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NB There is no August issue, but the September issue might appear early.

Apart from the Cambridge colleges, there are two cathedrals within easy reach of us that maintain the full Anglican choral tradition, Peterborough and Ely. It is embarrassing to say that I haven't heard either sing a service. Perhaps if we did not always have the children in tow, we'd slip into the quiet haven of the close and cathedral after a Saturday afternoon shopping at Peterborough and maybe combine a Sunday afternoon visit to John and Sally Butt with Evensong at Ely Cathedral nearby. I am sure that, like me, there are many who would feel that part of our heritage would be lost if professional choral services came to an end (however much one might question the validity of any continuity of performance style) yet are happy to ignore them while they are flourishing.

Should we be worried about the continuation of that tradition? Many church leaders feel that it is out-of-date. There are arguments both theological and aesthetic that choral services involving professional choirs are out of touch with the current beliefs and social stance of the church. I have some sympathy: having been brought up a Methodist, I am only happy in a prayer-book service when I'm in the choir rather than among the silent majority in the congregation.

The controversy on single-sex or mixed choirs doesn't worry me. I was amused by the research that suggested that the sex of the conductor, not of the singers, was the significant factor in the sound. The issue is primarily social rather than musical: do the sexes mix, or will the presence of girls put off boys?

But irrespective of religious considerations, musical life in Britain would be much the poorer if the unique education in music and performance which the choir-boys (and, in some places, girls) receive were no longer available. And it would be sad if the cathedrals were preserved as dead architectural remains. If they are to become museums, at least keep them as living museums! Perhaps more could be done to integrate the choirs more formally into the musical life of the community, each cathedral choir becoming the centre of the city's musical life.

CB

NEW BOOKS

Clifford Bartlett

Women Composers: Music Through the Ages edited by Martha Furman Schleifer and Sylvia Glickman. New York: G. K. Hall (Prentice Hall), 1996. Each vol. £70.00
 Vol. 1. *Composers Born Before 1599*. x + 365pp. ISBN 0 8161 0926 5
 Vol. 2. *Composers Born 1600-1699*. ix + 390pp ISBN 0 8161 0563 4

I welcomed vols. 3-5 in April (*EMR* 49, p. 7), but said that I suspected that the musical quality would be higher in the earlier volumes. I am grateful to the publishers for giving me the chance to examine them and confirm my guess. These are fascinating volumes. I have been dipping into them constantly since they arrived, and will no doubt continue to do so. Even without reading a note of the music, they are valuable works of reference, with substantial and scholarly introductions to each composer. Take Kassia, for instance, a Byzantine composer of the 10th century. I knew nothing of her, and she isn't in New Grove, though she is one of the few composers to feature in Gibbons' *Decline and Fall...* Here we have a five-page introduction (and these are large, two-column pages), two pages of facsimile, a four-page list of her compositions and dubia, a page of footnotes and a page or so of bibliography. Then come editions of five of her religious songs, preceded by poetical texts and translations. Other composers don't all get quite such thorough treatment, but these volumes will be my first port of call if I need information on any of the composers included.

Jumping a few centuries, I was interested by the polyphonal pieces of the nun Sulpitia Ceses, whose *Motetti spirituali* were published in 1619: we are not given the precise bibliographic details. 15 of the 23 motets are for eight or more voices. The editor discusses performance possibilities, including using *chiavette*. Curiously, some pieces in high clefs are marked *alla quarta bassa*, but that is presumably when sung by men. With transposition being so normal, there is no need to suppose that nuns particularly needed music to be notated in high clefs, and for the eight-voice parody of Palestrina's *Io son ferito* their use is determined by the original madrigal. *Parvulus filius* a12 has the lower parts for instruments (*violone, arciviolone & two trombones*) marked *alla quarta bassa*, but that might mean that, if the work is transposed, those parts need to be played, not sung.

I am puzzled why non-liturgical songs by Francesca Caccini should be allocated to the organ while one to a liturgical text is given an unspecified accompaniment: the statement in vol. 2 p. 59 that an organ would not have been available for home performance begs the question of how wealthy the home might be. There are a few oddities in the editing of her *Romanesca* (p. 240). The natural at the end of bar 2 must refer to both Bs, the under-lay is out in 1, 4 and 6, the slur is wrong in 1, the trills are a note early in 1 & 3, the bar

numbers are missing from the first verse, and the cadence at 6-7 must be a 4#3 dominant and a major tonic. There are a fair number of minor cadence chords elsewhere in the book, though if a composer in the early 17th century wanted a minor chord she would have to figure it, since it would otherwise be played major. In *Jesu corona Virginum*, is the rest in the middle of the first word not just a misprint, probably for an F? (In the original, the *-ro-* is attached to the *co-*.)

The big name in vol. 2 is Barbara Strozzi. But her music is becoming increasingly available elsewhere, so it is the other names that attract greater interest. Sophie Elisabeth, Duchess of Brunswick and Lüneburg, for instance, whose *Sinfonia* and *Angel Chorus* for four instruments (TrTrAA) and four voices (TrTrAT) with continuo (neither group has a separate bass part) is of interest. The editor is frank about its technical weaknesses, but it works well enough and one would like to hear the complete birthday piece for her husband from which it comes. She seems to have been better at melody than harmony, and some of her songs had basses added by her husband.

These volumes show a wider range of music by female composers than is generally known. Some pieces need no special pleading, but others show the faults of the amateur composer of either sex, though have enough flair to justify performance. The editing is good, though there are some inconsistencies, e.g. in the showing of the range of each part, for instance, the information on the source and the detail in the commentaries. There is a strange variety in the density of music on the page, and the music-setter hasn't realised that in triple time minims should generally have the spacing of crotchets or quavers in duple time. There is something very odd in vol. 2: pages 151-2 have been given the wrong page numbers and swapped with 153-4; similarly pp. 155-6/157-8, 159-160/161-2 and 163-4/165-6. These variations do not, however, undermine a really useful series which should be in all libraries, if a bit expensive for the non-specialist individual.

BOWERS & SHERR

Roger Bowers *English Church Polyphony: Singers and Sources from the 14th to the 17th Century* (Variorum Collected Studies Series). Ashgate, 1999. xii + 354 pp, £52.50. ISBN 0 86078 778 8
 Richard Sherr *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Rome and Other Courts* (Variorum Collected Studies Series). Ashgate, 1999. xii + 326pp, £55.00. ISBN 0 86078 768 0

Both authors have devoted a considerable amount of effort to the study of archival materials to reveal how choral institutions function, which can throw much light upon

who sung the music which survives and, in some respects, how it was sung, even if identifying any individual piece is rarely possible. Richard Sherr has concentrated chiefly on the papal choir, and many readers will know the articles he has contributed to *Early Music*. Four of those are here. But many of the remaining 17 are from less accessible journals. I was particularly interested in item XI, 'The Singers of the Papal Chapel and Liturgical Ceremonies in the Early Sixteenth Century' from a 1982 *Festschrift*. We tend to take settings of the mass as having greater liturgical importance than they really did. Like a modern organist doodling until the time for the next event is ready, polyphony had to fit with the choreography of the service: a Kyrie could be sung up to 20 times if necessary. The music often changes style at 'Et incarnatus est' as a cue to the celebrant, not primarily because it has to sound particularly reverent. It is difficult to tell from the documents when the choir sings chant, when polyphony, and it seems not to matter. If the music has an independent life of its own, is there much point in liturgical reconstructions, which should diminish the value of the music the more realistic they are? Sometimes a bit of cross-referencing between articles would have helped. This article (XI) mentions trebles, but we have to hunt elsewhere (unlike Bowers, the author does not provide an index of subjects) to find that these are men (falsettists until the 1550s, when the first castrati appear). I suspect that there must be a lot more useful information lurking in the records that Sherr could make available. It would be fascinating to have him answering a series of questions placed by inquisitive performers like Andrew Parrott or Paul McCreesh.

Roger Bowers begins with three papers on the question of vocal tessituras and (by deduction from that) pitch. This is a notoriously thorny topic, and his approach sensibly avoids many of the pitfalls. The conclusions seem extremely logical but I feel a bit like a Kuijken or Wolff before the evidence of Rifkin and Parrott, with a gut reaction that makes me unconvinced but with no valid reasons to disagree. I don't want to descend to their levels or argument, but several lines for further investigation occurred to me.

a. Why are the vocal ranges of late-medieval and renaissance singers generally so small – at most an octave and a fourth. Most of the music under consideration was written for professional singers, often the best in the land. Modern singers are expected to sing a couple of octaves: why were voices then more limited? Is there evidence that singers could in fact sing a wider range but that the compass of each voice was an institutional convenience? Richard Sherr provides the example of Conforti, who sang both soprano and alto in different contexts. Early singers had to use a wider range in chant: sequences, for instance, often need at least an octave and a fifth. So there could be room to put Bowers' grid up or down a tone or so.

b. Although he mentions organs quite often from the 15th and 16th century, Bowers does not pursue the implications. They had probably found a more sophisticated activity than just making a joyful, indiscriminate noise like bells (as they

may have done earlier). By the mid 16th century at least they must have played in conjunction with chant – maybe not in so close a relationship with polyphony, but that is immaterial when the pitch of polyphony is derived from the pitch of chant. So the need to relate to the absolute pitch of an organ may have undermined the idea that pitch notation was relative, not absolute. (Or could the organ have played even *alternatim* at any pitch without relating to the pitch of the voices?)

c. How did singers get the pitch for a choral piece? I was watching The Clerke's Group at the Renaissance Weekend (see p. 8) using a very modern tuning fork and was suspicious of the authenticity of the practice. The leading singer could have given a note; but perhaps this was not necessary because it related to whatever had been sung previously. In that case, the system needed to allow a margin, since the resulting pitch may not have been ideal for the total compass of the piece.

d. When the practice of adding a bass below the tenor was introduced, might there not have been a rise in the overall pitch level to allow space for this new voice? Singers can now change their voices to fit new needs (witness the ascent of the countertenor to manage baroque castrato parts), so could have done so then.

The author's cutting out of extraneous evidence has led to some very clear-cut conclusions. I look forward to his investigation into post-Reformation practices. It would also be interesting to see how these conclusions relate to European conventions. Was the music of Dunstable and Power sung differently in foreign chapels?

There is much more in this anthology: I have only been reacting to the first section. Four essays deal with choirs in Canterbury, Winchester and Lincoln cathedrals and the household of Thomas Wolsey: these are not from musical publications, so their presence is particularly welcome. The Canterbury and Lincoln articles continue through to the Cromwellian period, and a final section has the oldest paper (a biography of Lionel Power published in 1976), comments on 14th-century pieces with specific chronological references, and a study of ecclesiastical 'patronage' in the 15th century. Despite the complexity of some of the arguments, the writing is extremely clear and the book is strongly recommended.

MARENZIO FOR FIVE

Luca Marenzio *The Complete Five Voice Madrigals For Mixed Voices*. Edited by John Steele. Gaudia Music & Arts Inc, 1996. 6 vols, \$20.00 each. ISBN 1 888471 07 7 (for set)
 Vol. I: The First and Second Books. ISBN 1 888471 08 5
 Vol. II: The Third and Fourth Books. ISBN 1 888471 09 3
 Vol. III: The Fifth Book and Madrigali Spirituali. ISBN 1 888471 10 7
 Vol. IV: The Sixth and Seventh Books. ISBN 1 888471 11 5
 Vol. V: The Eighth and Ninth Books. ISBN 1 888471 12 3
 Vol. VI: The Madrigals from Various Collections. ISBN 1 888471 13 1
 Sole agent: ECS Publishing, Boston.

These volumes are in the same series (*Renaissance Voices*) as several other volumes of Italian madrigals published initially by Galaxy and later by Gaudia, with red laminated covers and in a comfortable format for singers to hold. They contain Marenzio's complete output for five voices, vol. VI rounding up 18 madrigals from anthologies, including the whole of the six verses of the dialogue *Mentre tu fui si grato* (to which he contributed only the third) and *Quel laure, che fu in me* for two five-part choirs. (Three of the five-part books end with double choir pieces, but for two four-part choirs.)

There is no need to sing Marenzio's praises, but singing his music has happened far more rarely than it should, chiefly because of the difficulty of access. These volumes are designed to be user-friendly and in many respects the editorial conventions are fine. C is transcribed with four crotchets in a bar, C with four minims. Note values are unreduced. The texts are set out as poems along with excellent translations at the head of each madrigal. Low-clef pieces are generally printed untransposed, but high clef pieces generally go down a tone, with sensible key signatures. This doesn't quite bring the two groups into the same tessitura but it does make the books usable by ensembles built around the modern SATB classification. Generally the tenor is divided, sometimes the soprano, and very rarely the alto. Each volume has introduction and commentary. The editor does his best to give some idea how to shape a madrigal, but trying to notate it looks very odd and is not, I suspect, particularly helpful. The best advice is to follow the words for rhythm, tempo and shape.

I don't know how easily these can be obtained here. I bought my set from The Von Huene Workshop, 59-65 Boylston St, Brookline, MA 02146, tel +1 617 278690. I'm happy to get copies for readers outside the USA.

SOUTH LOW-COUNTRIES HARPSICHORD

Zuid-Nederlandse Klavicembelmuziek. Harpsichord Music of the Southern Low Countries... Three Manuscripts from the National Archives in Antwerp: Arendonk, Dompna Isabella and Maria Therese Reijnders... 17th Century. Ediderunt Godlieve Spiessens & Irène Cornelis. (*Monumenta Flandriae Musica*, 4). Leuven & Peer: Alamire, 1998. lvii + 111pp. ISBN 90 6853 121 2.

Alamire has retrenched on its operations over the last year, hence the selling off of some of its stock. This series, however, seems to have ambitious plans, with 13 volumes listed in an accompanying letter (which curiously mis-numbers the present volume as 3). Like the first volume, *De triomfeerende Min*, it is luxuriously produced, with introductions in the Southern Low Country language and English, but is not particularly expensive at BEF1493 or \$US47 (under £30.00) for a publication of its type. It is, however, perhaps more than many might want to pay for 111 spacious pages of rather routine music. A higher priority for your money is Alan Curtis's Dutch Keyboard Music of the 16th and 17th Centuries (*Monumenta Musicae Neerlandicae* 3), published in 1961 and still available for a

little over £20. I don't think there is anything in this new volume to match the anonymous *Daphne* from the Camp-huysen MS – one of the few solos I've ever dared to play in public! (Curtis, incidentally, later concentrated on Italian music: I have enjoyed his two fine collections of Monteverdi duets, and his *Rodrigo* is reviewed on p. 19.) The example he set of making an edition of often routine music valuable by his annotations is not followed systematically here: the references in the introduction are not easy to spot. Of the three MSS edited, the first dates from about 1650, the other two, from a single family, are from the 1690s. The music is stylistically and technically simple. The presence of fingering in the two Reijnders MSS is of interest, though nothing is made of it in the introduction. This will be useful for those studying amateur music-making of the time and the history of the repertoire, and there are some pieces which could be used for what was presumably the purpose of the anthologies in the first place – domestic entertainment.

