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This issue has expanded beyond our normal length, chiefly because it is the season of the summer festivals; so we have reported at length on the various activities in York, as well as the Spitalfields and Lufthansa Festivals in London, and Boston in the USA. In addition, far from being a quiet summer on the CD front, new issues have continued to arrive without lull. The number of discs reviewed could easily have been greater, but some have been deferred until next month. I have also limited my book and music reviews to four pages (plus *Giulio Cesare* on page 20), leaving material in hand for next month, since we will be away during the period when I should be writing and preparing the October issue, which may appear slightly late. (After various vacillations, we have abandoned our idea of driving from Darwin to Perth – if anyone is aware of a car-hire firm that will allow a drop-off for such a trip, please let us know. We will instead be in Florida from 29 August to 13 September: as usual BC will be at Banks End, but please don't work him too hard.)

I have had two occasions of late for considering how wind instruments play later 16th-century vocal music: apart from the Beauchamp summer school (which gets several mentions in this issue), I attended a pre-recording concert of The Renaissance Orchestra at Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge, in a programme of Morales and other Spanish music. What was interesting in the latter is that the singers were just a little too subtle in avoiding explosive consonants at the beginnings of words, and when not accompanied sounded a bit flabby, whereas when the wind joined them the attack was fine, without sounding aggressive. The instruments almost sounded as if they were singing (the topic of late-night arguments between Philip Thorby and Michelene Wandor at Beauchamp). It was also interesting to hear reed instruments integrated into the ensemble and being equally musical (something that the amateur reeders at Beauchamp were less good at). But the shawm stuck out a bit, despite being played beautifully (not a word one normally associates with a shawm). The ensuing CD is likely to be well worth hearing, though I expect that I will again object to the word 'orchestra'. CB

## NEW BOOKS

## Clifford Bartlett

## CHANT

Ruth Steiner *Studies in Gregorian Chant*. (Variorum Collected Study Series). Ashgate, 1999, xi + 312pp, £55.00. ISBN 0 86078 791 5

Most of the volumes in this series which we have received have been devoted to scholars with whom I have had some personal contact and who write on subjects about which I have some knowledge (one of whom has reacted to my review: see p. 6). But I have always skated over detailed studies of the interrelation of early chant sources, so can say very little about this collection except that I have enjoyed being shown the detailed research on individual topics on display here. Those concerned with polyphony or secular monody must be amazed at the quantity of chant sources; but the difficulties of assembling and analysing the information are immense, and it is hard to see much of a general picture here. That is not criticism: it isn't the point of collections like this. Apart from the value of having the studies together, the presence of indexes, especially of individual chants, will be useful. But it always annoys me that those who work in chant follow the practice of chant editions and assume that those who need to consult an index know what genre they are looking for: non-specialists would find a single alphabetic index much more helpful, with Antiphon, Gradual, Introit or whatever indicated after the title. I suppose when everything is on computer, it won't matter.

## TROUBADOURS

*The Troubadours: An Introduction* edited by Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay. Cambridge UP, 1999. xii + 330 pp. hb ISBN 0 521 57388 2 £40.00; pb 0 521 57473 0 £14.95

I suspect that more people than ever before have encountered the work of the troubadours, not through the circulation of the poetry as such, but from the increasing number of recordings of their songs, and with these recordings come editions and translations of the texts. (The importance of this as a way of circulating medieval poetry was pointed out by Christopher Page in *Leading Notes* Autumn 1996, pp. 6-8.) So I was interested to see the extent to which this study might be relevant to the interests and needs of those wishing to draw together the experience and information acquired thus. The simple answer is: fairly well, but only for those familiar with the language of modern literary studies. If you can take a sentence like 'with a minimal investment in dialogism, it offers instead a maximal inscription of intertextuality' you need have no fears; but if you can't, at least that is the extreme, and much of the book, especially the first half, is more straightforward.

The book is roughly in two sections, first a historical survey of troubadours, then chapters on particular themes. Between them comes an excellent chapter on the music by Margaret Switten. I was interested in the penetration of musical considerations in the rest of the book. Normally, the presence of a tune changes completely the listener's attitude to a poem. From the creative viewpoint, Campion is an entirely different sort of poet from Donne, not merely because his abilities may have been more limited, but because he was writing songs, not poems. (Interestingly, the poems from the Donne corpus with musical settings tend to be those of dubious attribution, except the one poem whose singing he encouraged, *Wilt thou forgive...*) Studying troubadour poetry without the music is a bit like just reading the lyrics of pop songs. Performance is discussed to some extent, particularly in connection with the diffusion of the poems: eventually the manuscripts themselves became the equivalent of performance. Does the fact that most of them have no music imply that the tunes were (or had become) of minimal significance? In view of the current circulation of troubadour poems (chiefly with music), more attention should have been devoted to this topic. Incidentally, there are two almost adjacent quotations of poems on pages 90 and 92, in the first of which Giraut de Bornelh expects the tune to be added after the poem is written and in the second Arnaut Daniel is writing to an existing tune; but no comment is made on the subject.

There are brief biographies of 56 poets and a short glossary of terms (which could usefully have referred the reader to fuller descriptions in the body of the book, e.g. from *sirventes* to page 55). As well as a bibliography, there is a separate section on research tools, etc; it is odd to mention Gennrich's edition (described as out-dated) but not that by Fernandez de la Cuesta (which happens to be the one I have on my shelves). The index is unsatisfactory, since individual poems appear only as numbers under their authors, so is usable only by experts, and there is no index of topics. I'm sure this will be essential reading for students of medieval literature, but it is a pity that just a little more thought was not given to breaking outside that circle.

## LASSUS STUDIED

*Orlando di Lasso Studies* edited by Peter Bergquist. Cambridge UP, 1999. xii + 253pp, £40.00. ISBN 0 521 59387 5

If the European Community wished to adopt a composer, it surely should be Lassus, with his strong links to Belgium, Italy, Germany and France (though if so, the bureaucrats would insist on a standard form for his name: I stick to the international language of Latin, except that when adding

an apostrophe, Italian looks less clumsy.) One could make a political point by stressing how idiomatic his settings of Italian, German and French are, a musical rejection of the Euro-banana mentality. There is a great shortage of writings on him in English, and once one has read Jerome Roche's short Oxford study, there is little else to turn to. (David Crook's *Orlando di Lasso's Imitation Magnificats...* Princeton UP, 1997, did not reach us for review; with no pressure to write about it, the copy I bought lies on the shelf unread.) It is, therefore, excellent that a volume like this has been assembled and published. It derives from, though is not the proceedings of, a conference on Lassus in Oregon in 1994.

I read this just before attending the Beauchamp summer school, this year devoted to Lassus. I must confess that only one chapter and one further piece of information from the book came to mind during it. The latter was something I had read elsewhere anyway: Noel O'Regan's account of how Lassus double-choir motets had to be rewritten in Rome so that they could be performed by separate choirs. The Munich choir evidently sung double-choir pieces unspaced so that there was no need for each choir to have a harmonically-independent bass. More significant is the final contribution: Horst Leuchtmann on 'Correct and incorrect accentuation in Lasso's music': a justification of the importance of singers following the verbal stress of their own lines in counterpoint to the overall pattern of the *tactus*. 'The singer has no score before him... he basically does not know how his part fits the whole... The singer must know the language in which he sings, and when he has the words before him, that is sufficient to bring out the correct accent in the musicalised speech, the music, in the most natural way' – exactly what Philip Thorby was stressing all week.

This is primarily a volume for musicologists. Daniel Zager's account of the cycle of polyphonic hymns is interesting in showing Lassus composing new settings regularly through a year, like Bach with his weekly cantata. Peter Bergquist's chapter on modal ordering within Lasso's publications is incidentally a useful reminder that modern singers should be far more aware of modality than they usually are, whether or not the arrangement derives from composer or publisher. There are two interesting articles on specific pieces, Mary S. Lewis on *Standomi un giorno* and Bernhold Schmid on *Fertur in conviviis*. There is a potential ambiguity in several of Lasso's motets about wine: is the *vinum bonum et soave* the blood of Christ, social lubrication, or both? In this case, one meaning was changed to the other by textual alterations. James Erb's article on the form of Lasso's Magnificat settings lacks point without comparison with settings by other composers. I was slightly disappointed with the volume, and even Leuchtmann's message is approached indirectly via R. O. Morris; but anyone with an academic interest in Lassus will need to read this.

#### CHOIR ANTHOLOGIES

The latest of Faber's geographical choral booklets is *Masterworks from Prague*, edited by Noel O'Regan: 11 motets

on 46 pages for £4.50. Only one piece here is likely to be familiar: Handl/Gallus's *Ecce quomodo moritur justus*, which older readers may remember from the Historical Anthology of Music. It survived in German usage into the 18th century and is memorably quoted by Handel; the editor tells us that it is customarily sung in Germany after Bach passions, but not the origin of that tradition. Gallus is an interesting composer and the book also contains his *Dies sanctificatus* for Christmas, *Ascendens Christus* and *O salutaris*. These are all for SATB, as are two motets each by Kerle and Regnart, including the latter's setting of the Christmas *Dies et laetitiae* to the usual tune. More voices are needed for three pieces by Monte, *Peccantem me quotidie* (SSATB for Lent), *Surrexit pastor bonus* (SATTB) and *Hodie nobis coelorum Rex* (for Christmas: SSATTB), which seem to be the most interesting pieces in the volume: choirs who know their Lassus might find Monte the next figure to explore. Generally, low clef pieces are untransposed, high clef pieces put down a tone. This doesn't quite manage to make the music fit the modern SATB ranges comfortably, and I wonder whether we try too hard to do that. To revert to the Beauchamp Lassus week, the music was sung untransposed, apart from *chiavette* pieces being put down a fourth, and there were few problems. Sopranos had to forego their top notes, some altos joined them, and other altos (of both sexes) sang tenor. Monte's *Surrexit Pastor bonus* is distinctly odd here, with the bass only going an octave below middle C. It would work better down a fourth, not a tone, with all trebles, sopranos and falsettists on the *cantus* (D to D), tenors and low ladies on the *altus* (E to A), baritones on *quintus* and *tenor* (D to E) and basses on *bassus* (A to C). The fact that they are not singing too high counterbalances to some extent the larger number of voices likely to be singing the top part. I am not talking in terms of authenticity here (except for music in nunneries), but the low contralto is a neglected voice that needs to be taken seriously. Out of, I suppose, about thirty singers there, a tenth (to be specific Kathleen Berg, Jennie Cassidy and Michelene Wandor) were ladies happy to sing tenor parts down to C.

I missed the earlier volume of the series, *Masterworks from Lisbon* edited by Ivan Moody (also £4.50 for 45 pages). There are eight motets, one each by Magalhães, Duarte Lôbo, Correia, Guerrero, Pedro de Cristo and Morales, and two by Cardoso. Here, transposition is less systematic, and Pedro de Cristo's *Inter vestibulum et altare* is left *ad aequales* (though would be more usable by non-experts had the *Tenor* been printed in untransposed treble clef). Don't rely on the accuracy of the preliminary *bassus* clef. Morales and Guerrero creep in because their works were sung in Lisbon, which might be criticised as poaching from further volumes, except that *Tu es Petrus* (SSATB) and *Quasi cedrus* (SATB) are such good pieces. Unlike O'Regan, Moody does not give any seasonal allocation to the pieces, and neither give a precise liturgical function, though both books begin with an *Asperges me* with chant incipits. Translations appear at the end of the books. Some comment on performance would be welcome: did Spanish instrumental practices apply in Lisbon? Both volumes are highly recommended.

Two further volumes with the same format and price come under Faber's Choral Programme Series. *Musicke's Praier: Classic English Prayer Settings*, edited by Tim Brown, contains ten short pieces for SATB by Stone, Tallis, Farrant, Hilton, Gibbons, Ford, Byrd, Lupo and Tomkins. Some are standard items known to any church choir (*Lord for thy tender mercy's sake, Almighty and everlasting God*), others deserve to be. Most are transposed to accord with the normal Anglican choral affection for multi-flat signatures. A rarely-sung Byrd piece is a useful reminder that verse patterns may be stronger than sense: it begins *Be unto me, O Lord, a tow'r [rest] Of strength against my mortal foe*. There is a gradual increase in complexity as the volume progresses, with the final two items (Lupo's *O Lord give ear* and Tomkins' *Almighty and everlasting God who hatest nothing*) being the most difficult. I don't see why we need to be told to sing Stone's *Lord's Prayer mp*: otherwise, dynamics are confined to the keyboard reduction. They are not thought necessary in the Masterworks series. The pressure from publishers to add them (I've done so myself in editions for Oxford) implies to me a pretty low level of choir directing.

Dennis McCaldin has compiled a group of *Six Motets* by Mozart, all originally with orchestral accompaniment but here with a two-stave keyboard reduction; I wonder whether a three-stave one might have been more useful? Apart from the obvious late piece, all date from Mozart's pre-Viennese years, ranging from *Veni Sancte Spiritus* K 47 and *Benedictus sit Deus* K 117/66a of 1768 to *Sancta Maria, mater Dei* K 273 of 1777. All are for SATB except for the double-choir *Venite, populi* K 260/248a of 1776. Mozart and Haydn's music has taken a long time to get back into the English church-music tradition, having been so firmly excluded by the ecclesiologists, that there may still be some prejudice against it. But this volume should enliven the service and also be useful in providing short concert pieces with orchestra, though two of the items are movements from longer works.

Oxford UP's *Christmas Motets* edited by John Rutter is part of the Oxford Choral Classics series, though at 124pp (£6.95) considerably shorter than the opera choruses or European sacred music volumes. There are 16 pieces ranging up to ten voices and two trumpets (Scheidt's *In dulci jubilo*). Three are for eight-voices (Mouton's impressive 4x2 canonic *Nesciens mater*, Palestrina's double-choir *Hodie Christus natus est* and Mendelssohn's *Frohlocket, ihr Völker*). Some of the smaller pieces are familiar, others rare (especially, from outside our period, Cui's *Magnificat*). The only other non-early item is Bruckner's *Virga Jesse*. This is a distinctive collection which choirs should find extremely useful.

#### ARIANNA

Claudio Monteverdi *Lamento d'Arianna: version for solo voice and continuo* edited by Nicholas Routley. Saraband Music (SM31), 1999. iii + 12pp + part. \$A\$15

Claudio Monteverdi *Lamento d'Arianna* for SSATB choir with optional continuo edited by Clifford Bartlett (Oxford Choral Classics OCCO 24) Oxford UP, 1999. 28pp. £2.50

These two editions have appeared simultaneously, with neither editor knowing what the other was doing: I would have found it useful to have had a critical edition of the solo version at hand when preparing the five-voice adaptation. Affordable copies of Monteverdi's most famous shorter work are remarkably difficult to find, so both will be useful. To get my own out of the way first, it is part of a series intended for the non-specialist choral market; hence the mention of choir in the title, though the ideal performing forces are five voices and harpsichord or lute. In accordance with the series conventions, I had to add a few suggestions for dynamics, buried out of the way in the accompaniment, which otherwise functions as a harpsichord realisation: I don't expect it to play the crescendos! My editorial task was easier than Routley's, since there are few discrepancies between the different printings of *Il sesto libro de madrigali*; the sources of the monody are more divergent. OUP gives a translation phrase by phrase beneath the music. Routley prints the text separately as verse with a translation in parallel (dare I identify a misprint, 'sing' rather than 'sink beneath the waves') and is the second word of line 2 'che' or 'chi'? His underlaid text does not benefit from the punctuation added in the verse text.

The most distinctive feature of the Saraband edition is the inclusion of additional sections of the music that survive in a couple of MSS but not in the printed versions (either of the monody, the contrafacted *Pianto della Madonna*, or the madrigal recomposition). One might argue that the work is quite long enough already: there is a limit for recitative unbroken by arioso in a foreign language that audiences can take! The additional bits were included in the edition by Vogel in *Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft* III (1887) and Solerti's *Gli albori del Melodramma* (1904-5) but have been neglected since. The intervening choruses and speeches by Dorilla, however, are not included or even mentioned. The edition is based chiefly on a copy by Luigi Rossi (British Library Add. 30491), with significant variants listed. It is easy to read, though it might have been possible to make page-turns coincide with natural breaks in the music. A great asset is the inclusion of the music set out for voice and bass as well as a score with a realisation; so there is a copy for both singer and accompanist in the set. (This is not a piece that needs a string bass as well.) The introduction states: 'The 4/2 time signature implied by the sources has been retained with the original note values'. No complaints about the note values, but there is confusion between mensuration signature and bar length. The sources mostly have bar-lines after every four minims; but the signature is C, not  $\frac{4}{2}$ . Composers of this period tended to use the former when the music moves in crotchets, the latter when it moves in minims, and it could be argued that 4/4 would be a more appropriate modern signature. The original-notation incipit, incidentally, omits the bar-line before the third semibreve. Rossi's musical orthography is more in accord with modern practice than Saraband's: at bar 10, he begins a bar with  $\frac{4}{2}$  while Saraband has  $\frac{4}{4}$ . a warm welcome to the edition. The price is reasonable in Australia, but what it will cost here with post added is another matter.

## CELLO COMPANION

*The Cambridge Companion to the Cello* edited by Robin Stowell. Cambridge UP, 1999. xvi + 269pp. hb ISBN 0 521 62101 1 £40.00; pb ISBN 0 521 62928 4: £14.95.

Readers of my age will remember older books on the history and repertoire of instruments which dutifully cover the earlier centuries, often with extensive information on the makers, yet with no understanding of the music for which their craftsmanship was designed: somehow, one concludes, they must have been anticipating the 19th and 20th century repertoire, and the necessity of modernising their instruments was passed over rather quickly. There still is the problem that the many surviving instruments are not in their original state, and it is likely that of the few that are, some avoided such a fate because they were inferior. But like the other Cambridge instrument guides, this is written by musicians who have a sympathy for early music and its instrumental requirements. It is more general, but on the whole more user-friendly, than another recent Cambridge publication, Valerie Walden's *One hundred years of Violoncello* (see *EMR* 44, p. 7); any serious cellist will benefit enormously by reading it. I wonder whether some of the paragraphs listing repertoire might have been more digestible if tabulated (with a final column for comments), leaving prose for pieces like the Elgar concerto, which has a whole paragraph. I would, incidentally, have thought it an over-simplification to say that it 'reflects the emotions of an ageing composer'.

