leading Bach scholars: should not these be included in the bibliography, if only to single out those with original thoughts or information from rehashes?

A disappointing feature is the unwillingness to go beyond NBA in listing modern editions. Impressive though the *Neue Bach-Ausgabe* be, there can be different solutions to editorial problems, so it would have been useful to list those that have distinctive features. Even editions that are musically parasitic on the NBA may be useful for giving the performer an alternative key. Others, like those for the Associated Board by Richard Jones, are based on independent studies of the sources and are more user-friendly for the English non-specialist. The performer needs information, not just about scores, but about performance material: you can get a score of the *Magnificat* in *E*_b from Bärenreiter, but you have to come to King's Music for the parts. The section on the *St Mark Passion* (p. 121) might have listed the reconstructions published by Hänsler, Bärenreiter and King's Music. This is, incidentally, one of those bibliographies that avoids publishers' names, though surely for most purposes the name of the publisher is more helpful than the place: Oxford University Press is a more useful citation for the book being reviewed than New York or Oxford.

One final comment: the authors rightly concentrate on references directly related to their subject. But I would like to have seen a short section on ancillary aids: how to consult the Lutheran bible, for instance (are modern editions updated? is it available on CD-ROM?*) or the best readily-available German dictionary for dealing with religious texts.

*I was very frustrated recently when a tip-off from a reader for a CD-ROM from the American Bible Society that contained the Vulgate and the Luther bibles, plus various other useful material, turned out to be no longer available: is there an alternative?

HANDEL SUITES II

Georg Fr. Händel *Klaviersuiten, Klavierstück* (London 1733), HWV 434-442... herausgegeben von Ellwood Derr... Henle, 1998. 144pp, £19.50.

Handel's second set of keyboard pieces is far less coherent than the first set of eight Suites. What one might expect to have been an authoritative edition, published by John Walsh in 1733, is based on earlier Amsterdam (1721) and London (1727) editions of dubious authority, and there seems to have been little input from the composer at any stage – though the curious lack of autograph sources makes one wonder whether they are missing because they were sent off to a publisher. There is no reason to assume that the collection has any particular coherence, and I have doubts whether there is much point in its retention as an entity in modern editions. This edition rightly bases its text on the best source for each piece rather than giving the prints any special authority. As well as the main pieces, it includes 25 pages of alternative or earlier versions, and is comparable with HHA IV/5, though with the advantage of a bilingual

critical commentary. Its main disadvantage is the retention of the Henle tradition of adding fingering. I just don't see the point of some of the suggestions (e.g. the opening of the *Aria* of the Suite in G, HWV 441) and there is no comment anywhere on the principles that lie behind them or whether they are for harpsichord or piano. There is no pedagogical advantage in their presence: they neither get the hands into sensible positions nor give hints for phrasing. Fingering may be an asset in editions of Schumann and Brahms, but here it undermines the considerable merits that the edition otherwise possesses.

NITTAUF

Gottlieb Nittauf *Complete Organ Works* edited by John Sheridan (*Biblioteca Organi Sueciae* 2) Stockholm: Runa Nototext, 1996 [1998]. ix + 23 pp, SWK160:-

Gottlieb Sigismundus Nittauf (or Nitauff) is unlikely to be known to many readers, and he isn't in MGG or New Grove. He was born in Stockholm in 1685, studied in Hamburg (perhaps with Vincent Lübeck) and worked as organist at St Jacob's Church Stockholm (from 1705) and in Gothenburg (from 1710), where he died in 1722. His extant works comprise nine Preludes, seven of which are quite short and simple and two are multisectional, more elaborate and capable of standing on their own. They may not be comparable with Buxtehude and Bach, but the latter pair are quite showy without being very difficult, so make useful fodder for the close of a service. The transcription from tablature seems to have been carefully done. Two staves are used, which avoids the need to make the use of pedals unnecessarily explicit, and there is a thorough critical commentary.

PARIS QUARTETS

Georg Philipp Telemann *Nouveau Quatuors en Six Suites A une Flûte Traversiere, un Violon, une Basse de Viole, où Violoncel, et Basse Continuë*, ["Paris Quartets" Nos. 7-12] Performers' Facsimiles (224), 1998. 5 parts, £42.50.

G. Ph. Telemann 7 (8, 9.) *Pariser Quartett in D-dur (a-moll, G-dur) für Flöte, Violine, Viola da gamba oder Violoncello und Basso continuo...* edited by Manfredo Zimmermann... Aurea Amadeus (145-7; BP 837-9), 1998. Score & parts, 3 vols, each £13.75.

Acquiring the Paris Quartets has been a problem for many years. For a start, people get confused about the various sets, and there has been frustration that the Bärenreiter scores of sets I & II and parts of set I (were there ever parts of Set II?) have long been out of print. Mark Meadows issued facsimiles in the 1970s, but they too have been unavailable for some years. They reappeared from Mieroprint recently in A4 format on sturdy paper with comb bindings at a little under £30.00 for each set. The new Broude version of set II is more expensive, but more handsome. Although the print-size is only slightly larger, the generous margins give a more spacious appearance, and large pages folded and stapled are easier and quieter to turn. If you are buying

by post, the Mieroprint edition is 50% heavier but does have the advantage of a sturdy box for storage: PF's white covers get ragged and dirty rather quickly. The choice is between spaciousness and economy; we are happy to sell either.

Meanwhile Amadeus, having been working assiduously through Telemann's trio sonatas, has now issued the first three of the second set of Paris quartets. Each quartet has the same introduction, which confusingly devotes a paragraph to the continuo parts of the first set. If you want a modern edition, this offers a beautifully printed score and parts, sensibly laid-out and with a keyboard realisation that is playable. It is, of course, cheaper to play from facsimile, though even then a score is useful, while for study or watching while listening to recordings the score is essential. The editor points out some inconsistencies of slurs; I wonder how intentional is the marking of trills in one part but not another. Take the *Tendrement* of no. 7, for instance: in some places only one of two parts moving in parallel has a trill (the upper part except in bar 10), but in bars 11 and 23 both parts have them. Is that significant or not?

MUSIC FOR FLUTE

Michel Blavet was one of the the players commended by Telemann in the performance of his quartets. Schott has issued his set of six sonatas for flute and continuo op. 2 (1732) in an edition by Hugo Ruf (Schott, TR 164-5; 2 vols £10.95 each), who produced an edition of op. 1 back in 1967. An interesting feature is the composer's concern with correct breathing, and the edition preserves the letter *h* which indicates breaths; there are, however, no such aids for shaping the continuo part, which at times could easily sound relentless. Despite these being Italian-style sonatas, there are various French titles for whole pieces or single movements: it would be nice to be told what they mean.

The same publisher and editor are responsible for the new series *Flute Music of the Mannheim School*, with a pretty cover (unexplained) of a flautist inviting an unseen companion either to play either the cello or chess with him. Vol. 1 (ED 8661; £7.50) not surprisingly begins with a sonata by the leading figure of the first generation of Mannheim's fame, Johann Stamitz. It is an arrangement of Stamitz's violin sonata op. 6/1 by J. G. Mezger, a Mannheim flautist; the editor neglects to quote the source. It isn't impossibly violinistic, but will bore the continuo player(s). J. B. Wendling is a familiar name because of his connection with Mozart: Leopold singled him out for mention when he and Wolfgang visited Mannheim in 1763 and he was still there when he dallied there on his way to Paris in the winter of 1777/8. His Sonata in D (ED 8662; £7.95) has a little more harmonic interest, and has the advantage of being written for the flute by a fine flautist. The editor declines to tell us which of the six op. 4 sonatas (Paris, 1774) this is. The editor (or rather another man with the same surname) has added a few dotted slurs to the flute part, mostly sensibly, but I wonder why just one of 14 consecutive groups of triplets is slurred on p. 13.

The authenticity of *Six Easy Solos for a German Flut* published under the name of Giovanni Battista Sammartini has been questioned. Nos. 1-3 have been edited by Gerhard Braun (Universal UE 31129), who writes: 'They represent solid and easily-played examples of the early Classical sonata form'. They are not 'easy' in the way of the contredances reviewed below nor as simply classical as the Stamitz and Wendling mentioned above, but attractive pieces that the competent amateur can play with enjoyment.

The second volume of Jean-Louis Charbonnier's selection of easy airs from four mid-century *Recueils de contredances* (Zurfluh/UMP; £14.60) contains 31 pretty little pieces, mostly taking up only a page of score. They are intended for either flute or viol and continuo – presumably descant or tenor recorder or treble viol, and have a few fingerings added for the latter. They are expected to be playable by children in the second year on the instruments, but the price is probably too high for the market at which it is aimed. The translation of the short preface (called in the English version *Presentation*) has the mysterious word *shiftingon* for *shift* as in 'change position'.

A DUBLIN CHOIR

Music at Christ Church before 1800: Documents and selected anthems edited by Barra Boydell. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999. 284pp, £30.00. ISBN 1 85182 413 8

While a collection of documents like this is quite heavy reading matter, it yields some fascinating tit-bits as well as giving a picture of a musical institution at work. It doesn't tell you everything, but at least there is information on how often the choir rehearsed (on Wednesday and Friday afternoons in 1661) and that the choir chose the music: '[Ordered]... That the Chanters Vicar do always leave a Score of the Service and Anthem to be performed with the Senior Member present'. Instruments occur in 1638:

And farther to make up the Musicke of that Church more compleate and to comply with the intencion of the founders to our apprehensions, if they had lived in these times, We think meebe alsoe that twelve pounds yere be allowed out of the Said Revenues for two Sakebutts and two Cornetts to Serve every Sunday in Christchurche.

A theorbo appears in 1668-9, with subsequent payments needed for strings, violins in 1673. There are frequent payments for copying and for manuscript paper, with later subscriptions for Boyce and other church music collections. Individual salary payments are not listed, so the book cannot be used to trace the careers of singers, though some information is given in the notes. The most curious name is Faithful Tadpole (not, apparently, a joke). In 1741, singers were reminded that they should not take part in other musical performances without permission: Handel had problems with Dean Swift at St Patrick's (whose choir overlapped with that of Christ Church) the following year over singers for *Messiah*. More trivial entries include the requirement that Stephen Cradocke and his wife shave and trim the men and 'poll and round' the boys weekly (1564).

What looks like a payment for washing the boys probably refers to their clothes (1676-7).

The documents are arranged in three chronological swathes, each with an introduction. Most are financial or disciplinary, but there are three more general pages criticising bad practices in church music from Edward Wetenhall's *Of Gifts and Offices in the Publick Worship of God* (1676/8). After the documents come seven anthems by composers from the cathedral (Thomas Bateson, Richard Hosier (x2), John Blett, Ralph Roseingrave, Robert Shenton and Richard Woodward), giving some idea of the local repertoire from 1612 (if the guess that *Holy, Lord God almighty* was Bateson's B. Mus. piece is correct) to 1771. Would that all cathedrals had such convenient collections of documents and music available.

BEGINNING THE BASSOON

Thomas Sherwood *Starting on an Early Bassoon* Cambridge, The Author, 1998. 16pp. £3.60 incl post to anywhere. Available from The Early Music Shop (for address see p. 9).

This is a short booklet by an amateur player, intended as a guide for beginners and written with all the benefits of his own recent experiences as one himself. It contains a fingering chart for the four-keyed baroque bassoon, a brief history of the instrument, advice on buying and caring for it, and the basics of how to play. It also includes a short section on reed adjustment for the absolute beginner (contributed by Barbara Stanley) and a brief bibliography. This will be most help to an amateur musician with no previous bassoon experience, since it assumes the ability to read music and mainly deals with technique and care of the instrument, obvious to anyone who already plays modern bassoon. The title is slightly misleading, since it is mostly about the baroque bassoon. He mentions the classical bassoon as well but no separate fingering chart is included and no clear distinction is made between these two very different instruments. But for the baroque bassoon he has covered everything in a clear, friendly and encouraging style, providing a simple overview and a good starting-point for the beginner. The bibliography should be a valuable section in this sort of booklet, but seems in this case to be a slightly haphazard selection. It includes some useful addresses and books, but the small choice of music to practise seems odd and some of it is too difficult for a beginner. The whole section could have been larger and more logically set out. Of course, there is no substitute for a good teacher. But this guide, 'written by a beginner for other beginners' does give some advice that a professional might overlook. I recommend it to any would-be baroque bassoonist as a simple prelude to further reading and lessons with an experienced professional.

Sally Holman

Owing to the exceptionally high number of CDs reviewed this month, there has not been room to include reviews of all books we have received: those awaiting the March issue are listed on p. 9. Apologies in particular to Cambridge University Press.

JOHN MARSH'S JOURNALS

Ian Graham-Jones

The John Marsh Journals: The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752-1828) edited, introduced and annotated by Brian Robins. Pendragon Press, 793pp. \$76.00. (In UK from Rosemary Dooley)

It is surprising that the extensive journals of the Georgian writer and amateur composer John Marsh have not until now attracted much attention from scholars and musicians for it is clear that, even in the form in which they were known in Cambridge University Library prior to 1990, Marsh must rank as one of England's foremost diarists.

The story of these journals, representing the daily life, from birth to death, of a distinguished and well-educated gentleman with, amongst many other interests, a passion for music, is a fascinating one. Mainly through Brian Robins' extensive researches into the volumes at Cambridge, it was realised that the handwriting was not that of John Marsh but of his youngest son. Work on these books, due to have been published by Macmillan, was nearing completion when the long-lost original journals came up for auction at Christie's in 1990. Running to 37 volumes with getting on for some 7000 pages, they include vast amounts of important information that had been excised in Marsh's son's version and were too substantial for a single publication. So work had virtually to start afresh, with much new research to be done.

I was privileged to visit Christie's and spent a fascinating day handling the originals – all with matching cream vellum covers, and dipping into them. I can remember reading about Marsh's invention of a 'basso viola', which he played in concerts – historical knowledge of the tenor violin or the 5-string cello was not available at that time – and also a type of cello which had been brought to Marsh to try out with strings tuned in octaves (which, as I remember, Marsh thought little of), as well as many events and places of local interest. Since then I have occasionally used the microfilm copy in West Sussex Record Office for reference. The originals were sold for something over £27,000 and now reside in the Huntington Library, California.

It is a great disappointment that no British publisher felt able to take on this new publication, for we have to put up with American English in the Introduction and footnotes, which I fear may become the universal language of the future. (With my new copy of the Sibelius computer music processing program – produced in Cambridge, UK – I have to centre the title above the staff containing eighth and sixteenth notes in the measure!)

Since Marsh's 'history of his private life' can be conveniently divided into two parts – he concludes his narrative on his

50th birthday in 1802 and subsequently re-starts it, continuing to the week of his death in 1828 – Brian Robins' work follows the journals up to 1802 only, though with many small omissions. Where paragraphs or sections have been necessarily cut, these are clearly indicated and a resumé of the omission is usefully given. This was obviously the right decision, as any attempt to include the whole narrative would have meant large-scale cuts along the lines of Marsh's son's attempt – though not as ruthless or as ungainly, I am sure!

In any case, Marsh's musical activities declined somewhat in the early years of the 19th century, and although many of the entries concern domestic details and boring paragraphs about Mrs Marsh's state of health, they are still of great interest. Marsh continued with his local musical activities until 1813, organised a two-day festival, including a performance of *Messiah*, and travelled widely, visiting all the cathedral cities in England, even making an anti-clockwise tour of Britain to include Edinburgh and the Lake District at the age of 67. I hope that a second volume will be forthcoming to conclude the story of this remarkable man's life.

A brief introduction by Brian Robins succinctly paints the picture of Marsh as a person, and a postlude summarises his activities in the remaining 26 years of his life. The main body of the journal has been divided by the editor into chapters representing the key periods of Marsh's activities. His spellings and customary abbreviations have been retained, and the text is fully annotated with copious footnotes: the research that has obviously gone in to these is phenomenal. Virtually every reference to persons and music has been carefully identified, and the footnotes in themselves are a valuable resource. Appendices include Marsh's own Catalog of Compositions, a list of his writings, which show his wide-ranging extra-musical interests (notably change-ringing and astronomy), as well as selective indices.

I would have found a chronology of the main events in Marsh's life useful and my only concern is the 'selectiveness' of the main index. This covers people and musical works well, but does not include activities or musical instruments (except for the organ). There is no reference to the *basso viola*, for example, in either index in any form. Marsh's account of his meeting with Carl Stamitz in 1777, who played viola d'amore concertos, joining Marsh on viola in the other orchestral items, is fascinating, yet there is no mention of the instrument in the index, only of Stamitz. (I wonder how many distinguished concerto soloists nowadays would deign to join in the orchestra?) Those interested in other aspects of 18th-century life would find difficulty in locating the references to, for example, bell-

ringing, ballooning, or school life at the time. Marsh's attitude to social activities such as smoking or shooting could also be usefully indexed. I fortunately found that I had made a note of the year (1782) when the octave cello mentioned above was described, otherwise I would have had problems in locating this episode. (An amateur doctor, on one of Marsh's visits to Bath, played his *clavicello*, a 3-stringed instrument tuned to Cs rigged up with 12 keys played with the left hand, the right hand bowing normally. Marsh's wry comment is typical: 'This contrivance instead of being any improvement to the violoncello was just the reverse...').

The book is an invaluable resource for any study of music in the second half of the 18th century. Stamitz's obvious sense of humour, in playing a piece on the G string by tuning the peg, and in playing a duet on one violin at a private party during his 1777 visit to Salisbury mentioned above, gives an insight on his character that is not available elsewhere. Marsh's interest in unsuccessfully purchasing a lute ('an exploded instrument') in the London shops, having been lent a copy of Mace's *Musick's Monument*, is one of the many fascinating entries. His technical knowledge of the organ was obviously vast, and many was the occasion that, at Chichester, he was asked to tune the organ in an emergency, or to attend to a cypher, much to the annoyance of Walond, the cathedral organist at the time. His assessment of the cathedral personalities which he found on arrival at Chichester is cuttingly perceptive, particularly when compared with his comments on the then Archbishop of Canterbury 'with whose mild and pleasant manners I was well pleased... on seeing any lady or gent'n of whom he had the least recollection, he made a point of accosting them & inquiring after their families etc.' To single out further entries of fascination would be difficult, but it is tantalizing that so many of the events of importance, such as his meeting with J.C. Bach who was trying out a pedal pianoforte, his reactions on hearing a rehearsal directed by Salomon of Haydn's *Military Symphony*, or his comments with Charles Burney on the singer John Braham's performances at another concert, only receive a brief mention. For those interested in the repertoire of 18th-century music making the volume is perhaps one of the most important sources available, showing that the continuing performances of Corelli and Handel's choral music were important influences in the early music revival in this country.