WALTHER ORGAN WORKS

Johann Gottfried Walther *Sämtliche Orgelwerke...* herausgegeben von Klaus Beckmann. Breitkopf & Härtel EB (8678-80), 1998. 3 vols, each DM59.00 [about £20.00]

Vol. I contains the 14 extant transcriptions of Italian-style concertos plus variations on a bass by Corelli, an original solo concerto dating from 1740, a fugue, four Preludes and Fugues, and a Toccata and Fugue. The other two volumes contain 88 Chorale settings, divided alphabetically by titles, A-G and H-M; N-W will be in vol IV (EB8681). The name Beckmann inspires confidence that the editing has been thoroughly and meticulously done, especially since here the need to postulate lost tablature manuscripts (which raise problems in the edition of Buxtehude etc) does not arise: most pieces survive in autograph sources (Breitkopf still favours the unidiomatic 'autographic'). The Concertos are probably the works of greatest interest, thanks to their relationship to those of Bach; both composers were making similar versions for the same purpose in Weimar in 1713-14. It is nice to have these available in organ-format: the DDT volume must be unwieldy on an organ stand. Walther claimed to have made 78 such arrangements: the other 64 have vanished, which is odd, since the number of chorale settings extant (129) corresponds quite closely with the 119 examples that he claimed to have written by 1739. Perhaps the composer did not keep a copy and they were lost after Prince Johann Ernst's early death. The chorale settings are less well-known; they suffer a little from being over-systematic in the application of accompanimental material, but there is plenty of imagination and this is a set that organists interested in the baroque need to acquire.

LOTTI & TELEMANN

These have in common only the fact that they are recent editions from Breitkopf & Härtel. A *Missa in C for four-part mixed Chorus a cappella* edited by Anton Reinthaler (ChB 5295; DM 5.80, about £2.00) is taken from DDT60 with no

additional information. I'm puzzled whether the expected organ bass has been omitted: New Grove lists a Mass in C for SATB and organ, which is probably this one. It is obviously more economic to print the music without it, especially if it is completely *seguente* so can be played from the score anyway. But the modern implication of *a cappella* differs from that prevailing in the 18th century, and organ accompaniment would have been expected; so the introduction should have mentioned it. The music is somewhat uneventful and will probably be more use in churches when a mass that needs little rehearsal is required rather than for concert or recording purposes.

I would have imagined that there was strong competition for editions of Telemann's Trio Sonata in E minor (TWV 42: e2) for flute, oboe and continuo from *Musique de Table II*, but a check through catalogues shows that e6 is far more popular. The new Breitkopf edition by Brit Reipisch with realisation by W. H. Bernstein (KM 2276; DM25) looks fine, though I don't have anything to check it against. But, as so often, I'm not entirely happy about the continuo realisation. At the opening I would prefer to let the oboe have the chance to play a beautiful E without distracting tinkling below it, which also spoils the flutes opening phrase by anticipating it. Players in the first movement need to decide whether they should think in two-bar phrases with hemiolas, and a keyboard part which makes a different decision from the one which the players adopt isn't helpful. The top C on the last page is at least a fifth higher than one expects the right hand to go and is well above the solo instruments. This wouldn't matter if the separate bass part were figured. But it's a good piece for a useful combination.

BACH LEAFLETS

Last time I ordered some music from Carus they sent back various catalogues, including one of new titles for 1999, one labelled 'Catalogue 2000', and one on the Bach Family, with useful information in addition to a list of the music they publish – quite a lot of J. S. and particularly useful for the quantity of music by 17th-century Bachs. Like Hänsler with its companion to the Bach CD project, Carus (many of whose editions were originally published by Hänsler before the changes in that firm) has produced a document with independent value. There is a genealogical table, a list of the cantatas in order of the church year indicating the annual cycle to which they belong, a chronological table, brief introductions to the various Bachian vocal genres, and biographies of the other Bachs: nothing that can't be found elsewhere, but extremely convenient to have together in a short, free pamphlet. By an odd coincidence, Peter Holman was complaining to me an hour before I looked at it that there was no orchestral material of the 1725 *St John Passion*: the Carus edition looks as if it will present the 1725 and 1749 versions separately – though it is not due until December.

The Breitkopf leaflet *Bach 2000* has less ancillary information, but a more extensive cover of his repertoire. There has been a continual programme of revising the

editions. In some cases, there are completely new editions, but even when the BG scores have been retained, parts have been redone and the old parts with bowings and hairpins survive only for a few cantatas available on hire only. Bärenreiter expects to have its Bach catalogue available in a few weeks time.

I hope that copies of all three catalogues will be available from King's Music on request (so-far, only the Breitkopf has arrived), and we are happy to order performance material for customers.

LIBRARY OR THE INTERNET?

Thomas Mann *The Oxford Guide to Library Research*. Oxford UP, 1998. xx + 316pp, \$30.00. ISBN 0 19 512312 3

I was puzzled when this arrived since, with one exception, there is no mention of music at all. I had nearly read to the end before I noticed that the slip from the publisher which I was using as a bookmark belonged to *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice* by Jane A. Bernstein. I hope a copy of that arrives, especially since it will be useful to relate her study of Scotto with James Agee's book on the junior Gardanos, which has just come from Rochester UP. Mann has suspicions at the excess reliance researchers now have on information obtained through the net, and shows that it is not the panacea many think it is. I like his hierarchical categorisation: data, information, opinion, knowledge, understanding and wisdom. 'Where shall wisdom be found?' Probably not via the computer. 'While both screens and books can contain texts of any length, it is becoming more apparent that the book format is much more successful at conveying the higher levels of thought – which is not the same thing as merely recording them.' Mann is a librarian at the Library of Congress, so may seem to be biased. He has provided a convenient guide to how to use libraries and the net, especially useful for those seeking information outside their particular area of expertise. But it is written from an American viewpoint: British libraries are traditionally more concerned with classification than subject indexing. As for the music, the only mention is of the two four-letter words in vol. VII, p. 783, line 2 – Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen sounds as phoney as Estrum-Hellerup, but does have an independent existence. Two specific points: the term 'trade off' is used far too frequently, and the section on genealogy should surely have some specific reference to the data religiously collected by the Mormons.

HEAVEN CHEAPLY SINGING

Richard Rastall *The Heaven Singing: Music in Early English Religious Drama*. Boydell & Brewer. 456pp, £25.00 ISBN 0 85991 550 6

Welcome to this in paperback. It cost £55.00 when we reviewed the hardback (EMR 27, Feb. 1997, p. 2). At this lower price, all interested in the subject should buy a copy. How soon before we see vol. 2? *More reviews on p. 22*

LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

In pondering God's great vision, Oscar Wilde (in *Ave Maria Gratia Plena*) used the example of Semele, who

*sickening for love and unpeased desire
prayed to see God's clear body, and the fire
caught her white limbs and slew her utterly.*

More earthly interpreters, aided by the press publicity, had the chance to ponder the flash of Semele's glistening white bottom as she allowed herself a post-coital flaunt in front of a phalanx of flunkies. The English National Opera's production of Handel's tale of everyday life amongst the gods was nothing if not exciting. The action seemed to have been set in a royal palace not a millions miles away, with a familiar looking Juno sporting a head scarf and handbag – but no corgi. It normally takes me hours to work out these mythological blockbusters, but the basic story is usually quite simple. In this case, the mortal Semele falls for the God Jupiter, but in his human form. They consummate the friendship with some gusto. But she is then persuaded (by Jupiter's long suffering and bitter wife, Juno) that, however impressive the earthly Jupiter might have been, catching him in his godly form was a far more satisfying experience. But, according to Ovid, when Jupiter appears 'her mortal form could not endure the shock - and she was burned to ashes in his sight.' Both Handel and the ENO flunked out on this dramatic opportunity, and Semele's short but beautifully resigned aria ('Ah me! too late') was staged as little more than a gentle faint. But this production was certainly not without drama – much of the action takes place on a huge bed, and sex is never far away, even amongst the chorus (who were by far the weakest musical aspect of the evening, showing little understanding of consort singing or a willingness to move away from the Wagnerian roots – a major let down that ENO must address if they are to make any progress in performing pre-romantic opera). The seductive Semele was superbly sung and acted by Rosemary Joshua (notable in the angular lines of the mirror song 'Myself I shall adore'), and an equally impressive Christopher Saunders, who on the night I attended stood in for John Mark Ainsley as Jupiter ('Where e'r you walk' was only one of many outstanding arias). Amongst the other roles, Janis Kelly played a delightful cameo role as Juno's overexcitable secretary bird, but Stephen Wallace's underpowered countertenor voice (as Athamas) never really projected into the cavernous Coliseum acoustic. Harry Bicket's direction was brisk and busy, but the band lacked the tonal variety that period instruments would have brought to the party, although Abby Wall's expressive continuo playing on baroque cello was a highlight. The staging and production were stunning, with a particularly stylishly choreographed opening to Act III, as Somnus struggles to raise his reclining head. I under-

stand that *Alcina* and *Poppea* are on the cards for the ENO next year, so I hope they will ponder early instruments and (in the former) a more appropriate chorus. [For further comments on *Semele*, see pp. 9-11.]

Victoria Voices and Viols are a new group, directed by Andrew Hope, and dedicated, not surprisingly, to the music of Tomás Luis de Victoria on voices and viols, eight of the former, five of the latter, together with a theorbo and harp. Their 8 May concert at St Pancras Church, Euston Road (the second of a series of five which will cover all his motets) concentrated on those written for the dramatic period between Palm Sunday and Ascension Day. Particularly gripping were the sequences *Victime paschali* and *Lauda Sion salvatorem*, with their secular echoes of the Spanish villancico and early slave songs. The voices and viols were used in various combinations, sometimes with instruments doubling the vocal line, but often taking one or more independent lines themselves. Without getting into authenticity debates (and a number of performances recently have been breaking away from the voices-only line), the music was presented convincingly with appropriate expression. There was some nicely twangy theorbo playing by Taro Takeuchi, but Emma Johnson's harp was unfortunately more or less inaudible from where I sat, perhaps because she was tucked away below the front pew. The low point of the evening was the distracting conversation between two of the singers while their colleagues sang *Ecce sacerdos*.

Even the presence of The Queen elsewhere in the same building didn't prevent the Heathrow flightpath being directly overhead during the concert by the Italian Madrigal Group in the delightful setting of Windsor Castle's Vicars' Hall (9 May). This 11 strong group (SMATTB, 2 violins, cello, theorbo and harpsichord), was formed last year by tenors Simon Haynes and Julian Stocker to explore the music of Monteverdi and his lesser known contemporaries, particularly the little-known Giovanni Valentini, whose music ended the concert. His *Un di soletto* was described as being 'distinctly odd' before it was sung, but I thought it was a real find. Over a catchy plucked cello and drone harpsichord continuo, the tale of an enchantress unfolded via paired sopranos and tenors and a bass solo, using canon, violinistic passages in thirds and sixths and a concluding chorale, all articulated by lilting and sensuous violin interludes. Another supposed oddity was the mournful *E partito il mio bene*, which had some lovely Gesualdic harmonic twists amongst the little motifs tossed around the singers. Giovanni Rovetta (Monteverdi's successor at San Marco) was represented by *Giovinetta fastosa*, a delightful depiction of the gently mocking and flighty feminine wiles of April. This was a pleasantly convincing performance of a well

thought out programme. Despite the different vocal styles, the singers blended well, although the vibrato of the sopranos was distracting, particularly in chromatic or ornamented passages. Violin intonation was unsteady at times, and didn't always lead to the expected tune up between pieces.

It was brave of a well-known firm of architects to sponsor a concert in a building they had recently designed, but the new c250 seat recital hall at Southlands College showed itself well suited to the challenging acoustic requirements of Emma Kirkby's delightful concert with Anthony Rooley (lute) on 11 May. I have reviewed Emma Kirkby at the Albert Hall and most other major London concert halls, so there was a sense of returning to musical roots in this small scale concert. The programme was thoughtfully imaginative, and was aided by the irrepressible Mr Rooley's erudite musings on love, melancholy, solitariness, philosophy, imagery, and the wiles of the Elizabethan court (its likeness to bee hives being the chief metaphor of the evening). Apart from four lute solos by Holborne, all the music was by Dowland. This allowed audience and musicians alike to concentrate on the heartfelt and often tortured words of the poems. These were grouped under four of the key Elizabethan protagonists, Robert Devereux, the unfortunate Earl of Essex, the beautiful society hostess, Lucy, Countess of Bedford, Sir Henry Lee and the Virgin Queen herself. The complex sycophancy of courtly life was neatly summed up in the final piece, Lee's 'Far from the triumphing Court'. After a lifetime of grossly overdone devotion to Elizabeth 'the goddess whom he served', Lee retired to his country estate and, after Elizabeth's death, was visited by the new Queen Anne - 'But lo, a glorious light ... Ay me! he cries, goddess ... be you my saint.' The saint is dead, long live the saint! Emma Kirkby was, of course, outstanding, delicately pointing up key words and colouring the vocal line with gentle inflection and relaxed ornamentation, often Italianate in style. She deserves a musical preservation order. For a few hours one Tuesday in Roehampton, time really did stand still.

I never thought that I would find a concert where I looked to Michel Corrette to provide the musical meat, but that was the case at Fenton House (12 May) and the recital by the French harpsichordist, Olivier Baumont. Billed as a concert of early keyboard Russian music, the first half was a less than inspiring compilation of late-18th-century musical styles composed by the likes of Bortnyansky, Manfredini, Gurilyov and Karaülov in St Petersburg. Much of the architecture of that city is of a similar sugar-icing school, so I suppose the music should have been no surprise, but I did expect something - well - more Russian. Unfortunately Baumont's playing and interpretation did the music no favours. He generally avoided any early romantic leanings that might have been sought out, but equally didn't allow enough space and time for the *Sturm und Drang* or quasi galant elements to show their mettle. His playing was frequently rushed, with too many slipped and missing notes, made all the more obvious in the frequent arpeggio passages. There were also too many moments of unsteady timing or uncertain pulse. Baumont seemed rather more at

home in the French music of the second half, but it was only Corrette's Suite I in G that showed any musical depth. The harpsichord was the huge 1770 Broadwood, and Baumont made good use of its wide range of tonal affects, including one stop that sounded too close to an electronic keyboard for comfort.