There are several questionable statements in Margaret Campbell's chapter on 'Masters of the Baroque and Classical eras'.

*By the middle of the eighteenth century the cello became so popular in Italy that it had ousted the viola da gamba.* (p. 53)  
Was the gamba ever particularly popular in Italy? Does it occur in Italy in even the first part of the 18th century other than as a special effect (as in Handel's *La Resurrezione*)?

*The gamba was still a favourite instrument in northern Europe, whilst in France the cello was regarded as a crude impostor.* (p. 54)  
When? The previous paragraph has been concerned with Boccherini and Pleyel, but the above sentences are followed by mention of Berteau (c.1700-1771) and the next paragraph goes on to Barrière. She may be right for the 1730s, but in France the opposition depends on what sort of music you are thinking about. In the orchestra, the change was from bass violin to cello, and the gamba is irrelevant.

*In England, the viol reigned supreme until the middle of the eighteenth century, principally because it was favoured by the upper classes; in other words, it was 'a gentleman's instrument'... It was not until about 1733 that the cello superseded the bass viol in English orchestras.* (p. 56)

From this, the reader might deduce that Handel's operas were scored with gambas on the bass line! The relationship of bass viol, bass violin and cello in the late 17th and early 18th centuries is a complex one, and depends on types of ensemble as well as the professional-amateur divide. These are bad lapses which the editor (and the normally meticulous copy-editor) should have picked up.

On a positive note, it is excellent that a page is devoted to the 19th-century practice of accompanying recitative with the cello playing chords above the double bass: I'd love to know how far back that can be traced.

## WIND SURVEY

David Lindsey Clark *Appraisals of Original Wind Music: a Survey and Guide* (Music Reference Collection, No. 77). Greenwood Press, 1999. xvi + 555 pp, £71.50.

This is not primarily a book for early musicians, but the early repertoire is covered rather more thoroughly than in many other repertoire surveys that are available. The book is arranged by instrument, with sections in prose followed by summary information in list format. Part V (chapters 36 to 42) is devoted to pre-classical wind instruments, with 54 pages allocated to the recorder, 21 to cornetts and sackbuts and three to crumhorns. (Early music for other instruments is not separated off into this section, though it might have been sensible to have segregated music for natural trumpets and horns.) I have taken the cornett and sackbut chapter for a closer look. §92 might have mentioned the Lichlein piece for six cornetti (KM 240). The confusing word 'orchestra' creeps in (§97). Rightly, §111 draws players' attention to vocal music. It seems likely that wind ensembles regularly accompanied vocal ensembles in church music in a variety of parts of Europe (we don't yet know how ubiquitously) during the latter part of the 16th century and on such occasions as the older-style repertoire was performed in the 17th; trombones in particular remained until the late 18th century, though the cornett was gradually dropped. Such music can, of course, also be played without voices. But I would strongly discourage the use of editions that omit the words: they are essential in showing how the music should be phrased and shaped. Some of the writers mentioned suggest that the author is influenced more by older than recent musicologists, but the references to editions are up-to-date, apart from the omission of the King's Music editions of the Cavalli *Canzonas* and *Missa Concertata*. The list of pieces is in chronological order, fine if you are browsing, but less helpful if you want to trace an edition of a particular piece and don't know the date of the original publication or if the piece survives in an undated MS. It would be churlish to go through it looking for omissions; I suspect that even the most ardent collector of music will find something he doesn't know. I hadn't realised that Carus had done the big Praetorius *Wachet auf* with the florid cornett parts. (In fact, I'm not sure if they have: I have ordered a copy to see.) This is well worth browsing through, so make sure your library acquires it.

*I have put aside Leeman L. Perkins' massive Music in the Age of the Renaissance (Norton, 1999. xviii + 1147pp, £33.00) as plane and holiday reading; so it will be reviewed next month, along with other items that have been deferred because this issue is already so long: massive studies of the Venetian printers Scotto and the second-generation Gardanos by Jane Bernstein and Richard Agee, Don Harrán on Salamone Rossi and facsimiles from Fuzeau and Performers' Facsimiles.*

## EARLY ENGLISH VOICES

Roger Bowers

In his indulgent and thoughtful review (*EMR* 52, July 1999) of a recently published collection of my articles, CB poses a number of questions arising from the conclusions which I have reached relating to the sounding pitch of English church polyphony of the period c.1320-1559. All are valid and are well taken. Responses can be made, though I am well aware that the prevailing absence of evidence offering conclusive solutions means that I am not likely to be able to lay these reservations entirely to rest.

a. CB notes that the vocal ranges required of late-medieval and renaissance singers, at an octave and a fourth, appear to be unusually narrow (inasmuch as they use much less than the normal total range of trained voices); he wonders if this constraint created leeway for contemporary sounding pitch to emerge up to a tone above or below my suggested optimum overall compass of (modern) F-g". These relatively narrow ranges are a reality, but I would reckon that their adoption arose for reasons other than a desire to create scope for variability of sounding pitch. Indeed, the pressure placed on the extremes of overall compass naturally achievable by boys and men would appear to have limited acutely any such option for pitch variability. Divergence of up to a semitone (either way) from my F-g" optimum for 23-note polyphony does appear both credible and reconcilable with all the known data; departures any wider would seem incompatible with the natural limits of the generality of men's and boys' voices.

There were good reasons for the appearance in this music of narrowed individual ranges. At this period singers sang, not the range which they might (after training) sing, but that which the composers gave them to sing and which their experience equipped them to sing. 'Experience' at this period was mostly experience with plainsong. A number of sequences (as late compositions) do indeed extend to a compass of twelve notes, but that is only one category of many; most plainsong pieces operate within a compass of nine to eleven notes, which in due course became the natural standard range for contributing to polyphony also. And probably it was not only a response to the nature of plainsong that gave rise to this practice. There was another reason why composers required only narrow individual vocal ranges.

There was in contemporary thought a pervasive belief in the contribution made by deferential orderliness to the generation of harmony, whether in society, politics, government or matters aesthetic. Each component in a complex structure had its appointed and individual place within the whole, and the structure worked best when each component knew that place, adhered to it, and maintained

the differential between itself and its neighbours. Each of the four vocal timbres had its own particular and specialised role to play in the polyphonic whole, and much of the harmoniousness of that whole arose from each intruding no further than necessary onto the space allotted to its neighbours. Consequently, although individual singers might well be able physically to exceed in polyphony the conventional compass of eleven notes, there were good reasons for composers to eschew engagement of the extremes that would trespass on the space proper to their neighbours. Departures from these rules would immediately compromise the character of the contributing voices, so rendering their nature repugnant to and subversive of the sovereign concepts of individual particularity, salutary differential, and prescriptive orderliness, and of consequent harmony.

I am inclined to think, therefore, that these relatively narrow individual ranges were not associated with a desire to create scope to indulge in variability of sounding pitch, and were not exploited (deliberately, anyway) to create any such effect.

b. Consideration of issues arising from the integration of the resources of the organ into the performance of polyphony does not loom large, but cannot be overlooked. Prior to c.1600 the use of the organ simultaneously with voices was limited to the then rare event of the performance of a service or anthem in verse style. There is no shred of evidence to suggest that the organ ever doubled any vocal polyphony of the Latin rite, and evidence that it had begun to double the vocal lines of music composed in full style for the protestant liturgy post-1559 does not occur earlier than c.1620. In respect of the period prior to 1559, that is, only the performance of the organ alternatim with unaccompanied polyphony arises for consideration. The work I have done on this question, especially in the light of the recent discovery of two early 16th-century organ soundboards, does offer solutions to the issue of the manner of alternatim integration of organ and vocal polyphony (and also, incidentally, explains the emergence of two standard pitches -- 'choir pitch' and 'organ pitch'). However, until I can experiment with these ideas to determine how they work in practice, this research remains, regrettably, incomplete and unpublishable. (Does anyone know an amiable choir that could help?)

c. All that was necessary for a choir to obtain the pitch appropriate for a piece of polyphony was for an experienced singer to give it. In a fundamentally plainsong liturgy, such establishment of pitch happened many times for chant in every service, and there seems to be no reason why the

Master of the Choristers or anyone else equally competent should not have been able to find exactly the appropriate pitch in which to begin an item of polyphony as well.

d. I am not aware of the existence of any phenomena arising from this research for which a suitable resolution would be offered by a suggestion that the prevailing sounding pitch for polyphony rose to accommodate the novel addition of a bass below the tenor, c.1460-70. There appears to be no positive reason to think any such thing; moreover, the considerations raised in section (a) above appear to apply equally to this issue, indicating that scope for any such occurrence was severely constrained if existent at all.

CB notes that the prescriptivity of my conclusions arises (at least in part) from the 'cutting out of extraneous evidence'. This evidence is not suppressed and concealed; rather, after identification as non-compatible with the prevailing line of findings, it is reported in detail in the foot-notes. Such a practice may perhaps appear arbitrary and self-serving. However, I believe it can be justified as historiographically legitimate. Over many years I have analysed the overall compass and vocal scoring of nearly the whole of the surviving Latin repertory of the period 1320-1559, amounting to well over a thousand pieces. Such exposure leaves the researcher able to identify and diagnose certain practices as standard, conventional and all-pervasive; and it enables him to recognise such divergences from these practices as do occasionally occur as rogue and untypical, and therefore unable to compromise the validity of the general rules (which could hardly be more manifest). However, anyone wishing to replicate this work is very welcome to do so, and to report divergent findings if they arise – and then I shall have to address such objections.

CB's questions in respect of my conclusions concerning sounding pitch arise from his experiencing a 'gut reaction that makes me unconvinced but with no valid reasons to disagree'. I wonder if I may suggest that his gut reaction is entirely legitimate and explicable, and that it arises from the unsatisfactory nature of virtually all the performances of this music that most of us ever hear. Except for the noble but not always felicitous efforts of the choir of Christ Church, Oxford, the rendering of English choral music of the period c.1460-1560 has been hijacked all but totally by choirs unsuited to its performance by virtue of the mixed composition of their voices. Quite simply, sopranos are not a satisfactory substitute for boys, and the engagement of ensembles using women's voices for the upper part(s) is a solecism as unfortunate and as artless as would be, for instance, any performance of music for viol consort using modern violins on the top part(s). Not the message, that is, but the messenger is at fault. It matters not how beautifully or otherwise the female altos and/or sopranos render their lines; they simply make the wrong sort of sound.

Among the ingredients of contemporary performance practice engaged and exploited by the original composers

were two of especial contributory power. One was the particular character of the blend made by boy treble with adult male or boy alto voices (and it is this, rather the individual personality of the boys' timbre, that lends unique identity to the traditional English cathedral choir); the other was the manner in which boys' voices peak at the top of the treble stave, endowing notes even so modest as g'', f'' and e'' with a unique sense of brilliance and excitement to add to the natural earthiness and vitality of the juvenile male. Performances undertaken by mixed ensembles at a credible pitch and with – in principle – 'correct' vocal scoring are therefore always likely to sound lacklustre, unincisive and dull, and also to arouse other misgivings easier to sense than to diagnose, simply because two ingredients of the music vital for its successful performance are absent. No-one can be other than delighted that this music is being performed at all today, increasingly often at a credible pitch. Nevertheless, I have to agree with CB that for all the good intentions of those involved, such latter performances are rarely fully satisfying. The solution, however, lies not in winding up the pitch (even less in distorting the vocal scoring). Rather, it lies in the performance of this music by appropriate ensembles, akin to the modern cathedral choir but smaller in numbers of singers, which enjoy a nature and composition the same as those for whom it was originally written. Indeed, how can aficionados of early music ask for, or be satisfied with, anything less?

*I would be very interested in a study of how choirs that currently sing chant in isolation from polyphony or accompaniment choose their pitch. It is always said that choirmasters choose the pitch for each piece according to its compass. But does the music in fact all come out within a particular range? Is there consistency between the same chant performed on different occasions? Is there any pitch relationship between groups of consecutive chants? Whether that is the same as what happened 500 years ago is another matter, but at least it would be a starting point. If decorum of compass is of major importance, what do altos sing if the chant is pitched for the convenience of trebles and tenors? Do they use one part of their voice for chant, another for polyphony? (That, of course, is a problem at whatever pitch is adopted.)*

*Curiously, I happened to find myself recently singing a part from around 1500 that had a range of two octaves, but it was continental, in Brumel's Missa Et ecce terrae motus. Carver's music also has wide ranges, but again is from a different tradition. If there was a moral rationale for the limited compass, it is odd that it is specifically English. But there must always have been some voices that sang a different compass depending on whether they were singing chant or polyphony.*

*I also wonder whether the relationship between pitches of organ and chant in alternatim pieces might be irrelevant. Assuming that consecutive chants of different compasses were sung at different pitches without any concern for a tonal relationship, might it not have been acceptable for the pitch of an organ (or even polyphony) and choir in, for example, a Te Deum also to have been unrelated? The difference of sound and place from which it emanated may have overridden any consideration of continuity of pitch. CB*

## FROM RENAISSANCE TO BAROQUE: NEMA CONFERENCE

David Schulenberg

From 2 to 4 July 1999 the National Early Music Association held a conference – the first of what is planned to be a biennial event – in association with the York Early Music Festival and the Department of Music, University of York. Scheduled to coincide with the opening of the York Early Music Festival, the conference consisted of four sessions of scholarly papers alongside two performance workshops, all on the theme 'From Renaissance to Baroque'. Because the papers and workshops were given simultaneously, it was unfortunately not possible to attend both. But those who heard the papers were given the opportunity of also hearing the results of each workshop, that is, performances of Bach's Cantata 106 (the so-called *Actus Tragicus*) and various French baroque orchestral works. I was able to hear most of the conference papers and the two workshop performances, as well as two of the Festival concerts.

The conference focused on the development of new instruments and new instrumental practices – especially pitch standards – in England and northern Europe during the 17th and early 18th centuries. This is a difficult topic, since surviving instruments are few and many details of their construction, not to mention such crucial elements of performance practice as pitch and intonation, must be reconstructed indirectly through contemporary pictures and verbal accounts. The most impressive of the papers found at least provisional solutions to these problems by combining conventional musicological scholarship with organology and practical musical experience. Thus Marc Eochard and Bruce Haynes offered a pair of papers on the mysterious double-reeds that lie chronologically between the shawm and the oboe, illustrated by Haynes's all-too-brief demonstration of a prototype built by Eochard. Haynes placed Lully's adoption of the new instrument precisely in 1670, following a six-year moratorium on the use of *hautbois* during which Lully's players learned to play the new instrument. But Haynes's ability to master the instrument in evidently a much shorter time makes one wonder whether Lully's players could not have done so as well.

Along similar lines were Graham Lyndon-Jones's cleverly entitled 'Basstals & Curtoons: The Search for a Transitional Fagott', Jan Bouterse's 'The Woodwind Instruments of Richard Haka (1646-1705)', and Mary Oleskiewicz's discussion of flutes, flutists, and flute performance in early-18th-century Dresden, which documented that court's early cultivation of the three-piece French traverso as a background for Quantz's later development of a distinctive two-keyed, four-piece type. (The latter was heard in an excerpt from an unaccompanied Telemann fantasia, played elegantly by Oleskiewicz on a specially commissioned copy

by Jean-François Beaudin.) I had to miss Peter Trevelyan's talk 'How Did 17th-Century English Violins Really Sound?', but I enjoyed hearing an answer in the form of a demo-CD recorded on five instruments by the seventeenth-century Oxford maker William Baker, restored by Trevelyan and his colleagues. One lesson of this talk, as of Oleskiewicz's, was that even specialist performers today still often employ instruments and techniques that are far from the originals that they may purport to copy.

The same point was demonstrated, if inadvertently, in the two Festival concerts I attended. The first was a performance of Renaissance and Baroque works at the York Guildhall by Zephyrus, a flute quartet led by Nancy Hadden, who also presented a paper at the conference ('The Transverse Flute Transformed'). The concert opened with a set of Parisian chansons of circa 1530, followed by several 17th-century *airs de cour* and concluding with works from around 1700 by La Barre and Hotteterre. The sound of the ensemble and Hadden's embellishments were frequently exquisite, particularly on the four 'Renaissance' transverse flutes used for the first half of the programme (all arrangements of vocal music). Yet it seemed contrary to the spirit of the conference that these same instruments were used for more than a hundred years' worth of music, whereas the last few works were played anachronistically on four-piece flutes of mid-18th-century type with corresponding effects, however subtle, on pitch and sonority. Much the same might be said about the Festival's opening concert, a 'Venetian Extravaganza' held in the nave of the great York Minster, featuring the combined efforts of the solo vocal and instrumental ensemble Concertare, the QuintEssential Sackbut and Cornett Ensemble, and the Boys, Girls and Men of York Minster Choir, all under the direction of Jonathan Wainwright. The concert happily combined the predictable (including a Gabrieli canzon) with the unfamiliar (Priuli's twelve-part Magnificat of 1619). But as well-prepared as the music generally was, I am not sure that the performance could truly be said to have 'recreate[d], as far as is possible, the effect of a performance in St Mark's on a ceremonial occasion at the time of Monteverdi', as was claimed in the printed programme.

The workshop performances were, naturally, on a less ambitious scale. I was impressed by Andrew Parrott's care and patience in directing the Bach funeral cantata, a work probably written for performance in a small chapel by a small ensemble (one singer per part) such as were adopted here. The dances by Lully and others were directed by Peter Holman (in conjunction with Graham Sadler) with spirit, at an approximation of the historically low French pitch standard, though unavoidably on a somewhat motley

combination of instruments, few of which duplicated very closely those of the Vingt-Quatre Violons du Roy.

Among the other papers, I was particularly impressed by that of Jonathan Le Cocq, who showed that French composers of lute song may have been employing a form of continuo accompaniment at a time somewhat earlier than modern historians have supposed; the mistake has been to rely on published sources while overlooking the messier but sometimes more informative manuscripts that also preserve this repertory. There were also talks by Eva Legène on the iconography of the recorder (to which Anthony Rowland-Jones delivered a response), Matthew Spring on early 17th-century lute style, Dominic Gwynn on the English organ from 1630 to 1730, and Samantha Owens on instrumentation at the Württemberg court, as well as summations by Peter Holman and Jeremy Montagu.