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Items for review held over till next month include:

A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485-1714 compiled by Andrew Ashbee and David Lasocki assisted by Peter Holman and Fiona Kisby. Ashgate, 1998. 2 vols, £89.95. ISBN 1 85928 087 0

Bernard Braughli The Clavichord Cambridge UP, 1998. xix + 384pp, £70.00. ISBN 0 521 63067 3

Haydn Studies edited by W. Dean Sutcliffe Cambridge UP, 1998. xiii + 343pp, £45.00 ISBN 0 521 58-52 8

Music in Spain during the eighteenth century edited by Malcolm Boyd and Juan José Carreras. Cambridge UP, 1998. vii + 269pp, £40.00. ISBN 0 521 48139 2

review by June Yakeley

J. C. Bach Domine ad adjuvandum & Laudate pueri edited by Richard Charteris. PRB 1998.

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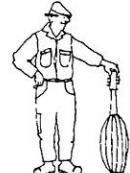
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Messiah in Huddersfield

Clifford Bartlett

Oxford UP arranged for the formal first performance of its (my) *Messiah* edition to be given by the Huddersfield Choral Society. Founded in 1836, less than a century after the work's first performance, it is the most renowned of the Northern choral societies, and I wondered how much of their Victorian traditions survived. The first performance of the work I heard was, within a day or two, fifty years earlier, and I expected the Huddersfield one to be not too dissimilar from that of 1948 in London's Albert Hall. Not that I remember much detail, apart from a large orchestra and choir. We were sitting behind the choir and I was fascinated by the conductor's movements. Huddersfield Town Hall is refreshingly small. I was surprised to hear that it seated as many as 1200: the scale seemed much smaller, far more intimate than the Queen Elizabeth Hall (with the same capacity) and with a much nicer atmosphere and sound. I happened to speak to Robert King the following day and he confirmed my surmise that it was a fine hall for baroque orchestras. In fact, despite the size of the choir and organ, the orchestra was small, with just three desks of firsts. The Northern Sinfonia played on modern instruments, but so stylishly that the most died-in-the-wool baroque fanatic could not fail to have enjoyed it, especially the lovely violin playing. I was particularly struck by the sustained notes in 'How beautiful are the feet', perfectly in tune and subtly coloured by a touch of vibrato. 'If God be for us' was played as a solo by the leader – maybe not an authentic practice, but marvellously executed. (She was not named in the programme, which cost two pounds, had plenty of adverts, including a puff for the edition, but didn't list choir or orchestra or have a proper note on the music.) The poor mezzo just couldn't compete in musicality. In fact, the less said about the soloists the better. They were often out of tune and never exciting. The tenor was the most ambitious: I've never heard so much embellishment in 'Comfort ye'. Normally one would expect none, but when the audience has known the music since childhood, it seems fair to produce a few surprises – but only if you can sing in tune! Singing your part from memory is all very well, but you have to learn the *Hallelujah Chorus*: he could only sing the unison bit, and seemed otherwise to be gesturing to his mother or girlfriend in the front row. His best idea was a silent one; after 'All they that see him', he half-turned to lead our eyes into the choral basses as they began 'He trusted in God'.

Continuity was a striking feature of the performance. No gaps, no shuffling from the chorus as it stood between movements – all stands and sits were made in silence and without fuss during the music. There was one exception: the audience was gestured to its feet before the *Hallelujah Chorus* rather than straggling up during the first twenty

bars. (That was not, incidentally, the first time that it rose: the concert began, by tradition, with a lusty audience filling the hall with two verses of 'Christians, awake!' – a moving experience, not like the artificial hymn singing on the Bach service reviewed on p. 23. Perhaps we should all have been asked to sing the *Hallelujah Chorus* as well.)

The conductor was Martyn Brabbins. He made the work sound absolutely fresh; I was not surprised when he told me afterwards that this was only the third time he had conducted it (the second time had been the night before). I'm not sure to what extent he was following institutional tradition: the odd practice of the harpsichord and organ never playing together, for instance, and the tempi of the choral singing. I feared a dull evening from the slow opening section of the overture, but from then on everything felt right. The detail was well prepared and the broad shape of each movement and the work as a whole was convincing.

As to the chorus, although I would not choose to have *Messiah* performed by such large forces, the Huddersfield singers certainly make a good case for it. Their control is excellent, their technical ability in getting round the semi-quavers at reckless speed is amazing, and they are extremely responsive to the conductor. The sound is bright and firm, helped by the immediacy of the acoustic. Their first 'wonderful, counsellor' nearly made me shoot out of my seat, the shock being all the greater since at the time my mind was focused on the organist, Simon Lindley. I had already been impressed by his accompanying of 'Christians, awake!' on the very large instrument behind the choir and was wondering how he would accompany the chorus. Certainly not by a tactful pretence that he was playing a baroque chamber organ! He was resourceful, dynamic and imaginative; I certainly wouldn't call it authentic, but it was convincing and it made sense on the instrument and with the choir. There were none of the time-lag problems that one might have expected. (He told me that he avoided stops hidden in the back of the organ for that purpose.)

Huddersfield has a tradition. Socially, it is interesting and valuable. Here is a musical institution which sells out every concert and has queues of potential sponsors. There is a civic pride, with performances in a noble hall. It is famous the world over. However purist I may be, I would not want to restrict *Messiah* to small professional choirs such as Handel would have used. As well as 'back-to-the-original' sort of performance, which *EMR* naturally favours, there is a need to find a viable way of involving larger forces. What I enjoyed so much about this was the vital mixture of tradition and style, and the ability to make a work that is so familiar sound fresh and new.

LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Shorn of Dryden's play, the Gabrieli Consort and Players' demisemi-staged performance of *King Arthur* (Barbican, 10 November) focused on Purcell's musical contribution. Although Paul McCreesh's free-range conducting style is unlikely to win prizes for poise or deportment, he always conveys a fresh direction to his musicians, even in pieces as well known as *King Arthur* (conductor and many of the singers performed without scores). Not only does he employ excellent musicians, but he knows how to lift their playing above automatic pilot. His sensitive interpretation of the more subtle moments was noticeable in this performance. His soloists excelled, with well-judged dramatic portrayals. Neal Davies contrasted the shivering Cold Genius in Act III with a richly bucolic *Cornus* in the rumbustious Act V (accompanied by funny hats for conductor and performers alike). Charles Daniels' sang lyrically in 'How blest are Shepherds', and there were fine performances from Rodrigo del Pozo and Peter Harvey. Mhairi Lawson and Julia Gooding captivated the audience with their expressive stage presence and singing. An exhilarating evening.

If choosing an area of London to twin with Venice, I doubt if many people would think of Hackney. But it was the slightly decaying splendour of the Hackney Empire that hosted the first visit to England of the Venice baroque orchestra Accademia di San Rocco and its director, Andrea Marcon (10/14 Nov). Bathed in ruddy lighting on an extended proscenium stage with a striking architectural backdrop, early music transferred easily from concert hall to theatre. In the first of two repeated programmes (a rare sign of confidence from a British concert-promoter), the 17 instrumentalists, with soloists drawn from the ranks, impressed in works by Alessandro Marcello and Vivaldi, with Marcello's dramatic cantata *Irene sdegnata* sung by soprano Laura Antonaz. The second programme featured the astonishing singing of male soprano, Angelo Manzotti. According to the programme note, he reproduces the timbre of a female voice, rather than a falsetto countertenor, by vibrating only the front of his vocal chords. Using the castrato Farinelli as model, his huge vocal range moved seamlessly from soprano to an occasional baritone. His voice production appeared to need real physical effort and was accompanied by some extraordinary contortions of his head and facial muscles. The sound appeared to resonate from the front of the face. Although diminutive in stature (unlike the historical castrati), he physically dominated the theatre with the dramatic intensity of arias from Vivaldi, Handel, Broschi and Giacomelli. Marcon's direction was stylishly effective, departing rhythmic drive and dramatic passion to the proceedings. Avoiding the frequent English jolly-romp approach to Vivaldi and friends, this was music performed from the heart.

Soprano Julia Gooding took the solo stage at the Wigmore Hall (19 Nov) for three cantatas by Michel Pignolet de Montéclair during the Florilegium concert of instrumental music by his French contemporaries. Singing in a vibrant mezzo tessitura, she brought a rich palate of vocal colour to these heart-wrenching pieces, in particular the depiction of a scorned woman going slowly off the boil in *Le dépit généreux*. Although I have given good reviews to individual members of Florilegium, their collective performance on this occasion didn't rise above the competent, despite effective moments by Katharine Spreckelsen, oboe, Lucy Russell, violin, and Daniel Yeadon, gamba. The players appeared ill at ease and Neal Peres Da Costa's harpsichord continuo, although inventive, was too dominant and busy. For example, the erotic air 'La beauté peu durable' started as a sensuous duo of soprano and viola da gamba, but the addition of the competitively florid harpsichord obscured and obstructed the vocalist and drowned the gamba.

I was surprised to find that their concert on 20 November was a Barbican debut for Frans Brüggen and his Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century. Their programme of Bach's *Magnificat* (with the Gulbenkian Choir) sandwiched between his Suites 1 and 4 (not the most musically innovative programme) was well enough played, but without much excitement and in a style that I am not convinced would have been recognised by Bach. Despite his country of origin, Brüggen must be as far from the windmill school of conducting as it is possible to get. Much of the time he sat back and let them get on with it, offering the occasional careful placing of a cadence or relaxed pointing of a phrase. Despite this light touch, Brüggen kept this expansive performance under control, focusing on classical lyricism rather than baroque momentum. There was more than a hint of 'notes inégales', both in the Suites and the gentle swaying oboe of Ku Ebbinga in 'Quia respexit' (and it was a nice touch for the soprano to stand behind the oboe for their duet). Despite the programme note's threat, even the trumpets were beautiful rather than blazing. Apart from stylistic concerns there were two misjudged performance decisions. 'Suscepit Israel' was sung by all the choir females, rather than the usual three soloists, thus obscuring the oboe's incantation of the chant; and in a moment of populist tosh, the ubiquitous Air from the third Suite made an unexplained appearance in the middle of the fourth.

The grandly titled St Ceciliatide International Festival of Music took place in the sumptuous and musically important surroundings of the Stationer's Hall, the venue for the first performance of Purcell's *Hail! Bright Cecilia* in 1692. The Stationer's Hall concerts have been resurrected over the past few years, linked to a dining club (which explained the pro-

liferation of dinner jackets). Indeed, the programme rather disconcertingly noted that almost as much time was spent in choosing the menus and wines as in preparing the musical programme. Among a number of concerts, two anniversaries were celebrated, the completion of Haydn's *Creation* and the death of Hildegard von Bingen. The staging of Kate Brown's theatrical presentation of Hildegard (prepared for the Scottish Early Music Consort) was simple but effective, although using the worst sort of Gerard Hoffnung music stands let the side down visually. Musically there was little to praise. Of the three singers (Colette Ruddy, Rebecca Outram and Fiona Milne), only the first avoided the sort of vibrato that unsettled both solo intonation and consort blend. The symphonia, rebec and vielle backing ranged from the inconsequential all-purpose medieval to the bizarre – notably an obtrusive and rhythmically-challenged bash on the nakers which might have surprised Mother Hildegard. The spoken text suffered from being all too obviously read from a script. It included the usual Hildegard naughty bits plus some pointed references to bald, over-weight old men lustng after young girls – something for the City types to ponder during their pre-prandial entertainment. The performance (on St Cecilia's day itself) of Haydn's *Creation* was rather better. It was only the second to use the English text prepared by the poet, Anne Hunter, around 1800 and adapted to Haydn's music with some difficulty by Lydia Smallwood and CB. The texts were delivered with conviction by the soloists Patrizia Kwella, Wills Morgan and Simon Birchall, although Morgan's enthusiastic and sweeping delivery occasionally bypassed the note. Fiori Musicali gave a sturdy performance under the emphatic direction of Penelope Rapson. It was revealing to hear the volume created by period instruments in the smallish hall.

Readers may no more expect *EMR* to include a review of a Bach Choir concert than one by the Mediaeval Baebes [we'd review them if they deigned to send us their CDs CB] or the Huddersfield Choral Society. But with a respected interpreter of early vocal music as their new conductor and the instrumental support of one of our leading period instrument orchestras, what would the renowned cast of thousands (or at least significantly into three figures) make of the B Minor Mass (RFH, 24 Nov)? It is many years since I heard the Bach Choir, so will not compare David Hill with his predecessor, Sir David Willcocks (although I did detect a rather familiar balletic style in Hill's conducting). Hill was a most inspiring conductor – he seemed at one with each of the performers, guiding, encouraging and shaping every entry, phrase and line with a naturally fluent grace and elegance. There were many moments of magic, one being the superbly-controlled move to the fugue 'Pleni sunt coeli' after the outpourings of the Sanctus. Despite the massed forces, Hill really did coax out of them a light and articulated vocal style – an astonishing achievement. A clue to his technique might lie in the fact that the whole of the opening chorus was sung from memory: who would have dared not to look at him? This was no louder than Haydn's *Creation* in the much smaller Stationer's Hall – I was actually able to hear the continuo organ.

On 27 November the Royal College of Organists promoted a mixed programme of music by composers connected with St Andrew's Holborn between 1713 and 1810. The choir of St George's Chapel, Windsor, joined The London Handel Orchestra for part 2 of *Israel in Egypt*. Of greater interest was a cantata by the blind John Stanley and the first modern performance of William Russell's only known organ concerto of 1810. Unlike the rest of the programme, the latter used modern instruments because of the pitch of the St Andrew's organ, which reduced the effect of Russell's harmonic twists. John Scott interpreted Russell as a classical, or even baroque, composer rather than an early romantic one, particularly in his choice of articulation. The Concerto had little of the musical power and harmonic daring of many of Russell's solo organ voluntaries – the organ and orchestra were generally in dialogue, with little attempt at coalescence. The final fugue was particularly predictable, the orchestra merely doubling the organ score, although the earlier Larghetto's dying motif set amongst Hadyn-esque garlands was pretty. One of several bizarries of programme writing omitted both title and words of the Stanley cantata (Op 3, No 5 – which Grove suggests is 'Compell'd by sultry Phoebus' heat') which was sung by the young soprano, Joanne Lunn, a recent arrival on the London concert stage. She has a clear and powerful voice and a confident stage manner; but her volume seemed to have more to do with pitch than mood – a greater sense of light and shade was needed. Her engaging (but occasionally unctuous) smile was applied somewhat indiscriminately, noticeably during the air in *Israel in Egypt* which describes the drowning of the enemy.

Space only allows a brief mention of four weekly lunchtime concerts in London's Temple Church, broadcast on BBC Radio 3 a week later. The impressive Consort Choir of the Birmingham-based Ex Cathedra opened the series with a programme built around Monteverdi's austere contrapuntal Advent *Missa In illo tempore*. The 10 mixed voices [a curious number for a six-voice work CB] projected a closely-focused sound under the spell of Jeffrey Skidmore's gently persuasive conducting. They concluded with Bouzignac's charming *Noe, Noe! Pastores*. The delightfully clear ringing tones of Carolyn Sampson must still be echoing around this circular church, albeit in homeopathically diluted proportions. Henry's Eight concert of Marian music was based around the propers of Byrd's Votive Mass for the BVM. The eight male singers have a harmonically rich and reedy sound with well balanced coherence. I particularly liked Isaac's *Virgo prudentissima* (cf p. 30), and Josquin's *alternatim Benedicta es*. The Palladian Ensemble gave a gentle concert of French 18th-century character pieces from France, opening with the tripping descending scales of Chédeville's Sonata IV. A group like this (recorder, theorbo and bass viol) really needs more intimate surroundings than a sizeable church, although the broadcast itself set them into a more friendly acoustic environment. The Hilliard Ensemble sang Christmas music from 14th century England and Hungary and 15th century Prague. But the highlight was Perotin's superb *Viderunt omnes*, first performed 800 years ago at Christmas 1198. If architecture is frozen music, then surely this is Gothic archi-

ture made liquid, with its solid foundation of chant and a structure built like a series of arches with filigree decoration. The Hilliard Ensemble's interpretation of rhythm and spatial structure was impeccable, as was their unrivalled vocal tone. Their ability to bring subtle interest to every note and each moment of articulation, and to use the opening transients of notes to lead and focus, makes them one of the most musical vocal groups around.

I hope that Johann Nauwach, Heinrich Albert and Andreas Hammerschmidt were looking down from heaven on the queues waiting for returned tickets for the concert of their music at the Wigmore Hall on 8 December. I am sorry to disappoint those readers who like a bit of blood on the floor, but the unassuming superman Andreas Scholl really does deserve all the plaudits he receives – it is almost impossible to fault him. His staggeringly clear and focused voice seem to be produced without effort. Although gestures may not come naturally to him, he uses them sparingly and to good effect. His musical use of a gently pulsating vibrato to enrich the vocal tone and to colour and shade a note is an example to all. Above all, he has a natural musical intelligence of the highest degree. Despite a slip or two in the overture to Handel's *Venendo amor*, the harpsichord accompaniment and solo playing of Markus Maerkl was some of the finest I have heard. A wonderful evening.

Two days later, the enterprising Wigmore Hall hosted another dream team with Jordi Savall and Ton Koopman – a partnership that goes back a long way. One theme that is emerging from the concerts over these two months is what separates the superstars from the merely excellent. Much of it is down to the intelligently subtle way in which individual notes are inflected and shaped, whether by a singer, instrumentalist or conductor. The Hilliard Ensemble, Scholl, Savall and Koopman are fine examples. Savall played with a vast depth of emotion and a huge range of tone. My only quibble was the breaking up of the usually fairly seamless *Folia* variations of Marais – but it allowed Savall to increase the emotional contrast between the sections. And only towards the end did Koopman's notoriously heavy harpsichord touch become at all apparent.

The amazing Bach 2000 project of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque soloists was launched in a short series of Bach Cantata concerts, including one at St Giles' Cripplegate on 12 December (BWV 16, 139, 98 and 133). Gardiner's Bach is magisterially strong and determined, though still musical. With one exception, all the performers were outstanding. Soprano Katharine Fuge was plucked from the ranks to replace Deborah York. The simple sincerity and clarity of her voice was ideal for this repertoire and she achieved a consistency of volume and tone over her range that eludes many sopranos. Her aria in BWV 133 (*Wie lieblich klingt es in den Ohren*) was particularly heartfelt. Julian Podger was most effective in the turbulent aria, *Gott ist mein Freund* (BWV139). The bass Gotthold Schwarz was an admirable story-teller in his many recitatives, although he had problems with some of the lowest notes, particu-

larly in the aria *Meinem Jesum* (BWV98). The one exception was the American countertenor Derek Lee Ragin, whose inappropriate stage manner was coupled with an overly operatic approach to gesture, vocal production and vibrato. His voice ranged through several styles from baritone to hooty-fluty, and his nonconforming dress and general deportment was little short of presumptuous. I could easily name all the instrumentalists as heroes, but will settle on Maya Homburger, the leader, Katerina Arfken on oboe da caccia, and Mark Bennett on a corno da caccia specially made for this performance. It was nice to see, and hear, a decent sized continuo organ – much better than the frequently inaudible little box organs.

For the third year running, the excellent Spitalfields Festival has run a short winter season. Two early music highlights were Paul McCreesh's Gabrieli Consort and Michael Chance. The master of the liturgical reconstruction took us back to a conjectural Christmas Eve Mass at St Mark's, Venice c.1600 based around Cipriano de Rore's mass on Josquin's *Praeter rerum seriem*, with large scale vocal and instrumental interjections from Giovanni Gabrieli. Featuring London's increasingly impressive battalion of cornett and sackbut players and 14 male singers, this was a plausibly authentic snapshot of the music that the Doge and his retinue might have heard from their privileged seats in the centre of the choir of St Mark's. All that was missing was the cavernous supporting acoustic and the 360-degree aural perspective: although there was a reasonable spatial separation between the various choirs, this was still a stereo rather than a surround-sound production. Two quibbles were the over-prominence of the countertenors' higher notes, which unbalanced the polyphony on a number of occasions, and the related problem that the bass and tenor vocal line was occasionally barely audible, particularly in the multi-choir pieces with one voice amongst four or five instruments in a choir. Nonetheless, a well-paced and exhilarating concert.

Michael Chance's sell-out solo Spitalfields recital (18 Dec) was a magical occasion. The acoustics of Christ Church proved to be ideal for solo song and the unobtrusive harpsichord accompaniment of Maggie Cole. Chance's confident and relaxed stage manner clearly captivated the audience and drew the listener in. He sang with a pure clear tone, coupled with perfect intonation and enunciation and a beautiful consistency of tone across a wide vocal range (not to be assumed with countertenors). For much of the recital of music by Campion, Humfrey, Monteverdi, Tippett and Celia Harper, he needed to do no more than float the tone out on the breath. The earliest music in style was in fact composed by Celia Harper within the past few years and featured the ethereal harmonics of one of the oldest instruments – the pre-Buddhist Tibetan singing bowl.