Times may have changed since my day, but I would have thought that the link between students and sherry would normally be rather tenuous. But for many years, the Royal Academy of Music has hosted the annual Croft Original Early Music Competition. Three student groups from the Academy made it through to the final (13 May) and they all demonstrated an admirably high overall standard of performance, musical insight and stage presence. The instrumental group, Flutopia, opened with a Fasch Sonata (flute, two recorders and continuo) and Purcell's *Three parts on a Ground* (three recorders and a bassoon and harpsichord continuo) which they played with a good sense of the pulse and overall architecture of the piece. Collegium Angelorum combined a soprano with oboe, two violins, violoncello and harpsichord for their Handel programme. Their singer had a nice stage manner and focused voice and they all gave a delightful rendering of *Tune your harps*. The third group, Abendmusik, also featured a soprano with flute and continuo. Their singer combined an admirably full, open and agile voice with a commanding stage manner and the group as a whole had a convincing communication within themselves and towards the audience. In what must have been a very close run decision, the judges, Catherine Bott and Timothy Roberts, (correctly, in my view) awarded the prizes in reverse order of appearance, with Abendmusik landing themselves a huge sherry decanter. I hope the communal harpsichord player likes sherry - she ended up with three bottles for her endeavours. As this was a competition for groups, I have avoided mentioning individuals, but this was an encouraging evening for early music.

South West Trains delivered me too late to catch the first two pieces of the St Mary-le-Strand lunchtime concert by the exciting new young medieval and renaissance group, Concanentes: Faye Newton (soprano/recorder), Hazel Brooks (vielle), Catherine Fleming (recorder), Arneir Hauksson (gittern/medieval lute) and Owen Morse-Brown (percussion/recorder). Their programme was Pilgrimage to the Virgin, with music from the *Llibre Vermell*, *Codex Calixtinus* and the *Cantigas de Sancta Maria*. This was an extremely well thought out programme, presented stylishly and approachably, with some excellent singing and instrumental playing and some neat interplay between the performers. It was a relief to hear drumming that concentrated on a simple but effective rendition of the pulse with unobtrusive flourishes at phrase ends and cymbals that didn't sound like saucepan lids. Like most contemporary performances of medieval music they have used an Arabic influence. Faye Newton's delightful singing included effective use of the ubiquitous ornamental vocal catch. They deserve their place amongst the finalists of the Early Music Network's Young Artists' Competition in York next month.

Most readers will know what to expect at an Ensemble Clément Janequin concert, and those of you that were at their 20th-birthday concert 'Les Cries de Paris' at the Wigmore Hall on 20 May will not have been disappointed. The five male singers were, as usual seated round a table, in a style that invites the audience to feel part of a friendly domestic entertainment – entirely appropriate for their repertoire of popular 16th-century French chansons. All that was missing was the brandy. The focus of the group is the astonishing voice and irrepressible character of countertenor Dominique Visse. His voice was slightly more subdued than it can be. He only ventured into his tortured-goose register a few times – but when he did, it was hard to avoid diving for cover. This is certainly not a one-man group. Indeed, all five singers ventured into goose territory as Marion cried 'Ay ay ay' in Ninot le Petit's suggestive *Mon amy m'avoit promis* and they gave a convincing 'musette au bourdon' in Janequin's *My levay par ung matin*. They are all outstanding exponents of the art of consort singing, without losing the individual timbre of their own voices, and they were supported by some outstandingly expressive lute playing by Eric Bellocq. Appropriately for a birthday concert, all the old favourites were there – *La guerre*, *Le chant des oyseaulx*, *El grillo*, *Nymphes des boys*, *Je ne mange point de porc* and *Nous sommes de l'ordre de Saint Babouyn*, sung with gusto and sauciness by the stars of their genre.

FAWLEY RENAISSANCE

A new early music festival is always welcome, particularly one which doesn't look as though it will be a one off. The derivation of the word Saeculum (the name of The Renaissance Society's new festival) reflects this confidence: with its roots in the Latin for 'the age', its normal liturgical translation being 'world without end'. Spread over two days (5/6 June) at the Thames-side country house of Fawley Court, near Henley, the focus of Saeculum was on practical music making as well as listening.

Saturday was a workshop day, with choir sessions led by Alistair Dixon, Peter Phillips and Edward Wickham and instrumental workshops led by Jeremy West. The choir, some 90 strong, looked at music by Gombert and Tallis and Manchicourt's amazing *Audivi vocem*, which on my score read *Audi vocem* – a neat advertising opportunity [VW haven't yet exploited the musical connotation of Lupo yet. CB]. Despite the competition from some spectacular rain storms and the problems of welding such large forces into a coherent whole, these workshops were a great success. I hopped from session to session, and ended up singing the same piece under all three directors, each with radically different ways of phrasing just the first line. The conducting styles were also interesting to compare, with my vote for this sort of workshop direction going to the one with the clearest beat and strongest indication of vocal entries. The ten instrumentalists made a more disparate group, and Jeremy West did well to mould them into a musical unity in Gabrieli's *Sacrae Symphoniae* of 1597. It was a shame that the two sides were not bought together for a final concert.

The Saturday evening concert welded together the sacred and secular with a joint production by The Clerks' Group and Sirinu, covering Renaissance England, Italy, Burgundy and France and included Ockeghem's *Missa L'homme armé*, preceded by a simple pipe and tabor tune and Robert Morton's early polyphonic version performed by Sirinu on voice, lute and harp. The sonorous *Agnus Die*, building up from the depths, was beautifully sing by The Clerks' Group (five men with a soprano on top), whose clean, focused sound and impeccable intonation always impresse. Their voices tonally coalesce into one, particularly noticeable with Rebecca Outram and counter-tenor William Missin.

Sunday was concert day, although Sirinu's ad hoc concerts allowed for some audience participation, particularly from dancers. Also participating were two scallop shells, making a delightfully versatile percussion instrument in the hands of Jon Banks. Joining The Clerks' Group and Sirinu were His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts and harpsichordist Lawrence Cummings, who gave three concerts of Ordres by François Couperin, including a magnificent performance of the *Huitième ordre*, with its fusion of Italian and French styles and large-scale *Passacaille*.

The Cornets and Sackbuts (and a natural trumpet) were put through their paces in two' concerts, one of English 16th and 17th music (the audience was rather unkind in demanding an encore of Tye's fiendishly complicated *In Nomine Howld Fast*) and an outdoor concert of Italian, Spanish and German music. I was interested to hear the *Cancions de Clarines* from the c. 1700 Martin y Coll organ MS played on the type of instruments which inspired some of the snarling reeds stops on baroque Spanish organ. The highlight for me was Vierdanck's Sonata 31 *Als ich einmal Lust bekam*, a flirtatious piece that contrasted a persistent unison motif with homophonic and polyphonic sections, perhaps suggesting the persistence and varying styles of the young man trying to chat up a young lady; it was also good to hear Vierdanck's Sonata 28, strikingly similar to the organ Toccatas of Scheidemann and his North German contemporaries.

The Saturday afternoon open rehearsal by The Clerks' Group was a prelude to one of their Sunday concerts when, following the well known engraving of Susato from the *Liber Primus Missarum* (Antwerp, 1546), they included a sackbut in Josquin's (or more probably, Noel Bauldewyn's) *Missa Da Pacem*. The rehearsal discussion had raised the question of whether instrumentalists should attempt follow the articulation implicit in the text; the player, Paul Niemann, decided not. In any case, the singers had to more or less improvise the text underlay, since they were reading from an untexted MS choir book. The inclusion of the sackbut was a delight, making the *cantus firmus* line easier to follow, particularly in Josquin's *Illibata Dei virgo nutrix* with its repeated 'La Mi La' motif that is eventually taken up by all the singers. Edward Wickham explained the complications of deciding questions of *ficta* on the spot, noting that the performance would be bound to contain errors: but, if there were any, they weren't noticeable to me.

The issue of singing from manuscript had arisen in Saturdays discussion between Alistair Dixon and Peter Phillips. Having heard The Clerks' Group sing in this way a couple of times now, and having tried it myself, I would agree with Edward Wickham that it can have a noticeable effect on consort singing and general focus of sound. The visible interaction between choir members alone is worth watching. But what surprised me most in the discussion and choir sessions was Peter Phillip's apparent trust in the work of editors on matter of ficta. Such questions can be fraught, and a decision on an individual note can have consequences elsewhere, but listening to The Clerks' Group doing it live in concert convinced me that it is the performer who must have the final say on such issues.

The intellectual highpoint of the weekend was the discussion with Jon Banks, Matthew Spring and Henry Stobart of Sirinu, introduced as the most-qualified musicians ever by Edward Wickham. Each laden with PhD's and other baubles, they gave a intellectually convincing argument for their backward recreations of secular music from later polyphonic appearances. They demonstrated with a sung version of the Sanctus from an Isaac Mass, followed by a lively reconstruction of the underlying folk melody. The discussion included the growth of the cult of the composer around 1500, the lack of evidence for written music for performers before that time and Sirinu's use of traditional music from the Bolivian Andes as an influence on their performance of late medieval and early renaissance music. Their performances, both formal and informal, throughout

the weekend showed four musicians thoroughly at ease with their chosen repertoire.

Altogether an excellent enterprise which, despite some unfriendly and noisy weather, seemed appreciated by all. Saeculum 2000 is on 3/4 June.

I attended the weekend as well. The site was magnificent, a Christopher Wren country house, set in spacious grounds with the Thames on one side. It is now a Polish religious centre, with huts providing accommodation for up to 200 (the total depending on the number of people willing to share rooms). I'm sure that I was not the only person filling the organisers' ears with ideas for improvements, so I'm sure that next year the event will be even richer, with perhaps more to entice non-participants.

I was studiously polite about the last Sirinu concert I heard; but their programmes need time to work into the system, which could not happen with their one-off Cromwell show. They were far more impressive in action here, both in their formal concert (the alternation with The Clerks' Group was highly stimulating) and in their outdoor activities. I was also very impressed by the Clerks, and am convinced by their practice of all singing from a single large choirbook: apart from any advantages of original notation, it gives both an aural and a visual cohesion. Their skill suddenly left them at the end of the Saturday-night concert, when the soprano decided to turn on her vibrato for a group of English madrigals. I was sorry I missed Peter Phillip's lecture, in which he apparently admitted he had been wrong about English church pitch for the last twenty or so years. CB

SEMELE at the COLISEUM

Robert Oliver & Clifford Bartlett

This isn't intended as a corrective to the review in Andrew Benson-Wilson's regular column: we are all basically in accord as, indeed, was Rosemary Druce, who was invited to contribute a further view if she disagreed. But I thought it might be interesting to get different opinions.

The main response to the production of Handel's *Semele* by the English National Opera at the London Coliseum must be loud cheers. Handel is surely the greatest composer to have suffered so many centuries of bad performances. A brilliant virtuoso, he was also an impresario, who made and lost fortunes mounting seasons of opera and oratorio, fixing the orchestra, arranging financial backing, the venues, booking the singers, rehearsing, directing the performances, and on top of this, wrote the music. He of all people deserves performances at the top level of professional competence – something he always set up himself. Of his English oratorios, *Semele* has suffered least (save perhaps *Hercules*) in that amateur choirs have largely left it alone. There's less for chorus than in most oratorios anyway, and the subject matter does not

conform to the expectations that choral societies have of Handel.

So the initiative of ENO in staging this successfully is to be warmly applauded. The singing is mostly so good: voices have been chosen for the suitability of their range and style, and, given the modern approach, sing very stylishly. The orchestra too, their ranks swelled by a baroque cello, archlute, harpsichord, organ and baroque guitar, respond well to the demands of the style, although not as well as they did in the last baroque opera I heard them do, Purcell's *Fairy Queen*. The evening is very entertaining, the music of Handel is put where it belongs, in the repertoire of a top opera house, and every seat was full.

However I do have reservations. Whatever Handel's reasons for treating this work as oratorio rather than opera, there are important differences between the genres. In his operas there are few choruses or ensembles. His oratorios, while giving the appearance of operas, with stage directions, divisions in acts and scenes, etc, give the chorus

a major role, and there are more ensembles. *Semele* conforms to the norms of the oratorio form, despite its high proportion of *da capo* arias compared with the less dramatic oratorios. Handel, a practical genius, wrote for the conditions of performance.

The production, a major reason for the success of the season, is brilliant, visually stunning, often very funny. The soloists act well, and it is such theatrical music, how can one possibly complain? Part of the problem is that the creative energy and originality came from the production rather than from the musical direction. Where there was a conflict, it was resolved in favour of the action or the staging. The problems became more obvious to me with the second viewing. I first saw it on TV and was delighted by the freedom of the staging, but bothered by the problems of ensemble. Three days later, we went to a performance. They had tightened up some (but by no means all) of the ensemble, clearly as concerned as anyone by the problems highlighted by the television. The lighting and stage set are simple yet so cleverly contrived that they have real impact. However this was at times at the expense of the music, and the acting sometimes got in the way of the singing.

Clearly the producer knew the music well, his ideas were suggested by it: Juno (Susan Bickley) checks to see if she has her air tickets, while she was delivering a cadenza at the end of her aria, then exits to seal Semele's fate. It was very funny, brilliantly linked to the music, one of many touches that delighted the audience. All the singers acted so well. Juno particularly made much of her part, at the same time managing her music with flawless articulation. Semele (Rosemary Joshua), who was brilliant and deserves the raves she has been getting, mostly managed the fast runs, except in her aria demanding that Jove reveal himself to her in all his glory. However, in the aria she sings in unison with the violins the ensemble and tuning were near perfect. John Mark Ainsley (Jupiter) was marvellous. The musical climax of the evening was his performance of 'Where e'er you walk'. And in the repeat of the first section, the heavens suddenly filled with stars. However, in the love scenes his singing was occasionally compromised. The bed-top manoeuvres seemed to distract him so that he was under the note (if on top of her). On one occasion, enjoying an opportunity afforded by a ritornello, he didn't break off the passionate and prolonged kiss soon enough to get a good breath and line up his support for the next passage. He only just made it through.

This is not so significant in Verdi or Puccini, but is as crucial in Handel as it is in Mozart. Where the producer is the main creative force behind the performance, the music can miss out. Some of the climactic moments were more visual than musical. For example, Jove leads the company in passing round the moon during the chorus at the end of Act Two. Visually it was absolutely stunning, musically it fell well short of its effect because the chorus was concentrating on its actions. In fact, the chorus was the least stylish. They made no effort to restrain their vibrato or

clarify their sound. They sang with full voice, exaggerated dynamics, little finesse and less style, and their words were unclear except where homophonic. Where they were too busy to watch the conductor, they became ragged. You can enjoy fugal entries, or action on the stage, but the combination is inappropriate, and the music suffers.