Speakers generally avoided what Peter Williams has called 'assertive musicology', although Ephraim Segerman insisted in his paper on the pitch of early violins that his was 'the only valid theory so far offered,' a claim that was duly

challenged from the floor. In keeping with the conference's theme, most speakers urged abandoning the use of such vague expressions as 'Renaissance', 'transitional', or 'Baroque' to describe individual instruments – but I was struck by how often they continued to fall back into such usage, where 'Renaissance' may mean anything from 1500 to 1675 and 'Baroque' more properly 'early eighteenth-century'. We tend to think we know what those terms of convenience mean – but perhaps the clearest lesson of the conference was that we don't.

*I would add that I hope in future conferences there will be a closer coordination between the academic and the practical. It was frustrating that those, myself included, who chose to listen to David's wife missed what was, I gather, an enthralling discussion of why A=440 was the inevitable pitch for Cantata 106. And I found the part of the rehearsal session of the cantata which I did manage to attend was the most exciting event of the weekend.*

*I am grateful to David Schulenberg, Research Associate at America's Shrine to Music Museum, Vermillion, South Dakota, for reporting on the Conference.*

## EARLY MUSIC NETWORK INTERNATIONAL YOUNG ARTISTS' COMPETITION – York 7-9 July

Andrew Benson-Wilson

The eighth Early Music Network International Young Artists Competition formed an integral part of the last few days of the York Early Music Festival. From 60 audition tapes, a shortlist of 24 had been further reduced down to eight finalists. For them, the competition began on the Wednesday afternoon with Orpheus Works, an introduction for the eight finalists both to their audience, the Yorkshire accent and the Orphic world of Anthony Rooley. The discussion involved the many pressures facing young artists in this highly competitive field, and concentrated not on the musical side (a high technical standard was, of course, assumed), but on matters of presentation, both in terms of publicity, and to the audience when on stage. Klaus Neumann, one of the judges, stressed the need for a varied repertoire and advised players to research sources properly. Glyn Russ, administrator for the Early Music Network, mentioned the importance of the commercial side of the music business – players need the ability to push themselves forward to get work. Rooley quoted from a 16th-century courtier's handbook, which gave just the right advice to performers, based on the three principals of decorum, *sprezzatura* (life/vitality) and grace. The definition of *sprezzatura* included such linguistic gems as calculated carelessness, noble negligence and wise foolishness, as well as energy, courage, boldness and rashness. I hope everybody understood!

The competition was judged by American soprano Anne Azéma, Kate Bolton of BBC Radio 3, Professor George

Pratt of the Incorporated Society of Musicians, Klaus Neumann, a Vice-President of the York Festival and record producer, and Casper Vogel of the Utrecht Early Music Festival. Each of the eight groups gave a short concert during the two days leading up to the Final, and then played in the Final itself, in front of the judges and the BBC Radio 3 microphones. The pre-Final concerts were set in the context of a workshop, with Anthony Rooley offering relatively gentle suggestions, generally on presentational style. This could have been quite nerve wracking for the finalists, but they all seemed to take it in their stride. It was certainly interesting for the audience and for other players to see them try out various ideas.

Ensemble La Fontaine are a quartet of two oboes (one doubling recorder), cello and harpsichord. They are from Tokyo and have already won the Yamanashi Early Music Competition in Japan. They specialise in early- to mid-18th century music. Their first concert included a fascinating trio sonata by one or other of the two Catalonian oboe playing brothers, Juan and José Pla. This sparkling three-movement piece was ideal for showing their admirable grasp of technique. Vivaldi's Concerto in g (RV103) combined recorder and oboe as solo instruments, and Koji Ezaki and Masamitsu San-nomiya bought out the playful humour in the opening Allegro. In their concert for the final, they played trio sonatas by Hotteterre and Telemann and confirmed their sure technique and musical understanding. Although their own presentational style

Although their own presentational style was rather formal by some current European standards, they presented the music well, with a clear sound, a good control of intonation and the ability to hold pauses and silences long enough to take effect in the acoustic.

The Amphion Wind Octet Basel research and perform the apparently vast repertoire of *Harmoniemusik* – late 18th- and early 19th-century original pieces and transcriptions for pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons. Groups like this became popular in the Germanic Courts, not least because the eight instrumentalists were cheaper than a full orchestra. In their first concert they played the Ouverture from Vogel's opera *Demophon* (with some sonorous and dramatic opening chords) and Hummel's *Parthia* in E flat. In the final, they played the better known Mozart Serenade in C minor. This repertoire and its characteristic instrumental forces is not one we hear too often in the UK and the Amphion Wind Octet Basel were persuasive advocates for it. They had a good sense of timing and the use of pauses, for example, just before the recapitulation in Mozart's first Allegro. It was fascinating to hear the wide range of sounds, including some nice buzzy timbres from the bassoons to compare with their more lyrical tones.

The Sweelinck Ensemble are seven musicians (two sopranos, two violins, theorbo, cello and organ) based in a church in London. They were founded in 1998 by the German organist Martin Knizia and specialise in Monteverdi and music of the 16th and 17th century from North Germany. Their first concert included motets by Schütz and Bruhns, and a dance suite by Praetorius. In the final they sang Monteverdi-inspired pieces by Schütz, and played three *Symphoniae* by Scheidt. They clearly enjoyed working together. This repertoire is not heard enough in the UK, and it was particularly good to hear the joyous cantata *Erstanden ist der heilige Christ* by Nicolaus Bruhns, a favourite pupil of Buxtehude. The descending cello scale that opens the work, played by Jane Ashby, was a lovely moment, and there was some imaginative theorbo playing from Liz Pallett, who produced a wide range of sonorities, including some guitar-like strumming.

The Galeazzi Ensemble (flute, violin, viola and cello) was formed in 1995 and plays music of the classical and early romantic periods. They gave us music from Vienna with flute quartets by Mozart, Gyrowetz and Haydn, and, in the final, J C Bach, Mozart and Hoffmeister. They presented themselves well, with nice introductions to the pieces that linked the work together without repeating the programme notes. The slow movement from Gyrowetz's Quartet in G minor is emotionally rich and features some appealing high lyric cello lines, played by Gareth Deats. All the musicians in the competition had to work hard to get their tuning right in very humid and hot conditions, and it was good that groups like this took the time to get it right. Audiences are far more sympathetic to the tuning and other needs of early instruments nowadays, and time spent tuning is time well spent.

Maniera (oboe/recorder, two violins, cello and harpsichord) was formed in 1996 and had been finalists in the last competition. They had put a lot of thought into their choice of programme, the informative notes and their presentation, which included some stylish tassled music covers. In their two concerts they played works by the women composers Elisabeth Claude Jacquet de la Guerre and Isabella Leonarda and as well as by Boismortier and Telemann. Leonarda's *Sonata Prima* was well chosen, giving each of the players a solo spot. Their interpretation and ornamentation was sensitive to the mood of the piece. It included some scrunchy harmonic and chromatic moments, for which they use an appropriately cantabile articulation. There was good eye contact between all the players, with the cello and harpsichord continuo in particular (Sophie Willis and Leah Stuttard) working together well.

Concanentes play both medieval and renaissance music, but were in York in their medieval guise. They performed music in praise of the Virgin Mary from Alfonso's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the *Llibre Vermell*, including the song which inspired their name, *Cuncti simus concanentes*. They used vielle, recorders, symphony, gittern and percussion and the seductively expressive soprano voice of Faye Newton. I have reviewed this group before, and remain impressed. Much of their repertoire is inevitably known to medieval enthusiasts, but they have not slavishly copied the performing styles of others. Their settings are simple but believable, and they avoid the temptation to try and be too clever. Hazel Brooks [a violinist with Maniera] played an impressive vielle solo in the *Instampitta Ghaeta*, with drone symphony backing, and it was nice to hear the tone of Faye Newton's voice merge with the echo of a cimbel at the end of *Maravillosos*. Their presentational style is engaging and enthusiastic. It was a shame that they were the only finalists playing music from before about 1600.

The Private Music specialise in the 17th century repertoire. They focused both their concerts on music from the Roman court of Queen Christina after she had abdicated the Swedish throne, with arias and cantatas by Marazzoli, Stradella, Cavalli and Gesualdo and a sonata da chiesa by Corelli. The group includes two violins, bass violin and organ and is fronted by the Swedish soprano Hedvig Eriksson. She has a clear ringing voice and engages most effectively with the audience (who were spread around three sides of the stage), using her score only as the occasional aide memoire. There was some passionate violin playing in Stradella's instrumental *Sinfonia*. The rich tones of the bass violin added a distinctly percussive edge to the recits of Marazzoli's dramatic cantata *O mortal, se corri appresso*, and it was good to hear full use being made of the resources of the continuo chamber organ in the same work.

La Coloquinte are four musicians based in Paris playing flutes, viola da gamba and harpsichord. They specialise in the 18th century trio sonata repertoire and played music by Dornel, Philidor, Telemann and Quantz. They have an impressive technique and communicated their music extremely

well to the audience. In their first concert they showed a natural grasp of French 'bon gout', and adopted a sensible pace through the various movements. It was good to see a group that were not afraid to tune up between movements when needed. As a result of the short workshop session after their first concert, they changed their platform position for the Final concert, but I wonder if this broke the very effective link between gamba (Florence Bolton) and harpsichord (played with considerable style by Véronique Barbot). It was good to hear the harpsichord playing gentle arpeggios rather than repeating single notes for the tuning up. Apart from being clearer to those tuning, it makes the event more musically engaging to the audience.

With musicians like this around, there is much to be positive about in the early music scene today. I was impressed with all of the young musicians who made up the eight finalists (and, looking at another generation, was

also impressed with the 16 young girls – yes, girls – and men of the York Minster Choir singing Viadana's *Exulti justi* during Evensong). [There were also boys and girls in the opening concert. CB] All the finalists had a grasp of the technical skills required, and all gave musically sensitive performances. All had involved themselves in searching out repertoire of interest with which to construct programmes were well presented and enjoyable even if, through no fault of their own, there was a surfeit of 18th century music. The judges had a difficult choice, and I wouldn't be surprised if their final decision was very close. I reckon that about half the groups had a chance of winning; all would do justice to public performance, and all should wear the badge of finalist with honour. I hope they can earn a living.

The winners were The Private Music (Hedvig Eriksson, soprano, Mira Glodeanu and Karen Raby, violins, Abby Wall, bass violin, and Silas Standage, organ).

## YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL 1999

### Andrew Benson-Wilson and others

The theme of this year's Festival was 'Celebrating music for wind instruments'. Some concerts and the competition have already been mentioned; Clifford Bartlett and Ann Allen write about other events in the first part of the Festival and I take over mid-week. AB-W

I was straining at the leash as the postponed NEMA AGM dragged through Sunday afternoon, and only saw the end of the outdoor presentation of a mystery play *Moses and Pharaoh* written by the YEMF's educational co-ordinator, Cathryn Dew and performed by pupils of special schools in the area. Having been impressed by our son John's school dramatic production a couple of weeks earlier, I was interested to see how effective these performances were. They took place in a park with no sense of enclosed space and with a footpath running in front of the stage (with passers-by oblivious that they were interrupting), which hampered the relationship between performers and audience. But the way the large cast was intent on its action was impressive: I suspect that their concentration was stretched to the limit and beyond. The repetitive text worked like a pantomime or a fairy story, though it must be reported that the attention of the only child I knew in the audience, Joseph Cassidy (aged 7), was only intermittently held. My own dramatic performance followed soon after. I was so busy talking to his mother (no doubt about the compass of lady tenors) that I failed to spot another entertainment in progress. The solo performer (at this stage miming a joust: later he became a fire-eater) needed an opponent, and so conscripted me. Not having followed the story so far, I was puzzled what was expected; but the audience seemed amused, despite my abysmal knowledge of jousting procedure. CB

Monday began with Philip Thorby presenting a concert (accompanied by Jacob Heringman), then a lecture, on Ganassi and the later division masters. He appeared equally at home performing and informing, which is a balance that few achieve. The audience seemed genuinely delighted by this repertoire and astounded by the intricacies of Ganassi's ornamentation, though I felt that the performance needed a little more variety of texture: perhaps recorder and lute should each have been allowed a few solo moments. [For a chance to attend a course by Philip on Ganassi, see diary for 23-24 October. Be warned that, if his glass is kept full, he is capable of talking on the subject long into the night.]

Les Haulz et les Bas, the international *alta capella* group, impressed everyone with their stamina and mental ability later that day in a programme of complex 15th-century music, performed by heart. The show was stolen with a jazz-like shawm playing in an estampie from the Robertsbridge Codex by Ian Harrison – the Miles Davies of the early music world! This was a superb concert, although I found the ensemble slightly unbalanced, with Harrison dominating the texture both in personality and volume.

Tuesday saw the unlikely combination of a screening of the film *Brassed Off*, a glimpse into the world of Tibetan sacred music and the close harmonies of South African gospel singing. I had heard about the unusual pairing of an ex-Oxbridge madrigal group with a Sowetan gospel choir and had wondered what the outcome was like. It was a pleasant shock to find that all my preconceptions were swept away by their concert. Although it was the name I Fagiolini which drew the crowds, it was SDASA Chorale which excited them, even managing to get an English

audience to give a standing ovation. It was an entertaining and unusual concert, presented as a fusion of two choral traditions although in reality it seemed a show-case for the African choir to warm the English soul with their spice. Despite the well thought-out arrangements, the merging of the two choirs, and the varied presentation of the concert, I worry slightly that this project does not show off I Fagiolini in the best light. Whereas they normally win audiences over with their precision singing, combined with tongue-in-cheek theatrical interpretations of early repertoires [cf p. 24], not to mention Robert Hollingworth's witty repartee, the heartfelt harmonies of the Soweto choir seemed to make both the music and the presentation of the European repertoire seem a little subdued. [We reviewed CD of the the combined choirs in *EMR* 35, p. 19.]

Ann Allen

The Wednesday concerts started with Pamela Thorby (recorders) and Frances Kelly (triple harp) in a lunchtime concert of Geminiani, Barsanti, Telemann, Handel and John Parry at the Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate. It took them a while to get their act together. Players and instruments alike were suffering from the effects of high humidity, which produced squeaky high recorder notes and made the complex knitting of the triple harp even harder to unravel. But was that all? Rather too often I got the feeling that the pair weren't together in their idea of what the pulse should be. The high speed of some of the recorder movements resulted in some snatching at notes and occasional loss of control of intonation and both players were less than accurate on a number occasions. But, that said, when they were good, they were very, very good – and the audience clearly loved it. Their best performance was what I think might be a back-arrangement of Croft's (or Purcell's) keyboard Ground to an earlier vocal or instrumental model (cf p. 22 for Trevor Pinnock playing the normal harpsichord version at the Wigmore Hall).

The Thursday lunchtime concert was of French baroque music by Couperin, La Barre, Marais and de Visée, played by Lisa Beznosiuk, flute, Elizabeth Kenny, theorbo, and Richard Tunnicliffe, cello. It is shame they were not at Anthony Rooley's competition talk the previous day, as they seem to break most of the advice that the finalists had been given. With the exception of Elizabeth Kenny, there was little attempt at interaction between the players or with the audience, the flute music stand was set up in such away that the cellist was obscured to part of the audience and heads were generally kept tucked away in their scores. They missed a trick from the start – clearly showing annoyance at the admittedly irritating noise from outside, they didn't take advantage of the situation by enlisting the sympathy and support of the audience. In fact, their response just drew our attention to the commotion just at the moment when we should have been encouraged to concentrate on the players. Despite the external noise, the best moment was Elizabeth Kenny's group of theorbo pieces.

The Thursday evening concert (St Olave's Church) was the Fitzwilliam String Quartet with Lesley Schatzberger, clarinet,

playing Bernhard Henrik Crusell's Clarinet Quartet in C minor, Mozart's Divertimento in D (K136) and Weber's Clarinet Quintet in B flat Op 34. This was a real treat – witnessing five eminently confident and talented musicians making music together. Crusell's rhapsodic and joyous quartet was an attractive introduction to his music. Despite being a clarinet player himself, he manages to integrate the strings into a coherent whole, with some demanding writing for all. The second half was Weber's, and the attention was grabbed immediately by the inspired opening. The subdued strings repeat their *sotto voce* opening, and clarinet enters with a single Mozartian high note, but then merely rounds off the string motif before starting its own jaunty main theme. The cello (superbly played by Daniel Yeadon) has a key role in defining the structure of the Allegro, with similar lyrical passages just before the *da capo* and recapitulation. The cello closes the Adagio with a descending arpeggio in a passage that was beautifully spaced by all players. An inverted arpeggio starts the final movement, which ends in throwaway manner. A diverting evening.

Thursday's late night concert was in the candlelit Catholic church of St Wilfrid's Church, nestling bravely close to the west front of the Minster. Jeremy West, cornett, Susan Addison, tenor sackbut, and Timothy Roberts, organ and harpsichord, gave a programme of virtuosic music from Spain and Italy in the early 17th century, including pieces by Castello, Bassano and Arauxo. I have never heard such frolics from a sackbut – indeed, Susan Addison gamely announced that Rognoni's divisions on *Susanna un jour* was the hardest piece she had ever played in her life. The tone of the chamber organ meshed perfectly with both cornett and sackbut, but I was less convinced with the harpsichord as an accompaniment. The Spanish organist, Francisco Correa de Arauzo provided two Tientos, the first played on the harpsichord with many of the elaborate ornaments that Arauzo expected his player to add. The second *Tiento de medio registro* was intended for an organ with divided keyboard, allowing the treble to be taken by one of the colourful solo registers of the Spanish organ. One such stop was the Cornet, so it was entirely appropriate that the real thing should have a go. It worked extremely well, partly because the speed was less frenetic than many of the other pieces in the concert. Apart from reflecting the late night mood, it allowed the cornett's figuration to show through. The chamber organ produced an appropriately sombre low *flautado* sound. This concert explored a new area of the repertory in an imaginative way, but all the players could have saved themselves some of the effort, and revealed some of the melodic detail, by adopting a rather more leisurely pace.