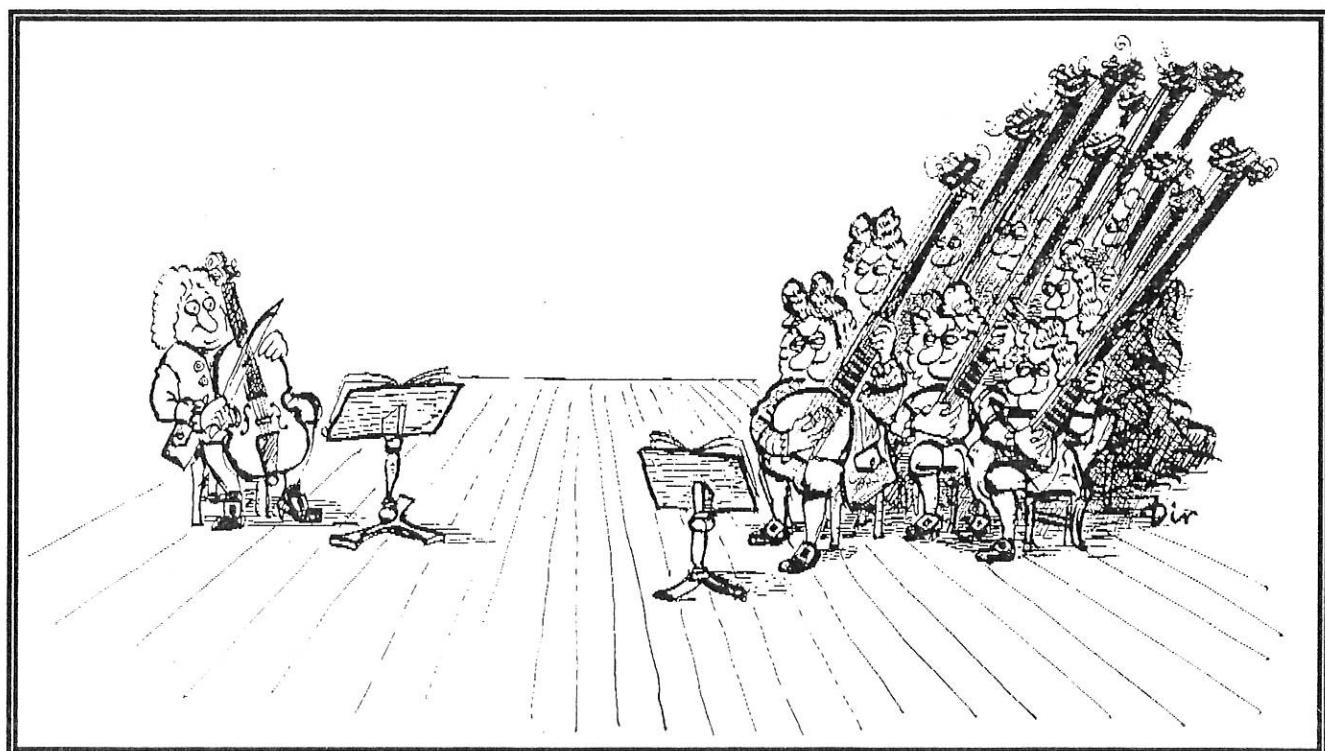
Philips Picket's contribution to the Christmas festivities was *Nativitas*, performed by the New London Consort at the Queen Elizabeth Hall (22 Dec). The programme ranged from the austere sensuality of an *Officium pastorum* music drama from a 13th-century manuscript in Rouen Cathedral

[for a chaste edition of the music see *EMR* 14] to a distinctly secular 'medieval' mummers play with strong 18th-century roots performed with gusto by a group of Morris men. Musically the highlight was the opening *Rouen Officium pastorum*. The simplicity of the vocal line, sung beautifully by the robed singers, refreshed the pallet for the exuberance to come. There was an effective accompaniment from a symphony and the rarely seen Queen Elizabeth Hall organ. The audience probably preferred the rollicking Germanic-Anglo-French carols from the 12th to the 15th century that formed the bulk of the second half, including versions of *Resonet in laudibus*, *Puer nobis nascitur* and *In dulci jubilo*. The instruments were increased to include a harp, gittern, fiddle, recorder, a 4' harpsichord and the organ. This was a tightly scripted production with little apparent room for the players or singers to improvise. Although this gave an extremely professional and focused sound, the lack of spontaneity was occasionally noticeable.

The seasonal battle of the Messiahs pitted The Sixteen (with Harry Christophers and The Symphony of Harmony and Invention at the Barbican on 11 Dec) against Polyphony (with Stephen Layton and Canzona at St John's, Smith Square on 23 Dec). Although St John's is a more intimate space than the Barbican, the forces used there were greater (25 singers/25 players against 18/23). Such is the London musical scene that there a number of overlaps, including tenor soloist Mark Padmore and the programme-note writer. Harry Christophers offered attention to musical detail (for example, in his exquisite shading of the repeat of the opening *Sinfony* and in his meticulous phrasing of the final fugue subject), which he achieved through strong direction of his forces. Stephen Layton concentrated on the broad sweep and emotional intensity of the unfolding drama, revealing an intensely musical personality. He has a confident willingness to trust his performers, to the extent of leaving the

platform altogether during the penultimate aria, leaving Emma Kirkby, Theresa Caudle (violin) and the continuo team to make music together. [Whence this desire to allocate 'If God be for us' to a solo violin? The same was done in Huddersfield; see p. 10. CB] Both conductors clearly enthused their performers, albeit by different means. Of The Sixteen's soloists, the rather pinched sound and occasionally wayward pronunciation (peopull, sayviyor, liveff) of Nancy Argenta disappointed. But Catherine Wyn-Roberts, Mark Padmore and Michael George were on fine form. As well as the excellent Mark Padmore and David Wilson-Johnson, Polyphony fielded the ideal team of Emma Kirkby and James Bowman, with his increasingly liquefiant and supple voice. Both choirs were excellent, with The Sixteen's clarity matched against Polyphony's drive and energy. But judged by the usual high standards of The Sixteen, I had two quibbles. At least two of the six sopranos dominated the chorus with unnecessary vibrato and at least one of the four altos had a tendency to swoop up to a note. Interestingly, although more of Polyphony's singers used vibrato, their overall effect was of a more unified consort. Only in the *con bello* fugal entries of the *Amen* did their slightly more romantic style become apparent, particularly when followed by the baroque clarity of Canzona's instrumental entries. That same *Amen* saw Stephen Layton's minor end of term naughtiness with the stealthy introduction of the large organ at the opposite end of St John's. But the commendable restraint of the organist, Laurence Cummings, made this a forgivable indiscretion (I hope he got danger money for transposing into D flat to match the low pitch).

It is interesting to see what conductors do with the Hallelujah chorus. Christophers left us to it, which meant that most of the audience eventually stood up, but took more than half the piece to do it. Layton turned round and, with commendable aplomb, conducted us all to our feet.



SILLY PLUCKERS

Peter Holman

I have been giving Tony Hicks's review of The Parley's *Handel in Hamburg* CD (*EMR*, December 1998) some thought over Christmas, and have come to the conclusion that such an extreme reaction from a normally sensible and well-informed critic is a symptom of something more than the differences of taste that inevitably arise in artistic matters. I think it was Alexander Silbiger who first pointed out that the concept of Baroque music was seriously flawed, not least because there were more profound changes of style and musical practice around 1700 than around 1750. In other words, the musical worlds of Purcell and Handel, Lully and Rameau, Schütz and J.S. Bach are further apart than we think, or at least, have tended to think in the past. In my opinion, the greatest advance in recent years in our understanding of late seventeenth-century music is that we no longer try to perform as if it was Bach and Handel. But things are not that simple: the style boundary comes at different times in different places in Europe and in different repertoires. I think most people would agree that Corelli's concertos are at least partially in the new musical world, while I am sure I am not alone in feeling that some early works of Bach and Handel still essentially belong to the old even though they were written early in the 18th century.

All this is a longwinded way of saying that I think that the overtures and dances Handel wrote for his Hamburg operas still belong to the tradition of French orchestral music derived from Lully and popularised in Germany by a group of his German followers, including Johann Sigismund Kusser, who studied with Lully, worked at the Hamburg opera, and even preferred a French version of his name, Jean Sigismond Cousser. As the recent *Cambridge Companion to Handel* recently reminded us (p. 238), 'we know almost nothing about the orchestra at Hamburg's Theater am Gänsemarkt', so we have to rely on parallels with other opera houses at the time, and in the end, on personal taste. As an academic as well as a performer I know only too well that academics can safely sit on the fence ('we know almost nothing') but performers have to decide what to do, for better or for worse. This led me to use essentially a late 17th-century continuo section for the recording, with theorboes, archlutes and guitars as well as harpsichords. Tony would doubtless have preferred me to use a single harpsichord, and had it been Handel of the 1740s, say, that is what I would have done – as I did in *Opera Restor'd*'s recordings of operas from that period by Lampe and Boyce. I think (and I'm sure he would agree) that there has been a tendency in recent years to use hand-plucked instruments too much in mid-18th century music; there is certainly no place for them in *Messiah* or Handel's other later oratorios.

Tony asks for 'evidence of hand-plucked instruments in this music'. As we have seen, there is none for the Hamburg opera house, but, to take a few examples almost at random,

Lully may have used two harpsichords, two theorboes and two lutes in his operas (J. de La Gorce, 'Some Notes on Lully's Orchestra', *Jean-Baptiste Lully and the Music of the French Baroque*, ed. J. H. Heyer (Cambridge, 1989), 108), Corelli used as many as five archlutes for a church concert in 1689 and two harpsichords and two archlutes for an oratorio in 1692 (Jesper Christiansen's notes for Ensemble 415's recording of Corelli op. 6, *Harmonia Mundi* 901406.07), and Georg Muffat wrote in 1701 that 'you should embellish the bass part of the full [orchestral] chorus with the accompaniment of several harpsichords, theorboes and harps (preface to *Ausserlesene Instrumental-Music*). Handel is known to have used two harpsichords and a theorbo in his opera orchestra in 1733 (Diary of Sir John Clerk, reported in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, p. 241), and Quantz was still recommending two harpsichords and theorbo for theatre orchestras in 1752 (*New Grove*, 'Orchestra'). The change from a rich and colourful continuo section to a monochrome single harpsichord was one of the changes from the old to the new around 1700; as Roger North put it writing in about 1720 of the fashion for harpsichord continuo: 'Hence, away all yee lutes and guitars, and make room for the fair consort bases!' (*Roger North on Music*, ed. J. Wilson (London, 1959), p.248). I encouraged Bill Carter and Liz Kenny to use guitars as well as theorboes or archlutes on the recording partly because the guitar was one of the most fashionable instruments all over Europe around 1700. We need not be surprised that it is not often mentioned in orchestra lists, because it was usually played as an alternative by lutenists, and sometimes by other instrumentalists. For instance, Roger North wrote that the violinist Nicola Matteis was 'a consummate master' of the guitar 'and had the force upon it to stand in consort against an harpsicord' (*Roger North on Music*, p. 357). In the theatre the guitar had particular associations with the sarabande, and was used to provide local colour for Spanish and north-African settings. That is why the libretto of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* calls for at least one guitar (the rubric 'Dance Gittars Chacony' is unpunctuated, so it is not clear whether one or two is meant), and why sarabands in the English Restoration theatre were often accompanied with guitars and castanets. In the court masque Calisto of 1674 'several sarabands with castanets' were danced in the prologue, presumably accompanied partly by the four guitarists listed in the payments for the occasion (my *Four and Twenty Fiddlers*, p. 367-9). For what it's worth, I was also encouraged to use guitars in the recording because the operas *Almira* and *Rodrigo* are both set in Spain. Tony specifically objects to a gentle strummed beat behind the characteristic tum-tum-ti rhythm of Handel's sarabands: they 'fill in the brief silences so characteristic of the style', while I have always felt that the strange halting rhythm of these pieces was conceived with a regular beat in mind. But that, I'm afraid, is just a matter of taste.

Grandi - O chiome erranti

8

O chio-me er - ran - ti O chio-me do - ra-te in-a-nel-la - te O chio-me do-ra-te in-a-nel -

O chio-me er - ran - ti O chio-me do-ra-te in-a-nel -

6

-la - te O chio - me er - ran - ti O co - me bel - le E vo -

-la - te O chio - me er - ran - ti O co - me bel - le, O co - me,

11

- la - te, E vo - la - te, E vo - la - te E scher - za - te,

E scher - za - te E vo - la - te, E scher - za - te, E scher - za - te, E scher - za - te

16

E vo - la - te E scher - za - te Ben voi scherzan - d'er -

E vo - la - te, E scher - za - te Ben voi scherzan - d'er - ra - te,

21

-ra - te, scherzan - d'er-ra - te, E son dol - ci gl'er-ro - ri,

Ben voi scherzan - d'er-ra - te Ma non er-ra-te in al-lac-cian - d'i_ co -

27

E son dol - ci gl'er - ro - ri Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac -
-ri. Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac - cian - d'i co - ri,

32

-cian - d'i co - - - ri, Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac - cian - do, Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac - cian - d'i
Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac - cian - do, Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac - cian - d'i

36

co - - - - ri,
co - - - - ri,

40

Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac - cian - - - - d'i co - ri.
Ma non er - ra-te in al-lac - cian - - - - d'i co - ri.

Bar 37: Tenor 2 has \sharp before first note

O chiome erranti,
O chiome dorate inanellate,
O come belle,
E volate,
E scherzate,
Ben voi scherzand' errate,
E son dolci gl'errori,
Ma non errate in allacciand' i cori.

O straying locks,
O gilded, curling locks,
O how beautiful you are;
you fly,
and play,
and in your pleasures you stray,
and your straying is sweet,
but you do not stray in entwining hearts.

Giambattista Marini

RECORD REVIEWS

CHANT

Angels from the Vatican: the invisible made visible Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, Mary Berry 75' 29"

Herald HAVPCD 220

Chant, including *Missa de Angelis*, Marenzio *Qual mormorio soave*, Palestina *Ave regina caelorum*, Venit Michael archangelus, Victoria *Duo seraphim*

The booklet begins with a summary of angelic theology by the Pope, who is also photographed shaking hands with Mary Berry. Since far more people believe in angels (70% of the UK population, I think I read recently) than believe in Christianity itself, this should sell well. I'm not sure, though, that this is the group's best CD. If you follow the texts, you will get an aesthetic dimension to the Papal prose. The group is mixed-voice, with four ladies well-known in the professional small-choir circuit. They don't blend convincingly in the polyphonic inserts, but the chant is as always convincingly sung. There is no explanation of why the *Missa de Angelis* is so called. CB

Gregorian Chant for the Church Year. Advent. Veni Domine Choralschola der Wiener Hofburgkapelle, P. Hubert Dopf 67' 48" Philips 446 087-2

This is from a series of six CDs of chant for the church year. Beginning with the first chant of Advent matins, it contains chiefly the propers for the four Sundays in Advent, supplemented by three hymns, three 'O' antiphons and the responsory *Aspiciens a longe*. The Viennese singers (especially the soloists) are far more satisfactory musically than the Canadian group reviewed below, without any apparent loss of fervour, though with less resonance. A fine recording, with different notes in four languages, texts and translations. It is unfortunate that the two chants reproduced do not match exactly the versions sung. CB

Gregorian Chant: Christmas Benedictines from Montserrat & Münsterschwarzach 150' 58" Deutsche Grammophon 459 421-2 ££ rec 1973 & 1981-2 2 CDs

This well-filled pair of discs begins with the monastic responsories for Christmas matins, sung with vigour and feeling by the monks of Montserrat. The rest of disc one and all of disc two, sung by the more-refined German group, comprises the propers for the three Christmas masses and Epiphany (including the ordinary for the first and last of these masses). These are quite old recordings: the Responsories date from 1973, while the masses comprise the first two of a five-LP Archiv set of 1982. Despite the large amount of music, the booklet has texts and triple translations (though not the four-stave and neumed chant of the original Archiv booklet). If you want coherent sections of chant repertoire,

not just a collection of favourite melodies or a textually-themed anthology this is highly recommended. CB

Pax: Gregorian chants on the theme of peace

Le choeur des Moines bénédictins de l'Abbaye de Saint-Benoit-du-Lac, Dom André Saint-Cyr 64' 40"

Analekta *fleurs de lys* FL 2 3058

The Abbey of Saint Benedict of the Lake is a Canadian offshoot of Solesmes. One has to balance realism – the feeling of a community of monks singing as part of their daily round rather than a choir chosen for the beauty or accuracy of the individual voices – with the absence of the polish that one expects from singers aiming to please a public. This is a particular problem when listening to the clinical sound of a CD, even though there is here a considerable amount of resonance from the Abbey. The theme of the programme is only apparent if you follow the texts (the words are not clearly audible without); but if you do that, you are likely to pay a closer and more critical attention to the vocal quality, unless your attention is fully occupied by translating the Latin – no other languages are given (and the hymns are set out as prose). I suspect that one really needs a recording of a service for the realism to outweigh the wooliness in sound, the weakness of the high notes and the vibrato. But I found that this grew on me; the singers really do sound as if their chant is more than just music. CB

MEDIEVAL

Hildegard of Bingen Luminous Spirit Rosa Lamoreaux S, Hesperus 71' 51" Koch 3-7443-2

This is Hildegard at her most highly orchestrated with a rich improvisation on recorders and medieval bowed and hammered strings throughout most of the pieces. I find the improvisations sensitive and inspired, sometimes doubling or imitating the voice-line, but more often providing drifts of counter-melodies which build and reflect upon the thoughts expressed by the music and the words of the singer. In *O viridissima virga*, the vielle launches into its own brief dance, as if unable to restrict itself to mere accompaniment at the words 'in you there is no deficit of joy' – much more satisfying and elevating than the familiar single or double drone. Three instrumental interpretations of Hildegard's music intersperse the sequence of vocal performances. 'Luminous' is a good description of the radiant voice of Rosa Lamoreaux, which avoids harshness, scooping, languid phrasing, abrupt entries, dull tone and most of the other enemies of lyrical solo performance. Her diction is good, and her word stress and phrasing (and the fact that she translated the texts)

reveal that she understands what she is singing, as well as sounding as though she does! The nicely-produced leaflet has some rather unenlightening notes by David Preiser which refer to the *Liber Subtilatum* as the 'Book of Subtleties' (sic). I love that word! I would recommend the recording for its beautiful sound, its varied scoring and presentation and, chiefly, for the sympathy with the music revealed by all three performers.