The bedroom scene, which takes up a large proportion of the Second Act, raises the question of how much action is needed. Handel's music is fabulously sensuous. Do you have two singers standing at a distance, giving off waves of eroticism, or do you, as in this production, have them giving a dynamic imitation of a great night in. I would like more left to my imagination. There is a problem of progression: once some clothes are off, and appropriate positions assumed, what then? Is sex such a spectator sport, or is it the potential for it that grips us? (But I am lost in admiration of their techniques - I was taught to sing standing up). Handel answers emphatically that it is love, not sex. Jupiter loves Semele, and his recitative when he realises the foolishness of his promise to her, touches us to the quick. Then poor, foolish, vain, dying, Semele sings 'Ah me, too late I now repent' and we all weep for her. There was little action, few effects here, and none were needed. The music could be left to itself.

Later in the week we went to *Julius Caesar* [Shakespeare, not Handel] in the reconstructed Globe. The scenery was limited, the lighting effects non-existent, the costumes miscellaneous Elizabethan. Not everything was perfect, but the conditions threw the emphasis very much on the speeches, which the actors declaimed, using dynamics, rhythm, and voice production (the latter with varied success). The full power of the text came to the fore, the mannered, ritualistic movements and contrivances made complete sense. Too much verisimilitude can exclude the audience, great art involves us.

Although staging *Semele* raises such questions, there is no doubt that this season has made the general public realise what a marvellous evening Handel will give them. It is an achievement worthy of the masterpiece, and a great night out.

Robert Oliver

It is forty years since I first saw *Semele* staged, by the Handel Opera Society at Sadlers Wells, with Heather Harper as Semele and Owen Brannigan in the comic role of Somnus - the only comic role: the work is not, as the introduction to the TV showing stated, a 'hilarious' opera. Curiously, what I particularly remember from that and the revival of two years later was not so much the singing but the extraordinary variety of Handel's writing for strings in Act II. So when I had a tame choir a few years later, I put on a concert performance of that Act. I don't recollect seeing a complete staged performance since then. I did some editorial work for a BBC radio performance by John Eliot Gardiner, including checking the autograph (direct, not on film), and was delighted to be asked by ENO to prepare the material for their production.

Staging *Semele* is a problem in that the nature of the work is ambiguous. Congreve wrote it as an opera, but not the sort of opera with which Handel was familiar, with little regard to the Metastasian or pre-Metastasian conventions. Handel was not anticipating staging, and used the structural framing and articulation of the drama by choruses which he had invented for his oratorios. Staging the more dramatic of the oratorios has long been tempting – *Semele* was performed thus as far back as 1925; but there are problems. Perhaps the ideal form is on disc, where, unlike real opera, the absence of visual action is no handicap since it was never intended.

I saw the performance on May 13th, and also the live TV showing of the following performance on the 15th. The differences in my perception were interesting. The London Coliseum is a vast theatre – too vast, was the initial critical response when what was then the Sadlers Wells Opera Company moved there in 1968. At least from my seat (back right corner of the stalls, just under the projecting Grand Circle) the balance was fine. The orchestra was a bit quiet, perhaps because of that projection, but that enabled the words of the singers to be as audible as one had any right to expect. The vocal strength seemed natural, and there was little feel of excess effort being used. But this all changed with the sound heard at home. The soloists often seemed to be trying too hard and the vibrato was far more noticeable. There's a moral here: what works in a particular building does not necessarily work in a recording. No recording engineer is going to aim at reproducing the slightly-distant sound at my particular seat, so I fear that the proposed CD will not do the performance justice.

I commented unfavourably about the amateur conductor of *Admeto* last month; it was audible right from the first few bars of the Overture that Harry Bicket was operating at very different level. The music had shape (though not distortingly so), and despite some very nippy tempi (perhaps too nippy for the singers when placed at the back of the stage), they generally made musical sense. The orchestra was stylish: the standard of baroque playing in non-specialist orchestras seems to have improved a lot recently. Abby Wall was imported as baroque cello continuo, and presumably played the arias with solo continuo. There was a curious difference in 'O sleep' between what I heard in the theatre and at home, where the opening pairs of quavers sounded very detached: presumably Abby was playing to the acoustic, not to the microphone. It was nice that Ino's 'Turn, hopeless lover' was not cut: lovely music, which worked dramatically. It is also a useful example to quote at those who argue that the organ should not be used to colour quiet airs, since it is specified in the autograph.

Sex loomed large in the publicity for the show. On stage, the heroine did not disappoint, though the TV close-ups made her look a little more mature. I suppose in real life girls lower in the hierarchy fall for executives who have had rather too many working lunches, so the *Semele*-Jupiter relationship looked plausible. It would have been more interesting if the timing of the flash of bare bottom had

varied from one performance to another, to subvert the reviews which had revealed when the titillating moment would come. Attempts to get the chorus to join in the mood were pretty unconvincing on stage and ludicrous on screen. Musically, in fact, the chorus was a disaster. 'Endless pleasure' followed Rosemary Joshua's sexy solo version with what could have been a description of a Sunday School outing (or perhaps not even that: they were quite flirtatious events when I was in my teens). It didn't act well, either, but it was so busy acting that its singing was weak and out of time. Surely it was obvious from a fairly early stage in the rehearsals that this aspect of the production wasn't going to work? What was needed was a simple way of getting the singers on and off stage, grouped with each voice together, in a position (preferably front-stage) where they could see the conductor. Then give them some easy movements that they could manage without losing concentration on the music and that didn't look too stupid. The contrast with the orchestra was enormous. If the production is to be recorded, either the chorus needs to go into training, or a proper choir needs to be employed; amateur choirs could do better.

The solo singing of the two lead roles was magnificent. Particularly notable was the way the lavish embellishment was used as a means of characterisation, and both Rosemary Joshua and John Mark Ainsley were completely on top of it (as well as each other). Juno (Susan Bickley) was given the difficult task of being treated as a comic figure, mimicking the Queen, though surprisingly no Corgis. How could she escape from that into her forceful 'Hence, Iris hence away', especially as even during that Iris was undermining her? Similarly, why was she prancing around pretending to steal Semele's clothes against the marvellously embellished *da capo* of 'Myself I shall adore'? Sadly, it seems that opera audiences still can't adjust to listening to music without continual stage business. [EB, however, joined most of the critics in enjoying this scene and was not concerned that the action was imposed on the music.] Casting Iris as Juno's secretary worked quite nicely, though it's an old idea (cf Bella in *A Midsummer Marriage*). It would have been fine as a contrast with Juno, but the contamination undermines her role, which is not, as far as I can see, in any way comic in the text and music Handel provided.

I've been a bit negative. In fact, I found the performance very enjoyable. I can see the attractions of staging one of Handel's best works, especially one that is more in accord with current taste than many others. In many respects it worked well, and the fact that the public reception was so good shows that the effort was worth making. There will be kill-joys like me who pick holes in some aspects. But the overall standard of the solo singing (apart from a weak Athamas) and orchestral playing was impressive. It came over well on television – far better than some productions specially devised for that medium. I look forward to *Alcina* later this year – as I write, we are adding Amanda Holden's text to our computer files of the work. Fortunately, little is demanded of the chorus. CB

J. H. Schmelzer – Balletto di Done Veggie

Intrada

Violino 1mo G2

Violino 2do C1

Violetta 1ma C3

Violetta 2da C4

Basso F4

Aria



5

6 6 6

Borea



6 6 6



6 6

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Clifford Bartlett

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Each set priced as 2 CDs

The 'conception and layout' of Harmonia Mundi's *Discovery Series*, subtitled 'Capturing the Essence of Music', is credited to Christian Girardin, and the success or failure of these three packages (I'm not sure what to call them) must be largely ascribed to him. The idea is excellent. The books, in the slightly odd shape of two CDs one above the other, are extremely sensibly devised, with colour-coded references to the CDs, and illustrative material which really helps – no pretty pictures for their own sakes, except for a view of Venice set opposite text on Monteverdi's Florentine *Orfeo*. I've listed the three books in descending order of my evaluation of them. Why has no-one written such a simple (I use the word as commendation) account of the standard Baroque forms? Perhaps it is because such books are normally printed in black and white and do not have accompanying CDs. It would, of course, make an excellent textbook (though perhaps a bit expensive), but anyone who enjoys baroque music, whether musically literate or not, will find this interesting and rewarding. Disc 1 has what are called 'four emblematic works' (the middle word puzzles me). I am puzzled by the choice of Act I of *Orfeo*: it is so untypical of what was to follow that it will confuse rather than help: Corelli's op. 5/3, Couperin's fourth *Concert Royal* and Bach's Cantata 78 are better choices, and the performances here, drawn from the Harmonia Catalogue, are mostly very good, though I'd rather forget than remember the Dido. The second disc has 25 pieces, closely linked to the text. Popularisation in the best sense: I hope this circulates widely.

The problem with the Bach set is the text. I would be tempted to quote the whole of the last section, 'Ars moriendi', in our *Camera horribilium* section: instead I sent it to our cartoonist, since it was full of visual images like Bach having 'taken refuge atop Mount Zion in a solid fortress, citadel or tower where the only guest admitted was science'. (David Hill produced instead something more fundamental.) The rest is more straight-forward, but a bit too idiosyncratic for the non-specialist reader and not always entirely reliable. Has a copy of the music (not just the text) of Buxtehude's *Castrum doloris* emerged recently

(p. 15)? We need to hear more of the older Bachs, a curious omission from the CD of predecessors (presumably there are no Harmonia Mundi recordings, which is probably the same reason for the absence of any of the Weimar Vivaldi transcriptions, though there is a Walther movement in the organ volume). The French aspect of the Brandenburgs seems a bit over-stated, and does anyone here use the term 'whole consort' and relate any English practice to scoring for four violas (pp 25-26). There are a few odd quirks of translation, such as the description of the *Trauerode* (included complete on disc 1) as 'not liturgical but an academic work, performed during a funeral ceremony'

The Organ guide initially looked as if it would be extremely useful, with a whole disc demonstrating the sound of the various stops and standard combinations. Sadly, this backfires, partly because the examples are improvised pastiche and parodies rather than real music. Also, the more I listened, the more I was conscious of the similarities between the sound of any stop rather than the differences. And it is a pity that both organs used are modern French, the smaller one built by the author of the book, rather than historic instruments. These only appear on the second CD, which illustrates the chapter on the forms of organ music. In some cases we are given registrations, but more could have been done to relate styles (rather than forms) to their specific sounds. The opening chapter, on the history of the instrument, is a bit naive, and we are told on p. 8 that the organ made its first appearance in churches in the 12th century while on the next page the Winchester organ of 951AD is mentioned. The technical description, however, is well done.



RECORD REVIEWS

CHANT

Meditation: Chants for Lent The Russian Patriarchate Choir, Anatoly Grindenko 63' 26" Opus 111 OPS 30-240

I can't judge whether Anatoly Grindenko's performance practice of Russian chant is more comparable with recordings of Gregorian chant by Mary Berry or by Marcel Pérès. His CDs have the virtue of sounding vigorous and boldly convincing, this one more so than its predecessors, avoiding the mesmeric manner that current Western attempts at mystical music affect. Until a more knowledgeable reader convinces me otherwise, I will continue to recommend his recordings. CB

Vir Dei Benedictus: Liturgy of the Solemnity of Saint Benedict Monastic Choir of the Abbey of Montecassino, Stefano Concordia, *cond & organ* 67' 28" Fonè 99 F 02 CD

Includes J. G. Walther/Albinoni concerto & Widor; Toccata from Symphony 5

One has to wait a long time for the chant: first come 7' 35" of bells, then 7' 37" of one of Walther's concerto arrangements (the third mention of them in this issue), the latter being more exciting than the former. At last we hear the Benedictine schola (ten members are shown on the photograph) singing from a distance the propers for the Feast of St Benedict. After the Widor (now so inextricably associated with weddings that perhaps it symbolises the monks' wedding to God) come the Vespers antiphons, and an item each from Lauds and Compline, concluding with a *Te Deum* (and those bells again). We are told that the recording was made at St Benedict's tomb: were the microphones not allowed on such holy ground? The feeling of being at the wrong end of the church palls after a bit: people will buy this for the choir, not for the organ. But the suggestion in music of the style of the building – not at all austere – was a good idea. The choir sings well, though don't expect a reconstruction of the sound of Montecassino in the 6th century! It will probably mean more to tourists than to someone who hasn't been there. CB

MEDIEVAL

Machaut Chansons Ars Cameralis, Lukas Matousek dir 73' 25" Studio Matous MK 0027 - 2 931

This is a generous programme, with 24 of Machaut's amorous pieces followed by *Armes, amours*, Deschamps & Andrieu's ballade on his death. Not perhaps a disc for English *a capella* heretics, but the instrumental accompaniments are delicate and support the voice rather than compete with it. The booklet has a note justifying

this and the tempi, which are fast, but not faster than Zuzana Matousková, the chief singer, can manage; indeed, she fully justifies buying the disc, whose main disadvantage is that the texts appear only in old French and Czech. CB

El Cant de la Sibilla: Mallorca, València, 1400-1560 Montserrat Figueras, La Capella Reial de Catalunya, Jordi Savall dir 61' 38" Alia Vox AV 9806

This reminds me of Tavener more than anything else, a phrase from the Valencian piece particularly. But Tavener is never as minimal as this. I can praise the singing, and others of a more meditative frame of mind may find it useful as a sort of spiritual keep-fit music. Savall seems to prefer extremes: either everything is over-jolly or, as here, drawn out beyond the musically tolerable. The Sibilline offerings on Savall's previous label were rather more interesting. If anyone would like to offer a more enthusiastic report for the next issue, I'll happily send the CD. But curiously I have already found it growing on me. It is restful, and even more. I have been playing it again while consigning my previous thoughts on it to print, but the music keeps on thrusting itself on my attention. By the time this is delivered to the printer, I'll probably love it! CB

Personent Hodie: Medievo e Mistero della Natività Ensemble Weltgesang, Roberta Cristoni dir 56' 51" Fonè 99 F 01 CD

Mostly anon, + Brasart *Gratulemur christicole*; Busnois *Noël*; Hildegard *Ave generosa*; Lymburgia *Inmizabo regi meo*

This begins tentatively, and I thought that I wasn't going to like it; but the first verse of the title song is repeated with vigour, shawm and drums, and fears of a mystical experience vanish. The programme has separate sections for mother and son. The Italian (not German) group comprises a choir of eight, three soloists (less effective than the choir) and four players. Although most of the items have some church connection, the manner of performance is secular. It would be nice to be told the sources, and you need to understand Latin and middle English (for *Edi beo hu*), since no translations are printed. There is little sense of time and place, but this is a pleasant, perhaps too easy-going, collection. CB