The Friday lunchtime concert, The Spirit of Silence, (All Saints Church, North Street) was an introduction by Yoshikazu Iwamoto to the sound world of the shakuhachi, a Japanese bamboo flute played recorder-like, but without mouthpiece, with the player resting the open end against his lips and blowing against the frontal sharpened edge. The shakuhachi has developed since the 16th century as part of the ritual of Zen Buddhism, and its evocative and

seductive sound was an example of music making at its most simple – and most complex. The traditional pieces used frequent long-held single notes, but the player moulded and shaped each note with an amazing series of changes of timbre and intricate ornaments and using a variety of infinitesimal gradations of interval. The harmonic structure of the tone is complex with a myriad overtones and harmonics, and includes the very high frequency whistle produced by the human breath itself as it excites the bamboo tube into music. The piece *Miyama Higurashi* depicts the silence of the high Japanese mountains – and, interestingly, was played louder than most other pieces, which produced a distinctive metallic edge to the sound. It had a captivating episode towards the end when a very quiet high note floats gently upwards towards the quarter tone above. The end of this piece was magical, as the sound of the shakuhachi gradually subsided to meet the silence of the background ambience. The Spirit of Silence indeed.

The Friday evening concert at St Olave's Church was impressive UK debut of Mala Punica, an Italian group directed by Pedro Memelsdorff and specialising in the Trecento repertoire. Their programme, *Narciso Speculando*, featured six of the thirteen allegorical madrigals that the Florentine diplomat and abbot, Dom Paolo da Firenze (or di Marco), composed between 1390 and 1415, together with ballatas and istampittas. This was an extremely well-presented concert, with the four singers and five instrumentalists (playing recorder, vielles, chitarrino, slide-trumpet and organ), making very effective use of the different staging levels. This three-dimensional element was further enhanced by the way the musicians moved around as one piece flowed into another. The evening started and finished with a chanted *Benedicamus Dominum* and the simple sound of a bell (a nice touch of symmetry), but the emotions and underlying messages in the intervening pieces were far more complex, including storms, battles, nasty old women, and scenes of love and jealousy, all set in the web of political intrigue. There was a good balance between vocal and instrumental pieces and in the presentational style of each piece, but for a concert lasting 90 minutes using English church pews, an interval would have helped those parts of the anatomy that music cannot reach.

Holy Trinity Church in Goodramgate is an architectural gem, with 18th-century box pews enhanced by candlelight for Friday's late night concert by the American soprano Anne Azéma with Joel Cohen, lute. Their programme, *Aura Dulza*: the breath of the breeze, explored love, the seasons and the weather in songs of the 12th century troubadours and trouvères. The orientation (literally non-orientation, since they didn't all face east) of the box pews meant that the audience faced in all directions, so the occasional moves round the church and the half time transfer from east to west were appreciated. Anne Azéma, also one of the judges in the early music competition, has a clear declamatory voice which she projected well throughout the church. There was a hint of movement and buzz in her tone, enough to make a long-held notes interesting, but not quite

enough to cast doubt over pitch or stability. Accompaniments were either drone symphony (called *chifonie* in the programme), or the lute. The lute had a strong tone, and the style included more or less following the vocal line, adding a reflective motif at the end of a vocal line, providing an arpeggio drone, adding a second voice or keeping quiet altogether. Some of the songs included spoken lines and many were entirely spoken, in very modern translations. Rather like hearing a modern translation of the Bible rather than the King James version, I wondered if a hint of early linguistic styles might have worked, but we at least had one song proclaimed in Old French and one in Middle English. Although Joel Cohen's lute playing and verse reading were fine, I wondered if his singing might be best left for more private occasions.

The Saturday evening concert was Mozart's *Davidde penitente* and Haydn's *Harmoniemesse*, given at St Michael-le-Belfrey Church by the Yorkshire Bach Choir and Yorkshire Baroque Soloists, directed by Peter Seymour. It was interesting to hear Mozart's reworking of his Mass in C minor into the cantata. In many cases the words of the cantata libretto were a better fit with the music than the more usual Mass setting. But having just heard some wonderfully clear and focused singing in the Early Music Competition final, what struck me most about this concert was the use of operatic singers (or singers singing in an overly operatic manner). Given an orchestra of early instrumentalists and a choir that was clearly well versed in appropriate singing techniques, the mismatch was inexplicable.

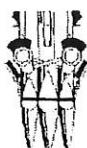
The Sunday morning concert at York Guildhall was by Wood, Wind and Wire (Cathryn Dew, recorder, Rachel Gray, cello, and Robert Howarth, harpsichord), previous finalists in the Early Music Competition; Cathryn Dew is the York Early Music Foundation's educational co-ordinator (see p. 11). They played four recorder sonatas from Telemann's *Der getreue Musikmeister* and three of his 1732 fantasias transposed for treble recorder. The introductions and programme note made much of Telemann's use of the different key colours resulting from unequal temperaments and the use of musical rhetoric used to communicate the passions. We weren't told what temperament was being used, except that it wasn't Kirnberger's; but even in the fairly remote key of F minor, the expected key colour wasn't all that apparent on the solo instrument, and it was a shame that there wasn't a demonstration on the harpsichord. I also didn't quite work out why pieces apparently written to take advantage of the distinctive harmonic colour of one key could be transposed up a minor third with impunity. But it is good that musicians other than keyboard players are taking such an interest. Cathryn Dew played in a declamatory manner that suited her remarks on the influence of the study of rhetoric on composition. This was a pleasantly relaxing way to spend a Sunday morning – even a pigeon popped its head through one of the Guildhall windows to check things out.

The Private Music's first concert after winning the Young Artists' Competition was on Sunday lunchtime in York's

Mansion House. The programme, 'Pallas nordica', was a extract from their two competition concerts of music from the Roman court of the abdicated Swedish Queen Christina, starting with Stradella's spirited aria *Sù, sù spariscono*. Soprano Hedvig Eriksson made a very persuasive Angel inviting the Souls to join her in Heaven. Her voice was tested on darker and more dramatic fare in the recitative of Marazzoli's cantata *O mortel, se corri appresso*, which also featured some gutsy bottom strings from Abby Wall's bass violin and well-registered continuo organ playing from Silas Standage. Hedvig Eriksson sings with fluidity and a beautifully clear tone. However, in the concluding Alessandro Scarlatti cantata, *Jam sole clarior*, I wondered if she could do with slightly more articulation of notes during the more virtuosic swoops. A novelty was a performance of Gesualdo's *Spurge la morte* in the preferred style of Queen Christina's time, with the five vocal parts divided amongst singers and instrumentalists. Silas Standage sang as well as played the organ, and the bass violin took the bass line alone. This was most effective. Gesualdo was the Queen's favourite composer, so this creates a whole new musical area for The Private Music to explore in their themed concerts. A Corelli Sonata da Chiesa was played with vigour, but the contrast in style between the two violinists (Mira Glodeanu and Karen Raby) was exposed. The strong bow attack of the former did not always produce perfect intonation at the start of notes and, although volume was generally kept

under control in the vocal works, the focus of attention wasn't always resting securely on the singer. It was good to see the players in more relaxed mode away from the rigours of the competition. This was an impressive performance by a talented group of young musicians.

The final concert of the Festival was given, appropriately, by The York Waits in The Guildhall. The programme was equally appropriately called Northern Winds. They played music of the Stadtpfeifern of Renaissance Germany and the Low Countries from the late 1400s through to the 1550s, including music by Obrecht, Isaac, Finck, Senfl, Hofhaimer, Susato and culminating in the grand six-part repertory of the Hessen brothers of the town band of Breslau. I think The York Waits would consider it an insult if I were to call their playing sophisticated. Indeed, they mentioned that their greatest compliment was 'aren't you loud'. And they were. There wasn't a pigeon in sight. They used an astonishing array of instruments, including shawms, sackbuts, recorder, flutes, crumhorns, bagpipes and a hurdy-gurdy. Before starting each set of pieces, they have what in most circles would be thought of as a tune-up, but in their case seems to consist of blowing the dust out of their instruments and reminding themselves of the first line, generally as loud as they can. Rarely does any tuning result. But what matter. Their playing is distinctive, approachable, probably realistic, and certainly great fun.



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## BOSTON FESTIVAL

Bernardo Liévano & Maxwell Sobel

For several years I have wanted to pay a visit to Boston and the excellent festival of early music that takes place in this beautiful town of the United States of America. Finally, the opportunity came and I could spend a week immersed in the festival about which I had heard so much. The Festival takes place every two years: this was the tenth. It is an amazing event that puts together first class musicians, instrument makers and restorers, publishers, music retailers, CD sellers, and an audience willing to participate in the numerous events that take place every day during the week.

There are what I might call 'main courses', the central performances, and 'side dishes', or concurrent events, all of them very well organized. For the central performances we had such first class artists as Jordi Savall, Monserrat Figueras and Hesperion XX, the harpsichordist Andreas Staier, The King's Noyse violin band, The Boston Camerata directed by Joel Cohen, Tragicomedia, La Colombina, and the recorder player Dan Laurin. The main piece was the opera *Ercole amante* under the direction of the leading spirits of the festival: Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, brilliant lutenists and musicians with a deep knowledge of historically-informed performance.

Let us begin with *Ercole Amante*, an amazing early opera (words by Francesco Butti, music by Francesco Cavalli) that runs for nearly three hours. It was written when the composer was in France during the reign of King Louis XIV and presents a flattering story of *le roi soleil* himself. Butti establishes a parallel between the French king and the semigod Hercules, as it was usual to borrow subjects from the classical mythologies in French opera and ballets in the 17th century. The music was beautifully performed by the King's Noyse and a plethora of musicians, conducted by Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs from their lutes and theorbos.

The soloists and choir were all top class singers and I particularly enjoyed the fine bass-baritone Harry van der Kamp and the brilliant countertenor Steve Dugardin. The staging was not what I expected: we had the same scenario all the time and this resulted in a rather dull stage that contrasted with the quality of the music and the rest of the performance.

Of the other 'main course' concerts, I must say that the harpsichordist Andreas Staier left a deep impression on me. He seems to have no technical problems, his musical approach is profound, and his knowledge of the instrument and the music, together within the beautiful theatre of the New England Conservatory, made for a splendid recital. The programme focused on the *fandango español*, with pieces taken from the corresponding repertoire of the 16th and 17th centuries that included music by Felix Máximo

López, Sebastián de Albero, Josep Gallés, Domenico Scarlatti, José Ferrer and Antonio Soler. Unforgettable experience, unforgettable harpsichordist!

After this harpsichord banquet, we had a beautiful night concert given by La Luna, a fine chamber music group lead by the violinist Ingrid Matthews. The music was all taken from that extraordinary repertoire of the early 17th century and included canzonas, sonatas and fantasias by Selma y Salaverde, Falconiero, Cavalli (again), Marini and Picchi.

On Thursday I again enjoyed The King's Noyse violin band, its leader David Douglass sharing direction with lutenists Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs. The programme was built under the title *Il Giardino d'Amore* (The Garden of Love) and besides the artists mentioned before, we heard the excellent recorder player Dan Laurin and again the superb singer Harry van der Kamp, who amongst other artists joined together to offer the audience an extraordinary feast of music, mostly by it by the Scarlattis (Alessandro and Domenico) with two pieces by Handel, all of them related to the garden of love. As an early string player, I must say that I was very impressed with this group, their particular approach to this early and rather rare repertoire and their fine and accurate playing always giving a permanent momentum that sustained this excellent performance.

Of the rest of the 'main course' concerts I would like to mention Hesperion XX. Amongst early music lovers and connoisseurs, Jordi Savall and his forces need no commendation. For more than 20 years they have been feeding us with splendid music and superb recordings that clearly have the finger-print of Savall, perhaps the most important violin player in the world and one of the most gifted musicians of our time. I was specially impressed by his modesty, his almost sacred admiration and love for his instrument and, of course, his extraordinary ability as a first class performer. I think wherever Savall goes, he leaves a deep impression on the audience and this is really what music is for.

I would like to say some words about one of the 'side' concerts. This was a recital by the Canadian-born violinist Emelyn Ngai and the Australian-born harpsichordist Peter Watchorn. The programme was superb: J.S. Bach sonatas for violin and harpsichord BWV 1014, BWV 1019, BWV 1016 with the Toccata in d minor BWV 913. (This reminded me of an unforgettable programme offered by John Holloway and Lars-Ulrik Mortensen in Jesus College Chapel in Cambridge and repeated in Bogotá, years ago). Violinist Ngai is a gifted musician with a clean technique and one can say that he not only manages the early

repertoire but is also an excellent modern violin player. He rendered these masterpieces with maturity, beautiful tone and fine phrasing. Unfortunately, I can't say the same about harpsichordist Watchorn: although he played all the notes, he was unable to get the music out of them, and music is what Bach is full of. One could easily guess that he is a pianist that just moved to the harpsichord. The contrast with Staier was overwhelming.

Another activity of the BEMF, and perhaps the one I most enjoyed, was the exhibition. Two complete floors of two hotels in Boston were packed with instruments makers and music editors. At the Boston Park Plaza hotel were the keyboard makers. This was quite an experience, little and medium size rooms packed with all kinds of early keyboard instruments: harpsichords, spinets, virginals, fortepianos and even chamber organs, which were played throughout the day by visitors and buyers. Harpsichords and organs are the instruments I most love, and finding a place that puts together makers and performers like this is an experience that one can't get every day. Most of the makers were from the United States, with some from Canada, and it was interesting for me to know the state of the art in harpsichord making in America. Amongst the exhibitors I was very pleased to meet again Marc Du Cornet, who I had met in Paris some years ago in his atelier in Vincennes, an excellent person who follows the late Jacques D. Way in harpsichord making and harpsichord kits.

The rest of the exhibition was at the Radisson hotel, with makers of all kind of instruments (viols, violins, cellos and woodwind), some string makers and music publishers. As with the keyboards, most exhibitors came from the United States and Canada, with a few from Europe. It was very rewarding to appreciate the high skills one could find in the different booths that filled the area of the conference center. I was impressed by the collection of beautiful antique instruments presented by William Monical from Staten Island, New York and those of Robert Young from Manhattan, beautifully preserved and restored. Ralph Ashmead showed very beautiful finely crafted baroque and transitional bows.

As in every place where early music is present, recorders of all kinds were on display. It is difficult to mention all of them but the Von Huene Instruments display deserved particular attention because it offered not only recorders but also early brass and woodwind. (By the way, Von Huene, in association with the Early Music Shop from Bradford, was the only exhibitor offering oboes and sackbuts.)

To finish this general impression of the BEMF, I would like to mention an activity that is always attached to any early music event: the master classes that are given by some of the distinguished artists present. Every day the visitor can attend at least two classes, in which it is possible to come close to some these first class performers, not only physically but musically as well. Most of the audience is made up of

amateurs and music lovers, some of them very advanced indeed. I decided to attend two, by Harry van der Kamp and by Jordi Savall. These offered very interesting experiences, but for someone that has been deeply involved in music for many years, the result is not the expected one, and I could corroborate a feeling that I have had for many years: these great artists are excellent on stage, but their skills for teaching and communicating their knowledge are not always the best.

As a coda to this note I can say that the BEMF is definitely a festival worth visiting, but I would ask the organizers if they could try to make it more international. I would have been very pleased to find more exhibitors from Europe, Japan and other countries that clearly have become important in the field of early music, not only in performing but in restoration and instrument-making too.

In contrast with what I have seen in similar events in Europe, the average age of those who attended the festival was quite high, perhaps in the mid-forties, and none of the concerts had a full house. This makes one think about the future of the early music movement in the USA and what musical education should aim at: just an entertainment in which young people don't find any interest at all, or one of the most important activities of the human being that must attract and give room to every one and should be one of the pillars of a better world for all of us in the future.

Bernardo Liévano

*Mid-forties seems quite a young average age for early-music events. I would guess that, discounting two couples in their thirties and their children, I may have been below the average age at the Beauchamp summer school (and my 60th birthday occurs while this issue is at the printer's). The age-range there seemed quite typical of early music participatory events.*

*We are grateful to the director of La Folia, baroque band of Bogotá for writing his impressions of the BEMF. I also received an e-mail letter from an Indianapolitan with whom I have attended the previous two Festivals, which we also include.*

Dear Cifford

Just returned from Boston. There was some spectacular music, and the weather was reasonable – no runs in the rain from one venue to another like last time. The opera, *Ercole Amante* by Cavalli, was quite well done. The singers were uniformly good and the orchestra seemed quite cohesive and adequately rehearsed. The plot is rather absurd, especially the contrived and somewhat unsatisfying ending; but that is no fault of the composer, of course. Stephen Stubbs and Paul O'Dette took turns directing different numbers: the constant bobbing up to conduct and then down to play by the former was a bit distracting at times, at least with the line of sight my seats afforded. The costumes were very beautiful, but somewhat more restrained than the extravagant ones seen in the 1997 *Orfeo* by Rossi. Curiously, here were almost no sets or backdrops – much of the action took place with absolutely no scenery behind

it, which I found problematic at first, though I didn't notice it from about the middle of the first act. There was some nice dances to instrumental music by Lully in between several scenes, one in particular where the statues in the minimalistic set 'came to life' was especially effective. Overall, I would say that the opera was quite a success, despite the usual negative opinions of the Boston music critic, who seemed to have despised all of the BEMF productions. [Did his favourite singer not perform in a tiny room and get a rave review mentioning a full house again this year? CB]

I attended the concert in which some of the singers from the opera were spotlighted in arias from various operas by Scarlatti and Handel. The instrumental forces seemed a bit top heavy, with a veritable sea of violins; the bass violins were drowned out at times, and I really missed not having any 16-foot sound, regardless of the historical issues involved. Again, the singers were very good – Ellen Hargis, Judith Malafronte, Claron McFadden and Harry van der Kamp all did an excellent job and appeared to be having a good time as well. Some of the instrumental playing was a bit ragged, presumably from lack of adequate rehearsal time, and the trumpets had some significant struggles. The harpsichordist, Alexander Weimann, played some brilliant variations on *Follia di Spagna* by A. Scarlatti – if Scarlatti senior could play them, one could see where junior got his keyboard skills.