Selene Mills

Perhaps it is as well that I sent this disc to Selene: my own initial comments, written before I played a note of the disc, were more sceptical. 'It was not uncommon in the middle ages for instruments to double or support the voice', we are told in the booklet. It was not uncommon in the period since the Reformation for church music to be accompanied by the harmonium. One needs a little chronological and geographical refinement to limit the relevance of either statement. Since the notes imply that the music is liturgical, the remark is irrelevant and does nothing to justify the practice of the performers (cf p. 2 of this issue). The name of the group is not likely to attract anyone who as a child was, when looking particularly scruffy, compared with the wreck of the Hesperus – but perhaps that poem did not enter American popular culture. CB

[No title] *Acantus* 57' 40" Gimell 462 516-2

The information visible without removing the shrink-wrap is minimal: *Acantus* on the front, which otherwise features a crucifix necklace and a cleavage, *Acantus* and *Gimell* on the spine, and a statement on the back in four languages: 'Sacred "songs of the people" from medieval Italy, a passionate fusion of ethnic folk music and Gregorian Chant'. If you tear it off and see the back of the booklet, it tells you 'Acantus performs music from medieval Italy, music filled with the dreams and tears of ordinary people for whom prayer and song were an essential part of daily life.' Publicity has contrasted this with The Tallis Scholars, which until now has been the only group on the Gimell label (now part of Philips). There is certainly a contrast between that group's refined style and the more earthy sound of *Acantus*. It presents strong and extremely convincing performances of a repertoire that has been called primitive polyphony (here the more polite 'simple' is used). I have great doubts whether music performed in more remote churches had any more connection with secular and popular music than that sung in urban cathedrals: it was merely older-fashioned. The disc is better than its presentation – and is insulted by comparison with the Mediaeval Baebes in its publicity. I would love to hear the group singing more complex polyphony (perhaps even overlapping with the Tallis Scholars). Meanwhile, this is certainly worth buying, both for the performances and for the 'simple' but affecting music, despite the inappropriate instruments (cf p. 2 again). CB

15th CENTURY

Ockeghem *Missa Caput, Missa Ma maitresse*
The Clerks' Group, Edward Wickham 67' 19"
ASV *Gaudemus* CD GAU 186
+ anon from Trent MS88 *A solis ortus cardine, Gaudie Maria, O sidus Hispaniae*

It should suffice to say that this is up to the usual standard of the Clerks' Group's Ockeghem edition, but for those who have somehow missed my previous reviews I should elaborate a little. The singers are now so well-versed in this repertoire that I can't imagine that it has ever been sung better, even by Ockeghem himself and his 15th-century colleagues, while Edward Wickham's confident readings and his use of the word 'Ockeghemian' in his excellent notes amply demonstrate the depth of his dedication! The rendition of Ockeghem's chanson *Ma maitresse* by solo alto accompanied by two wordless voices is inspired, while from its idiosyncratic opening to its enigmatic conclusion the *Missa caput* has a grittily definitive quality about it. The notes provide a fascinating explanation of the curious scoring of this piece, with the quirky cantus effectively in the bass part, a challenge which Ockeghem and in their turn Edward Wickham and his singers overcome magnificently. I think I detect in the flowing lines the full fruits of the group's recent decision to sing from facsimiles. Another tremendous achievement. D. James Ross

16th CENTURY

Ashwell *Missa Jesu Christe; Aston Missa Videte manus meas* Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Stephen Darlington 92' 48" 2 CDs
Metronome MET CD 1030/31 ££

These performances of masses from the Forrest/Heather Partbooks by the choir for which they were probably compiled makes for fascinating listening, all the more so given that these are the first recordings of works which are both master pieces by very significant composers. Thomas Ashwell was admired in his own day and by succeeding generations (a line of the present mass survives in the Douglas/Fischear Partbooks associated with Lincluden Collegiate Church in the south west of Scotland) and this performance helps to explain why. He has an extremely confident and idiosyncratic sense of melody, not unlike that of his contemporaries Fayrfax and Carver, drawing upon the flamboyant idiom of the Eton Choirbook and directly prefiguring the bold melodic and harmonic vocabulary of Sheppard and Taverner. Although slightly less individual in character than that of his contemporary, Hugh Aston's setting has an impressive flow and an inspired sense of harmonic progression, and his creativity too never flags for a moment. The choir of Wolsey's own foundation, Cardinal College (renamed Christ Church following the Cardinal's disgrace) ostentatiously rivalled Henry VIII's Chapel Royal, and the present inheritors of this daunting tradition have a fine sense of their musical heritage. Solo

and full-choir sections are handled adeptly, and the unnamed treble soloist, who also dominates the full top line, is a worthy successor of 'young Robin' poached by an envious Henry VIII from his Cardinal's choir in the 1520s. If the acoustic of the 12th-century Oxford Cathedral occasionally sounds a little cramped for this opulent music, we are at least given the impression that we are eavesdropping on a living performance with a real historical and geographical context, for which there is ample room on both discs, would have been very welcome. Nevertheless, casting as they do a spotlight on two masters suffering undeserved eclipse, these important discs claim pride of place beside the equally revelatory Cardinal's Musick series. D. James Ross

Escobar *Requiem* Ensemble Gilles Binchois
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45328 2 5 57' 40"
Also includes Ancheta *Libera me Domine, Peñalosa Adoro te, Inter vestibulum*

This liturgical reconstruction of a late-15th-century Spanish Requiem service incorporating the music of Pedro de Escobar and his colleagues at the Castilian Court, Juan de Ancheta and Francisco de Peñalosa is a very important recording. The influence of these composers on later Iberian church composition is immense, and the present performance will also go a long way towards restoring the not inconsiderable reputations they enjoyed in their own lifetimes. This disc has all of the virtues of previous recorded and live performances I have heard by this admirable French group: scholarly rigour in programming and performance notes, a confident, no-nonsense, idiomatic approach to the music and consistently good intonation and sense of direction in the polyphony and chant. It also demonstrates the one tiny reservation I have, a very slight muddying of the texture due to some quavering in the middle voices. This minor blemish was also evident in live performance so is not a product of recording balance, but should cause no more than the mildest discomfort in listening to an otherwise very impressive CD. In conclusion, the chant, which is taken from early 16th-century Iberian sources, seems to have had some *musica ficta* applied, and it would be interesting to have been told more about this issue and for that matter a little about the ensemble itself. D. James Ross

Escobedo *Missa Philippus Rex Hispaniae A sei voci, Les Sacqueboutiers de Toulouse, Chœur Philippus Rex Hispaniae, Bernard Fabre-Garrus* 59' 42"

Auvidis Astrée E 8640

Also includes Clemens non Papa *Carole magnus eras; Cotes Mortus est Philippus; Gombert Dicite in magni; Guerrero Ave Maria, Regina caeli; Manchi-court Nunc enim si centum; Rogier Laudate Dominum*

It is perhaps inevitable that the appearance of a new edition of a work stimulates a number of recordings and the Westminster Cathedral recording of this mass (see *EMR* November 1998) is immediately confronted with a French rival. The two approaches to the music could hardly be

more different. The French version interperses the movements of the mass with motets by Escobedo's Spanish contemporaries and combines voices with wind instruments, the case for which is well argued in the notes, where we also have a detailed account of the reconstruction of the mass. A clever choice of material, impressive singing and playing, and some vigorous tempi give this recording a real sense of occasion, and my only reservation is the slightest imperfection of intonation and blend in the singing of *A Sei Voci* which I have noticed in previous recordings. By contrast, the Sacqueboutiers and the full choir, specially formed for the occasion, are on better form, and as the director takes the conventional approach of accumulating forces and momentum as movements proceed, most sections end well. D. James Ross

Willaert *Missa Christus resurgens* [with Richafort's motet], *Magnificat VI toni, Ave Maria* Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summerly Naxos 8.553211 £ 56' 27"

As the notes for this CD mention, most of Willaert's masses are early works based on motets by other composers, and this charming but unpretentious setting takes as its model the motet *Christus resurgens* by Jean Richafort, a Franco-Flemish composer widely admired in his own lifetime, and whose music was also cannibalised by Palestrina. Both the motet and the mass are capably and expressively sung, although there is little sign of this in the music of Willaert's youth of the forthcoming splendours of his Venetian period. What is present is an unerring sense of line and inexhaustible powers of invention, both of which are brought out admirably by Jeremy Summerly and his singers. The *Magnificat* is a very simple setting, while the *Ave Maria* contains the best music on the disc and inspires some of the best singing. D. James Ross

Elizabethan Consort Music 1558-1603

Hespérion XX, Jordi Savall 66' 05"

Alia Vox AV 9804

Alberti, Daman, Mundy, Parsons, Strogers, Taverner, White, Woodcock & anon

Elizabethan consort music is less frequently recorded than Jacobean and is a repertoire commonly regarded as not being well performed by non-English players on the grounds of being too mannered and having too much vibrato. But these performances are surprisingly straightforward, and are strong advocates for this repertoire, based largely on the *solfâinge songs* of BL 31390. The tone of the consort is very full and boomy, despite the presence of two genuine 16th-century instruments. But all the basses, at least, have metal wound strings and soundposts, so one misses the reedy sound that one might expect for renaissance music. But that apart, it's superb. The playing is beautifully judged, warm and passionate, unforced tone. There are large ensembles, such as two 7-part *In nomine*s by Parsons, the Daman *Di sei sopranis*, which is gorgeous, and polyphonic pieces by Woodcock, Strogers, Mundy and

Taverner. The programme is lightened by the inclusion of MS dances, here scored with lute duet and marvellously light-fingered percussion, making the whole a very enjoyable listening experience.

Robert Oliver

Music for Cardinal Wolsey by Richard Pygott & John Mason Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Oxford, Stephen Darlington dir 52' 20" Nimbus NI 5578 Mason *O rex gloriose* Pygott *Missa Veni sancte spiritus*

Pygott was the first composer of the early Tudor period whose music had any impact on me, thanks to the carol *Quid petis o fili*. I soon found a context for that piece in the early Tudor carols, but his other music remained unknown until 1994, when Antico Edition published both pieces on this disc, with the editorial tenor parts by Nick Sandon that are recorded here. Pygott was in charge of the choir of Wolsey's private chapel, an institution of comparable size and status as that for which Taverner composed at Cardinal College. Their musical styles are similar, though Pygott is a little less fanciful. Mason moved in the same orbit. His motet without trebles sounds a bit congested, a fault which cannot entirely be blamed on the composer. CB

17th CENTURY

Biber Sonatae tam aris quam aulis servientes The Rare Fruits Council, Manfredo Kraemer Auvidis Astrée E 8630 67' 21"

This is second Biber set I've heard by this exotically named group and, although there is no contribution from the carillon stop on the organ this time around, it's every bit as exciting and enjoyable as the previous disc. Someone ought perhaps to have told the booklet author (or perhaps the translator?) that the 'middle' parts are played on instruments of the violin family rather than viols – that option still remains to be explored, as does my contention that the top viola (notated in soprano clef) should be tuned like a violin. These minor considerations apart, this is an excellent set and one which will feature a lot in my Biber-playing sessions (which are probably more frequent than most people's!) BC

Biber Battalia Locke The Tempest Il Giardino Armonico, Giovanni Antonini; Trompetten-Consort Innsbruck 67' 36" Teldec Das alte Werk 3984-21464-2 Also includes Biber *Partia VII in c* & *Sonata representativa*; Zelenka *Fanfare in D*

Whenever one comes upon a disc recorded by Il Giardino Armonico, one has to be wary of making snap judgments, for they have a habit of gradually working their way through your reservations. I'm afraid, however, that this one has continued to evade acceptance. I just cannot understand why the performers think it necessary to preface Biber's stunning C minor partia for two violas d'amore with a pseudo-17th-century Ricercare for gamba and lute by one of the viola d'amore

players. And what is a tenor chalumeau doing in the piece at all? The fact that Vivaldi used it to double the bassline in two works is hardly a reason to introduce it in music probably written before the instrument existed. The Zelenka fanfare at the opening (supposedly setting the scene for Biber's *Battalia*) is a nonsense: like a famous speaker at a meeting, it needs no introduction. BC

Jacquet de la Guerre The complete harpsichord suites Carole Cerasi (on Andreas Ruckers, 1636/1763, in the Cobbe Collection, Hatchlands Park) 78' 46" Metronome MET CD 1026 *Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin* (1687), *Pièces de Clavecin* (1707)

The backbone of this CD is the *Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavessin* (1687), a set of four dance-based suites written when Jacquet de La Guerre was in her early twenties. Whilst the overriding influence is that of D'Anglebert, each of the suites is preceded by a prelude in the manner of Louis Couperin, and some of the writing looks forward to the lighter and more varied style of Francois Couperin. Carole Cerasi's reading of the suites is utterly convincing – despite heavy ornamentation she maintains the pulse and momentum of the music and articulation is varied without ever becoming fussy. The harpsichord sounds superb, but is given a very close recording, providing lots of information but a reduced sense of space around it. The two suites of the *Pièces de Clavecin qui peuvent se jouer sur le Violon* (1707) make up the remainder of the disc. Robin Bigwood

W. Lawes *Fantazia-Suites for Violin, Bass Viol and Organ* Music's Re-creation (Carla Moore vln, John Dornenburg bv, Lorna Peters org) 64' 35" Centaur CRC 2385

Persistent readers of my reviews will wonder if I ever have a bad word to say about the music of William Lawes. This review will raise their suspicions further. In mitigation I plead that I've been singing and playing his music for nearly 30 years, and the pleasure of performing the Fantazia Suites has been more frequent for me than that of hearing them. Scored for violin, bass viol and organ, some, with their undemanding viol parts, were perhaps for the viol-playing king, Charles I. Others, definitely not for lesser techniques, were presumably played by Lawes himself. They are not easy to bring off. The organ, often playing three polyphonic lines, must balance with the bass viol, which some-times merely doubles the bass, but is often obbligato. The violin, out on its own, must not dominate the texture, yet must play with passion and commitment. All of which happens on this recording, and if the instruments all sound a bit 18th, rather than 17th-century, this is a detail. The playing is delightfully expressive, fully encompassing the switchback moods of Lawes – mostly cavalier, even droll, then suddenly poignant and passionate. The players are beautifully balanced,

the violin never shrill, the viol clear and articulate. I recommend it highly, and sceptics should listen to the great D Major suite which ends the disc. It is brilliantly played, and I defy anyone not to be moved by it.

Robert Oliver

Marais Pièces en Trio (1692): *Trios pour le coucher du Roy* Ricercar Consort, Philippe Pierlot dir 139" 07" 2 CDs in box Ricercar 206482

The *Pièces en Trio* by Marais are for me amongst the most beautiful chamber pieces of their time, and listening to this double CD of the complete set of six suites is something of an indulgence. The performance quality is no disappointment; the Ricercar Consort is completely at home with the repertoire – the performers somehow manage to capture all the weight and tension of the pieces whilst retaining their cool: a perfect French aloofness, in fact. The instrumental forces are large but employed creatively: the two upper parts are divided imaginatively into pairs of recorders and *dessus de viole* (Suites III, IV & VI) and flutes and violins (Suites I, II & V) whilst the continuo is divided in the manner of the 'Chambre du Roi' between harpsichord, guitars and theorbos. The title of the disc apparently comes from a manuscript source of works by Lully, 'Trios pour le Couche du Roy' in the Bibliothèque national, upon which Marais may have partly based his own trios. This is a real classic for every CD collection and definitely worth owning. Marie Ritter

Monteverdi Amor, dicea: Complete duets 2 Il Complesso Barocco, Alan Curtis 73' 57" Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45302 2 7

The back of the booklet is more informative than the front as regards the content of this disc. Of the 17 tracks, only seven are duets, for various combinations of voices (including two basses: *Interrotte speranze*, already featured on a Veritas sampler disc). The singing is excellent – there is something about the Italians and their own language that no-one else can quite recreate. The *Lamento della ninfa* allows a direct comparison with their main rivals, *Concerto Italiano*. The first section is certainly more understated and strictly in time. The central lament (the title piece, *Amor, dicea*), where the Nymph is told to sing *a tempo del' affetto del animo* rather than *a quello dela mano*, sees the harpsichord continuo waiting for her (rather defeating the desired effect, surely), and it's only the regular singing of the three men that creates the tension. One is suspicious of rubato that always slows down, never moves on. In this piece, Curtis is less controversial than the *Concerto Italiano* but no less musical. If you have Vol. I (see *EMR* 39, p. 16), you will need no recommendation to buy this: the greater variety of this disc gives it even more appeal – a fine performance of *Hor ch'el ciel*, for instance, with that amazing final phrase not lingered over but still soaring to fine effect. Highly recommended. BC/CB

Monteverdi *Canzonette* (1584) Concerto delle Dame di Ferrara, Sergio Vartolo dir Naxos 8.553316 £ 78' 01"

Readers will remember that I have had doubts about previous Vartolo recordings. Fortunately, here there are no quirks or oddities and each of the 21 *Canzonette* is effectively performed. But they are treated somewhat intensely and despite the strophic forms are given an expressive madrigal treatment. Taken in bulk this is overkill, and invests the music of the 17-year-old composer with a seriousness that it does not warrant; so only play a few at a time. The continual high voices (Patricia Vaccari, Maura Pederzoli & Lucia Bagnoli SSA) are impressive in themselves but cannot sustain an hour and a quarter broken by only a few instrumental verses. I doubt whether violins would have had such exclusive prominence as early as 1584, let alone the cello. But buy it if you want every note that Monteverdi wrote. CB

Pachelbel *The Complete Organ Works* Vol. 5 Joseph Payne on The Gothic Organ ca. 1500 at St Valentinus & Dionysius, Kiedrich (Rheingau), Germany 62' 40" Centaur CRC 2353

Ciacona in C, *Dies sind die heil'gen zehn Gebot, Fugue on the Magnificat sexti toni No 1, Praeludium in D minor, Toccata in F, Hexachordum Apollinis (Arie 1-5)*

Vol 1 of this series was reviewed in *EMR* July 97, vol. 2 in Nov. 1997, but vols. 3 & 4 have passed us by. Vol 5 includes five of the six *Hexachordum Apollinis* variations of 1699 and the substantial *Ciacona* in C. The Kiedrich organ was rebuilt in 1653 using material dating back to at least 1500. It is known in England because of the link with Sir John Sutton, referred to in the notes as 'Lord Sutton' – how can Americans hope to rule the world without knowing the difference between a baronet and baron? Sutton became a major benefactor to this Rhineland town and church in the mid-19th century, 'gothicizing' the organ and church as befitting his Oxford movement and Roman Catholic leanings. In doing so, he destroyed the principal feature of the German baroque organ by moving the *Rückpositiv* from its forward position on the gallery to an echo position in the church tower. The playing has more than a tinge of neo-baroque articulation, registration and style. But more seriously, there is a lack of understanding of the expressive qualities of the organ's winding system and its essential link to keyboard touch and the careful release of notes. The booklet even suggests that the winding supply was 'designed to impart a randomly expressive quality'. A curious notion – such winding system was designed to impart exactly what the player imparts to the keys. This can include the percussive harmonic spit that occurs when notes are released too quickly, an effect heard too often on this CD. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Ercole Pasquini *Opere per organo* Wijnand van de Pol on organ at S. Magno in Amelia (Terni) 64' 26" Bongiovanni GB 5068-2

+ Carleton Verse & Tomkins Fancy for two to play

Although far less well known to organists than Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710), Ercole's music formed an important step in the development of the Italian keyboard style in the period leading up to Frescobaldi, who succeeded him at the Capella Giulia in 1608. He was born around 1560 and died in Rome around 1620 in dubious mental health. His 30 or so surviving pieces cover the expected repertoire of toccata, canzona and ricercare and two mellifluous *durezze* pieces. The 7-stop organ in S. Magno includes pipework from c.1600, although it is substantially an 18th-century instrument. Its sound is a bit of a disappointment, unnecessarily 'old' and spiky, and is rather too closely miked – there is little of the acoustic bloom that one would expect and which the music tends to rely on. It has the curious feature of two keyboards, one in the gallery and one at ground level. Presumably on the basis of 'if you've got it, flaunt it', the CD includes duos by Tomkins and Carlton (sic), although I would have preferred a couple more of the Pasquini pieces [or perhaps some of the other Pasquini's pieces for two figured basses CB]. The playing has some fluidity, but not to the extent demanded by this improvisatory music. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Perti *Cantate morali e spirituali* (op. 1, 1688) Rosita Frisani, Catarina Calvi, Carlo Lepore SAB, Solisti della Capella musicale di San Petronio, Sergio Vartolo 83' 81" Bongiovanni GB 5061/62-2 2 CDs in box

Giacomo Antonio Perti, born in Bologna in 1661, followed the compositional style of 'the three greatest luminaries of our profession' – Rossi, Carissimi and Cesti'. His Opus 1 was dedicated to Leopold I, the Hapsburg emperor, and eventually earned Perti the Emperor's chain. It contains some stunning material, and rarely resorts to formulaic writing without some touch of originality. He wrote some 25 operas and 20 oratorios but his only other published work was *Messa e salmi concertati* (1735). The most arresting feature here is the accompaniment: the continuo is taken by harpsichord (played by the director of the group), and a very resonant cello, using *affetti* of a type I have never encountered before in 17th-century music, such as a strong bow vibrato (*piangono*, Cantata I). The harpsichord is also full of imaginative little tricks, a few of which sound convincingly baroque. Together they play wonderfully waywardly – almost drunkenly in Cantata II, and the two violinists are in league with them in robbing the listener of any sense of security about rhythm or tempo. A double bass is sometimes added, making the texture rather heavy, and lutes are entirely absent: perhaps this is right in such a modern performance. The overall effect is something like harpsichord music being brilliantly interpreted on a Steinway grand.