15th CENTURY

O rosa bella: English and Continental Music from the Late Gothic Period Clemencic Consort Arte Nova Classics 74321 59210 2 £ 70' 44"

The title is not, as so often, merely that of the best-known piece. This begins with the familiar Bedingham (or Dunstab/ple – the listing on the disc gives both names) and

continues with another 14 tracks based on it. Short settings are performed instrumentally, but the major work, a Mass from Trent MS 88, is sung – those who associate Clemencic with excess instrumentation need not worry. The booklet does not mention Strohm's tentative attribution of the Mass to Gilles Joye, who happened to have a mistress called Rosabelle. Despite the fact that the alto (so most prominent) voice is David James, the sound is very different from the Hilliards, more direct with a strong forward motion and less emphasis on the sound itself. It is a pity that the ballata itself is performed with an added voice, so we do not hear the unadorned original. The disc has a fine climax with Ciconia's setting of the text, which would have been better with a voice on each part. A fascinating disc, and very good value. CB

16th CENTURY

Byrd Consort Songs (English Consort Music I) James Bowman Ct, Ricercar Consort, Philippe Pierlot dir 61' 02" Ricercar 206442

I have some misgivings about counter-tenors singing lute and consort songs: the colour and characteristics of the voice don't always suit the music as well as one might expect. But James Bowman is the sort of singer who transcends limitations. The voice itself is always beautiful, even when reaching for the top notes and with slightly distorted vowels. He is so much a natural singer that the listener just accepts what comes out. Every note is beautifully in tune, the meaning of his singing is always clear even if the words aren't, and he has such a beautiful pianissimo. The Ricercar consort accompanies him with playing of assurance and poise, faultlessly stylish and beautifully shaped, as though they know the words as well as does the singer. The music is all beautiful: well-known songs (*Ah silly poor Joas, Ye sacred Muses*) together with political songs (the music transcends the awful verses – the new poet laureate should read and beware) give plenty of variety. The viols play three consorts – two by Byrd and an anonymous 5-part piece – beautifully, with lovely shaping of the phrase and warm yet intense sound. The disc finishes with a song, *In Paradise*, accompanied by 6 viols, sonorous and sensuous, images of heaven in heavenly sounds. Robert Oliver

Fayrfax Missa Regali ex progenie... The Cardinall's Musick, Andrew Carwood dir, David Skinner ed 77' 44" ASV *Gaudemus* CD GAU 185

+ *Lauda vivi alph et o, Magnificat Regali, Alas for lak of her presens, That was my woo*

This is the fifth and last of yet another Cardinall project, an achievement which

has brought to life another distinguished early-Tudor composer. Previously this was music for specialists; now all can enjoy it and delight in Fayifax's mastery of texture and vocal sonority. These are the obvious introductory features and will draw the listener into other aspects of the music. Glorious music, sung with just a touch of coothing so that you can feel that you are overhearing something that is happening for the praise of God or the enjoyment of the singers (or both); it draws you in, doesn't preach at you – the music and the singing of it match perfectly. CB

Guerrero Battle Mass Choir of Westminster Cathedral, His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornetts, James O'Donnell cond 72' 16" Hyperion CDA67075
Missa de la batalla Escouez; Conditor alme siderum, Duo Seraphim, In exitu Israel, Magnificat VIII toni, Pange lingua, Regina caeli laetare

This eagerly-awaited recording more than lives up to its expectations. Close collaboration with Bruno Turner has produced a very important disc which seeks to reconstruct performance practices in Seville Cathedral during Guerrero's fifty-year span as assistant and, from 1574, *maestro de capilla* until his death in 1599. The cathedral chapter acts fortunately provide a considerable amount of information, particularly about the extensive use of instruments and alternatim performance; Bruno Turner has also provided the relevant plainchants and the result is a mind-opener. The instrumentalists are, as one would expect, superb both in accompanying the choir and in the *Salve Regina* which they perform on their own. The singing is equally outstanding from a choir which has already proved its affinity with Guerrero's music. The mass has little of Jannequin's battle in it: Guerrero uses just some of its themes, with great restraint, but with wonderfully sonorous counterpoint in what seems a clear attempt to consecrate the secular. The other pieces here show both Guerrero's liturgical and grand ceremonial sides, the alternatim hymns, psalm and Magnificat being particularly well done. It is perhaps ironic that, more than four hundred years after the Armada, it is English singers and instruments who are doing such service to Spain's musical patrimony. Westminster Cathedral Choir's commitment to this repertoire over the last two decades has been exemplary. Let us fervently hope that it will continue in the future. Noel O'Regan

Congratulations to James O'Donnell on his move to another part of Westminster: we hope that he will not become the third organist to be sacked by the Dean.

Leal Amour: Flemish Composers at the Court of Philip II Egidius Kwartet 62' 27 Etcetera KTC 1218

Gombert *A bien gran tort, Dicite in magni; de la Hèle Mais voyez mon cher esmy, Asperges me; Manchicourt Du fond de ma pensée, Media vita; Payen Avecque vous mon amour finers, Virgo prudentissima; Rogier Leal amour, Missa Philippus secundus (Kyrie & Agnus); Turnhout Craint' et espoir, Ierusalem luge*

There is undoubtedly an urgent need for a recording which presents a cross-section of

music composed by the members of Philip's *Capilla flamenca*. [Flemish members of Philip's *Capilla* might be a better after-Noone description. CB] The chansons, and these include particularly fine and underperformed examples by Georges de la Hèle and Nicolas Payen, are generally idiomatically sung and suit the one-to-a-part treatment. Less successful is the sacred part of the programme. To my mind, this repertoire seems to call for larger forces and a more generous acoustic, although it is interesting to have a chance to hear it at all. The mismatch between the ideal and the present reality is at its most extreme in the two movements of Rogier's Mass *Philippus secundus*, where what should be an overpowering musical showpiece is reduced to a puny remnant, the more disappointing for being in part rushed and imperfectly recorded. Peter de Groot's excellent programme note makes interesting reading, although he perhaps paints a rather too rosy picture of the life of the emigré Flemings. A major factor in their protracted presence in Spain was surely the appalling genocide, directed specifically at intellectuals, which their patron was prosecuting in their homeland. D. James Ross

17th CENTURY

Blow Venus & Adonis Rosemary Joshua Venus, Gerald Finley Adonis, Robin Blaze Cupid, Clare College Chapel Choir (Timothy Brown dir), Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, René Jacobs dir 51' 00" Harmonia Mundi HMC 901684

Venus and Adonis has long played second fiddle to *Dido and Aeneas* in terms of early English opera recordings: there have been several fine recordings of Purcell's miniature masterpiece and here, at last, is the equivalent for Dr Blow. Starring several of the brightest lights of today's early music scene, it starts as it means to go on with a finely executed French overture, which makes perfect sense of Blow's angular lines. Pitching two substantial voices in the leading roles against Cupid and his band of girlish followers works very well, and the excellent singing from all concerned is matched by some particularly fine instrumental playing – I enjoyed the recorders especially. René Jacobs is to be congratulated on a fine achievement. BC

Buxtehude Harpsichord Music, Vol. 1 Lars Ulrik Mortensen 51' 58" da capo 8.224116 BuxWV 165, 166, 176, 179, 223, 225, 226, 233, 249

When I first bought the Banget (Hansen) edition of Buxtehude's harpsichord music back in 1961, I was extremely disappointed that it was just a collection of short dances and had nothing of the scale of the organ music that I knew. If I had still been so scornful of the suites, this recording would have disabused me. But it also would be satisfying if I hadn't, since it mixes these with *manualiter* works that are normally considered as being for the organ but which work very well on the harpsichord.

I have just one quibble: I was puzzled why *Wie schön leuchtet* seemed so hesitant and I realised that the problem was that even a slight spread of a chord made the melody in the treble sound late. There is a similar problem in romantic piano music where the left hand plays the bass and then reaches across to play a treble melody, but one expects a greater rhythmic precision in earlier music. Notwithstanding, this is a very fine recording, strongly recommended, with excellent notes by Kerala Snyder. CB

Fergusio Mottetti e Dialogi da concertare (*Tesori del Piemonte*, vol. 6) Gli Afetti Musicali, Corale Polifonica di Sommariva Bosco, Claudio Chiavazza dir 65' 53" Opus 111 OPS 30-236

The son of a Scottish teacher (presumably originally called Ferguson) in Savigliano in the Savoy, Fergusio (1582-1628) received musical instruction from an early age and chose Parma University to study law so that he could also study music with Claudio Merula there. Back home, he wrote dance music (which hasn't survived) and published his *Mottetti e Dialogi da concertare da una sino a nove con il basso continuo* in 1612. Arthritis in his hands prevented him playing the organ and took away his interest in music. The dialogues have aroused some musicological interest, though I'm not sure if they should be isolated as if a different type of composition from the rest of the set. This disc includes nearly half of the collection (20 out of the 42 items). One wonders, of course, what the rest are like, but one disc is enough. As so often with recent Italian premiere recordings of music that is not quite of the top notch (though nevertheless well-written with touches of imagination), the performance also lacks the excitement that someone like Alessandrini might give it (though I would probably then complain of exaggeration!) Individual pieces work well; heard in bulk, it sounds a bit routine. I would question the use of a choir, however small, taking the *concertare* in the title to imply one to nine solo voices. But those who enjoy Italian music of the period will welcome this. I hope Angelo Chiarle, whose thorough notes accompany the disc, publishes his edition of Fergusio. CB

Muffat Nobilis Juventus: Suites and Concertos Armonico Tributo, Lorenz Duftschmid dir cpo 999 635-2 63' 34" Ciacona Propitia Sydera, Coronatio Augusta, Indissolubilis Amicitia, Nobilis Juventus, Quis Hic? Saeculum

One of the first LPs I bought was The Academy of Ancient Music's recording of extracts from Muffat's *Florilegium secundum*. Some of those pieces appear on this disc, but, in spite of thinking I knew them well, I struggled to identify them. If this was largely on account of the somewhat theatrical interpretation and varied orchestration, I don't intend it as criticism. There's the clinking of chains in a movement called

Phantom, for example, which is initially startling, but ultimately seems somehow appropriate in trying to invoke whatever Muffat may have had in mind. There are some passages where solo oboes and solo violins are interchanged within sequential passages, which seems rather unlikely to be historically accurate (would musicians of the period have practised purely instrumental music together often enough to make such precise scoring decisions?) I was delighted when I saw the announcements for this disc, and I can happily report that it more than met my expectations. BC

NB Armonico Tributo is the name of the group; they don't include anything directly from that publication

Sweelinck *Cantiones Sacrae* (1619) Trinity College Chapel Choir, Cambridge, Richard Marlow cond
Vol. 1: Nos. 1-21 74' 17"
Hyperion CDA67103
Vol. 2: Nos. 22-37 64' 40"
Hyperion CDA67104

It is an extraordinary coincidence that the choirs of two almost-adjacent Cambridge colleges should produce complete recordings of this previously unrecorded major collection of motets within a few months of each other. Tim Brown hasn't spoken to me since I wrote about his Clare College version (*EMR* 47, p. 21); perhaps he will be comforted that my reaction to the Trinity performance is quite similar. I don't think that either recording reveals performers who have asked of the music the questions I expect from those intent on recreating a work (or group of works) of the past. There is probably less of the English Choral Tradition here than from Clare, but it is still in evidence, and I'm not sure how differently the choir would sing the motets of Stanford. Trinity keeps to the order of the print, while Clare rearranges the pieces according to the church year. Both recordings show the excellence of Cambridge choirs, but neither makes me feel that I am anywhere near listening to music from the Amsterdam of 1619. Such re-creation is ultimately impossible; but the music would benefit from going a lot further in that direction. I hope at least that these recordings will encourage singers to listen to the whole set and then try singing more than just the ubiquitous *Hodie*. CB

German 17th-Century Church Music Robin Blaze cT, The Parley of Instruments 74' 10"
Hyperion CDA67079
Music by H. Bach, J. C. Bach, J. M. Bach, Bernard, Buxtehude, Geist, Hofmann (BWV 53), Krieger, Rosenmüller, Schütz

There is a wealth of magnificent church music written for all sorts of ensembles surviving from 17th-century Germany. One might fear that nothing could follow the poise of Schütz's marvellous *Erbarm dich*, which opens this programme; but all of the remaining dozen pieces (three of which are instrumental) are of high quality. The only one that is (or at least was until it was de-ascribed from JSB) at all well-known is *Schlage doch*. Some may

find the prospect of a whole disc of counter-tenor offputting. There is, indeed, a certain lack of variety, but Robin Blaze is effective both when a beautifully-sustained sound is needed and in more dramatic modes. The stylish playing is helped by the use of the Parley's 'renaissance' instruments (the York conference on 2-4 July on the transition to baroque will probably suggest that the renaissance lasted longer than we think). Since this review is a bit late (my fault, not Hyperion's), it is probably unnecessary to recommend the disc; but if you haven't bought it, hasten to your nearest CD shop or contact Lindum Records. CB

LATE BAROQUE

Bach Arias for Soprano and Oboe Nienke and Pauline Oostenrijk 55' 55"
Vanguard 99166
Arias from BWV 1, 21, 31, 32, 74, 75, 84, 93, 105, 127, 144, 248

This is not a disc we would normally review, as it's a collection of odd bits and pieces played on modern instruments. But that would be our loss, for both the playing and the singing are excellent. The 13 arias include one with a pair of recorders in addition to oboe, and many have a string band which includes Wim ten Have on viola, Lucia Swarts on cello and Siebe Henstra on keyboard. Nienke Oostenrijk's voice is pure enough in tone and diction, with an added warmth, lending shape without having an effect on the pitch. Her sister keeps vibrato to a minimum, too, which is in itself an interesting effect. I suspect this will sell best among double-reed players, but I'd happily recommend it to any fan of Bach – it is a collection of wonderful arias, beautifully performed. BC

Bach Johannes-Passion Roberta Invernizzi, Claudia Schubert, Jeremy Ovenden, Klaus Mertens SATB (Mertens also *Christus*), Nico van der Meel Evangelist, Coro della Radio Svizzera Lugano, Ensemble Vanitas, Diego Fasolis 108' 26" (2 CDs in box)
Arts Authentic 47539-2

This set is taken from a live performance in 1998. I'm surprised by some of the pronunciation (there are several 'isht's, for example). There is real drama about the opening chorus, with huge, rasping bass notes on every second beat. The choir is very good (especially in the chorales, which are neither sung like robots nor over-interpreted), but sometimes takes a while to settle into each chorus – not so good, when they are representing an impassioned, rowdy crowd! Instrumental obbligati are well taken, as are most of the arias. I simply do not like harpsichord continuo in the arioso *Betrachte meine Seel*, especially when the instrument is as weedy as this one, and when the following aria (also with viole d'amore) is accompanied by organ. Inevitably with a live recording, there are one or two moments when something catches someone out, but this is overall a respectable performance. BC

Bach Masterpieces from the Weimar Period
Kay Johannsen org 57' 31"
Hänssler (Bach Edition 93) CD 92-093
BWV 532, 534, 542, 706, 727, 768
Bach Six Sonatas BWV 525-530
Kay Johannsen org 78' 01"
Hänssler (Bach Edition 99) CD 92-099
Bach Late Works of the Leipzig Period
Martin Lücker org 79' 12"
Hänssler (Bach Edition 100 CD 92-100
BWV 544, 548, 562, 668, 769, 1079/5

Three CDs from the Hänssler complete Bach series have arrived for review, two played by Kay Johannsen and one by Martin Lücker. The contrast between the players couldn't be greater. Of the three CDs, my pick is Johannsen's 'Masterpieces from the Weimar Period', played with panache and musical maturity and insight on the 1737 Christoph Treutmann organ in the Stiftskirche, Grauhof. It includes three of the majestic *Praeludia* from this relatively early period, including the G minor fugue associated with his unsuccessful audition at St Jacobi, Hamburg in 1720, the magnificent partite *Sei gegrüßet*, and 8 seconds of organ gadgetry, the *Kalkantenglocke*, or bell to alert the bellows blower. If you want a taster of this exciting player, listen to the thrilling performance of the *Praeludium* in D, BWV532, on track 21. Johannsen's other CD includes the six *Trio Sonatas*, played with technical and musical conviction. The recording probably makes the 1992 Metzler organ sound spikier than it is in the building.