La Luna, thanks perhaps to the rave reviews they received [in *EMR* among other places] from their concurrent event performance in 1997, now were a part of the main Festival, and gave a late night performance at 11pm, after most of them had played the opera. If they were tired from the long day, it didn't show. They were, briefly put, inspired. I have never seen such spirited, precise playing. They all seemed to breathe as one, and every gesture, every nuance of the works, brilliant showpieces from early 17th century Italy, was performed as if it was effortless. The church was packed, and I had momentary fears that the floors were going to collapse from all of the foot stomping that accompanied the usual hand applause. Certainly a performance to remember.

The last official concert I attended was Hesperion XX, where Jordi Savall led off with some amazing viol playing, and then sat out a good part of the remainder of the performances, which were primarily dances and songs by José Marín performed by the rest of the band, including Savall's daughter Arianna, who acquitted herself quite well on the harp. Some of the biggest applause came from the visual effects – the castanet-player Adela Gonsalez-Campa, got up and danced quite emotionally in one number, which brought the house down. Monserrat Figueras gave her usual intense, fiery performance. The music, however, had little harmonic interest or variation to me, and while I certainly enjoyed the performance, I would not have wanted to sit through another couple of hours of this type of music, well played as it was.

Of the concurrent events, I should mention a few that stood out. The Boston Bach Ensemble gave a glowing concert of Bach works from several cantatas, along with a few instrumental works. The singers, Anne Harley and Elizabeth Anker sang several beautiful duets, and did so with vibrant, clear tone that allowed for easy understanding of the words. The instrumentalists, including oboes, oboi di caccia and recorders, also played very well together. My only complaint would be that the small organ used was simply too loud, and in several pieces drowned out the intricacies of the harmony.

In another event, solo violin and harpsichord sonatas by Bach were performed by Emelyn Ngai and Peter Watchorn, both of whom played in the above mentioned Boston Bach concert. Mr. Ngai is a spectacular violinist, well matched by Mr. Watchorn's impassioned keyboard playing. I was quite happy with both performances, and glad to be able to hear some Bach – most of the concurrent event performers seem to favour French works, which I find tiresome quite quickly.

Scott Metcalfe's Convivium Musicum is a vocal ensemble that did an excellent job with Josquin last festival. This year they went Spanish, with works by Peñalosa, Morales, Guerrero and Lobo. This was a very moving concert, with considerable experimentation with period pronunciation – I was always a bit disconcerted when items ended with *Amen*. Pronunciation aside, the works were very beautiful, and well done.

Byron Schenkman, harpsichordist, was the recipient of the Bodky award this year, and gave an excellent fortepiano recital of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven to a full house. I missed both his harpsichord recitals, but heard from several people that he was brilliant as usual. Certainly the piano playing I heard was quite impassioned and moving.

I did see a few other concerts, but most of these were more notable for the enthusiasm of the performers rather than the execution of the music.

The exhibition moved from the Castle to the Radisson – and clearly was quite a bit smaller than even the last festival. A number of regular exhibitors did not appear, like Harmonia Mundi, Tower Records and Kings Music. I talked to a few of the exhibitors, who seemed to concur that this aspect of the festival was shrinking. I don't know how anyone else did financially, but I carried about 30 pieces over in a box, and brought all 30 back home with me! Maxwell Sobel

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**Farinelli Arien** Arno Raunig S, Paul Weigold *pf* 66' 21" CAFFA CD 002

**Broschi** Ombra fedele anchio, Son qual nave ch'agitata; **Farinelli** Al dolor che vo sfogando, Che chiede? **Giacomelli** Mancare Dio mi sento; **Hasse** Pallido il sole, Per questo dolce amplesso; **Porpora** Alto Giove, Dall' amor piu sventurato

**Baroque Arias Vol. 2** Yoshikazu Mera cT, Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki 74' 11" BIS-CD-1029

**Ahle** Magnificat a7, Zwingt die Saiten in Cithara; **Bach** BWV 63/2 & 5, 71/5, 106/3, 155/2, 161/4, 172/5, 182/5; **Buxtehude** 5 arias from *Membra Jesu nostri*; **Handel** He shall feed his flock, O Death where is thy sting, If God be for us (Messiah)

Most of the music on these CDs was written for a castrato, a woman, or a pre-pubescent boy alto; little if any was meant for a falsettist. This matters, not because 'authenticity' is some ethical or principled ideal (it may indeed be so, but that's another story), but because in these repertoires, at least, the intended resources conditioned many of the composer's strategic decisions.

This article, like most of my 'alto' reviews for *EMR*, says more about voice production and technique than about interpretation or musicianship; but to charges of *Klangmaterialismus* I plead 'Not guilty'. The thing about falsetto singing is that (as Dr Johnson said of a dog's walking on his hinder legs) 'It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.' A falsettist normally has a smaller compass and a narrower dynamic range than when the same man sings *au naturel*; the effort to transcend those limitations is central to the falsettist's *métier*.

Graham Pushee's Vivaldi CD (recorded 1997) competes with a 1976 Oiseau-Lyre release which saw James Bowman at the height of his powers. Pushee's voice has just a touch

of fingernails-on-blackboard harshness; he is weak below c', but then so is Bowman (it goes with the falsetto territory). However, the Australian has a fine legato, and he balances nicely with the 10-strong Aurora Musicale, whose playing is capable and energetic (I've never heard such ghostly muted strings as in their *Nisi Dominus*). The tempos are good, though whenever Bowman goes just a little slower than Pushee the music seems to breathe easier. Pushee's slight acceleration in the 'Amen' of *Nisi Dominus* (perhaps unintentional) could be exciting in live performance, but in a recording it just creates a sense of unease that distracts attention from the music. On balance I prefer Bowman, though Pushee's filler, the picturesque *Longe mala*, is well worth hearing.

Because Pushee's 1994 Handel CD draws from only three castrato vehicles – *Rinaldo* (for Nicolini), *Giulio Cesare* (Senesino) and *Alcina* (Carestini) and includes several *ouvertures* and *sinfonie* among the arias, it's better balanced than the usual 'artist portrait' CD. The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra is deft for its large size (21 strings), though prone to punch the *fortes* a bit too hard. Pushee sounds more closely miked than the band, in a soundscape that you'd never hear in the theatre. But if we could see the hero on stage it would help us, synaesthetically, to discern his voice clearly within the aural context; absent such a visual aid to concentration, it may be perfectly proper to give the home listener some discreet help with the balance between voice and orchestra. Pushee lacks the last degree of that vocal agility for which Handel's greatest castrati were so much admired, and he can't approach their combination of powerful sonority and melting sweetness. But his performances are unmannered and will wear well: not a bad substitute for those who (like me) lack the funds to fill their shelves with complete Handel opera recordings or (like me) lack the patience to listen to them.

On a pair of CDs dating from 1993 and 1998, the Austrian Arno Raunig calls himself a 'soprani' and boldly claims to re-create the range and power of the castrati. The 1998 CD focuses on Farinelli's repertoire, while the earlier one ranges more widely; both include arias by Giacomelli, Porpora and Hasse which were new to me. I'm very glad to have heard this music, which is more than I can say about the singer. His voice is distinctly hard-edged; the quick vibrato, though not unpleasing, is unpleasantly ubiquitous. He manages a tolerable legato and some fairly nimble *fioriture* at times but not consistently, and the inconsistency is unsettling to listen to. Where Raunig is all too consistent is in singing flat, and getting flatter as he goes up the stave (though I have a famously undemanding ear in this respect). He does get down to baritone A, but only by drawing upon a chest voice that is utterly disconnected from his falsetto; above about a" he is surprising (in

Johnson's sense) rather than rewarding. The sole accompaniment is a piano (!), engagingly soft-toned but sometimes ineptly played on the first CD, technically more secure but nastily percussive on the second. Both CDs make me repent of my recent coolness towards Andreas Scholl in these pages: he may be distressingly mannered at times, but after Raunig his vocal quality and technique seem wonderfully confidence-inspiring.

As much in control as Scholl, but as far from the German temperamentally as geographically, is Yoshikazu Mera, who was (until recently succeeded by Robin Blaze) the 'house alto' for Masaaki Suzuki's ongoing series of Bach recordings. Most falsettists, at least since the early 1980s (I think of Visse and the young Jacobs), have tried to overcome their limited compass by cultivating a kind of meta-chest voice below middle *c'* or thereabouts. When Mera makes a wide downward leap (e.g. the first two notes of Buxtehude's *Salve salus mea*, *a'* to *a*) it can seem that two different singers have shared out the vocal line between them, *à la* Webern. But where the line is more conjunct – as in 'If God be for us' from *Messiah* – Mera's 'extension' is unusually satisfying.

Mera's 'Baroque Arias vol.2' (I haven't heard vol.1) is in fact a sampler, from a range (dating from 1995 to 1997) of recordings with Suzuki's Bach Collegium Japan. But for an artist's sampler it's unwontedly un-self-centred: Mera sings alone on only 7 of the 22 tracks, sharing the rest with one or two partners, and in one case standing aside for the chorus ('But thanks be to God' from *Messiah*). What is most distinctive about Mera is his reserved, laid-back manner. Choosing a comparison almost at random, in BWV 182 Judith Malafronte with the American Bach Soloists is commanding (am I allowed to say 'virile')? where Mera – decidedly slower, and with a more deferential recorder player – is meditative. The selection here favours this approach (we don't get, for instance, 'But who may abide' from Handel or 'Es ist vollbracht' from Bach), though Mera's almost trancelike calm relates imperfectly to John Elwes's more energetic defiance in 'O death where is thy sting'.

I'm told that Mera has now abandoned early music for a pop career on Japanese television. It's easy to see why; even his publicity photos project a modest sweetness which matches his voice, and which must seem pre-sexual and utterly unthreatening to an early-teen audience. The Leonardo di Caprio of the Baroque, in fact.

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Jack Edwards phoned me on his return from Boston and Chile to say that his production of Caldara's *Dafne* had embarked on a month's tour: probably the first baroque opera in South America, is it also the first staging of a Caldara opera anywhere? He was very impressed with a local countertenor, who took the leading role.

This seems an appropriate place to include a review from the artistic director of one of the recordings reviewed above discussing a performance whose cast included Graham Pushee.

#### RINALDO in SYDNEY

I went to *Rinaldo* in Sydney last week, sung by a very fine and well balanced cast conducted by Patrick Summers, unfortunately with Opera Australia's modern orchestra. However, it played extremely well, ably led by Tony Goult. Summers played one of the continuo harpsichords and almost managed the harpsichord solos. The cast featured three Australian counter-tenors, and here were some interesting contrasts. Rinaldo, played by Graham Pushee, was an outstanding soloist obviously at the peak of his career. His mastery of the various affects required of this demanding role were more than evident. Whether in breathtaking coloratura (*Venti, turbini*), heart-rending pathos (*Cara sposa*) or dramatic bravura, complete with top *Gs* (*Or la tromba*), his skill and experience truly won him the night. Goffredo, played by Christopher Josey, vocally lacked the dramatic impact of Rinaldo (perhaps partly Handel's fault). Josey has a harsh but lighter voice that is not always pleasant, and not always able to articulate coloratura passages clearly. Eustazio, played by James Sanderson, the youngest male, has a sweeter voice and was able to demonstrate greater mastery of coloratura and suitable ornamentation, but was not always able to sustain his breath throughout the longer phrases. It seemed that Pushee's experience and technique enabled him to sustain himself throughout this long opera. (As an aside, all men in the production sported their own beards!) Also outstanding were Richard Alexander as Argante and Emma Matthews as Almirena. Alexander's rich Baritone and extremely nimble coloratura was always secure and convincing. Matthews is another star in the making. Her clear and strong voice was an absolute delight. I must not forget Yvonne Kenny who, as Armida, was assured and confident in this dramatic role, mingled with appropriate pathos when needed to seduce Rinaldo. Kenny and Pushee often have shared the Sydney stage (productions of *Alcina* and *Julius Caesar* over the last five years). They both demonstrate a confidence and mastery of the stage and their craft that opera needs to be convincing. Overall, this was, in my opinion, a very strong all-Australian cast ably at home in one of the great masterpieces of Handelian art.

The costumes by Michael Wilkinson were outstanding and richly conceived, opulent fabrics and vast trains, intensely coloured and contrasting well with the sombre darkness around them. The set by Michael Scott-Mitchell, however, I found fussy and did not achieve many of the required effects. Likewise, the production, directed by James Robinson, did not always achieve its aims. Although grand in intent, many effects lacked grandeur, especially the entrance of Armida. There was much use of pagan/Christian symbolism – often too much so nothing worked. To top this off, the choreography (by Stephen Page) was abysmal. Used mainly as a device for the furies and for the battle, it lacked drama and intent. It was only at the end of the battle, when Pushee was skilfully plunging his sword into a reckless enemy that one realised that this whole scene was meant to be in slow motion; a good effect had it worked!

John Liddy

## TO BURY OR PRAISE?

Clifford Bartlett

G. F. Handel *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* Edited by Winton Dean and Sarah Fuller. Oxford UP Music Dept, 1999. xviii + 381pp, £95.00. ISBN 0 19 336712 2

**Handel Julius Caesar** Janet Baker *Caesar*, Christopher Booth-Jones *Curio*, Sarah Walker *Cornelia*, Della Jones *Sextus*, Valerie Masterson *Cleopatra*, James Bowman *Ptolemy*, John Tomlinson *Achilla*, David James *Nirenu*, English National Opera Orchestra & Chorus, Charles Mackerras cond 183' 56" (3 CDs in box) Chandos CHAN 3019(3) rec 1984

It is apparent to anyone who has read the relevant chapter in Winton Dean & John Merrill Knapp's *Handel's Operas* that Chrysander's edition of *Giulio Cesare* (the source of all subsequent ones, including the cheap Dover reprint) offers a gross simplification of the complex history of the work, inadequate for performers and scholars alike. It has been the most popular of Handel's operas with modern opera houses, so was the obvious work for Winton Dean to choose to make an exemplary edition, setting forth the considerable changes at revivals and printing the significant amount of music that did not survive to the premiere but is worthy of publication. The main text represents the version first performed in 1724. A series of appendices then shows the variants of each revival, followed by rejected material and, finally, Handel's own keyboard arrangement of the Ouverture (not identical with that in Novello's *Twenty Overtures*) and of the first chorus, which formally overlaps as the last movement of the Ouverture: it is, for instance, included in the Walsh orchestral parts. There is a concise critical commentary. Anyone performing the work will need to consult, if not use, this score, and it is marvellous to have the work made so comprehensively available. At the time it was prepared, it was the first thorough edition of a Handel opera, though the more recent Bärenreiter volumes have been similarly thorough, and have gone further by including translations (though not singing ones). It is sturdily bound and the price, though it may seem high in comparison with the Dover reprint, is in line with current rates for full scores and is probably about half of what an equivalent HHA edition would cost.

But the edition has suffered from an extraordinarily long time in preparation. In fact, I think Oxford would have done itself a favour by coming clean and admitting that it was conceived, prepared, and mostly typeset in the 1960s. It then lay in a Music Department cupboard till a new musical editor found it. My brief involvement, some 15 years ago, was sorting out the pile of material (including, as far as I can remember, third proofs). But by then, the whole impetus was gone, and I suspect that picking up the threads was a difficult business for the editors, depressing because

of the long hiatus and the need to update scholarship, and not helped by Winton Dean's health; that no doubt accounts for much of the subsequent delay. I am sure that I would not have made the following criticisms thirty years ago, but the user is not going to treat the publication as if it had been edited and produced then.

The printing is not up to the standards one expects from the publisher. In comparison with the recent Oxford Handel score I know best, my *Messiah*, *Giulio Cesare* looks far too congested: the notes and staves are too big, there isn't enough blank space and the proportions are wrong. In recitative, the staves are far too close together (occasionally the text is almost resting on the top line of the continuo stave). It may be a good example of 1960s East-European processing, but unlike the Sibelius-set *Messiah*, this is not a score that it is a pleasure to behold.

But the problem is not just technical. One reason why the layout looks so fussy is because the edition offers far more obtrusive help to the performer than now seems desirable. For considerable stretches of the arias, an additional stave gives ornamentation for the repeats; sometimes there are even two extra staves with cadenzas for the first and second time. This fixes something that should be tailor-made for an individual voice. In 1985, I was asked to write embellishments for a couple of Handel operas. Only when I knew the voice of the singer could I do this sensibly: I enjoyed writing for James Bowman, for instance. But it is very difficult to write for unknown voices, and when Andrew Parrott asked me to embellish *Alcina*, he had the excellent idea of requesting a choice of cadenzas, which the singers could either take literally or adapt for themselves. (They were also pretty illegible when scrawled into a Chrysander score, so they probably had to use their imagination anyway.) I refused to add anything to my Oxford UP *Messiah* score, since I didn't want to hear the same examples cropping up at every performance that didn't use those from Watkins Shaw's version. I feel strongly that it is not the editor's duty to add them: they should be left to the performer, generally helped by a repetiteur or conductor. (*Giulio Cesare* isn't the sort of piece that will be put on by amateurs without access to specialist expertise.) In fact, the versions on the ENO CDs are often preferable to those in the new score. Even the conventional alterations at recitative cadences obtrude in print, especially when they are implausible (as at the end of page 233). Editorial suggestions don't just affect the singers. There are the usual indications of double-dotting (a practice that is now treated more flexibly) and the unsatisfactory practice of repeating the first section of the *Ouverture* softly is indicated. Surely it is the sort of music written to be played loud, not soft? I suspect that the score will be used

for its musicological information, but not for performance. (No, King's Music hasn't a rival version, though we've done about half the arias.)

I read the score along with the English National Opera recording. I could produce a list of comments both on the score and the CD, but will exercise restraint. London has long been fortunate in having two opera houses that run in very different ways, avoiding the normal tendency of unbridled competition to produce convergence of the product. (A typical example of that is the television programming on the evening I am writing this: Inspector Morse on ITV, detectives Dalziel and Pascoe on BBC. I suspect that the target audience is the same.) One difference is social: while the Coliseum audience is hardly made up of the working classes which Lilian Baylis set out to attract to her enterprises in the 1920s, it has a slightly more demotic feeling than Covent Garden, whose audience has retained much of the social status that it had in Handel's day.