Soprano Rosita Frisani has a powerful and beautiful voice, well matched by the sonorous (sometimes enhanced by his standing in a boomy corner of the church) yet agile bass of Carlo Lepore, who can be heard finding his note before starting a phrase, and occasionally drops notes in his

semitone runs. The (female) alto's voice is suitably sexless for moralistic cantatas; it blends well but displays less flamboyance than the other voices. Cantata IX is perhaps the weakest, and it might have been prudent to omit this from the disc and thus contain the music on a single CD (thus cutting its price from £24 to £12); but all the other cantatas have merits which I would be sad to lose. Selene Mills

Scheidemann *Works for Organ* vol. I Pieter van Dijk (Van Hagerbeer/Schnitger organ at St Laurenskerk, Alkmaar) 78' 40" Naxos 8.554202

Naxos is becoming a major player in the world of early organ music with the start of complete editions of Weckmann (see *EMR* 46 p. 22) and now Scheidemann, both masters of the Hamburg music scene in the period leading up to Buxtehude (indeed, Scheidemann may have been one of his teachers). He is one of my favourite early Baroque composers. Pieter van Dijk is a superb interpreter of this music, particularly in structuring the large scale pieces (like the 16-minute *Magnificat* and the 12-minute *Jesus Christus* on this CD). My only (minor) quibble is the choice of organ. Although it is magnificent (see my review of van Oortmerssen's Bach CD in this issue), it is very much an early-18th century instrument rather than a mid-16th century one. An interesting oddity is that it appears to have been in equal temperament since 1725; but there is something about the voicing and acoustics that make this less of an issue than it would be on many organs, and only rarely does the out-of-tuneness grate (one place being the final chord of the *Magnificat*). But van Dijk is organist at the Lutheran church just down the road in Alkmaar, and clearly knows his way around this complex instrument. It is good to hear two of Scheidemann's intabulations of motets by Bassano and Lassus; pieces like this were heavily criticised by writers such as Apel, but are overdue for a reassessment of their position in the development of keyboard writing. Organists should listen to van Dijk's beautifully judged articulation of the treble semiquavers in the majestic *Toccata* – a fine example of the sort of effect that is made easier by (but is not a result of) early paired fingering. At less than £5 a CD, buy several them for your friends: if they have any musical sense they will love it, and possibly you, forever. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Sweelinck *Cantiones Sacrae* The Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, Timothy Brown Etcetera KTC 2025 2 CDs in box 140' 44"

It is embarrassing (since I have in the past written notes for several Clare/Brown recordings and Tim buys music from us) to write that I find this disappointing. One reason seems to be a lack of confidence in the 1619 publication (which is a set of parts, not a score as the notes state). Most recordings of complete prints retain the original order of items, on the assumption that whether or not we follow the logic, there is some reason for it: this doesn't. The

conductor's notes draw attention to the small-scale nature of the domestic performances for which the music was most likely intended; the logic of that would be, rather than occasionally reduce the number of singers from 26 to a smaller group, to make one-voice-a-part the norm. The organ part is dismissed as mostly unnecessary, whereas in fact, whether the music is *stilo antico* or not, by 1619 its presence seems to have been customary. The desire to omit it goes along with the sort of English choral tradition which to me makes the singing style inappropriate: a lack of impetus and dynamics which feel imposed rather than rising out of the words. The whole effect seems more suitable for an anthem in a chapel service than a recording of music from a different tradition (how different we cannot know but can try to imagine). The music is more interesting than this. I'm not sure if the *Hodie Christus natus est* on the John Eliot Gardiner Christmas disc is quite to my taste (see p. 31), but it has something that is missing here. CB

The anatomy of melancholy Ensemble Daedalus, Roberto Festa cond. 59' 47"

Accent ACC 98128 D

Dowland *Lachrimae I-VII*; Cazzati Aleman detta la Ghislardi, Giga detta la Bargellina; Frescobaldi: *Capriccio IX di durezze*; Soriano Romano *Il soprano scherza col cromatico*; Salvatore Durezze e ligature; Trabaci: *Consonanze stravaganti*, Gagliarda quinta cromatica

There are many aspects of this recording to be admired: the quality of the playing, the juxtaposition of roughly contemporary Italian music in extravagantly expressive style with the restrained intensity of Dowland's *Lachrimae*, presented complete. The ensemble of five viols plus lute, is conducted, so the dynamics are very well, perhaps too well, controlled. The approach becomes self-conscious, almost orchestral, occasionally in the Dowland and much more often in the Italian pieces. These are extremely interesting. A Pavan and Galliard by Trabaci, a four-part Capriccio by Frescobaldi, pieces by Salvatore, Romano, and, much later in style, by Cazzati. In the end, the selection doesn't hang together, despite its theme of melancholy. The inward-looking, almost penitential soul-searching of Dowland's epic cycle does not fit in with the extrovert operatic expressiveness of the Italians, and this is emphasised by the performance. With the introduction of the violone to the Italian dances, the sound becomes too large-scale, inappropriate to viols. The deliberately soft focus (blurred articulation) which only sharpens up with the concluding (out-of-context) Giga emphasises the harmonic movement. This suits some of the Italian pieces, but not the Dowland, where the rhythmic texture varies far more than can be made apparent with this unbroken legato. Fine playing does not overcome these problems for me. The booklet includes my entry for the inappropriate photo competition. It shows eleven people standing in an empty, stone-lined pond in an unidentified location. It can't be where the recording was made, Fontevraud Abbey (which I visited between

hearing the recording and writing the review), and there are only seven involved in the recording. Robert Oliver

Saints and Sinners: 17th-Century Musical Dialogues Capella Figuralis, The Netherlands Bach Society, Jos van Veldhoven 72' 25" Channel Classics CCS 12498 Benedictus a Sancto Josepho, Charpentier, Grossi, Hacquart, de Koninck Pfleger

The origin of the title and idea is Frits Noske's book (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), though none of the pieces printed there in full are recorded here. A couple are in the same author's *Music Bridging Divided Religions* (Noetzel, Wilhelmshaven, 1989) and other pieces are from his unpublished transcriptions. For most listeners, it will be new repertoire, and well worth seeking out. The music is slightly less impassioned than its Italian models and the performance style suits this, drawing you in rather than shouting at you. If you can respond, you will find it most rewarding: music of high quality, well sung. CB

LATE BAROQUE

Mauro d'Alay *Sonate a violino solo col basso* (London 1728) Maurizio Cadossi vln, Marco Frezzato vlc, Francesco Saverio Pedrini hpscd Tactus TC 682901 66' 34"

I have received two Italian records under the Tactus label – see also Franceschini in the Classical section – by composers who are new to me, and who are not listed in New Grove. The six sonatas of Mauro d'Alay were published in London in 1728 and are interesting works in the Tartini/Locatelli style. The music is strong, at times somewhat chromatic, with interesting bass lines. Initially impressed by the first three sonatas, I found a slight tendency to ramble, with rather too much use of sequence, in some of the later sonatas. Four of the set are in minor keys. They are virtuoso pieces, ably played by Maurizio Cadossi on baroque violin. I found that I had to cut down the slight edginess of tone in the treble, and the harpsichord continuo could perhaps have been a little more forward for my taste, but these are interesting sonatas, well worth adding to a baroque violinist's collection. Ian Graham-Jones

Albinoni *Cantatas* Derek Lee Ragin ct, Roderick Shaw hpscd, Nicholas Sello hpscd Etcetera KTC 1204 59' 23" Albinoni: op. 4/2, 4, 6, 8, 10 & 12; Caldara *Astri di quel bel viso, D'improvviso amor ferisce*

Many moons ago, I asked CB to put me on his list to review CDs of male altos: not because I relish the falsetto sound, but because I sought a voice that might bring the castrato repertoire back to life. With all due respect for the singers I've reviewed since then, such a quest represents (as Dr Johnson said in another context) the triumph of hope over experience. However, because male altos seem to be more enterprising than most sopranos or tenors in seeking out new repertoire, they've shown

me much worthwhile but unfamiliar 17th- and 18th-century music; and it's mainly for that reason that I welcome this CD. Derek Lee Ragin's is not a big voice, but that hardly matters in this chamber repertoire. He generally sings in tune (which does matter), and he understands his texts even if he doesn't always act very vividly. The six Albinoni cantatas here are the even-numbered items from a set of 12, published in 1702, which are equally divided between alto and soprano ranges. An interesting feature of two of the cantatas is the brevity of the final recitative & aria pair, epigrammatically setting just two or three lines of text. The two Caldara pieces [source not given, but not from his op. 3] are more ambitious both vocally and dramatically, and so ask a bit more from the soloist than Ragin can quite provide – witness the ferocious descending climaxes of various clauses in the last aria of 'Astri di quel bel viso', where the voice peters out towards the end of the phrase. I'd love to know how these two pieces might come across in the hands of Lorraine Hunt – or, if they were transposed (and why not?), of Suzie Le Blanc or Nancy Argenta.

Eric Van Tassel

Bach *St John Passion*, 1724 including 1725 appendix) John Mark Ainsley Ev, Stephen Richardson Christ, Catherine Bott, Michael Chance, Paul Agnew, Stephen Varcoe SATB, Choir of King's College Cambridge, The Brandenburg Consort (Roy Goodman), Stephen Cleobury 138' 12" (2CDs) Musica di Angeli 99185 £

I reviewed this enthusiastically in 1997 (EMR 30, p. 15), when it was issued by Columns Classics. It is worthy of note again because of its amazing value on a new label. I found it as part of a bargain box of 15 CDs for £25.00 entitled *The Credo Set* advertised by CD & Video Selections of Dorchester; the Bach alone is available at £5.00. Incredible value, provided that you do not want texts, translations and notes.

Stephen Daw

Bach *Weihnachts-Oratorium* Monika Frimmer, Yoshikazu Mera, Gerd Türk, Peter Kooij SATB, Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki BIS-CD-941/942 144' 50" (2 CDs in box)

Suzuki and the Bach Collegium have already made a very strong impression with their sumptuous and expressive Bach recordings; in terms of beauty of sound they virtually rule the field. The *Christmas Oratorio*, one of their most ambitious projects so far, would seem ideally suited to their style: it is largely written in a lush, expressive and almost galant idiom that is so apt for the six feasts of Christmas (and thus largely free of the bracingly archaic and often agonizing elements of much of Bach's church music). Suzuki is also able to communicate a sense of explosive excitement, making a particularly striking impression with the very opening of the oratorio. There is also a wonderful vigour in many of the other choral movements: e.g. the 'Ehre sei Gott' of Part II and the

closing choral of Part VI. Much of the string playing is also very striking, particularly in the shepherds' chorus of Part III. Virtually all the solo singing is excellent and the ensemble numbers – often the bane of performances that employ excellent idiosyncratic soloists – work particularly well (especially the 'Ach, wenn' trio of Part V). Some will inevitably complain about Suzuki's occasional capriciousness of scoring (e.g. the organ-only bass line for an aria in Part V and the use of full sopranos for the soprano interjections in recitatives). But there is a clear interpretative presence in this performance and an obvious care in the sound and balance. What is sometimes lacking is a subtlety of counterpoint, rhythm and articulation: the sinfonia to Part II is impressive enough in timbre but rather woolly in ensemble, floppy and dull (perhaps this is indeed a perfect representation of the shepherd's life). Some of the fast numbers lack grounding and subtlety: the glorious tenor aria from Part IV has little inflection, even with the pungent suspensions donated by the composer; the opening chorus of Part V is an easy candidate for the speed record but lacks detail and sparkling articulation.

There is clearly much of worth in this performance and it stands well above the generic norm. As always in Bach Collegium Kazu Mera is striking. The voice sometimes seems hardly to exist but its delicious nonexistence is admirably captured by a microphone placement that seems closer than normal classical practice; nevertheless, the ensemble numbers suggest that Mera can also produce a fuller sound. Whether you find it beguilingly expressive or intolerably girly, this voice suggests that there are still many directions in which the male falsetto can be developed. *John Butt*

Bach Epiphany Mass Ann Monoyios, Angus Davidson, Charles Daniels, Peter Harvey SATB, James O'Donnell, James Johnstone organs, Gabrieli Consort and Players, Congregational Choirs of Freiburg & Dresden, Paul McCreesh 159' 59" Archiv 457 631-2 (2 CDs in box) ££ *Missa brevis* in F BWV 233, *Sanctus* in D BWV 238, Cantatas 63 (*Sie werden aus Saba*) & 180 (*Schmücke dich*), Organ preludes BWV 572, 567, 603, 619, 654, 657, 719, 734, 738a

Those for whom an hour is the maximum duration for a church service would be horrified by the Leipzig Sunday morning *Hauptgottesdienst*, which ran for some three hours from 7.00 am. This well-filled pair of discs gives a good idea of how that time was spent. The sermon is mercifully shorter than would have been normal (six minutes of Luther, placed at the end of disc 1, so easily cut). This is an essential aid in understanding the context of Bach's music. A plan of the church would have been useful. I was not entirely sure where I was placed; should I sit with my back to the speakers or sideways?

Some of the performances are very good, but not all problems have been solved. The congregational hymns are much too well rehearsed (and pitched quite high): there is no trace of the heterophony characteristic

of congregational singing. It is good to have inter-line interludes on the organ, but it is often not clear to the congregation when to come in for the next line: surely there should be a regular pulse from the end of one line to the beginning of the next unless the entry is very clearly signposted by a trill with termination. The Gottfried Silbermann organ at Freiberg Cathedral sounds magnificent, but James O'Donnell makes far better music on it than James Johnstone, whose continuo playing is more convincing than his solos. One wonders how much time they had to get used to the instrument.

It would be naive to assume that the service was recorded in the order in which we hear it, especially as two different churches and pitches were used (by no means obvious without reading the notes). Yet the *concertato* music improves as the programme proceeds. The two cantatas are delicately and wittily sung and played, especially by the oboes and horn (Anthony Robson & Catherine Latham; Philip Eastop & Robert Evans). The Mass is less successful. The *stile antico* Kyrie has a 19th-century holiness about it and the opening movement of the Gloria races as if Minkowsky was in charge. Ann Monoyios, who later sings very well, gets nowhere near the subtlety of the solo oboe in the *Qui tollis*. The bass soloist, Peter Harvey, is also less impressive here than in the cantatas. The use of countertenors in an ensemble in which boy trebles are replaced by sopranos feels odd: female altos might fit better. The tenor Charles Daniels, who perhaps fortunately has no solo in the Mass, is outstanding in the cantatas, making an unforced sound without giving the feeling that he is putting on a restrained, 'early-music' voice. A small choir, including the soloists, are used for the Mass and Cantata 65, just a solo quartet for the *Sanctus* and Cantata 180. I'm not convinced from the result that the extra voices were necessary, but such close comparison is useful evidence for the choir vs soloists controversy.

This isn't a perfect recording. But in addition to its documentary value, both for the liturgical context and for the use of genuine organs of the period (the smaller one used for continuo is also a proper church instrument, not the usual portable), it has two marvellous cantata performances that will delight all who enjoy Bach's music. *CB*

Bach Secular Cantatas Monika Frimmer, Lynne Dawson, John Elwes, David Wilson-Johnson SSTB, Orchestra and Choir of the Age of Enlightenment, Gustav Leonhardt Philips 454 467-2 67' 21" *BWV 208 Was mir behagt*, BWV 215 *Preise dein Glück*

Bach's secular cantatas are frequently dismissed as secondary to the composer's main, spiritual concerns. Yet it takes little familiarity with this music to realise that not only are many of the gestures and idioms common to both secular and sacred realms but that the music itself is often identical: parts of Cantata 215 reappear in the Mass in B Minor and Christmas Oratorio and Bach's most famous aria, 'Sheep may safely graze' from Cantata 208

is in fact a secular piece in honour of a worldly ruler. To Bach, the realms of heavenly and earthly rule might have been closer than would be comfortable for many of us today. But Gustav Leonhardt, autocratic in aura if not in person, is clearly able to capture the majesty and certainty of the secular order of Bach's age.

By the recent trends in Bach performance – a certain blandness on the one side and a lusciousness of sound on the other – Leonhardt's performances might sound surprisingly ugly and stilted. The opening of Cantata 215 is slow, dry and rather regimented, some of the bow strokes in the bass rage aria produce sounds that are virtually unpitched, the choir often speaks more than it sings and the whole is filled with the evil 'Dutch' *messa di voce*. Some things in the 'Hunt' cantata (208) are disappointing: Monika Frimmer lacks the necessary fizzing coloratura and the famous aria (Lynne Dawson) is bedevilled with flat singing or sharp recorder playing (or both). But throughout there is still a sense of an incredible breadth of expression and subtlety; Leonhardt's supremacy as a Bach interpreter is not just a myth. Behind that stilted opening lies not only a sense of royal pomp (and, perhaps, that of the original outdoors performance of 1734) but a wonderful detail and pacing of rhythm. Indeed Leonhardt is virtually the only director I can think of who can take pieces such as this at a tempo well below the chic early-music norm and still communicate a sense of dance and overall direction. If this is not enough, there is a tremendous breadth of affect, most excitingly presented in the final recitative of Cantata 215. Ugly, mannered, unfashionable and occasionally scrappy, this is not a beautiful disc (even by Leonhardt's own standards), but I think it still reaches depths that are seldom achieved elsewhere and, at the very least, it should be valuable instruction for anyone concerned with Bach performance.

John Butt

Bach Organ works Vol 5 Jacques van Oortmerssen (1646/1725 van Hagerbeer/Frans Caspar Schnitger organ, Alkmaar, Holland). Vanguard 99105 68' 21" BWV537, 564, 578, 592, 690/1, 768

I have always admired van Oortmerssen's outstanding musical intelligence, but his playing hasn't always portrayed that genius to best effect. But during the course of this Bach series, he has showed himself to be increasingly capable of projecting the most intimate and complex of musical thoughts. He has developed an intelligent musical fluidity and freedom which puts him at the peak of Bach interpreters, a position he has long held as a teacher. This is playing of the utmost maturity. You will never grow tired of it. Particular highlights of this magnificent CD are the effective ornaments added to the slow movements of both the Toccata BWV 464 and Concerto BWV 592, the appropriate promotion of the 'little' G minor Fugue to a powerful *pleno* piece, and the masterly portrayal of the emotional intensity of the C minor Fantasia and Fugue. There is an

interesting point of interpretation in the massive partite on *Sie gegrüßet*. Rather like the B minor Mass, this has survived a rather patchy conception to become one of music's masterpieces. The booklet refers to the alternative chorale text associated with this piece, *O Jesu, du edle Gabe*. This attribution occurs in at least one important MS and is a better fit with the number of variations set by Bach, although the order of the variations is different (and, to me, rather curious). The text of *O Jesu, du edle Gabe* is far more intense and dramatic than *Sie gegrüßet*. But van Oortmerssen plays the variations in the more usual (NBA) order, and his interpretation veers towards the meditative and thoughtful and is therefore more appropriate for the gentler mood of the *Sie gegrüßet* text. The organ is the magnificent one from Alkmaar (see the review of Scheidemann above), one of the finest of the wonderful collections of Dutch 'Bach' organs. I once heard a distinguished player give an entire recital without realising that it is an 16' organ - neo-baroque registrations (8, 4, 2, Mixtures) will not work, and the *pleno* has to be based of the 16' Principal. But van Oortmerssen is thoroughly at home here, and brings out the many distinctive tone colours. A must! *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Bach Organ Works vol. 8 Ton Koopman (Drei-faltigkeitorgel, 1754-66, Basilika St. Alexander & Theodor, Ottobeuren) 69' 34" Teldec Das alte Werk 3984-21466-2

Recording the complete *Orgelbüchlein* is always tricky. With 48 pieces, many of only about 45 seconds, there is no ideal way of keeping the momentum and mood going during the 70 or so minutes it takes to play the complete set. Some CDs interpolate sung chorales; I have rarely found that satisfactory, although it does set the pieces in context. Koopman plays them straight, which is probably the most sensible approach, although he does play some single manual pieces on two manuals. If you know the pieces, this is disconcerting, as it changes the polyphonic balance. His choice of registrations does not always make this an easy CD to listen to in one go. Although it is possible (but not necessarily probable) that Bach would have played some of these miniatures on full organ, Koopman rather overdoes it. The full organ sound of the larger of the two Ottobeuren organs sounds its age on this CD. I didn't notice this when I played there last year - I wonder if the recording position was a bit too close or if the combination of reeds and flue stops in the full chorus is better avoided on this essentially French organ. The gentle sounds of individual stops are wonderful, and take the listener to the spiritual heart of this sublime music which, despite minor reservations, is superbly played and well worth a listen.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