Martin Lücker's playing is something else. Quirky to a fault, his impression of laboured self indulgence does the music, and this listener's patience, no good at all. Playing an undistinguished modern organ, he delights in cramming in as many changes of registration as he can (some rather odd) – no fewer than 13 in the eight-minute Fugue in B minor BWV544ii. The related *Praeludium* is like a giant lorry with dicky ignition, as it jerks along, periodically almost grinding to a halt, until it finally gives up the ghost with a disturbingly short chord. By contrast, the final chord of the *Canonic Variations*, BWV769a, is held on for a staggering 20 seconds. Interesting as it is to hear the *Ricercar a6* played on the organ, at 14' 39" it rather overstays its welcome. The only track I could ever envisage listening to again is the Fugue in E minor, BWV548, where a degree of mannered excitement is whipped up over a reasonably steady pulse. If the contrast between these CDs is anything to go by, this series needs careful monitoring. There may be some gems, but then again... Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Organ Works Rainer Oster (Arp-Schnitger-Orgel, St. Jacobi, Hamburg) 76' 55"
Arte Nova 74321 63644 2 £
BWV 527, 538, 545, 547, 572, 590, 654

The closest Bach ever got to having the organ of his dreams at his disposal was when he applied for the post of organist to St Jacobi, Hamburg in 1720. The organ he played at his audition still exists, having survived the centuries with remarkable

integrity. It has been recently restored, and is now one of a small number of idiomatic North German organs that can cope with Bach's mature music successfully, looking forward, as it does, to the more coherent organ style of the 18th century. There have been many recent recordings, a number on budget labels. This CD is certainly worth a listen. I have not come across the player before, but he plays this attractive programme with conviction and strength and a well-judged smattering of personal style. I am less convinced about the recording, which picks up too much of the Hamburg rumble and doesn't quite give the organ the bloom apparent when heard live, although the spatial separation between Rückpositiv and Hauptwerk is clear enough in BWV538. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Bach Sonatas & Partitas vol. 1 (BWV 1001, 1002, 1004) Rachel Podger vln 76' 17" Channel Classics CCS 12198

This is a stunning CD. Rachel Podger just seems to make time – there's an effortless shift from beautifully sustained chords to melody and counter-melody. Her bow work is virtually flawless, especially across the strings – even as closely miked as this. Her tuning is spot on. Her choice of speeds is sometimes surprising, but never unconvincing. More than anything, it is her carefully thought-out phrasing which wins out. The final Presto of the G minor sonata is the only time I felt uncomfortable as the number of beats in each bar seemed to change: this, of course, is Herr Bach's fault (if such effects can be called a fault!), but there might be the slightest hint of over-stating the phrasing here. I hate to criticise the disc at all – it is simply the best solo Bach I've ever heard. I'm afraid Sigiswald is about to be moved down one peg in my CD racks. And I'm off to burn my copy of the music, as I don't think I could ever scrape my way through the easier movements again. *BC*

To add one sour note, the photographer has achieved the virtually impossible task of making Rachel look unsexy. *CB*

Bach Suites for Solo Cello BWV 1007-1012 Boris Pergamenschikow 127' 52" (2 CDs) Hänssler (Bach Edition 120) CD 92-120

How lucky we have become in the closing years of the millennium with regard to these delightful Suites! With really stylish accounts already available from modern cellists of the calibre of Heinrich Schiff and Ulrich Heinen, besides good ones on period instruments from Anner Bylsma (twice), Peter Wispelwey (twice) and Jaap ter Linden, our cup already seemed to overflow with outstanding yet highly different interpretations. We now have this superb Russian reading on an 'ordinary modern' cello, confident in technique, poised and gently humoured through its touches of elaboration and ornamentation, a wonderful blend of tradition and novelty, which sets a new benchmark in Bach interpretation in that it is masterly in answering the music's demands whilst sensitively explor-

ing and expanding in the creative aspects of fine performance. Such an account should adjust whole outlooks with regard to this treasured and rationally respected portion of repertoire. *Stephen Daw*

Bach Sonatas for Violin & Harpsichord BWV 1014-19 Dmitry Sitkovetsky vln, Robert Hill hpscd 76' 15" (rec 1996) Hänssler (Bach Edition 122) CD 92.122

Stephen Daw reviewed the original issue (as 98.154) in *EMR* 32 (July 1997) p. 25 and found that, despite the use of a modern violin, it was competitive with some of the best baroque violin interpretations of the set, though he pointed out that the need for the harpsichord to be strongly voiced to balance the violin made it difficult to play *cantabile*. The version of BWV 1019 includes the late *Allegro* for solo harpsichord. *CB*

Bach Brandenburg Concertos Orchestre Musica Antiqua, Christian Mendoze dir, Pablo Valetti leader 90' 35" (2 discs in box) Accord 206802

There is such a choice these days even between period-instruments accounts of the Brandenburgs that any new recording needs to have some special character, and this one is novel in that the orchestra plays in so heavily-compromised a way that we might well judge that it aims to sound almost completely modern for much of the time. Partly, this springs from the constitution for each concerto, with solo upper strings, two cellos and one quite sonorous violone as standard. But it isn't simply that the players are a little heavy-footed: rather they sound under-experienced in the somewhat mannered attitude that I hope to hear in these wonderful works. The performances do, however, benefit from not being over-hurried. *Stephen Daw*

Barrière Sonates pour le violoncelle avec la basse continue. Livre III (1739) Ensemble Concerto di Bassi, Alain Gervreau 54' 47" Mandala MAN 4941

I found the six sonatas an enticing mixture. Clearly, in spite of Italianate title *Sonates*, this is French music by a Frenchman. Some movements are very much in the *basse de viole* tradition, reminiscent of the Sainte Colombe duet style some decades earlier; others are more virtuoso, in the style of Forqueray or Leclair. There are nevertheless Italianate elements, with some Corelli-like *Giga* movements, and all (bar one) are in the expected Italian four movements. Alain Gervreau makes a very French sound on a copy of Goffriller, and this is assured and tasteful playing, varying from the expressive, viol-like sonorities of the second sonata to the virtuosic fourth. The second cello has the function of *basso continuo* as well as providing some interesting duet movements, and is ably played by Hilary Metzger. Occasional portamenti may be heard, but it could be argued that the *coulé de doigt* in French viol technique could be imitated on the Italian cello. I

found the overbearing use of theorbo, harpsichord and organ somewhat annoying. Particularly distracting were the decorations added by the chamber organ (even with its 4' stop, which mercifully is only used on a couple of occasions). Some of the continuo playing was more like a Clementi or Sor sonatina, even at one place a Czerny study. Some may like it, but *le bon goût* it is not! Cellists may wish to know that King's Music publish facsimiles of all four books of Barrière's sonatas. *Ian Graham-Jones*

Thank you for that unsolicited advert: we are grateful to Alain Gervreau for their availability. CB

Dauvergne Concerts de Simphonies Concerto Köln 65' 04" (rec 1993) Virgin Veritas VM 5.61542 2 ££

This mid-18th century gentleman is new to me, but I am glad to have made his acquaintance. Stylistically, he is somewhere between Rameau and later Telemann (not a bad place to be) in works that are really suites: each begins with an *ouverture* and ends with a *chaconne*, framing movements that often have dance characteristics, if abstract labels. They are affectionately and neatly played by the strings of Concerto Köln, who do not make the mistake of seeking profundity where there is only pleasure. *David Hansell*

M. de La Barre Flute Suites Nancy Hadden fl, Lucy Carolan hpscd, Erin Headley gamba, Lynda Sayce theorbo, Elizabeth Walker fl ASV Gaudemus CD GAU 181 62' 06" Suites VI (1697), IV (1703), II (1710), XIII (1722), Sonata I (1722)

Michel de la Barre's 1702 publication was the first set of solos designed specifically for the transverse flute and as such established a style for the instrument much as Marais did for the viol. His concern was for sonority as much as melody, and this collection regularly features his trademark long notes, falling melodies and preference for the low register, this last made all the more striking here by the use of low (392) pitch. As on the disc of C. P. E. Bach which I reviewed a couple of years ago (*EMR* 27, p. 23), Nancy Hadden plays with complete technical control and in the best possible taste, to which she is able to add those touches of imagination which elevate competence to artistry, particularly in the three unaccompanied items. Her colleagues offer strong support, though I did feel that, with all due respect to Lucy Carolan, less frequent harpsichord and more theorbo would have allowed the delicious flute sound even greater flexibility. To be honest, this is not music that lingers in the memory, but the playing does. *David Hansell*

C. Graupner Two Overtures (D5, G14), *Cantata Es begab sich* Barbara Schlick, Hein Meens, Stephen Varcoe STB, Das Kleine Konzert, Hermann Max dir 64' 34" cpo 999 592-2

Let me say at the outset that I loved this CD. My criticisms are more aimed at background matters than the performances,

which are first-rate, or the recording, which is very good. First of all, the listing of players omits the oboist and the two chalumeau players. Secondly, the booklet notes are basically a summary of the standard biography and some notes about the individual pieces, seemingly without any awareness of the composer's total output. The suite with horns and timps, for example, is not unusual in combining those instruments: there are several, as well as numerous sinfonias (another of the Landgrave of Darmstadt's favourite forms). The closing chorale, with its bizarre 'fragmented' string parts, is also far from unique among Graupner's huge sacred output, nor is the soprano aria particularly virtuosic. Finally, it seemed strange to do a cantata with chalumeaux but opt to do instrumental pieces without them. I hope this disc sells well and more people are drawn to Graupner's music – it is extremely esoteric, but contains many a miniature master-piece, and could hardly ask for better performances. BC

Handel *Rodrigo* Gloria Banditelli *Rodrigo*, Sandrine Piau *Esilena*, Elena Cecchi Fedi *Florinda*, Rufus Müller *Giuliano*, Roberta Invernizzi *Evano*, Caterina Calvi *Fernando*, Il Complesso Barocco, Alan Curtis dir 154' 49" Virgin Veritas VCD 5 45897 2 2 CDs in box

Like *La Resurrezione*, *Rodrigo* suffered from incomplete publication by Chrysander. You couldn't buy a complete score of the former until 1993 you still can't get *Rodrigo*. It is, however, now complete on disc; some of the missing material has been identified and some has been filled by conjecture, with just one bit of new composition required. The documentation here in itself makes this an essential purchase for Handel enthusiasts (the involvement of Anthony Hicks is why he is not writing this review). Some of the secco is cut, though given in full in the booklet, in accordance with 18th-century convention. Also omitted is the best-known music from the work, the opening group of dances, which circulated independently in England as the *Music for The Alchemist* and has been recorded as such, so one can excuse Virgin for not running to a third disc to include it. This was Handel's first Italian opera, and is not quite as successful as the afore-mentioned oratorio. But it is well worth hearing and the performance is mostly effective – not everyone will share my reservations about some of the singing. Gloria Banditelli is one of those mezzos who sounds like an aristocratic lady with an affected voice coming from a constricted throat, and she turns on the wobbles as she ascends. Elena Cecchi Fedi makes singing seem harder work that it should. Fortunately, Sandrine Piau restores faith that it is possible to sing Handel's music in a way that can sound pleasant. This isn't among the top ten (or even twenty) of Handelian operas, so of minority interest, despite Alan Curtis's excellent advocacy. But Handelians should buy it without a second thought. CB

Leclair *Sonates II* Convivium (Elizabeth

Wallfisch vln, Richard Tunnicliffe vlc, Paul Nicholson hpscd) 64' 27" Hyperion CDA67068 *Quatrième Livre* (op. 9) nos. 2, 3, 6, 7

It's difficult to put one's finger on just why Leclair's sonatas are more successful as pieces than those of his Italian contemporaries; while solo violin recitals often include Corelli and Vivaldi, others, such as Locatelli, Veracini and Tartini (apart from the ubiquitous and more often than not doctored Devil's Trill) rarely feature (even though these performers have recorded the gems on previous Hyperion CDs). This disc, played by someone I once referred to as 'Locatelli incarnate', dismisses the technical difficulties with ease – the complex bowings, the multiple stopping and the high position work which put many lesser players off this repertoire. Wallfisch distinguishes between passages where it sounds as if one fiddle is playing in harmony (though with an incredible range of bow strokes to colour individual notes in a chord) and those where it's as if two violins are duetting. Both the stringed instruments are very clearly recorded, but I'm only gradually getting used to the subtle harpsichord accompaniment, and I feel that it could be slightly more prominent. I await the next issue keenly. BC

Leo *Cello Concertos* Arturo Bonucci, Ensemble Strumentale Italiano (rec 1990) vol. 1 Arts 47341-2 58' 39" £ Concertos in D, C minor, A, F minor vol. 2 Arts 47342-2 47' 56" £ Concertos in A, D minor; Concerto for 4 vlns