The other distinguishing feature is language. The English National Opera has followed its predecessors at Sadlers Wells and The Old Vic of almost invariably performing in English. There is much to be said for learning the repertoire in the vernacular: that is how I received my operatic education – mostly at Sadlers Wells – and not through recordings. And although I now feel uneasy hearing Handel opera in English, I am very sympathetic to the practice. In fact, I suspect that there is something to be said for singing the recitatives in the vernacular (so that they need not be heavily cut) and the arias in Italian (so that the singers can make a better sound): it happened in 18th-century Germany, but seems unacceptable now. The recitatives are heavily cut in this English version. Unfortunately, Handel's operas are long (though are getting shorter as performances get nippier), and there is an economic and practical limit to the running time. It would have been nice to have had an uncut version (a few arias have disappeared as well), but I'm sure that, for the purposes of recording a famous stage production, it was right not to try to get the singers to add material they had not performed on stage, and this does feel like a performance, not a series of studio sessions. There would, however, have been less need to cut if the Largas had been taken somewhat less lugubriously.

Opera in English would not, of course, be worth it if the words were inaudible. Having mentioned Dalziel (not just above but in connection with Bach's *St John Passion* in *EMR* 50 p. 5), it is worth mentioning that the Englishing of *Kindertotenlieder* came over as absolutely pointless in the TV version of *On Beulah Heights* because the words were lost (only one of many respects in which an immensely rich book was maltreated: even the long hot summer was given dark clouds). Fortunately, the ENO diction is excellent, and only occasionally is recourse needed to the printed libretto. In terms of editorial detail (bowings, overdotting, etc) Charles Mackerras and Winton Dean do not always agree, the former often seeming the more stylish. I suspect that most of our readers will find the voices unsuitable, even

that of Dame Janet – whose singing will be the main draw for most purchasers of the discs. I used to be a fan back in the 1960s, but her voice developed and my taste moved in the opposite direction through the 1970s and it is only with a great effort of imagination that I can feel the distinction of her performance. This is, though, a historic performance: an example of the best of what could be produced at that stage of the rediscovery of historical performance styles by non-specialist performers. The cast is not outshone by Dame Janet, and the all-round quality is very high. If I were to pick out one aria that really is worth hearing, it would be 'Va tacito' for its delightful horn-playing, even to the extent of participating in a cadenza.

My view of the ENO recording may seem a little radical to regular members of the Coliseum audience: am I running ahead of them, or have I been diverted down a blind alley? Yet the current musical direction seems happy with the type of edition I favour: following *Semele*, they are using our *Alcina* this autumn, and were not even curious to see my added embellishments. Both CD and edition of *Giulio Cesare* are significant historical documents which need some suspension of disbelief.



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## LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

One of the annual musical summer fixtures is the light and sound show in the Freemason's Hall by The Sixteen. This year it was the chance for Handel's *Jephtha* to get the Star Wars treatment (3 June). This performance was more convincing as a semi-staged production than last year's *Samson* in that the soloists sang from memory, although there were still awkward moments, as when one singer wandered off-stage while still being sung to. Musically this was a praiseworthy evening with fine performances from David Wilson-Johnson, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, Helen Williams and Carolyn Sampson. Mark Padmore as Jephtha was at his best in the more meditative moments, particularly his lament at the forthcoming demise of his daughter as he calls on the angels to waft her through the night. He appeared slightly miscast in the more belligerent and combative moments – he didn't look the type to quell the haughty fire of the Ammonites and the stage personas and vocal styles of his wife and daughter looked more likely to make mincemeat of him, rather than willingly acquiesce in his demand for the sacrificial murder of the latter. The Sixteen's companion orchestra, The Symphony of Harmony and Invention were suitable symphonious, harmonious and inventive. Harry Christophers leads from the front, or in this case, the middle, emphatically directing every note and mouthing (and frequently vocalising) each word – from my seat, the latter was quite distracting. The lighting was a novelty for me last year, but I was less sure what is added to Handel's sublime music.

The New London Consort's concert at the Purcell Room (Bonfires of Vanities, 10 June) was the chance for Philip Pickett to demonstrate the theories on pitch outlined in *Early Music Today* (Feb 99). His harpsichord and virginals were restrung to A348 and A466 respectively, which might explain the gentle, almost lute like, timbre to the former. The programme was divided almost equally between songs from northeast Italy in the decades around 1500, and 11 keyboard pieces from the Venice manuscript (Ital iv 1227, published by Jeppesen as *Balli antichi veneziani*) and Antico's *Frottole intabulate da sonare organi* (Rome, 1517), liltingly played by Sharona Joshua. Susan Hamilton's fresh, agile and boyishly clear soprano voice was ideal for the vocal repertoire. Although Tromboncini's *A la guerra*, tested the bottom of her range, she never lost control of her tone. The ending of *Vergine bella* was magical, as her final note dissolved into the timbre of the accompanying instruments. Cara's melancholy *O mia cieca* was supported by Pavlo Beznosiuk playing a seven-string lira. Other songs were accompanied by one or both lutes (Jacob Heringman and Tom Finucane) or variations of the full band of lutes, fiddle, two bass violins, recorder and virginals. The overall balance of the programme seemed slightly odd, with rather too

much solo harpsichord music. With such accomplished players, it was a shame there were not more instrumental pieces to balance the songs: the interplay between Pavlo Beznosiuk's fiddle and the delicious treble register of Susanna Pell's bass viol in *La Mortee de la Region* was enchanting.

The friendly acoustic of The Regent Hall in Oxford Street was the venue for a delightful lunchtime concert (11 June) by the young Tan-Michalak Duo (baroque violinist Qin Tan and Kazimierz Michalak, theorbo) and a programme of Castello, Biber, Corelli and Telemann. Despite their rather diffident stage manner, their performance was excellent. The works of the 17th-century exponents of the *stylus phantasticus* are becoming increasingly popular, but they can be difficult to interpret convincingly. They combine extremes of emotion with apparent rhythmic anarchy and Qin Tan did well to mould them into a coherent whole. Kazimierz Michalak's subtle theorbo accompaniment was most effective, notably in Biber's Sonata 3 (from the 1681 collection of 8 sonatas) – a piece worth hearing for the ending alone, a runaway train extravaganza. Tan also showed herself to be a convincing interpreter of the later baroque repertoire, with some lovely ornamentation in Corelli's Sonata Op 5/3 – like a good singer floating ornaments on the breath, she never lost sight of the melodic line. A talented duo in an oasis of calm just yards from the horrors of lunchtime Oxford Street.

The English Concert concluded their 25th anniversary season with a programme of Purcell and Handel at the Wigmore Hall (17 June). Their style is strong and confident, but they avoid the excesses of some groups. Rachel Podger, who has settled in magnificently as their new Concert-master, gave an impassioned performance of Handel's Sonata in D, with some delightful tone colour in the opening *Affetuoso*. Consort playing was commendable in, for example, Handel's vigorous *Trio Sonata* Op. 5/4, played with drive and energy but always avoiding the brash or showy. Trevor Pinnock's harpsichord solo was Croft's (or Purcell's, or somebody else's?) *Ground* played, I think, in the version from the manuscript that bears Croft's name. This piece is similar to a number of Purcell grounds from vocal pieces and is in the style of a realised continuo with lilting cantabile melody. Nancy Argenta sang songs and airs by Purcell (including that childhood favourite, *Nymphs and Shepherds*) and arias by Handel. Her phrasing and the pacing of the pieces were admirable, as was intonation and ornamentation but, as mentioned in previous reviews, I still worry about the persistent vibrato and the rather pinched quality of her voice. Bach's *Cantatas* BWV106 and 131, both clearly for four solo voices (whatever the arguments

about his later cantatas) are early works, written at the age of about 22 shortly after his appointment to Mühlhausen. Both have similarities, particularly in the use of a free-ranging solo voice over a fugue or formal intonation of the chorale melody and the distinctive colours of the accompanying instruments; no. 106 ('Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit' *Actus Tragicus*) using the exquisite combination of two bass viols, two recorders and organ. Charivari Agréable Simfonie's concert at St George's Hanover Square (24 June) contrasted the cantatas with two Quartets by Telemann. Helen Groves (a most effective soprano) had the first of the free range parts in 'Es ist der alte Bund', one of Bach's magical depictions of the life hereafter. The musical depiction of 'the law' is characteristically set as a fugue, but with the ecstatic soprano line floating serenely and independently heavenward. The harmonic structure is left suspended at the end of this movement, and there could therefore have been rather less of a pause before the alto aria. There was some fine instrumental playing, particularly from Susanne Heinrich and Sarah Groser on bass viol and Jane Downer with the very exposed oboe part in Cantata 131. In fact, the whole programme seemed to be instrumentally led, with director Kah-Ming Ng setting speeds that were frequently very much faster than the singers (particularly the bass) were comfortable with. It was nice to hear a bass viol taking the third treble line alongside a violin and recorder in Telemann's Quartet in G, although the violin didn't always manage to restrain volume as much as was needed. Equally attractive was the use of a chamber organ as continuo rather than harpsichord – obvious in the cantatas, but equally effective in unifying the tone of the Telemann Quartets.

Sonnerie negotiated the often fraught transition from baroque to classical with consummate ease in their programme of Mozart Piano Quartets (Wigmore Hall, 25 June). It goes without saying that late-18th-century instruments and bows were used, including a copy of a 1795 fortepiano (at A430 pitch, in a mildly unequal temperament and with a knee-activated sustain). But this was only the start. What impressed most was the musical insight that Sonnerie brought to this new addition to their repertoire. Avoiding the temptation either to overdo the classical elements or to play in a familiar but inappropriate baroque style, they dealt with matters such as phrasing and rubato as to the manner born. As with other recent Sonnerie concerts, the focus was on the outstanding keyboard playing of Gary Cooper. He combines seemingly effortless virtuosity with a well-honed sense of musical style – a combination not always to be assumed. One of his early moments of stardom came in the final Rondo of Mozart's Quartet in G minor (K478) when he relieved the first moment of tension after the sunny opening with an amazing flurry of arpeggios over a fermata. The grins that spread around the band emphasised the improvisatory nature of such moments. The treatment of the huge interrupted cadence just before the end of the same movement was a good test of Sonnerie's infusion into Mozart's style. Monica Huggett took the mantle from Mr Cooper for the Violin Sonata in E

minor (according to the programme note, the only piece Mozart ever wrote in that key – a challenge if ever there was one), avoiding the temptation to be sanctimonious as the final movement develops into an almost Mendelssohnian song without words. Alison McGillivray (cello) and the versatile Emilia Benjamin (in her viola incarnation) were both excellent, with a delightfully jaunty cello riff in the Quartet in E<sub>b</sub> and plenty of chances for the viola to shine. A typically excellent concert by one of most refreshing groups around.

#### THE LUFTHANSA FESTIVAL OF BAROQUE MUSIC

The Lufthansa Festival, now in its 15th year, goes from strength to strength, with audiences now so large that only one concert was held in its smaller former home at St James's Piccadilly. The move to St John's, Smith Square, started last year, has clearly paid off. With only four of the 11 concerts being given by British players, this has become the leading showcase for visiting musicians. Under the inspired artistic and musical direction of the unrelated Kate Bolton and Ivor Bolton, our own music scene can only gain by this annual influx. Following last year's foray to France, Italy was the destination this time. No prizes for guessing where they will land next year.

Handel's *La Resurrezione* was an inspired choice for the opening concert (7 June). The 23 year old Handel had only recently arrived in Rome, where opera had been banned by the pope for some 30 years. *La Resurrezione* was his answer to this musical challenge. One of the most dazzling oratorios imaginable, it had staging that would have put most opera sets in the shade, an orchestra that featured Corelli as leader and a cast of star soloists. Ivor Bolton's St James's Baroque Players also fielded an impressive line up of soloists, with Emma Kirkby as Magdalene, Susan Bickley (Cleophas), Paul Agnew (St John) and David Wilson-Johnson (Lucifer). But it was soprano Deborah York as the Angel who stole the show and many hearts as well. After a relatively innocuous instrumental Sonata, the Angel opens with an astonishing flourish in 'Disserratevi, o porte d'Averno' as she (a very feminine Angel, in this case) tumbles out of the heavens to dispel the dismal darkness, unbar the gates to admit Christ and generally challenge the wiles of Lucifer. If I were Lucifer, I would have given up on the spot and gone home: Deborah York's Angel was not somebody to meddle with. At the end of her first skirmish with Lucifer, she strutted off stage with a delightfully dismissive shake of her head, leaving him to call upon the hideous serpents and fiercely hissing Furies. Deborah York displayed an astounding fluidity and beauty of tone, perfect intonation, musically intelligent use of Handelian ornamentation and an expressive vibrato that should be an object lesson to early music singers. *La Resurrezione* is opera in all but name, with love duets (Mary and Cleophas depicting of their love for the soon to be resurrected Christ), dramatic recitatives and sensuous arias. All that was missing was humour. Susan Bickley's expressively rich mezzo voice ranged from the doleful sorrow of 'Pianete, sì, pianete',

through Handel's youthfully naive word painting of the stormy waves in 'Naufragando va per l'onde' to Cleophas's naive call to the little birds and brooks to praise the Lord. I wondered if Emma Kirkby was in best voice, and Paul Agnew (whose voice I normally enthuse over) seems to have developed a rather shaky vibrato, although he floated his voice beautifully in the dawn aria 'Ecco il sol', while the agitated lower strings interject with the overnight shaking of the earth. The continuo accompaniment was imaginative and varied but was the organ was the right accompaniment for Lucifer. Despite some impressive viola da gamba playing by Richard Campbell and Gail Hennessy's courageous oboe role, the band were not at their best, with some moments of shaky intonation, particularly from the lead violin and continuo cello.

Ivor Bolton directed slightly smaller forces in Alessandro Scarlatti's 1707 oratorio *Il primo omicidio* (14 June) – an interesting contrast between the mature Italian and the youthful German heard the week before. For me, the 23 year old Handel exposed the 47 year old Scarlatti's rather too predictable alternation of recitative and aria, and lack of contrast between the two sections of the arias. Ivor Bolton's vast experience in opera direction has given him a clear insight into the underlying mood of the music and the action. He is a very baroque conductor, driving his forces on with decorative gestures and ornamental garlands. He involves himself in the action by sharing the harpsichord continuo. Sarah Connolly was magisterial as the scheming Cain and the angelic Deborah York managed the transformation to the boyishly charming, if too good-to-be-true, Abel with aplomb. I have trouble thinking of God as a countertenor, particularly one who drops into a tenor register as he pours out his wrath on Cain – and Christopher Robson was also prone to swooping through notes, particularly in the aria 'Vuò il castigo'. David Wilson-Johnson had a repeat performance as Lucifer, and revelled in the gleefully malicious instruction for Cain to kill his brother – 'uccidi Abelle'. As with the Handel concert, I had problems with the continuo cello – the intonation was unpredictable from the start, the style was rather unyielding (noticeably in 'Caro sposo') and there was a tendency to pull back on the pulse (particularly in Adam and Eve's duet 'Mio sposo'). For those lamenting the early demise of Deborah York as Abel, she made a welcome reappearance from beyond the grave shortly before the end just before Mark Padmore's exquisite depiction of the grieving Adam in 'Padre misero, o dolente'. [I was amused that a rival publication sent to this concert a reviewer who couldn't stand da capo arias: surely as silly as getting me to review a pop concert. CB]

The vocal group I Fagiolini usually slot in a comedy item somewhere in their programmes, but they have now gone the whole hog with a show (30 June) that is pure cabaret – the Oxford equivalent to Footlights. With only a few madrigals to counter the frolics, this was the sort of entertainment that could bring entirely new audiences to early music. The hardest choice was whether to try and

follow the words and risk missing some gem on stage. Most musicians are far too po-faced to prance about on stage, but these apparently quite normal singers seemed born to it. Alongside favourites like Mateo de Flecha's *El fuego* and Clément Janequin's *La chasse* were Monteverdi's *Gira il nemico insidioso* and *Barco di Venetia per Padova* by Adriano Banchieri, a Benedictine monk whom I previously knew as an organist and writer on Italian fingering. Banchieri's piece is made up of a series of Decameron-like comic vignettes arranged into a narrative of 20 madrigals as the assembled group sail across the lagoon of Venice. It includes caricature of a Florentine bookseller, a music master from Lucca, a consort of five singers, and a drunken German (a brave presentation in light of the Festival's sponsors). All of these substantial works were fully acted out with an inventive array of actions. The intervening madrigals including a curiously doleful rendition of some bombastic words in *Una sañosa porfia* and Juan Anchieta's beautiful *Con amores, mi madre*. Eligio Quinteiro supported the singers with some fine guitar playing. Among the solo items, tenor James Gilchrist was prominent in *Mignonne, allons voir si la rose*, Ronsard's sad little ditty on the effect of age on a women's physical appearance. I have been troubled in the past by the vibrato of most I Fagiolini singers, but that was generally less evident – the clarity of intonation in *Una sañosa porfia* was particularly noticeable. A fun evening.

Rinaldo Alessandrini directed two concerts, the first with his group, Concerto Italiano (30 June) and the second with contralto Sara Mingardo (1 July). Italian groups seem to play their own baroque repertoire with far more strength and passion than we are used to in Britain, where Vivaldi and his ilk are usually seen as an opportunity for a light-hearted romp. Alessandrini gave us an object lesson in how to do it, as did Europa Galante, reviewed below. In Castello's *Sonata decimaquinta* a4, for example, he demonstrated amazing control of volume and tone, gave the music space to breathe, and showed that he was not afraid to leave gaps in the music or play at the lowest extreme of volume. At the other end of the baroque spectrum, Corelli's *Concerto Grosso* in G, punchy chords in the opening *Adagio* and helter-skelter violin writing in the *Allegro* were presented with panache. The alternating of strong and weak chords was particularly pronounced in Vivaldi's cantata *Cessate, omai cessate*, which included the bustling impassioned aria *Nell'orrido albergo*. Alessandrini's harpsichord continuo style was commendably straightforward: he wasn't tempted to add flourishes to every chord, but moulded the tone of his instrument into the timbre and mood of the other musicians. He supported all fugal entries, rather than waiting for the bass entry, which produced a coherence to the overall sound.