The Bach Family Circle: Music for oboe and harpsichord Geoffrey Burgess ob, Ann Murphy hpscd 58' 26" JSB BWV 992, 1020, 1035; Telemann *Methodische Sonata 4*; CPEB *Hobo solo in g* H549

The two players come from Melbourne, but their main training has been through authoritative Dutch teachers (Ku Ebbinge for the oboist, Koopman, Leonhardt and Glen Wilson for the harpsichordist). Even after attentive study of Burgess's note, listeners may well still remain unclear that only the two works by C. P. E. Bach and Telemann are heard in a probably original form. The *Hobo solo* is a delightful piece - over ten minutes of lovely material I had never encountered. Burgess's playing is mostly fluid, expressive and quite delightfully varied after the manner of his teacher. Ann Murphy's accompaniments are also of a very high quality, although perhaps a little too dominated by block chords for my taste (and the absence of melodic doubling of the bass doesn't help here). The idea to fill out gaps in the Bach oboe list with ingenious extrapolations certainly deserves credit, and this Australian issue deserves international credit. *Stephen Daw*

Besozzi Sei soli per oboe e basso continuo (London 1754) Alessandro Baccini ob, Franco Perfetti bsn, Stefano Celeghin hpscd 49' 13" Tactus TC 700201

The Besozzi were something of a musical dynasty who enjoyed an international reputation in the mid-18th century. The composer represented here died in 1793 at the age of 92. The family's power base was the Duchy of Parma, though their fame was such that for two months in 1735 Alessandro and his bassoon-playing brother Girolamo were the star guests at the Concert Spirituel. In 1770 Charles Burney wrote a flattering critique of their playing - 'charming... a realisation of some significance' - and the following year a certain W. A. Mozart felt he should pay his respects. On the basis of this disc, both travellers were present at a thoroughly civilised and civilising occasion. The melodies flow elegantly, do not outstay their welcome and are supported by a bass line that is sufficiently active to provide a more than adequate accompaniment on its own - indeed, when the harpsichord is used it is recorded so distantly as to be little more than an irritating background rustle. This is a shame, as the wind duo (on modern instruments) play beautifully, wistful in the adagios and sprightly in the allegros, and the embellishments are particularly effective, both in their placing and content. Any lover of the galant style will savour this disc, though even they will look at the price/playing time equation carefully. *David Hansell*

Bonporti 6 Motetti a canto solo con violini Daniela Uccello, Kaunus Chamber Orchestra, Augusto Ciavatta 58' 23" Bongiovanni GB 5549-2

Bonporti's motets deserve a recording, but this does not do them justice. Daniela Uccello is not convincing enough a singer to make them work; even if you like her sound, the intonation isn't good enough, and the orchestra is lack-lustre. The only virtue is the booklet, which includes texts

and translations rather better than those currently in the King's Music scores. *CB*

Couperin Music for Harpsichord vol. 2: *Eighth Ordre, Concerts Royaux 3 & 4* Laurence Cummings hpscd, Reiko Ichise gamba 66' 46" Naxos 8.550962 £

I have always found Laurence Cummings's playing particular satisfying - superbly musical, informed, creative and varied - and this disc is no exception. Three works are presented: the eighth Ordre, with its *tour de force* Passacaille, and the third and fourth Concerts from *Concerts Royaux*, for which Cummings is joined by Reiko Ichise on gamba. These latter works are, for me, the highlight of the disc, with the two players ideally matched and clearly sharing a deep understanding of the music. For example, the Muzette of the third Concert is wonderful, as is the *Courante à l'italienne* of the fourth. Recording quality is excellent, with lots of detail and a roomy acoustic, and the harpsichord, a double by Michael Johnson after Taskin sounds very good indeed. If there was ever a Naxos bargain then this, along with vol.1, is it!

Robin Bigwood

Couperin Barricades mystérieuses: pièces de clavecin Blandine Verlet hpscd 73' 05" Auvidis Astrée E 8649 ££ (rec 1976-89)

This is a sort of 'Couperin's Greatest Hits' CD that restricts itself to pairs and small groups of pieces from Ordres 1 to 8 (Books 1 and 2). This is not, however, apparent from the track listing, which gives only piece titles and no indication whatever of source or date. Verlet is very much a *claveciniste* in the grandest style: she creates masses of dark-hued sound, brim full of ornamentation and with lots of rubato. For the rich and decorative allemande- and sarabande-based pieces this is fine - Couperin should always be played with a fine sense of breadth - but I object to pieces with a fairly simple rhythmic basis, like *Les barricades mystérieuses* being pulled around very much. Verlet nearly pulls it to bits, surging forward here and slamming on the brakes there, such that, if you didn't already know the piece, you'd be hard pushed to guess its time signature at first! Other movements, especially some of the lighter character-pieces, are beautifully played though, and it would be difficult to criticise the fundamental approach to articulation and execution of ornamentation, both of which are spot on, in my opinion. An acquired taste, but not for want of character.

Robin Bigwood

Music of the Couperins Asami Hirosawa hpscd BIS-CD-982 66' 49"

L. Couperin Suites in *a* & *C*; F. Couperin *Ordre XIII*, A-L. Couperin *Les tendres sentiments, L'Affligée, La du Breuil*

This is a most enjoyable recital, carefully compiled and thoughtfully played. If there is sometimes too much feeling of 'moment' at the expense of 'whole', this at least contributes to the very positive sense of personal commitment in the playing. The

préludes non mesurés are convincingly realised in the two suites of Louis and the succeeding dances are given substance without over-inflation. It was in François' *Folies* that I most keenly felt a need for more continuity: though each mood is neatly captured, overall pacing seems erratic and the variations do not quite hang together. The three pieces by A-L that end the programme provide Hiroswa with a final opportunity to display the sumptuous sound of the instrument – fans of low harpsichord sound will savour this recording. Throughout, choices of registration are apt and the tutti is almost frightening in its richness. The performer's own notes appear in three languages but there are no translations of A-L's titles, a small but nonetheless disappointing lack of attention to detail in presentation. No lack of detail in the playing, though.

David Hansell

Gasparini *Santa Maria Egiziaca* Constanze Backes, Joachim Diessner, Christoph Burmeister-Streffer, Olaf Tetampel SATB, Ensemble Corydon Köln 77' 14" Bongiovanni GB 2220-2

The story of this oratorio (which was wholly new to me) is greatly simplified from the *Golden Legend*. Mary of Egypt (*Santa Maria Aegyptiaca*), who seems to be an avatar of the woman taken in adultery in Luke's gospel, journeys from Alexandria to Jerusalem in search of amorous conquests; but after she has been tempted by Pleasure, Penitence arrives to show her the error of her ways, and she turns to Jesus. All four characters have barn-storming opportunities for vocal histrionics (this may be the only Baroque oratorio I shall hear this millennium in which the recitatives are at least as exciting as the arias): Pleasure (alto) seduces, Penitence (tenor) admonishes and consoles, Lucifer (bass) pops up briefly to rage, and Mary (soprano) displays by turns every emotion you can think of. There are rapid shifts of tempo and affect throughout the piece (only a couple of the 20-odd arias last over 2½ minutes each). But this is possibly the least able performance I've ever heard on a commercial recording. It's no fun saying that, for those involved are obviously dedicated to their art; but the piece includes what are technically some of the most taxing passages I can recall, and the performance is not just disappointing but occasionally embarrassing. (Even the string intonation, which one normally takes for granted nowadays at professional level, is often flawed.) At least Constanze Backes (Mary) and Christoph Burmeister-Streffer (Penitence) usually sing in tune, although Backes's very intensity of expression sends her off the rails occasionally. If she can acquire greater technical control without losing that fire and passion, I shall hope to hear more of her. I can't recommend the recording for anyone's aural pleasure; but it is worth hearing, especially by some group who could themselves perform the piece more adequately.

Eric Van Tassel

Handel *Poros* (in German) Günther Leib Poros, Philine Fischer Mahamaya, Margarete Herzberg Nimbavati, Hellmuth Kapahn Gandharta, Wenner Enders *Alexander the Great*, Franz Stumpf *Timageles*, Händel-Festspielorchester Halle, Horst-Tanu Margraf dir Berlin Classics 0093742BC 156' ££ (3 CDs in box) Rec 1958

The keen Handelian will have learnt a lot merely from the listing above. Some tampering has clearly been done to the libretto, since Indian names replace Italian ones, and Poro and Gandarte/Gandharta sing down an octave. The booklet tells us that the arranger, Heinz Rückert, 'replaced the Italian original's repetitions with verses which are based on the original forms and at the same time aspire to create a rational presentation of the characters' [by verse the translator means line]. O dear! The English listener is not given the benefit of translation of the libretto. The start is inauspicious, with a very slow first section to the *Overture* that isn't even enlivened by double-dotting. The first aria has a bass singing at a pitch uncomfortably near that of the continuo: Handel's own solo bass parts, on the contrary, always take the continuo line as their starting point. The horn parts are interesting, but Handel scored the aria just for unison violins. In the next aria, much of the violin figuration is given to solo violin, which is perhaps as well since the tutti sections are horribly messy; but a wind group appears when the violin stave has rests. The men sound very Germanic – not perhaps a fault since they are singing in German, but concealing the pace and character of an Italian opera. But there is a strong sense of drama, something not always present in more authentic recordings. It is best to think of this as an historical document of interest for the study of the process of the revival of Handel's operas; if that is what you want, this is certainly worth hearing.

CB

Handel *Saul* Stephan MacLeod *Saul*, David Cordier *David*, Knut Schoch *Jonathan*, Barbara Schlick *Michal*, Claron McFadden *Merab*, *Witch of Endor*, Marcel Beekman *Abner*, Gotthold Schwarz *Samuel*, Joachim Carlos Martini cond 173' 22" Naxos 8.554361-63 £ (3CDs in box)

This is the second of Martini's recordings of Handel oratorios to appear on Naxos, taken from live performances and previously issued privately. (The first was *Athalia* – see *EMR* 45, p. 19. The latest, at the moment available only from Junge Kantorei, is a regrettably bizarre treatment of Handel *Il trionfo del Tempo e della Verità* in which the otherwise unrecorded 1737 score is expanded from two to three hours' length by the addition of material from other versions and elsewhere.) At budget price the *Saul* is quite acceptable, the main overall fault (as in *Athalia*) being the poor balance between the ill-focussed chorus and the forwardly placed orchestra (with an exceptionally clangorous theorbo). Martini pushes the fugal choruses rather hard, but in other respects his direction is

sensitive. Schlick and McFadden are well cast in the contrasting roles of Michal and Merab, though the latter does not chill the blood as might have been hoped as the Witch of Endor (a part written by Handel in tenor clef). The unhistorical casting of David as a countertenor – a weakness on other recordings (see *EMR* 41, p. 18) – is here a strength: Cordier sings the high-lying vocal line with power and passion. Poorly-pronounced English occurs only in the small part of Samuel's ghost. Like Gardiner, Martini includes all the High Priest's music, but his text is marred by errors derived from the Halle edition (notably the spurious *da capo* in Merab's 'Capricious man' and the addition to the Act 2 'Wedding Symphony' of a solo organ version of the gavotte from the overture to *Semele* and some quirky decisions of his own. He inserts an aria for David ('Fly, malicious spirit, fly') discarded before the first performance during revisions which left no proper context for it, and has the D major aria 'Ye men of Judah' sung instead of the usual recitative setting before the final chorus, introduced by a curious organ improvisation in recitative style. (Handel seems to have used the latter aria in the first performances, but its presence here confirms his wisdom in eventually rejecting it.) The full-price Gardiner and the mid-price Neumann recordings still retain their superior place, but Martini's version has some interest for keen Handelians and does not seriously mislead the general listener.

Anthony Hicks

Hasse *I Pellegrini al Sepolcro di Nostro Signor* Rachel Elliott, Valérie Gabail, Gérard Lesne, Michael Chance, Peter Harvey SSAAB, Il Seminario Musicale, Gérard Lesne dir 75' 23" Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45329 2 4

In this, the 300th anniversary of the composer's death, it seems right that what was arguably his most popular work should be recorded. Gérard Lesne and his colleagues do far more than play lip service to the commemoration, I'm glad to say, for this is an excellent recording of a first-rate performance. The music is beautifully conceived and each of the five soloists revels in Hasse's lyricism and in the chance to decorate the repeats in a style quite unlike other baroque works (The piece was first performed at Dresden in 1742). Seven recitative and aria pairs are the primary ingredients, with each half ending with quintets (the first called *laudo*, the second *coro*). While I hope this is not the only outstanding Hasse CD I hear this year, it is almost certain to remain in my top ten for 1999.

BC

Music of Antonio Lotti The Harvard University Choir, The Harvard University Chamber Orchestra, Murray Forbes Somerville dir Centaur CRC 2376 54' 23" Mass for three choirs, *Benedicam Dominum, O vos omnes, Crucifixus* (a8), *Trio Sonata in A* (vn, ob, BC)

The impetus for this CD comes from the acquisition by Harvard's Houghton Library of the library of Broadcast Music Inc,

which incongruously contained a MS of the Mass, probably written at Dresden between 1717 and 1719. This is of considerable interest (though curiously not to the note-writer) as a multi-movement setting of the Kyrie and Gloria written for Dresden a decade or so before Bach did the same, even apart from its substantial intrinsic merits. The performance is good enough to show this while still leaving room for one that is more idiomatic and characterful. The familiar *Crucifixus* a8 seems to be done in the style implied by the 19th-century sources rather than the Dresden MS: the organ is omitted, the A in tenor II bar 26 is flattened, the speed seems a bit slower than I would understand by *a tempo giusto* and it sags too early at cadences. There are a couple of less intense *a capella* pieces performed by the Morning Choir (alas, the three choirs of the mass are not the morning, afternoon and evening choirs!) and the trio sonata makes a jolly conclusion to the disc. CB

Rameau *Les Indes galantes* [instrumental suite]
Prima la Musica, Dirk Vermeulen 45' 21"
Eufoda 1283

Prima la Musica enjoy a considerable reputation in their Flemish homeland. They use modern instruments, but that does not prevent their playing this music with a good understanding of its often elusive style (the conductor numbers Brüggen, Herreweghe and Christie amongst his mentors), even down to the potentially irritating comma before the final tonic. Only occasionally does one miss the 'authentic' timbres – when, for example, the strings use too long or too heavy a bow-stroke or wind try too hard to sound 'antique'. One can hardly blame any orchestra for wanting to explore this sensational music and there is no doubting that, within their own parameters, Prima la Musica do a good job. However, this disc may well be overshadowed by those from Brüggen and McGegan that I reviewed recently, though at a cheaper price than c.£14.00 it would not be unworthy of attention. David Hansell

Rameau *Pièces de Clavecin en Concerts* Les Nièces de Rameau 60' 09"
Accord 206592

This must be my fifth CD of these pieces, and a very welcome one too. It is different from the others in taking seriously Rameau's commercial ploy of alternative instrumentation. I have no qualms about re-orchestration, being an accessory for the crime (if so be it) with my own ensemble. I would, however, be more circumspect over what composers (or publishers) say to sell their music. Rameau's suggestion that the harpsichord part could stand alone as solo clavecin music is pure opportunism. So far I've heard versions with violin, gamba and flute. This one has two violins, the second violin not being merely a transposition of the gamba, which could have played a reconstructed bass line (not difficult to do) for the sake of balance. The

gamba does, of course, participate in the usual disposition, playing with as much éclat as her colleagues on violins and keyboard. A fine production with excellent sound. Kah-Ming Ng

Scarlatti Sonatas Virginia Black hpscd 60' 20"
crd 999 344-2
K24, 113, 119, 120, 146, 213, 318,-9, 380-1, 466, 501-2

It was a harpsichord music compilation CD by Virginia Black made some years back that really fuelled my own interest in the instrument to begin with. So these recordings, which appear to have been made in the second half of the eighties, bring it all flooding back. Virginia Black has the poise and panache of a modern concert pianist – her performances are fluent, seemingly effortless, and, in some of the more tricky sonatas, unbelievably accurate. The tempo of the Scarlatti D minor sonata (Kk 120), for example, is barely credible – one begins to imagine, as in some of the Scott Ross recordings, that a third hand must have sometimes have found its way into some of the sessions. Who knows? The Soler is enjoyable too, inevitably less well known than the Scarlatti, but just as well played. The harpsichords, after Taskin (Scarlatti) and Goujon (Soler), are rich and sustaining, and the acoustic is very full, with the harpsichord quite distant, all of which makes for a fairly diffuse sound for much of the time. Disappointingly, action noise is often very intrusive. For accomplished, musical performances of Scarlatti and Soler these discs are a good buy, but if it's more quirky and daring playing you want, look elsewhere. Robin Bigwood

Telemann *Tafelmusik* (First Production)
Arion 70' 50"
Analakta fleurs de lys FL 2 3118

The two first pieces on this disc overlap with last month's offering from Manchester's Orchestra of the Golden Age. Where the latter chose to include the G major quartet, Arion omit it and by omitting repeats, manage to fit on all of the other pieces from the set – a trio sonata in E flat, a flute sonata in B minor and the Conclusion in E minor. I must confess that I preferred both the Canadian performances. Technically, it is a closer, warmer recording with a direct acoustic and a more defined balance between the players, who seem more relaxed about the entire undertaking. The trio sonata is particularly attractive. BC

Telemann *La changeante, Les nations anciens et modernes, Suite in D* [TWV55: g2, G4, D21] Northern Chamber Orchestra, Nicholas Ward 57' 58"
Naxos 8.553791 £

It is nice to see Telemann's music making it into the mainstream in this way, but I'm afraid there is little here to attract our readers: the first two suites are already available (albeit at almost three times the price) from Chandos with Simon Standage directing Collegium Musicum 90, who are

in a different league altogether, and the third is not such a stunning piece that the disc becomes an essential buy. BC

Telemann *Concerti da Camera, Chamber Music*
Ensemble Florilegium 53' 20"
Channel Classics CCS 5093 (rec 1992)
Concerto in a, Corellisierende Sonata in F, Paris
Quartet 6 in e, Quadro in g, Trio Sonata in Bb

This remains one of the best recordings of Telemann around. The programme consists of five of his most outstanding chamber works, including the quartet in A minor for recorder, two violins and continuo (originally recorder, oboe and violin, but it works just as well here) and the Sixth Paris Quartet in E minor for flute, violin, cello and continuo. The instrumental forces are unusual but effective: with two theorbos in addition to cello and harpsichord, the ensemble is able to offer an immensely satisfying array of dynamic and tonal contrast to support the upper parts. Aside from the obvious technical skill and sophistication of these musicians there exists an extraordinary rapport and confidence between them which transcends the bounds of the recording studio. Highly recommended.

Marie Ritter

This is one of several of several Channel Classics which are being re-marketed, most of which we have reviewed already. Had we not had so many new CDs this issue, we would have at least listed them, if not re-reviewed them, since they are of very high quality.

Telemann *Kammermusik mit Viola da Gamba*
Ensemble Baroque de Limoges, Christophe
Coin 56' 26"
Auvidis Astrée E 8632
Quatuors TWV 43 C2, G12, h3; Sonatas 42 F10, g7

The vein to be mined by artists recording Telemann seems inexhaustible. How constantly interesting is the music from this most fecund of composers! Although it has long been enjoyed by amateur players, there is no doubt that the chamber music responds brilliantly to the extra energy of virtuosi. These artists especially bring a highly charged virtuosity to the music, none less so than bass violist Christophe Coin, perhaps better known these days as a cellist. I first heard him playing the bass viol 20 years ago in Brussels, where he performed a Marais suite (he had to borrow an instrument for the concert). The suite was the D minor from the 2nd book, which includes *Cloches au carillon* which he tossed off with ease even then. His instincts are those of a cellist, and not necessarily a baroque one: long up beats and a sense of phrase which belongs to later music, or at least to an earlier approach to this music. But he is a considerable artist, as well as a brilliant player, so the performance is marvellous, with an unusual degree of dynamic control – he achieves an exciting, unforced, forte, for example. He is joined by flautist Maria-Tecla Andreotti, violinist Gilles Colliard (a bit wayward but exciting) and bassoon Sergio Azzolini, in a programme with gorgeous textures, busy vivaces, galant and lyrical – vintage Telemann and enjoyable from start to finish.