The seven works on these two discs come from a single manuscript. The cello concertos have two violin parts and no viola. The Ensemble Strumentale Italiano (all seven of them!) play modern instruments, mostly sensitive to the needs of the style. Arturo Bonucci is a fine cellist and the pieces are very attractive, so it's hardly surprising that Leo was such a popular composer in his day. Least successful for me was the concerto for four violins: some of the tuning in the second movement fugue is painful, and the vibrato seems to have been notched up by one degree. BC

Rameau *Pigmalion* Jean-Paul Fouchécourt *Pigmalion*, Greta de Reyghere *Amour*, Nicole Fournié *Céphise*, Sandrine Piau *La Statue*, Le Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet 51' 28" Virgin Veritas 5 45897 2 (rec 1992) ££ Also includes *Ces oiseaux par leur doux ramage* & 2 Airs from *Le Temple de la Gloire*

This *acte de ballet* was Rameau's second most performed work in the 18th century and is perhaps the ideal introduction to his dramatic music. This performance lacks some of the nobility and raw excitement that are the hallmarks of the recording by La petite Bande, but is nonetheless a thoroughly enjoyable account of the scintillating score. Jean-Paul Fouchécourt is stylish in the title role and the orchestra is large enough to convey the grandeur of the music. The booklet includes the text but no translation. David Hansell

Rameau *Cantates profanes; Pièces en Concert* Sandrine Piau, Bernard Deletré SB, Soloistes de l'Ensemble Baroque de Limoges, Christophe Coin 58' 40" Virgin Veritas 5 61540 2 rec 1994 ££ *L'Impatience, Thetis, Concerts 1, 3 & 5*

This attractive programme sandwiches the two cantatas between the chamber music to create a disc that is more concert than document. Christophe Coin's playing is masterly, Sandrine Piau delightful and Bernard Deletré slightly uncontrolled. The concerts will irritate those who prefer either flute or violin and not a mixture within each work, but on their own terms are very well played. An excellent essay appears in three languages, but there are no translations of the cantata texts. David Hansell

Tartini *Violin concertos* Interpreti Veneziani Agora AG 207 65' 05" Vln concertos in e (D56), Bb (D 125), Vln concerto in A, Slow movement from D96

'Played with the original violin of Giuseppe Tartini' is the bold claim on the front of this disc – the plucked continuo (had there been such a thing) might well have been played on Orpheus's original lute, for all one would have recognised such a 'valuable' instrument. That is only outdone by the sleeve notes: 'In 1714 [Tartini] discovered the so-called "third sound" generated by the simultaneous performance of two notes of different loudness.' Huh? The performances are not bad; the solo violinists are very good, the solo cellist has a nice tone but comes unstuck intonation-wise once or twice; the second movement of the sinfonia sounds as if it were part of the incidental music for *Brideshead Revisited*. The violin is only mentioned in the Italian notes, but seems to belong to an Italian community in present-day Slovenia. One thing's for sure, though – Tartini wouldn't recognise the sound it makes. BC

Telemann *Musique de Table (Tafelmusik)* Vol. 3 Orchestra of the Golden Age 62' 55" Naxos 8.553731 £ Part II (except Overture, which is on vol. 2)

This CD completes Part II of Telemann's subscription publication with a solo violin sonata, a trio for flute, oboe and continuo, a quartet for two flutes, recorder (here played an octave lower by cello and bassoon) and continuo, the concerto for three violins and strings and the *Conclusio*, which features the brilliant trumpeting of David Blackadder. I enjoyed the solo sonata and the trio but had problems with the quartet, where the alternation of bassoon and cello between soloist and continuo struck me as bizarre – and why not play it on recorder anyway? (There's a sonata by J. F. Fasch for exactly that combination.) I think my most pressing problem with this set is the acoustic; there seems to be little natural resonance, which does not help the overall sound and creates tuning problems for the strings. I'm afraid that problem might persist through the rest of the series, as this CD, like its predecessors, was recorded some four years ago. BC

Telemann *Die kleine Kammermusik* Paul Dombrecht *ob*, Wieland Kuijken *gamba*, Robert Kohnen *hpscd* 66' 14" Vanguard Passacaille 99716

This set consists of six partitas, each comprising an introduction and six *arias* (in reality short dances or character pieces), and has long been a source of Associated Board examination material, expressly because the composer designed it for amateurs and virtuosos. Paul Dombrecht, of course, fits into the second category and his lively and stylish performances, cleanly and directly recorded by Vanguard, reveal both his own wealth of talent and Telemann's creative impulses at their best. If I have nothing to say of the continuo playing, that is simply because it is exemplary without drawing attention to itself. Quite a delightful disc. BC

Telemann *Quadros and Trio Sonatas* Ensemble Senario (Saskia Coolen *rec*, Peter Frankenberg *ob*, Johannes Leertrouwer *vln*, Mieneke van der Velden, Erik Beijer *gamba*, Jacques Ogg *hpscd*) 65' 05" Globe GLO 5154

TWV 42: c2, d10, F3, TWV 43: F3, G6, g94, a3

There are a number of very fine instrumental works by Telemann which seem to crop up almost everywhere: the *Quadros* for recorder, oboe, violin and continuo in A minor (TWV43:a3) and G major (TWV43:G6) are amongst the most popular of all for baroque instrumentalists, giving every performer the chance to shine. The beauty of this recording is that alongside such well-known gems, three superb works with viola da gamba are included – a refreshing change when so many ensembles overlook the expressive and virtuosic capabilities of this instrument; the *Trio* in F (TWV 42:F3) for recorder and gamba is a particularly successful and exciting piece. Several of the works represented make tough technical demands on the soloists, and Ensemble Senario choose ambitious speeds into the bargain. In fact the players are all extremely articulate, but there are moments (particularly the dazzling solo in the finale of TWV 43:a3) when the violin could be a touch more salient. Nevertheless these are all very competent musicians and with such a varied and interesting programme this is a most enjoyable disc. Marie Ritter

Zelenka *Trio Sonatas* 4-6 Vojtech Jouza *ob*, Jana Brozkova *ob*, Jaroslav Kubita *bsn*, Vaclav Hoskovec *db*, Frantisek Xaver Thuri *hpscd* Studio Matous MK 0009-2131 (1993) 53' 14"

This is another Matous release which has recently become available through Koch International. The virtuosic passages of these remarkable pieces are made to sound easy, such is the standard of the playing – and the blindingly fast tempi of some faster movements. The tuning and ensemble are exceptionally good, except perhaps between bassoon and double bass, but that struck me as being on account of the latter's slightly slower 'speaking'. The harpsichord playing is fine, but the instrument is not

the best. My only performance grumble regards the limited ornamentation – just simple mordents or rapid-fire trills. Still, this is outstanding double-reed playing. BC

CLASSICAL

Giordani *Passio per il Venerdi Santo* (1776) Maria José Trullu *Testo*, Anke Herrmann *Christo*, Carlo Lepore *Pilato*, Ensemble Vocale di Napoli, Academia Montis Regalis, Alessandro De Marchi *dir* 91' 56" (2 CDs) Opus 111 OPS-30-249/250

My previous review of Giordani's music was of the aptly-titled three hours of agony. No such discomfort here: De Marchi and his performers deliver a stylish and captivating account of a fascinating piece. The text is from St John and it has more in common with Schütz than Bach, in that there are very few set numbers and the narrative is broken into brief sections of recitative, arioso, turba chorus and aria (the last track of CD1 is a particularly attractive piece with obbligato oboe). Dating from 1776, the *Passio* is somewhere between the baroque (the secco recitative in particular constantly reminded me of Vivaldi's *Juditha*) and the classical (such as the aforementioned aria). A thoroughly enjoyable release. BC

Gluck *Armide* Mireille Delunsch *Armide*, Charles Workman *Renaud*, Laurent Naouri *Idraot*, Ewa Podles *La Haine*, Chœur des Musiciens du Louvre, Les Musiciens du Louvre, Marc Minkowski 139' 28" Archiv 489 616-2 (2 CDs in box)

I thoroughly enjoyed this performance from beginning to end: there may be little action, but the music is marvellous at capturing moods and conveying emotions. The singing and playing are quite wonderful and if Minkowski has been criticised elsewhere for his rather precipitous speeds, I think he's right not to linger too long. What particularly astounded me is the fact that this is a live recording – very occasionally the beautiful solo flute playing does not quite come across as warmly as one might wish (there are several lovely aria obbligatos), but otherwise the recording engineers have worked wonders. Some of the smaller roles are particularly well taken: Françoise Masset and Nicole Héaston are Phénice and Sidonie in the opening section and their voices work extremely well together. But Mireille Delunsch is undoubtedly the star of the show: she can be sweet and tender, as she must be when she's overcome by love for Renaud, but she's every bit as convincing as the vengeful sorceress. For my money, this is Minkowski's greatest achievement so far. BC

Kraus *Symphonies* vol. 2 Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Petter Sundkvist 72' 13" Naxos 8.554472 £ In C (VB 138), F (VB 130), A (VB 118), *Sinfonia buffa* (VB 129)

Kraus is another of those composers who died in their mid 30s, leaving one to

wonder what might have been. The four symphonies recorded here include three premieres, and are delightful. The opening of the CD sets the tone – the sound is a little airy and the musical lines do not always come over with great clarity. The actual sounds produced by the orchestra (apart from the ultra-clear solo violin) are slightly overpowering: I was particularly unimpressed by the steady vibrato of the flutes – the only instrument I've heard producing beats like a harpsichord when two are not quite played in unison. A good introduction to the Mannheim Kraus, but hardly benchmark performances. BC

Mozart *Don Giovanni* Andreas Schmidt *Don Giovanni*, Gregory Yurisch *Leporello*, Amanda Halgrimson *Donna Anna*, Lynne Dawson *Donna Elvira*, John Mark Ainsley *Don Ottavio*, Nancy Argenta *Zerlina*, Gerald Finley *Masetto*, Alastair Miles *Il commendatore*, Schütz Choir of London, London Classical Players, Roger Norrington *dir* 195' 14" 3 CDs in box Virgin Veritas VHT 5 61601 2 (rec 1992) ££ Includes 1787 Prague version on 2 discs, with a third disc of additions and emendments for the 1788 Vienna version.

It is good to have this exciting *Don Giovanni* of 1993 reissued: it strikes me as the best of the period instrument versions, better all round even than the sets conducted by Gardiner, Kuijken and Östman, fine as they are. Right from the crisp yet eerie opening bars of the overture one senses one is in for a bold, revelatory performance. And so it is, with Schmidt an outstanding protagonist, finely backed by Yurisch's Leporello; Ainsley takes every opportunity as Ottavio, and Finley and Miles both make much of their smaller roles. All three of the women are very fine. Best of all is Norrington's direction of the LCP, who make every detail tell (wonderful balance and clarity to the wind counterpoint), without ever holding back the sweep of the whole: urgent, dramatic yet un hurried. Sensible tracking enables the listener to select between the Prague and Vienna versions, the recorded quality is exemplary, and the libretto booklet is a model of its kind. This is a superbly controlled performance, vital, stylish, chillingly dramatic, unfailingly beautiful.

Peter Branscombe

Soler *Sonatas* Virginia Black *hpscd* 62' 34" crd 345 2 ££ R 10, 21, 39, 43, 47, 74, 77, 78, 81, 84, 90, 100, 117

This was reviewed by Robin Bigwood in *EMR* 47 (Feb. 1999) page 26, along with the same player's recording of Scarlatti sonatas; but we omitted the heading for the Soler. Our apologies.

19th CENTURY

Beethoven, Krufft, Lachner *Lieder* Christoph Prégardien *t*, Andreas Staier *fp* 65' 19" Teldec Das Alte Werk 3984-21473-2 Beethoven *An die ferne Geliebte* + op. 75/2 & 83/1 Krufft 6 songs; Lachner *Sängerfahrt* op. 33

Here's a treat for lovers of the early Lied. The Beethoven items (*An die ferne Geliebte*

and two other songs) are, of course, familiar; virtually unknown are five interesting songs by Nikolaus von Krufft, a Viennese civil servant who died at 39 in 1818, and an extended group of ten Heine settings by Schubert's friend Franz Lachner. I'm sure it's not just the excitement of the new that arouses my enthusiasm for some fascinating alternative settings of texts well known from other, greater hands. Staier accompanies the Krufft and Beethoven songs on a Salvatore Lagrassa ('Viennese School') of 1815, the Lachner group (*Singerfahrt*, op. 33) on an instrument by Christopher Clarke modelled on a Conrad Graf of 1826. Both give much pleasure in Staier's hands, and Prégardien is his usual perceptive self, making no special claims for the rarities that indeed are fully capable of standing on their own feet, and relishing the Beethoven. Good, clear recording and model notes and translations in the booklet. *Peter Branscombe*

Brahms *Ein deutsches Requiem*, op. 45; *Begräbnisgesang* op. 13 Lynne Dawson, Olaf Bär, The Schütz Choir of London, London Classical Players, Roger Norrington 67' 59' Virgin Veritas VM5 61605 2 (rec 1993)

Readers may remember that I have problems with Norrington recordings, especially those that derive from his Experience weekends: I can't work out if it is just my disappointment that the atmosphere of the event is missing or whether it is because Roger needs the excitement of an audience whose support and enthusiasm has been, by the time the main work is performed, entirely won over to him. Apart from the feel of a passionate performance, there is nothing wrong with this disc: indeed, it is a very fine account of the work, with a particularly good relationship between the singers and orchestra and some lovely wind playing. Sadly, no real performance can be compared with a remembered one, which can improve in the mind unchecked by any cold analysis. So ignore my doubts and buy it: it's worth it just for the horns. *CB*

VARIOUS

Early Music Recital jan DeGaetani mS, Paul O'Dette lute, Judith Davidoff vdg, vielle, Philip West shawm 49' 53' Bridge Bridge 9087 (rec. at concert 27-9-77)

Jan DeGaetani (1933-89) was an American singer with a particular interest in contemporary as well as early music. She became Professor of Song at the Eastman School of Music, hence the presence of a young Paul O'Dette on this recording of a concert at the Eastman School, Rochester, NY. The programme is a bit of a mixture, with six songs each by Dowland and Oswald von Wolkenstein (brilliant singing of his German version of *Par maintes foys*), *Aure soave* by Luzzaschi, the inevitable *Amarilli mia bella* by Caccini, *Sovran uccello* by Donatus de Florentia and three of the 15th-century chanson standards. It is a pity that she turns on the vibrato for the stressed notes, since the unstressed ones are very pleasant. The overall effect is otherwise fine; *Sorrow stay*,

for example, is intensely moving, and she clearly had a deep understanding of a wide range of music. Diction is particularly good. It is nice to hear a solo verse for lyra-style gamba in *Whoever thinks or hopes of love*. *CB*

Souvenirs de la France Profonde The University of Kansas Chamber Choir, Simon Carrington dir 59' 17" CDKU 598

This souvenir of the choir's trip to Quercy a year ago was kindly sent by its director, an enthusiastic subscriber to *EMR*. It includes a wide range, particularly of French music from Sermisy and Bouzignac to Poulenc. The earlier pieces intended for one-a-part tend to be slowed down for choral performance but the general effect is impressive, a reminder of the quality of choirs in what may seem to us to be unexpected places, with a very interesting and varied programme. *CB*

Two Thousand Years: music from the major television series 129' 32" 2 CDs BMG 75605 51353 2

According to the sticker on the front, the most noteworthy items are Allegri's *Miserere* (curiously out of place just before Monteverdi in a programme that is roughly chronological rather than where it belongs next to Barber's *Agnus Dei*), Parry's *Jerusalem* (sadly just with organ, not with the composer's orchestration or Elgar's arrow of desire) and Górecki's *Symphony No. 3* (only the second movement, with a rather wobbly soprano). That is the longest track, beating the Barber by two seconds. My first thought was: how odd to include a version two removes from the original quartet. But on closer inspection it is turns out that the title refers, not to 2000 years in general, but to a TV series, currently broadcast on Sunday evenings on ITV, which presumably uses some of these pieces for background. I've heard bits of the programmes (mostly chats between adherents of different denominations) but have not noticed the music. The booklet has a chronological chart with Leonardo, Michaelangelo, Titian, Rembrandt, Matisse, Picasso and Warhol as its eccentric choice of major artists of two millennia. As a representative selection of 2000 years of vocal music, this is equally curious: no plain-song (except Hildegard), no Palestrina or Victoria, the most boring movement of Monteverdi's *Vespers*, and with very little from outside the Western tradition. 14 of the 29 tracks are from existing recordings by the Choir of Trinity College Cambridge. There are some some good individual performances, but as an anthology, it is not coherent or broad enough. *CB*

HELIOS

Reissues at budget prices from Hyperion.