The St James's, Piccadilly concert with Sara Mingardo was one of the highlights of the Festival, and gave another chance to relish Alessandrini's accompaniments, this time on harpsichord and fortepiano. His two solo pieces were not quite so successful. The pace of Frescobaldi's *Cento partite sopra passacagli* (played on the harpsichord in the shortened version to end in the home key) became rather

frenetic whilst Mozart's Fantasia in D minor was played at such a slow pace on the fortepiano that it was difficult to retain momentum. Sara Mingardo has a rich and sensuous contralto voice, with amazing control of breathing and musical line. The first half delved the dark passions of Monteverdi, with extracts from *L'Orfeo*, *Poppea*, *Ulisse* and the exquisite *Lamento d'Arianna*. The harpsichord was then swapped for a delicately toned fortepiano for simpler reflections on life and love by Mozart and Schubert. The St James's church bells tolled right on cue during Schubert's pastoral *Der Jüngling an der Quelle*.

Europa Galante was founded by violinist Fabio Biondi in 1989 and has since built a strong international reputation through recordings. As with a number of other Italian groups, they approach their 17th and 18th century repertoire with a considerable degree of passion. Their St John's, Smith Square concert (5 July) was of music by Corelli, Geminiani, the younger Sammartini and, of course, Vivaldi. The eight standing string players swayed back and forth with the music, like tall grass gently swaying in the breeze, in an almost choreographed stage presence. Their involvement in the music was obvious. They generated enormous rhythmic energy, pushing towards each strong beat with an emphatic pulse and a clear dynamic direction, punching out the hemiolas, for example, in the final Allegro of Vivaldi's Concerto in D (RV230). Corelli's Concerto Grosso in D (Op. 6/4) was played in the Italian fantasy style, with dramatic pauses punctuating the flow and the declamatory opening chord thundered out. An exciting evening.

#### THE SPITALFIELDS FESTIVAL

Although the musical focus of the Spitalfields Festival is eclectic, its partial focus on early music has been retained as it has strengthened its admirable community and educational work. With a base in Christ Church, Hawksmoor's stunning baroque masterpiece in the cosmopolitan area just to the east of the City of London, the festival has a magic all of its own. Although the exterior of the church is now more or less restored, the bare brick floor and exposed walls provide so much of the charm of the interior that I will miss it when it is fully restored (and wonder what the effect of the new galleries will be on the acoustics). That said, Christ Church contains one of the most important historic organs in the country and its restoration relies on the completion of the interior. As it stands, the acoustic can cope with anything from reasonably large choirs down to a single voice – a feature of a number of the concerts this year. In a hectic month, I managed to get to five of the early music concerts, but missed Emma Kirkby and the Brandenburg Consort, Sonnerie, and the choirs of Christ Church and of New College, Oxford.

For an occasion billed as 'a festive Festival', the opening concert, 'Let mine eyes run down with tears' was a rather subdued affair, which I heard in a preview (prehear?) a day before the formal opening on 9 June. The Gabrieli Consort

contrasted Purcell's funeral sentences and other generally mournful choral pieces with Schütz's funeral *Musikalische Exequien*. The choir of 14 (with 8 used as soloists or semi-choir) were accompanied by Timothy Roberts on organ and harpsichord with the director, Paul McCreesh, playing bass violin in the Schütz. The musical highlight of the Purcell section was the solo singing of tenor Charles Daniels – one of our finest – with a tonally and emotionally expressive voice that retains a consistency of tone over its wide range. The dying phrases of George Herbert's elegy *With sick and famish'd eyes* was exquisite, as was the spirited central section of *Lord, what is man*, introduced by a wonderful harpsichord flourish. In fact, it was the men of the Gabrieli Consort that were on best form throughout, with notable contributions from Peter Harvey, Julian Podger, Steven Harrold and Rodrigo Del Pozo. The solo sopranos were less effective, with issues of tonal quality, overuse of vibrato and shaky intonation – the soprano chorus also failed to produce a unified timbre. The Schütz was directed with sensitivity and momentum, particularly during the short sections that make up Part I, the vocal Concerto 'in the form of a German burial mass'. The dramatic concluding 'Canticle of the blessed Simeon' is written for a chorus singing the *Nunc dimittis* while two sopranos and a bass, representing two Seraphim and a Blessed Soul, sing 'Blessed are the dead' from a distant gallery. This sort of performance is always risky, and unfortunately didn't quite come off. The gallery singers sounded late, slow and out of tune, as though they were taking their beat from the sound of the chorus as it reached them. I wondered if they could see the director's beat clearly. Nonetheless, this was a most inspiring start to the festival.

The double bill of concerts on 18 June started with La Serenissima's programme 'Travels with Vivaldi'. In fact it could have been more accurately billed as travels without Vivaldi, for doubt was cast on the authenticity of most of the pieces. But Vivaldi or not, the early-evening audience was clearly enthralled. La Serenissima is a flexible group which this evening had six members: two violins, flute, theorbo/flute, cello and harpsichord. The piece least likely to be Vivaldi, to my ear, was the Sonata in D minor for violin and continuo RV13, possibly by Roman. It certainly had a sort of Nordic predictability to it, and the accented syncopations in the bass of the last movement gave it a barn dance feel. A similar hoe-down mood pervaded the final movement of the Concerto for flute, two violins and continuo in G RV102, with Adrian Chandler, Kati Debretzeni and Katy Bircher as soloists. The second movement included some lovely theorbo playing by Linda Sayce, shimmering like the Venetian light, but in most other movements the continuo was dominated by rather busy and percussive harpsichord playing. The performing style of the band in general is flamboyant, but with a welcome concentration on tonal and emotional depth rather than fizz and froth.

Sarband's programme later that evening was billed as 'Fallen Women' (a reference to the troparion Kyrie by

Kassia, a Byzantine composer and courtier, born in 810), and rather more arresting than the sub-title 'Women as Composers and Performers of Medieval Chant'. The three singers of Sarband (Aida Tomb, Fadia El-Hage and Marianne Kirch) each had sensuously evocative voices which caught the acoustic of Christ Church perfectly in music by Hildegard von Bingen, Kassia (daughter of Ioannes Klades), items from Codex Ias Huelgas, and traditional Arab-Byzantine and Greek-Arabic pieces. The occasional instrumental accompaniments and introductions were simple, using a santur, ud and a delightful portative organ played with delicate control of the organ's breath, including partial winding, by Sarband's director Vladimir Ivanoff. But for much of the time, the music was solo or supported by gentle vocal drones. This was much better presented than their appearance last year at the South Bank when, for example, they ran a medley of different pieces together over a percussion riff which I thought inappropriate for Hildegard von Bingen. The slightly different line-up of singers has also bought more a unified style. The packed audience sat mesmerised but alert throughout this most moving concert, quite correctly saving all applause until the end.

Solo song was also a feature of the Gothic Voices concert, The Heavenly Jerusalem, on 21 June. Focusing on the anniversary of the capture of Jerusalem by Christian forces in 1099, the programme also included music by Hildegard von Bingen (born the year before), pieces lamenting the loss of Jerusalem to Islamic forces nearly 100 years later and Crusader melodies from the period in-between. Much of the music was monophonic, and ranged from simple recitation, through the poetic, but restrained, melismas of the Te Deum (with Christopher Page on hand bell) to the soaring lines of Hildegard. It was interesting to hear the opening Psalm 79 'Deus venerunt gentes' (shorn of its antiphon) sung in the distinctive but entirely authentic manner with a long pause part way through each verse, but the end of each verse overlapping with the start of the following one. Would a greater spatial separation between Leigh Nixon (soloist) and Steven Harrold and Julian Podger have been more authentic of medieval liturgical practice? Catherine King portrayed Hildegard's complex visions with her usual highly musical style and beautiful tone, but I wondered if I was detecting a slightly nervous wavering to her voice on occasions. Gothic Voices' interpretation of Hildegard is well known – generally syllabic, but with the occasional pointing, or extended melisma, on a word or phrase. The recording of the concert by the BBC rather got in the way, with the frequent repetitions of sentences in Page's erudite introductions spoiling the flow for the audience. I have noticed a recent increase in BBC recordings of public concerts where the needs of the recording clearly takes precedence over the paying public. This sort of thing would be understood and accepted in one of their free-admission recording sessions, but is just not on when the audience has paid to attend a live concert.

Alba (Vivien Ellis, voice, and Giles Lewin, fiddles) gave a lunchtime concert (22 June) of 13th century vernacular

songs and traditional pieces from England, Ireland and the Shetlands, including the amazing ballad reinterpreting the King Orfeo story with Isobel replacing Euridice, the world of the Fairies replacing the Underworld and the bagpipes replacing Orfeo's harp. I praised a similar programme by Alba in EMR last November. Vivien Ellis has a gentle, unassuming voice with a clear and resonant timbre that is ideal for her chosen repertoire, whether Gaelic mouth music (port-a-bael) or an Occitan 'dansa'. She sings with feeling and engages effectively with the audience. Giles Lewin's fiddle solos and accompaniments were empathetic and creative, and included a guitar-like plucked backing to *Amors m'art*. With the focus again on the solo voice, this was a wonderful culmination to the Festival, where the sound of a single singer so often combined with the resonance of Christ Church to produce a unified musical sound.



## KING'S MUSIC

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## RECORD REVIEWS

## CHANT

*Canti Gregoriani dai Manoscritti Ravennati: Officium Sancti Severi XI-XII secolo* Calixtinus: Ensemble di Musica Medioevale, Gianni di Gennaro dir 57' 12"

Tactus TC 100001

*Messe de Saint Marcel: chants de l'église de Rome* Ensemble Organum, Marcel Pérès 78' 38" rec 1991

Harmonia Mundi Suite HMT 790 1382 ££

Here are two groups trying to revive non-standard chant in non-standard vocal styles. Ensemble Organum is the more extreme, and as always I wonder whether Pérès approaches his various projects with too many preconceptions. His disc is a reissue; if you haven't heard any of his recordings and want a shock, try it. Calixtinus is new to me. They too aim to draw on Byzantine and Mediterranean influences, but are less raw and more musical. The repertoire is from fragments of MSS of the 11th and 12th centuries from Ravenna, containing part of the office of a Ravennan Bishop, St Severus, and an Easter mass with Greek Sanctus. An interesting point in the booklet: 'the cathedral effect facilitates the generation of the physical phenomenon of harmonics, which are best manifested by the singing of male voices.' Does it? Comments welcome. CB

## MEDIEVAL

*Machaut Le Jugement du Roi de Navarre* Ensemble Gilles Binchois, Dominique Vellard Cantus C 9626 65' 25" (rec 1994)

We reviewed this in April (EMR 49, p. 19), recommending it unless you are put off by readings of passages of Machaut's poetry, but added a note doubting its availability. It is on the Koch International June/July release list.

*Hoquetus: Medieval European Vocal Music* Theatre of Voices, Paul Hillier dir 58' 24" Harmonia Mundi HMU 907185

To call this a didactic anthology would be true, but would probably do it a dis-service. You can certainly use it to provide a wealth of examples for a lecture on hocketing. But it is primarily a magnificent and enticingly sung anthology of appealing medieval vocal music (beginning by stealing a couple of pieces from the exiguous repertoire that is usually treated as instrumental). If you expect a completely different sound for music of the period, this is not for you (though it is less smooth than the two Hilliard discs reviewed below). Otherwise I can think of few medieval CDs that I have enjoyed so much. The programme (mostly Italian and French, with a mixture of sacred and secular) is cleverly constructed, and not confined to hockets – there is a nice monophonic ballata sung by Ellen Hargis, for instance. Comparing the

two Ciconia pieces with the Orlando's performance of the composer, I would hesitate to say that either were better or even preferable, but both made the music speak clearly and beautifully. My only regret is that the need for a four-language text makes it impossible to set out double-texts in parallel: you can't tell from the booklet the complex cross-relations between the two in *Thomas gemma*. CB

*My fax to Harmonia Mundi requesting new issues from their fine release list did not get through, so we missed four extremely good CDs. I am grateful to Peter Berg for letting me borrow his copies while we were both at Beauchamp House, though I was only able to listen to each once on headphones. The other CDs are Maria Cristina Kiehr's Monteverdi (p. 30), Uccellini (p. 31) and Christoph Strauss (p. 31).*

*A Mediaeval Banquet: Music from the Age of Chivalry* The Martin Best Mediaeval Consort 323' (6 disc set) Nimbus NI 1753 £ Repackaging of NI 5002, 5006, 5081, 5261, 5444, 5445

I did not request a review copy of this set, since there is nothing new on them. Martin Best is a brilliant and convincing live performer, though on disc I find I am more likely to ask myself: 'is this really how it was done?' This package is extremely good value, and presents a view of the middle ages from someone who has got inside its music and expresses it with freedom and conviction. CB

## 15th CENTURY

*Agricola Fortuna desperata: Secular Music of the 15th Century* Ensemble Unicorn, Michael Posch 64' 55" Naxos 8.553840 £

I remember being quite excited when I first saw the CMM volume of Agricola's complete secular works, chiefly because of the way the reduced note-values produced interesting patterns on the page. I have only ever heard the occasional piece on anthologies, so hoped for an enjoyable CD. Sadly, I don't think this will win many converts. I could comment on details of instrumentation, etc, (not as fussy as some previous Ensemble Unicorn recordings, but still a little over-varied), but the main problem is that it all sounds rather dull. It is worth buying to hear the music, but don't blame Agricola if you find listening rather hard work. CB

*Since writing this I have read the review in the September Gramophone, which pairs this with an Agricola disc by the Hulegas Ensemble and Paul van Nevel containing mostly sacred music (Sony Classical SK 600760), which we probably won't get to review, Sony being the only major company that does not send us discs. (Not my favourite company, since its New York office has owed me \$3000 for three years!) Fabrice Fitch recommends both recordings strongly, being far more enthusiastic about Ensemble Unicorn than I am, recommending it highly.* CB

**Brumel** Hilliard Live 3 73' 54"

*Missa Victimae paschali laudes; Ave virgo gloriosa, Mater patris, Nativitas unde gaudia, O crux ave anon monophonic laude: O divina virgo, Oi mi lasso, Regina sovrana, Salve virgo pia*

**Dufay** Hilliard Live 4 73' 39

*Massa Se la face ay pale; Anima mea, Ave regina a4, Exultet celum laudibus, Flos florium, Moribus et genere, Vergine bella*

First, an apology. These were issued some time ago (though not as long as the 1977 recording date given in the booklet for the Brumel, a misprint for 1997). We didn't receive copies. I chased them, but then they got mixed up in my pile of old boxes for sending CDs to reviewers and only recently emerged. My apologies to the Hilliards and their distributor, Philip Martin. Both are essential additions to any collection of music of the period. I particularly enjoyed the Brumel, partly because I first played it between sessions of singing his 12-voice mass *Et ecce terrae motus*. Some readers will be pleased to know that his music doesn't normally sound like several groups playing *Tandernakens* simultaneously. The four *laude* sound more sophisticated than some of the accounts of performances suggest, but were no doubt sometimes sung by polite singers. The Dufay is a fine anthology, with an excellent booklet note by David Fallows. David has argued that, at least in some places, music like the mass was probably sung with rather more voices on the top line than beneath; but one David James is sufficient, and it is nice to be able to hear the lines clearly. If you can only afford one of these, get the Brumel because of the rarity of the repertoire; but both discs comprise fine music, well sung. Those who want to try to emulate the Hilliards may find practical help (or else be completely put off) by Rogers Covey-Crump's remarks on tuning. CB

**Isaac Motetten für Kaiser Maximilian I** Ensemble Hofkapelle, Michael Procter 67' 17" Christophorus CHR 77217

*Festa/Senfl Quis dabit; Hofhaimer Salve Regina; Isaac Christ ist erstanden, Christus surrexit, Innsbruck, Salve Regina, Sancti Spiritus assit nobis gratia, Virgo prudentissima; Josquin Inviolata integra et casta, Proh dolor; Senfl De profundis*

In addition to the promised works by Isaac we are given an interesting selection of music by his contemporaries Hofhaimer and Senfl, as well as a couple of pieces by Josquin, one well-known, the other a rarity – an extremely imaginative programme of generally underperformed music. In a full if not always felicitously expressed note, Michael Procter neatly articulates the music with the Emperor Maximilian's biography. Formed in 1998, his ensemble draws its members from throughout German-speaking Europe, and on the evidence of this disc has some way to go before it achieves complete integration. While the sections

for full ensemble frequently sound impressive, the reduced sections contain too many moments of inadequate intonation to be fully satisfactory, and a couple of incipits are downright sloppy. This repertoire can easily sound merely stolid, and whatever the reason, this is too often the case here, with some very jaded singing marring several pieces. Things are altogether happier in the instrumental items for cornetts and sackbuts, and Ingo Bredenbach makes a capable contribution on chamber organ. Hofkapelle sounds like a group with great potential, and I look forward to hearing their next disc when the voices have truly settled in and they can do full justice to their chosen repertoire. *D. James Ross*

**Isaac** *Virgo prudentissima* Münchner Dom-musik, *ecco la musica*, Karl-Ludwig Nies dir Christophorus CHR 77218 61' 41" *A la battaglia*, motet & mass *Virgo prudentissima*, *Optime pastor*

Recorded in the vast acoustic of Munich's magnificent and newly restored Frauenkirche (I counted a ten-second reverb at the end of track 1), this disc presents Isaac's six-part mass *Virgo prudentissima* in the context of the chant on which it is based, Isaac's motet on the same material, and two fillers, instrumental renditions of his *Battaglia* and *Optime pastor*. The performers are the cathedral musicians, clearly well acquainted with the building's foibles and able to make them a positive asset, and they sing Isaac's music and the associated chant with considerable confidence and musicality. These qualities also feature in the playing of *ecco la musica*, who obviously have a close rapport with the singers as well as considerable virtuosity in their own right. Some clever placing of microphones means that, while we are constantly aware of the large ambience, the sound is always focused and clearly defined even in rapid passages. Although never intrusive, Karl-Ludwig Nies's reading of Isaac's music is authoritative and idiomatic, sensibly taking the long view and welding together elements which in less skilled hands can so easily break into their constituent motifs. The opening section of the motet *Virgo prudentissima* makes an interesting point of comparison between these two Christophorus recordings. Where Procter's (male) singers sound uncomfortable, Nies's (female) soloists convey the sense of purposefully raising the musical curtain on great things to come; so while, sadly, a sense of discomfort pervades the former disc, the latter exudes confidence. *D. James Ross*