Robert Oliver

Telemann *The Cornett Cantatas* Mona Spägle, Henning Voss, Wilfried Jochens, Klaus Mertens SATB, Telemann Kammerorchester Michaelstein, Ludger Rémy 51' 28" cpo 999 542-2

Erhöre mich wenn ich rufe, Ich halte aber dafür, Sehet an die Exempel (TWV I: 459, 840 & 1259)

I feel quietly vindicated in what I wrote about Collegium Musicum 90's Christmas recording last month: the three cantatas on this disc are first-rate pieces. They combine the old with the new in terms of instrumentation (cornett with and without sackbuts in an orchestra with oboes and strings), and in terms of structure (long, contrapuntal movements based on chorale melodies interspersed with modern *ritornello* arias). Wilfried Jochens occasionally tries too hard to project the text, while Henning Voss sometimes lacks the agility required of the line. Mona Spägle shines as a bright star in her two arias, and Klaus Mertens is exemplary in his many. The brass players blend effortlessly with the familiar orchestral sound, the cornett seeming not at all out of place as a concertato soloist in *Ich halte aber dafür*. Altogether, another success for Rémy and the Michaelstein Telemann Foundation. Surely there is some suitable orchestral music could have been found to fill out the disc: just over 50 minutes is somewhat short measure.

BC

Veracini & Barsanti [Recorder Sonatas] Bergen Barokk (Frode Thorsen rec, Hans Knut Sveen kbd, Markku Luolajan-Mikkola vlc, Eero Palviainen lute) 63' 40" Simax PSC 1122 Barsanti: op. 1/1-3; Veracini: 1716 MS nos. 3, 4 & 6

It is probably true to say that recorder players today are more familiar with Barsanti's recorder sonatas than those of Veracini, even though there are many similarities between the two and they are certainly equal in quality. Though never published during his lifetime, Veracini's set of twelve sonatas for recorder or violin were presented to his employer, Prince Friedrich August of Saxony, in 1716. Barsanti's sonatas appeared eight years later in 1724, but both show a noticeable Corellian influence and a predisposition to a four or five movement plan. In this recording from the Norwegian ensemble Bergen Barokk, the energetic recorder-player Frode Thorsen obviously has a vast appetite for ornamentation. In fact, Thorsen has an enviable supply of good ideas, but all too often he steps over the line of good taste and obscures the melodic line beyond recognition. This, coupled with a rather raspy-sounding recorder, marred my enjoyment of an otherwise good recording. Bergen Barokk have some quirky ideas, and if you go for the high-energy approach this one is for you.

Marie Ritter

£ = low-price (around £5.00)

££ = mid-price

Other CDs are, as far as we know,
full price

Vivaldi *Concerti con molti istromenti* The King's Consort, Robert King 68' 44" Hyperion CDA67073 RV 97, 555, 562, 566, 574, 579, 781

Here are seven interesting concertos which are real gems for Vivaldi lovers. All have interesting scorings and, perhaps with the exception of RV781 for two trumpets and strings, are strikingly different from the typical Vivaldi concerto style. Robert King has assembled a fine team of players for this recording. The performances are full of interest, with flexible and improvisatory multi-continuo parts. Elizabeth Wallfisch (presumably the violin soloist throughout) ably negotiates the 'pig department' of the violin – the upper reaches of the gut E-string – and her improvisatory passages come off well. In the short RV555 the *tromba* parts are sensibly treated as violins in *tromba marina*, as in the similar larger-structured C major RV558, making for a sensible balance. The exciting D minor concerto for pairs of violins, oboes and recorders concludes the disc, which comes with an informative booklet.

Ian Graham-Jones

Vivaldi *Music on the Grand Canal: Sonatas and Concertos for flute, recorder, oboe, bassoon, cello, harpsichord and organ* Badinage 68' 44" Meridian CDE 84387

RV 35, 40, 44, 51, 52, 86, 103, 275 (arr. J.G. Walther), 310 (arr. Bach BWV978)

Badinage are an assured baroque ensemble that plays with spirit and sensitivity. This all-Vivaldi disc offers an interesting programme of chamber music for wind and continuo. I enjoyed in particular the two trio sonatas that provide the crusts for the sandwich, for recorder, oboe and continuo (RV103) and for recorder bassoon and continuo (RV86), where the ensemble is joined by Gerard McDonald. The two solo sonatas for recorder and flute (RV52 & 35) are altogether gentler works, providing a suitable contrast. Paul Carroll plays two of the more well-known solo cello sonatas on bassoon – there are plenty of solo bassoon concertos, but presumably no solo sonatas have been discovered, hence these transcriptions in the spirit of the time. My only comment with these sonatas is what I thought may have been mice in the wainscot on a couple of occasions proved to be the audible clunking of the bassoon keys in the trills. David Rowland ably performs two keyboard concerto transcriptions by Bach and Walther on harpsichord and organ. It is good that there are baroque wind players sufficiently versatile to be able to offer such a varied programme. Thoroughly recommended – a pity about the corny title.

Ian Graham-Jones

Vivaldi *Les Sonates pour Flûte Traversière* [RV 48-53, 58] Jean-Christophe Frisch, XVIII-21 Musique des Lumières 67' 15" Accord 241882 ££ rec. 1991

This collection of sonatas is slightly odd in that out of the seven represented, five are of doubtful authorship. Of the remaining two (RV 52 in F and RV 53 in C) the first

was originally designated for recorder, the second for oboe. Having said that, all the works are worthy of recording and are fully justifiable; in fact Jean-Christophe Frisch goes to great lengths in the notes to explain his stylistic interpretation, which includes some controversial opinions on performance practice. Perhaps the most surprising is his literal interpretation of Quantz's point that an accompanist should retain strict tempo beneath a more flexible solo part: in attempting to recreate this idea in the first movement of RV48, Frisch's solo part and the accompaniment remain a half-beat out for large sections of the movement, right up to and including the last note, leaving the listener understandably baffled. More effective though is the addition of 'improvised' preludes and interludes on various instruments (including archlute, flute and viola da gamba) in attempt to recreate a more authentic feel. In terms of playing quality there are one or two moments of spurious tuning, and the finale of RV53 is far too fast for comfort, but perhaps this is too picky. They are certainly trying very hard, and much of it comes off.

Marie Ritter

Petite musique de chambre Trio Farinell (Alan Davis rec, Jane Ryan gamba, Andrew Hurst lute, gtr) 72' 52" TFCD1

Music by Caix d'Herveloix, Handel, Hotteterre, Künnel, Lavigne, Marais, Telemann, de Visée

Taking their name from Playford's misspelling of Farinell (the violinist after whom the *Folia* ground was named in 17th-century England), this group presents a collection of baroque sonatas for recorder, bass viol and archlute by various composers, particularly Telemann (the programme is named after one of his many publications of chamber music), including a sonata by Handel, music by Hotteterre, Lavigne, a lute suite by De Visée and a partite for viol by August Künnel. The music is for the most part undemanding, as enjoyable to play as to listen to, and therefore very familiar to recorder players in particular. It receives straightforwardly musical, almost undemonstrative performances, more appropriate to the German than to the French music represented, but always well played. A distinctive feature is the beauty of tone of the Fred Morgan treble recorder, and voice flute (featured in an unaccompanied prelude by Hotteterre) and of the Pieray bass viol. The descant recorder also has a lovely sound, but is less well in tune.

Robert Oliver

Available from Early Music Shop Bradford, London Recorder Centre, Brian Jordan of Trio Farinell, 180 Shenley Fields Rd, Birmingham B29 5BP

Italienische Barockmusik in Franken aus der Graflich-Schönbornschen Musikaliensammlung in Weisentheil Parnassi musici & Kammerorchester Schloss Werneck 68' 15" Balthasar 002

Albinoni op. 1/2, 6 & 10, Arias; Caldara op. 1/6 & 8, op. 3/2; Corelli op. 2/12

This contains music from the library of the Dukes of Schönborn-Wiesentheid, which was assembled by the musical members of

that family in the late-17th and early-18th centuries, when they visited Italy. It's an attractive programme of sonatas for two and three violins (the latter, by Albinoni, is the least successful instrumental piece) by Corelli, Albinoni and Caldara, as well as vocal works by the latter two. I was extremely impressed by the Caldara trios and by Ruth Liebscher's lovely singing: agile as required with a sense of the text without too much 'interpretation'. The interplay between the fiddles was nice (the opening track had me constantly thinking how nice it would be to hear them play the Bach double concerto!) I can recommend this disc without reservation. BC

CLASSICAL

Amiot *Messe des Jésuites de Pékin* Ensemble Meihua Fleur de Prunus, Chœur du Centre Catholique Chinois de Paris, François Picard dir; XVIII-21, Musique des Lumières, Jean-Christophe Frisch dir 79' 25"

Auvidis Astrée E 8642

Also music by C. d'Ambleville, S. Bouleau & T. Pedrini

The previous recording by this ensemble (see *EMR* 28, p. 16) contained secular music from the Pekin Jesuits; this comprises a mass, mostly of Western music that was in the Jesuit library there, but also with some Chinese interpolations. The ordinary is from Charles d'Ambleville's *Armonia sacra* (1636), sung one-to-a-part as suggested by Jacques de Gouey in 1650 with the soprano part taken an octave down by a tenor*; it is played at pitch, with considerable but somewhat mechanical embellishment. Listening to the Chinese music makes one wonder what sense the Chinese could have made of the Western music they heard: there seems to be so little point of contact. This is an intriguing disc, with a wealth of information in the notes, and worth hearing by those interesting for the light it throws on the performance of French as well as for the Chinese music. CB

*De Gouy also recommends that female voices sing four-part pieces with bass and tenor up an octave.

C. P. E. Bach *Lieder & Oden* Klaus Mertens bar, Ludger Rémy fp 73' 44" cpo 999 549-2

The German songs of C. P. E. Bach vary in content, but are on average among his most interesting creations, not least because of this very variety. At times they are almost Schubertian in the intensity with which the two performers share the illustration of text; at others the keyboard simply serves the sung line, as in the folk-like *Lieder* of Brahms. The longer odes and cantatas come closer to the more personal *Lieder* of Mozart or of Beethoven's youth: rich comparisons indeed! These utterly delightful and completely sympathetic performances could hardly serve as a better introduction: I cannot commend them strongly enough.

Stephen Daw

C. P. E. Bach *Harpsichord Concertos* Wq 3, 32, 44, 45 [H. 405, 442, 477, 478] Les Amis

de Philippe, Ludger Rémy hpsc'd, dir 65' 17" cpo 999 566-2

Beside the seven volumes so far issued of the Spányi/Concerto Armonico/Szuets/BIS complete project, these performances sound rather stiff and violent in their contrast between the solo keyboard line and a comparatively large and broad orchestral accompaniment. Ever since we heard the Brandenburg Concertos performed as one-to-a-part chamber music we have come to notice more about the music, and this reducing process has also been successful in the concertos of Mozart and others. Simply to use period instruments is only to begin the journey of real dedication to a composer. Even if Rémy carried over to the faster movements the expressive control that he manages in the slower ones, his harpsichords still sound as though tuned without regard for key or style, and the choice of fortepiano-type instruments on the BIS discs really does suit the playing of Spányi very well, whatever the key and apparent mood. H442 & 478 include two well-played horns as well as strings; they have yet to be recorded by BIS, so direct comparison cannot be made. But speculative buyers of C. P. E. Bach's keyboard concertos should try the BIS Concerto discs 5 and 6 before this. Stephen Daw

C. P. E. Bach *The Solo Keyboard Music. 2 The Prussian Sonatas 2* (H 13, 17, 18, 28, 29) Miklós Spányi clavichord 72' 41"

Miklós Spányi in 1998* reminds me of Thurston Dart in 1948: a promising young keyboard musician of tremendous versatility who is already, within a few years, leading others and his own admirers beyond the presumed frontiers of musical perceptions with such involvement and energy that doors open and concepts expand. We are already experiencing what seems to be a complete recorded edition of C. P. E. Bach's vast output – and it is now the composers of the later 18th century whose music is emerging with the greatest authority from authentic performance, with tiny details and exact features of decoration and colouring producing effects undreamed of until very recently. This second volume of early solo keyboard music completes Spányi's delectable coverage of the Prussian and other early sonatas and leads us forward towards the slightly better-known six sets of works 'for connoisseurs and amateurs', where there is certainly more competition. But Spányi's sensitive performances will be difficult to surpass. Stephen Daw

*Stephen is to be congratulated for submitting his review so promptly. CB

Cannabich *Flute Quintets* op. 7/3-6 Camerata Köln 58' 43" cpo 999 544-2

This is a follow-up to the JC Bach Quintets recorded by Camerata Köln and reviewed in the November issue. Although these are not works of any great intellectual substance, they are a manifestation of the fashionable salon music favoured by the

middle classes and nobility during the last decades of the 18th century. Paris was the big cultural capital, and Cannabich made several extended trips there from Mannheim (where he was Director of Instrumental music, the post held by Stamitz before him). His orchestral music and *Sinfonia concertanti* (as he termed his opus 7) found success in Paris with public and publishers alike; these Quintets appeared in 1768/9 and are scored for two flutes, violin, viola and cello, except the fifth quintet, in which a second cello strangely replaces the second flute. Here, harpsichord and fortepiano continuo are added in the the third and fifth quintets respectively. The quintets are full of energy and rhythmic drive, clearly anticipating the classical chamber music forms of the next generation. Altogether this is a superb recording, played with excellent ensemble and plenty of character. Marie Ritter

Franceschini *Opera 1: Sei sonate per 2 violini e b.c.* Accademia della Magnifica Comunità (Enrico Casazza & Isabella Longo vlns, Francesco Farrarini vlc, Roberto Loreggian hpsc'd) 60' 31" Tactus TC 730601

In contrast to the D'Alay sonatas reviewed in the Baroque section, this set of six Op.1 Sonatas appears to have little musical merit. Although ably played, the second violin in these three-movement sonatas chugs away merrily in thirds and sixths with the first, bass lines are innocuously boring, and melodies are full of standard galant clichés. According to the cover booklet the set was published in Amsterdam in 1769 and the composer seems to have settled in Charleston, USA. Not a candidate for inclusion in Grove 7!

Ian Graham-Jones

Haydn *Nelson Mass; Wanczura Symphony No. 2 The Russian Fiori musicali*, Penelope Rapsom dir 53' 44" Metronome MET CD 1024

This is the third Nelson Mass I've reviewed in recent months and it is probably the best from the recording viewpoint – the acoustic is brought into a particularly sharp focus, allowing the individual instruments and voices to be heard clearly. The tricky soprano solo in the Kyrie taxes the singer to the limits (as usual) and there is some unsure tuning, particularly in the symphony (which is a thoroughly enjoyable piece, even if one of the folk songs quoted should have been included his Ukrainian rather than his Russian symphony), but the overall impression is a good one, with some excellent string playing. And what do the two works have in common? 1798.

Daniel Baker

Hofmann *Violin Concertos* (A2, Bb1), *Concerto for Violin, Cello & Strings* (G1) Lorraine McAslan vln, Tim Hugh vlc, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Nicholas Ward 60' 11" Naxos 8.554233 £

This is the second CD I've reviewed this month with the Northern Chamber

Orchestra (see Telemann, p. 26). Here they partner two established soloists in their continued exploration of Leopold Hofmann's concerto repertoire (if they are the work of that particular person – the notes are a masterpiece of obfuscation). Lorraine McAslan's violin sounded very dark and Tim Hugh's cello not always quite in tune. The orchestra, I'm afraid, failed to rise above playing the notes in the correct order: there was little hear to inspire the listener beyond a once-through. I suppose all complete sets must have their rough moments: this, I fear, is one. BC

Hugard Missa Redde mihi laetitiam Ensemble Accentus, Laurence Equilbey dir with Frédéric Desenclos playing *Pièces d'orgue* by Guillaume Lasceux on the Cloquot organ at Versailles Auvidis Astrée E 8638 49' 21"

Little is known about Pierre Hugard except that he was a boy at the maître of Notre Dame de Paris. His voice was already broken when he published his first Mass in 1744; the one recorded here was published in 1761. It is for four voices in the *a cappella* style; although not included in the original edition, it seems that a continuo was sometimes added in performance, though including a cello here as well as organ seems a bit unnecessary. Otherwise instruments were not used for the liturgical texts of the Mass at Notre Dame. Hugard's work is attractive, not as old-fashioned as one might expect, and well sung by a choir of 15. The organ pieces by Guillaume Lasceux (1740-1831), dating from 1771 & 1782/4, make an entertaining contrast: they are less backward-looking, and extremely exuberant. CB

Music at the Court of St. Petersburg, Vol. VI Manfredini, Khandoshkin etc Musica Petropolitana 78' 44"

Opus 111 OPS 30-231

Berezovsky Vln Sonata in C; Khandoshkin Variations on Russian folksongs; Manfredini Hpscd concerto in Bb; Paisielli Flute qtet 5 & 6; Sarti Vln sonata in e; Tessarini Sinfonias 1, 3

Russian Chamber Music of the 18th Century Vladimir Shulyakovskiy, Sergei Teterin vlns, Alexander Gorburnov vla, Konstantin Kucherov vlc, Alexei Ivanov db, Vladimir Radchenikov hpscd, Victoria Yevtovdieva Sop Arthrop ATR 98016 40' 49"

Music by Berezovsky, Bortnyansky, Khandoshkin & Turtovsky

Before commenting on these recordings, I feel obliged to say how wonderful it is to have performances of this repertoire on CD. Both groups have set their own direction – the contrast in playing styles and recorded atmosphere could scarcely be more marked, with Shulyakovskiy's biting strings in a resonant church, as opposed to the more suave and sophisticated Petropolitana sound with a mastered German radio tape. The Opus 111 cover gives an unjustifiable prominence to Khandoshkin – there is twice as much music by both Tessarini and Paisiello and they go unmentioned. Only the slow movement of Berezovsky's C major violin sonata is on

both discs, and choosing between the two is purely a matter of personal taste, although the sound of Radchenikov's harpsichord is a bit pale and, frankly, unworthy. Victoria Yevtovdieva is not what you might expect from a Russian soprano – there is very little Eastern vibrato and she cuts a clear line through the texture. It's a slight pity that we are limited to individual arias from Bortnyansky's motets; maybe the complete versions are a treat in store. BC

19th CENTURY

Trockne Blumen: Flute Music from the first half of the 19th century Barthold Kuijken fl, Luc Devos pf 66' 25"

Accent ACC 97125 D

Hummel Sonata in D; Mendelssohn Sonata in d; F X Mozart Rondo in e; Schubert *Trockne Blumen: Introduktion und Variationen* D802

This is a valuable addition to the small but growing selection of authentic performances of 19th-century flute music on CD. The Schubert variations on the song 'Trockne Blumen' have long been regarded as amongst the trickiest in the repertoire even on the 'modern' Boehm-system flute, which makes Kuijken's performance on an 1830 Liebel copy seem all the more impressive. Technically it is virtually flawless and the variety of sound he produces on this instrument is a delight to hear. Kuijken and Devos explore every musical corner of this complex work with sensitivity and imagination and the result is extremely persuasive. Although much of the music on this disc is in the style of Romantic 'salon music', at least two of the pieces are steeped in Classicism: the Rondo in E minor by Franz Xavier Mozart and the Sonata by Hummel are both elegant pieces in which melodic line is given precedence over instrumental bravura. The Sonata in F minor op. 4 by Mendelssohn is a contemporary transcription of a violin sonata which, with all its Romantic outbursts works surprisingly well on flute. This is, perhaps, music to be sampled at random, but nevertheless it is a superb recording. Marie Ritter

20th CENTURY

Josef Mons Komm Trost der Nacht Metabasis Cornetto CORN-30-2-0003 47' 12"