CDH55013 'How the World Wags': Social music for a 17th-century Englishman The City Waites 49' 55" (rec 1980)

CDH55010 Purcell Ayres for the Theatre The Parley of Instruments, Peter Holman 58' 24" Z570, 574, 597, 611, 632/1 & 20, 730 (rec 1986)

CDH55013 Vivaldi Recorder Concertos (RV108, 441-5) Peter Holtslag, The Parley of Instruments, Peter Holman 59' 53" (rec 1988)

CDH55020 Favourite Baroque classics The Brandenburg Consort, Roy Goodman dir. 78' 39" (rec 1992 as *Rondeaux Royaux*)

CDH55005 Concertos for the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies Giulio Giannelli Viscardi fl, Giovanni Sollima vlc, European Union Chamber Orchestra, Eivind Adland dir 54' 38" Durante *Concerto a quattro* No. 1 in f; Pergolesi *Flute Concerto* in G; Porpora *Cello concerto* in G; A. Scarlatti *Concerto* 6 in E, *Sinfonia* 12 in c (rec 1988)

Back in 1980 there were few groups with as much experience in the live performance of music from the lighter end of the early repertoire as the City Waits, thanks to a long spell of nightly performances at a restaurant. This is more of a one-man show than later discs, with Douglas Wootton accompanied by Barbara Grant, Keith Thompson and Nicholas Hayley, with Pethick (*alias* Jack) Edwards as reader: no Skeapings. I've failed to find an earlier Hyperion LP on my shelves: the Kirkby/Parley Monteverdi and the Breath of God are later. I find it nostalgic; much of it has worn very well.

The Purcell is not a selection from the 3-disk boxed set issued in 1995 but an earlier recording of suites from *Abdelazer*, *The Gordian Knot Unty'd*, *Bonduca* and *The Virtuous Wife*, with the Overture & Curtain Tune from *Timon of Athens* and the Chacony in g. The Parley's style has change a bit over the years, but it was more attuned to the period than other ensembles, so there is no need to listen to this as a period document in itself. If you thought that the complete set was too much of a good thing, this is a good compromise. The Parley provide a slightly solid accompaniment for Peter Holtslag's Vivaldi, but it makes a perfect foil for the soloist.

The Brandenburg *Favourite Baroque Classics* looks at a glance like so many other baroque compilations, but is was specially recorded and has an intriguing selection of pieces that are mostly well-known but not always as heard here. (Did you know that you knew the *Moderato* from Gallo's first trio sonata?) And there are genuine rarities, like a charming Rondo by Fux for piccolo violin, bassoon and strings. This disc deserves to go to the top of the charts: I hope it is used constantly by Classic FM. Hyperion needs to promote it to organisations that supply background music in hotel lobbies and lifts: it might cheer up their customers.

The Sicilian Concertos is the only one of these reissues with an inadequate booklet. Who are the European Union Chamber Orchestra and why were Tryggi Tryggvason and Ben Turner recording them in Palermo? The music is well played and this attractive programme deserves to benefit from the current interest in Neapolitan music. *CB*

£ = budget-price ££ - mid-price
Other discs full price
as far as we know

BOOKS & MUSIC

continued from p. 5

ELIZABETH-CLAUDE JACQUET DE LA GUERRE

Elizabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre *Sonates pour le violon et pour le clavecin* (1707). Vol. 1. *Sonata I (d), Sonata II (D)*. Edited by Carol Henry Bates. Furore-Edition (fue 290), 1998. DM 50.00. x + 33pp + 2 parts.

La Guerre is one of the few women musicians to have worked at a fully-professional level as composer, and it needs no special pleading to treat her music as an integral part of the Parisian repertoire of the years around 1700. Her surviving works for violin comprise two sonatas and four trios in MS score and parts and a set of six published under the title given above in 1707 along with her second collection of keyboard music. The title reads ambiguously: presumably, just as the keyboard pieces could be played on the violin (the title page reads *Pieces de Clavecin Qui peuvent se Jouer sur le Violon*), so the violin sonatas could be played by harpsichord solo. The two books for harpsichord received a modern edition in 1986 (*Le Pupitre* 66). The same editor has already published the four *Trio Sonatas* with Furore (fue 182 & 174), who are now issuing the 1707 solos. La Guerre favours quick tempi: seven of the eleven movements are marked *presto*, though probably not meaning quite as fast as the word implies now. In one short *Adagio* of the first sonata, the solo line is given to the *violle* with the violin tacet. Good music: I hope violinists will buy it.

Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre *Semelé, L'Ile de Delos, Le Sommeil d'Ulisse: Cantates françoises...* Performers Facsimiles (225), 1998. 83pp, £21.00

La Guerre's first two sets of cantatas (1708 & 1711) comprised the usual sets of six and take subjects from the Old Testament; this from 1715, which is not described as Book III, has three mythological pieces and a short duet. A postscript explains that there are only three in the set because they are rather long. There is rarely more than a single line for the instruments (other than continuo), but a varied scoring is indicated, with flute, oboe and violins. They are impressive pieces, worthy of performance; the writing can be dramatic, as at Semele's death.

CROFT COVER

Apologies to Colin Booth for not realising that the copy he sent of his fine recording of keyboard music by William Croft (described by Robin Bigwood as 'an impressive CD by any standards', *EMR* 51, p. 24) was an advance copy. We thought Colin had decided that serious harpsichord fans might be prepared to forego superficial gloss. The final version comes with a proper coloured cover with a mysterious picture of an almost-naked lady apparently foraging in a wood. EB could also see her image as the back end of a horse, I saw her as the front of an elephant. No: we are not being rude. Colin confirmed that the *tromp l'oeil* effect is deliberate, and if you were to get bored by the music (which I hope you don't) you can amuse yourself finding other shapes. He deserves support for his enterprise and the disc is stocked by Lindum Records. CB

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* Edition reproduced from a corrected copy of earlier printed material.

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We have many arias from Handel operas in stock, and can type-set others at low cost.

LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

Claire Ritchie

Dear Clifford,

Following John Liddy's letter in *EMR* 49 (April 1999, p. 28), I thought you might like to know a bit more on the situation in Sydney regarding performance of operas using old instruments.

I am in the happy position of having worked in the Sydney Opera House opera pit, both in the resident orchestra (The Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra) which plays for Opera Australia (formerly The Australian Opera) and for the Australian Ballet, and also for the early-instrument Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. The former works extremely hard, with salaries quite below those of the symphony orchestra in the adjoining hall and is required to cover repertoire from Monteverdi to late 20th-century Australian composers such as Larry Sitsky & Richard Mills.

The acoustic design of both the hall and the pit is pretty bad. The pit was extensively remodelled in the early 90s, but decibel readings during Richard Strauss, Puccini, etc often go over into the danger zone, as more than half the orchestra is covered by the stage, the pit is quite deep, and the walls are of concrete, not wood. The brass section sits in a perspex box. This may help the rest of the string section (they are behind the violas), but it may be telling that the door into 'the box' now has an industrial noise warning sign on it – the one that shows a pair of mufflers! Foldback is complex in this hall, and singers on stage often have trouble hearing the orchestra and vice versa (even during quiet bits in standards like *La Bohème* and *Rigoletto*).

The fault harks back to the initial decision not to follow Jørn Utzon's plan for the interior of the house. The opera hall is, in fact, what is now used as the concert hall. Still, we all live in hope; Simone Young, the new artistic director of Opera Australia from 2000, seems pretty fired up to correct the problem and help the orchestra in particular.

Anyway, to get on to the early-music side of things, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra did play for Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea* in the opera theatre for the summer season in 1993. I cannot remember exactly which edition was used, but there was a reasonably large band. The pit floor was raised a little (it's on a lift), but we were still below the stage. It was a very good experience, and there were favourable comments at the time, but I think possibly some people thought the early instruments were suffering from exactly the same problems as the modern orchestra in that particular theatre.

Opera Australia generally does at least one Handel opera a year, and I remember seeing an extremely beautiful production around 1994 of *Giulio Cesare* with Richard Hickox

conducting the modern-instrument AOBO, with Graham Pushee and Yvonne Kenny in the main roles. The orchestra did quite a good job stylistically, but I couldn't help thinking how great it would be to hear it with old instruments one day. I am not a slavish follower of the 'old is best' argument; indeed, I have played in a certain small chamber orchestra here in Oz which has a really interesting and totally credible line in Handel, Vivaldi, etc on modern instruments (and who also use old instruments to play Beethoven etc.)

To date the experiment has only been tried once, again with Monteverdi's *Poppea*. This time an even smaller band was used, mostly with players drawn from the AOBO who had to just 'swap instruments' so to speak. As a player who does mostly old instrument work, with a little modern in between, to 'pay the rent', I can't talk; but that bit of the experiment had mixed results.

Some people would like to just play their old instruments, here, but find it necessary to keep working on their modern ones as well, just to live. We're probably about to reach 'critical mass' in Australia with period performance, but it's been over twenty years coming. Others find it liberating to live in a musical culture here that is still very fluid and where you can still find the time to specialise in period or new music performance, jazz or whatever, and still find rewards in your day job in the state symphony orchestra.

I've also had the good fortune to hear other productions elsewhere in Oz, other than 'mainstage' ones. The early music scene in Perth is particularly strong, and I saw a fantastic production of Handel's *Alcina* in one of the University of Western Australia's theatres. The UWA Baroque Orchestra played and the design was most effective for period instruments: in the round and all on the same level. I believe they recently mounted a similarly successful production of *Pimpinone*. I am sure that there have been other small-scale period opera productions in Sydney and elsewhere round the country; they tend to be quite local, so you don't always hear about them.

Another encouraging development may be the new chamber music recital hall – Angel Place – in Pitt St, Sydney, which has had input from small groups such as the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Musica Viva (the national chamber music promoting body), etc. It may be that this hall could be used in the future for period performance opera. It should be finished in late 1999.

In any case, there's a thriving early music culture down under, and perhaps one of the challenges of the next ten years will be the production of operas using old instrument orchestras. It will take brave management and promotion, but here's hoping!

LETTERS

Dear Clifford-

The penultimate paragraph of your piece about Francis and June mentions their evening classes in the 1960s and 70s. I myself joined the class in 1982, by which time it was run by the London Borough of Hounslow, and took place at a Music Centre in Isleworth where below was the local symphony orchestra and above were the jets coming in to Heathrow. After years of continuing doggedly to play while we couldn't hear ourselves, and hoping we might still be playing together when the jumbo had passed, we decamped to the Baines's house in Barnes where approximately a dozen of us continued to meet until Francis and June retired to Ireland. We upped bows once more to David Pinto's home in Hammersmith, and until last year we were still under the auspices of Hounslow; but they seemed concerned that we were not going to pass exams and leave with qualifications, and dropped the class from their list. However, we still fly the flag – six regular players on a Wednesday night – and David Pinto continues to put up with us, in spite of losing his subsidy!

I feel myself privileged not only to have been taught by the matchless Francis and June, but to have followed in the footsteps of such noted viol players as you and Peter!

Jane Beeson

Dear Clifford,

May I comment on Douglas Bolingbroke's most useful article on p.4 of the Annual Byrd Newsletter?

It is true that there was no law against singing in Latin – consenting persons in private, as it were. But you couldn't sing Latin in 'Open Prayer' – that Prayer whiche ys for other to come unto – commonlye calle the Service of the Churche' (Act of Uniformity, Jan 1558/9), except for the 'encouraging of learnyng in the tongues in the Universities of Cambridge and Oxforde – in their Chappells – the holie

Communyon commenlye called the Masse excepted' (1549 Act). There you could sing the service in 'Greke Latten or Hebrewe'. (Later, 'the Colledges of Westminster Winchester and Eaton' were added.) Fuller texts are in my *Singing in Latin*, 269-71.

I should be interested if anyone knows how this was applied to anthems. Were they part of the Service and therefore, where there was a suitable choir, to be sung in English? It must have affected the sales estimates for *Cantiones Sacrae*, even if these were mainly for private or secret use.

Harold Copeman

It is an irrelevant curiosity that it would have been permissible to sing Rossi's Hebrew settings in Oxbridge. CB

Dear Clifford,

Thank you for publishing my polemical letter about ill-advised opera discs. Unfortunately the omission of the word 'only' led to my appearing to say that a heavy tonic accent plonked down at the end of every word is not wholly unauthentic as a way of pronouncing early 19th-century French. On the contrary, it's damnable – and constantly throws Cherubini's music off balance.

Andor Gomme

Mea culpa: my apologies. CB

SEPTEMBER ISSUE

At the time of going to press we are not sure of our summer schedule, since we have no idea of when we will take a holiday; nor do we know where we will go, so cannot warn distant subscribers (like some in Sydney last year) that we may deliver the September issue by hand. It is likely that the September issue will appear some time in August. We already have lots of CDs and books lined up for review.

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