The composer would be insulted were I to call his music pastiche. He goes back to styles of c.1600, but develops it in his own manner. He understands the style that he uses as his point of departure and can convincingly write within it, which can make the odd 'wrong' notes and chords feel more disconcerting than telling. But now that music from many periods is a vital part of our culture, why does new music have to develop from or react against only the immediately previous generation? Much contemporary music for old instruments is written against their nature or needs pseudo-antique instruments (most 20th-century harpsichord music, for

instance, requires mid-20th-century instruments). It is very difficult for those who want to programme contemporary music along with old to do so, a disadvantage of the use of period instruments. This is a development to be encouraged, whether or not you enjoy these particular pieces; I hope Cornetto will publish some. CB

VARIOUS

O Rose so Red: Marian Songs & Chants through the ages Schola Cantorum of Melbourne, Gary Ekkell 61' 57

Move MD 3209

Chant, Perotin, Dunstable, Ockeghem, Clemens non Papa, Guerrero, Victoria, Dering, H. Praetorius & Zelenka

I've played this a lot during the last couple of months and have enjoyed it immensely. The vocal sound is fresh, there's a good feeling for rhythm, and the music isn't allowed to become static. Ockegham's *Alma redemptoris mater* responds particularly well to this treatment. The highspot is Clemens non Papa's *O Maria, vernana rosa*, with its extraordinary Amen. The mixture of Marian chant (including the four Compline antiphons) and polyphony works well, and includes some unexpected pieces, such as a group of five short settings with instruments by Zelenka (everything else is unaccompanied). There are a few weak points, mostly when smaller groups are involved, but not enough to put anyone off buying this excellent CD. CB

Bellows, Jacks & Tangents: organs, harpsichords & clavichord from the Finchcocks Collection Steven Devine 71' 59"

Finchcocks Press FPCD002

Music by Agrell, Bachixa, Gallé, Hook, Nares, Philips, M.A. Rossi, D. Scarlatti, Stanley, G. Strozzi, Sweelinck

I'm all for recordings being made using the instruments in important collections, something which strikes me as a superb form of preservation, but some I've heard in recent years have sounded very dry and lifeless indeed. Not so this disc, showcasing two organs, five harpsichords, two virginals and a clavichord from Richard Burnett's Collection at Finchcocks in Kent. Steven Devine's playing is superb – robust, interesting, well-paced, engaging – and the flawless recording quality makes the sound positively leap from the speakers. An added bonus, too, is the fact that Devine's enterprising and often unfamiliar programme works so well as a whole. Highlights include the Nares *Introduction and Fugue* on the wonderfully honest Byfield chamber organ, and the *Pavana & Galliarda Doloroso* by Peter Philips, played on a muselar virginal by Adlam Burnett after Ruckers (1611). This is wholeheartedly recommended, and is surely a compulsory purchase for anyone with period keyboard persuasions who is visiting, or has visited, the collection. Robin Bigwood

The Grand Tour Michèle Dick m-S, Richard Burnett, Steven Devine & Stephen Turvey pf MMD 71067

Songs by Bach, Barber, Bizet, Brahms, Delius, Dunhill, Fauré, Handel, Howells, Mozart, Roe, Rossini, Schubert, Schumann, Verdi, Warlock

Although not on the same label, this links closely with the Finchcocks disc reviewed above (& a piano one to be reviewed next month) in the source of instruments and player; the recording teams are the same as well, and the programme is drawn from music sung at Finchcocks. It is the instruments that are the distinctive feature of the recording, at least as far as a magazine devoted to early music is concerned; they are identified by maker's name, but not date. So we don't know if there is any relevance in the choice of a rather brittle Erard sound to accompany Howells' sultry *King David*. The 18th-century items are all pieces that demand orchestra; they may work just with keyboard in an informal setting, but not on disc. Nor would one type-cast Michèle Dick as an 'early music' singer, so the disc improves as it moves out of our area. She may not rank with the best mezzos on CD, but this is a nice collection of songs attractively sung. I like the idea of a strip of passport photos of the singer. CB

Codex Gaudemus 77' 33"
ASV Gaudemus CD GAU 1004 £

A neatly-named and well-filled celebration of the label; it is sure to entice you to buy several of the discs featured. CB

Les Festes Champêtres: Festival de Sablé XXème Anniversaire 68' 37
Auvidis Astrée E 8631 ££

The booklet does not say whether there are any particular connections between the repertoire or performers here, so it is perhaps more an advert for Auvidis Astrée than the Festival itself, though unlike samplers it does not list details of the source recordings. There is an impressive list of performers, and the music, while mostly late-baroque, goes back to Janequin (A Sei Voci sing *Le chant des oyseaux*, neatly followed a varied Courante by Cornet with a twittering organ) and Du Caurroy (a *Fantaisie* from *Les Sacqueboutiers de Toulouse*). Ideal varied listening for pottering around the house or putting oneself in the mood while driving to enjoy the 'intimacy and conviviality' of the Sablé Festival (or anywhere else). CB

CHRISTMAS

As mentioned in the Diary section of the last issue, there was then a dearth of Christmas CDs; these arrived subsequently. We will try to reprint the details next December. See also under Chant

Russian Christmas: Vigil of the Nativity of Christ The Russian Patriarchate Choir, Anatoly Grindenko 60' 14"
Opus 111 OPS 30-218

I have complained, probably more than once, that most recordings of Russian chant sound as if the music was composed

around 1850. And not just records: when in 1960 I drove from Moscow to visit the monastery at Zagorsk (which seems to have been kept as a living museum for tourists) the slow, deep chords were pervasive. This is different. Grindenko is a musician of wide experience (as a double-bassist he played in the premiere of a sonata by Gubaidulina and he also plays the gamba) and the music has been reconstructed from 16th and 17th-century MSS. I am not able to judge the plausibility of the reconstruction, but it feels convincing, perhaps because it approaches the music afresh rather than through the surviving tradition. Lovers of low basses, however, will not be disappointed. There is an informative introduction, and my only disappointment is the absence of the Russian words (whether in Cyrillic or Roman characters) alongside the translations. CB

Medieval Carols: The Mystery of Christmas Night: Words and music from the Middle Ages Opus anglicanum 75' 02"
Herald Talking Books HAVPCD 212

Another disc beginning with bells: they are common this Christmas. This comprises a sequence from a group which specialises in programmes of music and words, and is based on a concert given annually at Wells Cathedral. I find such mixtures fail on disc because I generally don't want to hear the words as often as the music (or, put another way, there are different levels of concentration at which one can listen to music, but there is no point in hearing words unless one can follow their logic). Here, the spoken sections are brief, and are mostly texts one knows from musical settings anyway, so they are acceptable. The simpler medieval pieces – chant and 15th-century carols – work well, but Machaut needs more edge and *Viderunt omnes* lacks the impact of either of the Hilliard discs of Perotin. That the other long piece is a powerful performance of Horwood's *Gaudete flori virginali* says something about the imagination of the programming. Those used to this sort of music may find slightly too much vibrato, but the programme should widen the musical experience of those who buy it as a talking book! CB

Arcadelt - Mouton - Isaac The Virgin & Christ-child Henry's Eight 63' 42"
Etcetera KTC 1213

Arcadelt Missa Noe noe; Isaac Virgo prudentissima; Mouton Nesciens mater, Noe, noe; anon carols Alma redemptoris mater, Alleluia Now well may, Ave Maria...Hail blessed flower

An interesting, if somewhat eclectic, compilation of music loosely related to Christmas, this is worth getting for the Isaac alone: a stunning performance of a piece which is difficult to bring off (I have tried it with my own choir) but which here shows clearly why Isaac was seen as a rival to Josquin – though quite different in style. There is some wonderful duet singing, especially from the high male voices, in this and other pieces here. The two Mouton motets are also very fine and the four anonymous English pieces get very committed

performances. I found the mass a little disappointing: this is not the fault of the singers, who give it all they can and who make a particularly nice job of the Agnus Dei. The plainsong *Ave Maria* is a bit out of place, both stylistically in its Solesmes-like performance and acoustically. But I am once again very impressed with this group's blend, tuning, and controlled forward production which suits this repertory very well.

Noel O'Regan

Uns ist ein Kind geboren: Cantatas Greta de Reyghere, Artur Stefanowicz, Rodrigo Orrego, Klaus Mertens SATB, Collegium Instrumentale Brugense, Capella Brugensis, Patrick Peire 50' 41"

Eufoda 1272

F. L. Benda (?) *Gott steigt herab*; Homilius *Uns ist ein Kind geboren*; Kuhnau? *Uns ist ein Kind geboren* (BWV 142); Stölzel *Kündlich groß ist das gottselige Geheimnis*

Each of these attractive Christmas cantatas is a happy addition to the catalogue. BWV142 was long attributed to J S Bach, then to Kuhnau: its small-scale, intimate tone and the plain-spoken eloquence of the text suggest the turn of the century as a plausible date. Stölzel's modest work comprises a chorus, two short arias and a simple chorale. Homilius's cantata from 1783 features a substantial *da capo* aria in the galant style for soprano and breath-taking trumpet writing. The final work is attributed to a member of the Benda family and is the most forward-looking of the pieces. The music has been transcribed for this recording from sources at Brussels Conservatoire, and, indeed, merely scrapes the surface of this magnificent collection. The performances are very good, though the countertenor's diction is not 100%.

Tristram Pugin

Ryba Czech Christmas Mass, Missa pastoralis Dagmar Vankátová, Pavla Ksícová, Vladimír Dolezal, Václav Siberá SATB, Josef Ksíca org, Choir & Orchestra of the Czech Madrigalists, František Xaver Thuri cond 54' 43"

Naxos 8.554428 £

Here is a delightful example of Czech music at its most uninhibited and endearing. The Christmas Mass (1796) will be familiar to lovers of older recorded versions by Kuhn or, indeed, by Thuri himself; the little *Missa pastoralis* of 1788 is claimed as a first recording. Both works are put across with infectious charm and spirit, and the warm glow of the recording (All Saints, Hradcany) helps supply a suitably bucolic atmosphere. The soloists are good and lively, though the bass sounds too mournful in his solo in the Kyrie. The music is unashamedly popular, with echoes of *The Magic Flute* (and even pre-echoes of *Hansel and Gretel*) in the Christmas Mass, and pretty tunes offset by bold tutti. Despite the short playing time, this is a CD well worth acquiring.

Peter Branscombe

Christmas in Early America: 18th century Carols and Anthems The Columbus Consort, Joseph Petit dir 55' 40"

Channel Classics CCS 5693 (rec 1993)
Belcher, Billings, Carr, Dencke, French, Gregor,

Heighington, Herbst, Holyoke, Husband, C. T. Pachelbel, Peter, Schulz, Stephenson

We are used to hearing early American music recorded only by American groups, so it is refreshing that the Columbus Consort is based in Holland with members from Australia, France, Iceland, Israel, Norway, the UK and the USA, and has an Amsterdam-based organist, Richard Egarr, who features often in our reviews. The music is in a mixture of styles. What comes over best is the closing group of Moravian pieces, including a short Latin Magnificat by Carl/Charles Pachelbel of which his father would have been proud. Of the rest, the most entertaining is an *Anthem for Christmas* by Benjamin Carr, which prefaces an adaptation from *The Creation* with bits of Handel and Corelli: interesting that the Haydn was already popular by 1805. (A defect of the booklet is the absence of publication dates.) The more distinctively non-European music, e.g. Billings' *Bethlehem*, with its avoidance of the expected tonic-dominant patterns, is too polite: the hard-edged tone of, for instance, Larry Gordon's groups is much more effective. The performances here are more in the manner of Psalmody, well worth hearing provided you want a civilised sound. CB

Once as I remember Monteverdi Choir, John Eliot Gardiner 73' 11" Philips 462 050-2

I was intrigued during the summer by a series of phone-calls from the Monteverdi Choir with questions about various Christmas pieces, including a Gloria by Robert Cowper which I did not know. This begins a varied anthology of Christmas music which is based round the Gardiner family nativity play. Rather more cultured than those which most of us attend, the text was based round Milton's seasonal *Ode*, interspersed with a catholic selection of Christmas music, I doubt whether it was sung quite so competently and stylishly then, but with Sir John in charge, there is no suggestion of a village barn. I'm not always convinced by tempi: after a brisk (but effective) performance of Howells' *Spotless rose*, Byrd's 'O magnum mysterium'

is slow and overdone. So, perhaps, is the Palestrina, but it speaks powerfully nevertheless. This a fine collection of known and unknown Christmas music, and Gardiner's reminiscences of his childhood in the booklet are touching. Remember it when buying next year's Christmas presents. CB

AUVIDIS SPANISH PACKS

La Bomba: Música en la Corte de España
Auvidis Fontalis ES 9917 ££ (3 CDs)
Ensaladas Studium Musicae Valencia Hespèrion XX, Jordi Savall 52' 45"
(E 8535 1987)

Lluís del Milà (Luys Milan) Fantasies, Pavanes & Gallardes Jordi Savall, Andrew Lawrence-King, Sergi Casademunt, Eunice Brandão, Lorenz Duftschmid 63' 15"
(E 8535 rec 1994)

Bartomeu Càrceres & anon Villancicos & Ensaladas Montserrat Figueras, La Capella Reial de Catalunya, Jordi Savall 67' 53"
(E 8723 1990)

Fantasias: Música de Vihuela Hopkinson Smith Auvidis Fontalis ES 8652 ££ (3 CDs)
Luys Milan El Maestro, Valencia 1536
(E 7748 rec. 1984) 50' 40"

Luys de Narvaez Los seys libros del delphon de musica, Valladolid 1538 64' 40"
(E 8740 rec 1988)

Alonso Mudarra Tres libros de musica en cifras para vihuela, Séville 1546 68' 00"
(E 8740 rec 1991)

Musica Sacra La Capella Reial de Catalunya, Hespèrion XX, Jordi Savall Auvidis Fontalis ES 9916 ££ (3 CDs)

Morales Officium defunctorum, Missa pro defunctis a5
(ES 8765 rec 1991)

Guerrero Sacrae cantiones [16 motets]
(ES 8766 rec 1991)

Victoria Cantica beatae virginis [10 motets & Magnificat primi toni a8]
(ES 8767 rec 1992)

Sold at three discs for the price of two. The backs of each collective box quote ES as the prefix for each constituent CD, whereas they all have just E.

The problem with these, as I have mentioned with previous packs, is that if you like the music you may well have bought one disc already, so there is no

bargain in buying the set to get the other two. You probably have to be quite a fanatic to want these extensive anthologies of the three early Spanish vihuela prints; if you are, and haven't got them, don't hesitate. The playing is excellent, though you do have to put up with a lot of action noises. Perhaps less-close miking would have missed some of the hand-sliding. Readers will know my suspicion of some of Jordi Savall's output. I would give the church music a miss: too tuppenny-coloured for my liking in a way that diminishes rather than enriches the music. But the secular pack is invigorating and entertaining, and you don't need to be a specialist to enjoy it. CB

TALLIS SCHOLARS

The Spirit of the Renaissance The Tallis Scholars, Peter Phillips Gimell 462 846-2

Josquin Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales, Missa L'homme armé sexti toni
(454 919-2 1989) 74' 16"

John Shepherd Media vita 55' 08"
(454 916-2 1989)

Victoria Tenebrae Responsories 65; 57"
(454 922-2 1990)

Pope Sixth the Fourth would probably have turned in his grave at the event pictured on the front of the Tallis Scholars' CD catalogue included with this package (which usefully has an index of individual pieces they have recorded): not only are there five female singers present in his chapel (one can imagine the invective against such whores of Babylon) but there is even a harp, admittedly silent, lurking beside the altar. The three discs included in this package, however, are unaccompanied (as one expects from the group and, indeed, the repertoire). The close dating of these recordings makes one wonder if there will be a chronological remarketing of the other discs. Although the Tallis Scholars tend to emphasise the smoother aspects of their composers, there is much to enjoy here. If you want Victoria without being concerned about any specific pieces, this is a better bet than the Capella Reial, and the other two discs are well-worth hearing if you don't have them already. CB

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Letters

Dear Clifford,

In his review in the December 1998 EMR of Peter Holman's CD 'Handel in Hamburg' (p.23) Anthony Hicks takes exception to 'the silly pluckers' of theorboes, etc., among The Parley of Instruments performing instrumental music from Handel's Hamburg operas. He says he knows of no evidence for hand-plucked instruments in this music. There is, however, pictorial evidence that archlutes were used in the orchestra in German opera-houses in this period, although admittedly it comes 13 years later from another city - Dresden - where performance practice could well have been different, especially at the gala occasion depicted.

A copperplate engraving exists of the first performance of Antonio Lotti's *Teofane* in the new Dresden opera house in 1719. It is reproduced in *Early Music* 8/1 (January, 1980), p.49, to illustrate Douglas Alton Smith's article on Sylvius Leopold Weiss, who was one of the silly pluckers on that occasion. A greatly enlarged detail of part of the orchestra pit appears on p.96 (Plate 26) of the *Cambridge Companion to the Recorder* (Ed. J.M. Thompson, Cambridge UP, 1995) to illustrate Adrienne Simpson's chapter on 'The orchestral recorder', as three recorder players are shown in the Dresden orchestra, next to two pluckers. My caption describes their instruments as theorboes, but they may be archlutes (see greatly-enlarged detail below). In the crowded pit there is room for only one harpsichord.



I have not heard this CD, but if the plucked instruments 'dominate the sound in many movements' perhaps this has been brought about by the recording engineers, who sometimes have ideas of their own. Having heard the same group in live concerts with a similar instrumental ensemble playing similar music I have never noticed the plucked continuo instruments, even when improvising ('with complete abandon'), dominating the body of sound. Rather they provide a piquancy of articulation which complements the primary sounds of the bowed string instruments.

Anthony Rowland-Jones

Dear Clifford,

It was about a year ago, as I recall, that there was some discussion in *EMR* about the timing of Christmas services in the Sarum church, and especially of the influence of the nocturnal habits of domestic farmyard fowl on the precise scheduling of the *Missa in Gallicantu*. I have been led to

wonder if there might be any significance in the passage from Hamlet I:1:

*Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawn singeth all night long.*

If this was, indeed, a widely-held belief in pre-Reformation England, then the *Missa in gallicantu* would have been celebrated at any time during the night!

Simon R Hill

It was in fact that passage that first sprang to mind, but it doesn't help explain 'When the cock begins to crow'. CB

December is the time when about a quarter of our readership reviews its subscriptions. It has been very encouraging to us to find that so many subscribers have taken the time to write complimentary comments when paying their invoices. We have not space to include them all (anyway it would look too self-congratulatory) but do we include one that balances praise with a caution that we should not be too indulgent in using this publication as a vehicle to repeatedly express personal 'bees in the bonnet'. My New Year's resolution is to try to reduce Clifford's invective about recorders and the inadequacies of gem boxes, while making sure that if he comments on twentieth century popular music, he checks the sources thoroughly. Thank you to those who wrote and faxed to him about the Beatles misquote 'He loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah' NOT 'He loves me ...' EB

Dear Mr Bartlett,

I enclose my subscription, and thought that on this occasion I would enclose a note to say 'thank you' for *EMR*. How satisfying it is that, when 'dumbing-down' is increasingly the order of the day, it is still possible to have a publication which presents its chosen subject in an uncompromisingly intelligent way.

I have to say that I have no musical training or education whatever - I am a listener pure and simple. Large parts of *EMR* go completely over my head - nonetheless I am willing to listen to advice and benefit from experience, and the CD and concert reviews have guided me many times to music that otherwise I would have missed.

One point where I do feel qualified to argue, however, is on the matter of CD packaging. I afraid that I cannot understand your antipathy to the 'jewel case' format, nor your welcome for the recent alternatives (such as Alia Vox). The jewel cases do break, but they can be replaced for a few pence - and then all is as good as new. I do not begrudge the few pence. On the other hand, I cannot imagine what kind of patching you have in mind which would restore the alternative packaging to pristine condition. You comment on their lightness, but unless I was in the habit of posting my CDs from place to place, or had so many to carry that I risked a hernia, lightness is not a consideration for me.

John Lunn

<p><i>Handel Messiah</i> (parts) (Oxford UP edition by Clifford Bartlett) Strings: each £7.95 Wind set (ob. I, II, bsn, tpt I, II, timps): £24.95 Realised keyboard: £19.95 Available from King's Music</p>