**The Saracen and the Dove: Music from the Courts of Padua and Pavia around 1400** Orlando Consort 74' 21" Archiv 459 620-2

It is just as well that the back of the box has a subtitle, since the picture on the front gives no clue - just four singers in coats, three with shiny shoes. Margaret Bent's notes explain that the saracen and dove represent two warring dynasties, the

Carrara in Padua and the Visconti in Pavia. Half of the disc is devoted to each. Nine of the 17 pieces are by Ciconia, the most extraordinary being the one-minute *El ray au soleil*. He relates to both cities; Bartolino da Padova contributes, not surprisingly, to the Padua section, Antonello da Caserta and Antonio Zachara da Teramo to the Pavia. This is complex music, to which the singers bring a rather less instrumental quality to their voices than the comparable French repertoire often requires. Their skill underemphasises their virtuosity - the only possible criticism is to wonder if this modesty is too English an approach. An excellent disc. *CB*

## 16th CENTURY

**Le Jeune Octonaires de la vanité et inconsistance du monde** Ensemble Jacques Feuille 61' 43" rec 1972 Arion ARN 58466

Marvellous music, still so little known! I was worried before playing it that a recording of 1972 (based on a performance of 1967) might not have worn well. It is in some ways a bit dated: you have to make some allowances for vibrato, and we are given contrasting tessituras rather than transposition by *chavette* (I presume: I don't have a score). But the seven singers have the measure of the music, give it fluidity where required, perform as if they have been singing it for years, and are familiar with every nuance. Excellent booklet notes by the director, though only French texts of the poems. *CB*

**Phalèse Premier Livre de Danseries** (1571) Peter Van Heyghen dir 48' 40" Vanguard Passacaille 99725

Jolly renaissance dances were one of the first manifestations of the early-instrument revival to become popular. Recordings then were sometimes over the top in respect of the kaleidoscopic instrumentations, but had a verve which these more authentic performances miss. A positive merit is the absence of percussion and the fact that information from dancers has been taken aboard, though there are not enough repeats for practical dancing (there's plenty of room for one or two lengthy branles with increasing embellishment). The playing is good, and I wish I could be more enthusiastic. *CB*

**Tye 3 Masses** Ely Cathedral Choir, Paul Trepte 82' 37" (2 CDs for the price of one) ASV CD GAU 190

This is considerably different from the other Tudor-recordings ASV have been giving us over the last few years. Those who are concerned by the replacement of lay clerks and boy trebles by all-purpose professional men (admittedly mostly ex-choral scholars) and women now have a genuine cathedral choir to admire. As a reader points out below, the choir has been transformed under Paul Trepte's direction, and they sing very difficult music

with accomplishment. One slight weakness is that, although the singing is on the beat, it feels sometimes imposed from outside, and I miss a sense of enjoyment at rhythmic and tonal points of congruence. Ely's Lady Chapel, where this was recorded, is a vast box of a building: big, beautiful but extremely resonant. It is initially refreshing to hear this music in a so spacious an acoustic; but the effect palls, and, especially in conjunction with the high treble parts, the clarity of the lower parts suffers. It is good to have the three masses together (is ASV's two-for-one generosity the result of miscalculating the durations?) and I find my initial doubts on Tye's excellence diminishing on rehearsals; he certainly likes surprising cadences. *CB*

**Black Cow: Lute Music by Valentin Bakfark and Matthäus Waisel** Jacob Heringman 55' 39" Discipline Global Mobile DGM 9906

The disc's title, *Black Cow*, is an English translation of the Polish title of track 18: *Czarna krowa*. So says Jacob Heringman in 'A note from the lute player' in the booklet. Not being an expert on Bakfark, I was afraid this was going to be one of those gimmicky mock-pop CDs. I should have known better, as the piece also features on a Hungaroton LP of Bakfark played by Daniel Benko that he gave me at a Lute society Summer School in 1975. Benko made Bakfark something of a personal crusade, duly acknowledged by Heringman in the note just quoted, and this is the first significant recording since then. The music is thoughtful, introspective but beautiful stuff, whether in fantasias composed for the lute or in entabulations of vocal music, of which Bakfark made a great many and which form the majority of the pieces on this disc, from originals by Crecquillon, Arcadelt, Clemens non Papa and Josquin. Vocal part-writing does not always translate easily to the lute, and Bakfark didn't make life any easier for the player by adding tricks like stopping only one string of a pair, known in the trade as splitting the course. Heringman overcomes any and all of these problems with apparent ease and an unflashy artistry that entirely matches the mood of the music. Only one disturbing feature detracted from sheer enjoyment throughout: there are quite a few of the clicks that used to be so commonly caused by the movement of left-hand fingers over wire-wound bass strings. I say 'surprising' because, in a Lute Society discussion on stringing last January, Heringman said 'I have used lutes strung entirely with gut on occasion especially for solo recordings, but for practical reasons, I now use what sounds as much like gut as possible, without actually being gut.' I didn't think clicks happened with such strings, but that shows how little I know!

Returning to the music on the disc, Bakfark's is not without a subtle humour: for instance, in *Erravi sicut ovis* there are suitable wayward harmonic clashes before

the lost sheep finally arrives safely home. Lest such diversions seem slightly cerebral, the fantasias and entabulations are interspersed with music in a lighter vein by Waiszel, a near contemporary, 'as a foil to the seriousness of Bakfark's writing', to quote the player again. All 12 of these are labelled simply *Polish Dance*, and are presented in groups of two or three between the contrapuntal pieces, which might have been excessive had they all been umptumpty jolly little tunes; but Heringman is too fine an artist to fall for such a facile ploy. There is much variety among Waiszel's music, and neither he nor Jacob Heringman need fear the Polish proverb quoted in the booklet: 'Nie bierz po Bekfarku lutniej' - Don't play the lute after Bakfark!

Ian Harwood

*Magnificat*: La Cappella Musicale del Duomo di Treviso nel Secolo XVI Nuovo Coro Polifonico, Marina Malavasi dir

Rivo Alto CRR9901

Music by G. M. Asola, T. Clinio, G. Nasco, N. Olivetto, F. Santacroce

This is a collection of sacred music by five composers active at Treviso Cathedral during the 16th century. Treviso was an important centre and it is certainly interesting to have a disc devoted to one institution. The most obvious linking factor is a preference for polychoral settings by all but the earliest composer, Olivetto. Instruments, including organ, are used for the Asola and Clinio pieces. The singing is competent if a bit monochrome and tuning is not always perfect. There is a tendency to surge into notes in the unaccompanied pieces which can be a bit tiring. In the accompanied pieces the choir is a bit drowned and words are difficult to hear. Most of the music is recorded here for the first time and is uniformly good. I was particularly struck by Nasco's *Tenebrae responsory Tristis est anima*, whose chromaticisms and sensitive word-setting anticipate Lassus and Victoria. Noel O'Regan

*Nutmeg and Ginger: Spicy Ballads from Shakespeare's London* Musicians of the Globe, Philip Pickett 67' 45"

Philips 456 507-2

This is a great idea for a disc: some of the best tunes of the time, in instrumental settings and ballads which use them. The eponymous tune, *Packingtons Pound, Greensleeves* (in a genuine early version) *Daphne*, *Watkins Ale*, *Dulcina*, are heard in arrangements in five parts by Haussmann and Wigthorpe, and for lute duet by Dowland and others, with some of the enjoyably seamy ballads to which they were sung. The variety is enhanced by Gary Cooper's fine rendition of some keyboard settings. The Haussmann pieces are really good. They are played on renaissance violins with a commendably fresh sound, but I was disappointed with the style. *Daphne* has a strong beat on every tactus, while in a gorgeous pavan, Haussmann gives them lovely long phrases to which they respond with vibrato and too little sense of articu-

lation. It would be lovely on viols. The ballads are sometimes sung unaccompanied, a nice idea, but the singers are too nice - they should be sturdy rogues. And in *Daphne*, the solution to the admittedly impossible underlay of the last verse is a bit of an unintended joke. Singers and instrumentalists imbue these pieces with too polite a competence, but it is very enjoyable, and finishes with a rousing jam session on *Sellengers Round*. Robert Oliver

*Estro Venetiano* Yoshimichi Hamada, rec & cnt, Kaori Ishikawa gamba, Marie Nishiyama kbd & harp, Itsuko Noto organ 61' 29" Cookie & Bear C&B 00002

This is a second solo disc from Yoshimichi Hamada. *Il Chioristro Manieristico* featured mainly the Italian sonata and division repertoire of the cornett. In this one, the recorder predominates. The playing is neat and lively whilst avoiding the risk of becoming lightweight. The players deliver a strong idea of the shape and direction of the pieces. The sound is always active. Modulation of the breath and suave and vivace *affetti* are woven into the narrative in the most natural way - giving life to and never obscuring the music. The resulting freedom of the cornett sound is unbelievably seductive, especially in Rognoni's divisions on *Ancor che col partire*. The use of high pitch instruments is very persuasive - producing a direct, rather vocal legerity. Their first disc was at modern pitch, which makes for an interesting comparison. Contrasts include a second *Ancor...* by Rognoni - this time for viola bastarda, which works extremely well with organ and harp accompaniment, the harp adding the right outlines to the organ sound. Also, recorder divisions on *Lachrime pavaen* by Schop (a contemporary of van Eyck) provide a refreshing change of style. The accompaniment to the divisions often has doubled bass which itself occasionally divides. Whilst this to some purists is more continuo-like than madrigal-like, the result is musically better balanced and hints at the conversational aspect of madrigals. An excellent disc. Stephen Cassidy

## 17th CENTURY

*Corelli Opera I: Sonate a tre* (1681) Il Ruggiero, Emanuela Marcante dir 68' 39" Tactus TC 650305

Although this is markedly better than the previous Corelli set by Il Ruggiero, they still fall far short of the Purcell Quartet - the different rallentandi at the end of track 2 set the tone. This music looks so easy on the page, but the interplay between the fiddles is a minefield. That old favourite of Corelli's (the semiquaver rest followed by three rising or falling semiquavers) causes many a slip. I don't particularly like Corelli with cello, lute and keyboard: the bass is simply too heavy. As part of a complete Corelli set, this may be fine for reference purposes, but not, I fear, as a source of pure unmitigated pleasure. BC

de Visée *Suites de danses* Pascal Monteilhet theorbo 57' 51" Virgin Veritas VM 5 61541 2 (rec 1992) ££ Suites in a, b, c, D & e

This is a re-release of a 1992 recording, which will be welcomed by those who missed it first time around. There are plenty of recordings of this repertory available, but to my mind this is the finest; Monteilhet's deep familiarity with the style is evident from the first notes, and his technique is more than equal to the music's demands. Particularly striking is his fluid and copious ornamentation, and wonderful feeling for line. The theorbo's sound is not the finest around, as if it is simply too small to string well in the required tuning with gut strings. In a charmingly honest note Monteilhet adds that he has sought to make the best of the stringing problems arising from the instrument's low pitch by using old wound nylon strings. However this should not put you off; the performances are fine enough for this to be a minor consideration.

Lynda Sayce

Förster *Oratorios & Sonatas* La Capella Ducale, Musica Fiata, Roland Wilson 74' 24" cpo 999 584-2

The cover picture (Caravaggio's *David with the head of Goliath*) is among the most appropriate I've seen in a long time: the overall construction is dynamic and the detail finely captured - just like Förster's music. Yet another minor master of the mid-Seicento is brought to light in remarkably bright and stylish performances under Roland Wilson. No special pleading in the notes, no special effects in the execution - they simply let the fine counterpoint and the sumptuous harmony of a composer who worked in Copenhagen (twice), Rome, Warsaw, Venice (twice) and Danzig speak for itself. The three dialogues reflect the influence of Carissimi, while *Repleta est malis*, the grandiose *Domine Dominus noster* (which Gustav Düben twice included in his tablature score collection) and the sonatas are more Venetian in style. Enough music by Förster survives for a second CD, so I hope sales of this release encourage cpo to record it!

BC

Frescobaldi *Fioretti del Frescobaldi* Wilhelm Krumbach org 57' 16" Arte Nova 74321 59227-2 £ 11 Canzonas & a Toccata from British Library Add. 40080, all of dubious authenticity.

Whether or not these pieces are actually by Frescobaldi, they do demonstrate a possible way in which a composer like Frescobaldi might have constructed both free and formal compositions. The manuscript seems to be an early sketch, with the opening toccata sections represented only by their bass notes, perhaps indicating the importance of harmonic progression, and improvisation, in the Italian early baroque. The only known copy has been in the British Library since 1921 and has been published in facsimile and performing edition within

the past 12 years. Part of the evidence in favour is the similarity of the manuscript to those of Nicolò Borbone, Frescobaldi's friend and publisher. The 11 *Canzonas* and concluding *Toccata* are not unattractive pieces, but Wilhelm Krumbach seems to do his best to make them sound boring. Avoiding practically every one of the detailed instructions that Frescobaldi left for the performance of his music, he plays with a predictability of touch and articulation and a lack of fluidity that is far removed from the Italian *seconda pratica* style. Whether these pieces are by Frescobaldi or not, neither he nor his Italian contemporaries would have played them like this.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Jenkins Consort Music** The Apollo Consort (William Thorp *vln*, Imogen Seth-Smith, Margaret Richards *viols*, Laurence Cummings *org*) 70' 24" Somm SOMMCD 217

The combination of violin, two division violins and organ is a very satisfactory one, unique to English music, and to the time of Jenkins. The violins play an active role in turns, which can create a problem of balance, but not on this very enjoyable disc, where the balance is very good. It is well played, and William Thorpe's violin sound goes very well with violins. It is very clear and he has the right sense of the line, expressive without mannerism, strong but never shrill. The two violins are both good, their sounds enjoyably distinguishable, but uneven in their articulation, with one attacking the notes less cleanly than the other. The ensemble is otherwise excellent, and the music is just marvellous: lovely poignant melodies, instruments answering each other, zestful and exciting divisions. It is a most enjoyable disc, and we shall listen to it, several times, on our plane journey home to New Zealand tomorrow.

Robert Oliver

**Il Kapsberger della Musica** vol. 2. Ensemble Musiche Varie (Jennie Cassidy, Richard Wistreich *mS B*, Suzanne van Os, Joachim Klingenberg *lutes*, Martin Lubenow *crt*, *org*, Sebastian Knebel *kbd*, Stephen Cassidy *crt*, Jürgen Krauß *trmbn*) 67' 14" Musiche Varie CD HK.02

Musiche Varie will be familiar to many readers through their practical editions of much 17th-century Italian music, including that of Kapsberger. I confess to being somewhat nonplussed by this disc. On the plus side, it gives a broader selection of Kapsberger's music than is available on comparable discs, and it is good to hear some of his elaborate solo vocal items, and instrumental ensemble pieces. There are many recordings of his solo theorbo music, but few lutenists have the courage to attempt it on the gigantic Roman chitarroni such as are used here, so full marks to theorboists Suzanne van Os and Joachim Klingenberg for organological rigour. The former supplies some finely played solos with exemplary neatness, no mean feat on instruments of this size. Singers Jennie Cassidy and Richard Wistreich tackle the

huge ranges and daunting divisions Kapsberger demanded, and emerge with credit. My chief reservation is that everything is terribly careful and somewhat pedestrian as a result – more a musicological exercise than a performance. Unfortunately Kapsberger's style is such that he suffers from this treatment more than most would; personally I would have preferred a bit more oomph at the expense of the odd splat or grunt. Fascinating, but try before you buy.

Lynda Sayce

**Jean-Noël Marchand** *Cantiques spirituels de Jean Racine* Ensemble Almásis, Iakovos Pappas dir 47' 48" Arion ARN 68467

Just when you thought that even the darkest recesses of the French Baroque must by now have yielded up their treasures, out pop two composers every bit as talented as all the others, performed by an ensemble (with a Greek director) well-established in France though unfamiliar, I suspect, to most at this end of the tunnel. (The other composer is Madin: see p. 35.) This Marchand was no relation to organist Louis even though he too was an organist – of Notre Dame de Versailles. His musical style is very much in the Lully/Charpentier dramatic tradition, displaying a sensitivity to melodic and harmonic inflection and a keen ear for instrumental colour. As with a number of French groups, the ensemble work is often better than the solo singing, the lower voices in particular seeming rather diffuse in tone and sometimes imprecise. Nonetheless, this good music and much care has been taken with this performance, issued in celebration of the Racine (d.1699) tercentenary. David Hansell

**Monteverdi VIII Libro de' Madrigali: Madrigali amorosi** Il Ruggiero, Emanuela Marcante dir Tactus TC 561306 78' 30"

A frustrating disc. It would be nice to be able to recommend it, as it contains all of the *Madrigali amorosi* except for the two that were reprinted in Book IX, with some of the most beautiful music any singer can be asked to perform. The voices are rather hard-edged, right perhaps for church music, but this needs something more delicate (Monteverdi distinguished between the church and chamber voice), and there are several flat passages. So often here the composer's raw presentation of almost pure emotion failed to move me. Had this been a resuscitation of obscure repertoire, one could have made allowances and enjoyed what is good – and there are many excellent features; but Monteverdi's music needs the very best and purest voices. CB

**Monteverdi Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda et madrigaux de la Gerusalemme Liberata** Marinella Pennicchi, Giovanni Caccamo, Furio Zanesi STB, Ensemble Elyma, Gabriel Garrido dir 69' 30" + 75' 03" K.617 K617095/2 2 CDs in box  
Also includes music by Bernardi, Cifra, D'India, Eredi, Mazzocchi & Marini. The second disc *Paysages musicaux de Gabriel Garrido* is compiled

from previous recordings, with Latin American church music and villancicos, etc (75' 05")

A welcome relief after the previous disc. I haven't come across Gabriel Garrido before, which is my loss. An Argentinian, like the singer of the disc reviewed below, he studied at Basel and is associated with early music in Palermo; this CD derives from a programme there in July 1997. There are many rival versions of the *Combattimento*, but this is one of the best: very Italian, more controlled but less refined than Alessandrini's. It is followed by a variety of other settings of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, providing a snapshot of secular musical styles of the period. I was particularly delighted to find that the last piece was Marini's *La bella Erminia* (the a6 setting, not the monody, as the note-writer thinks, though he quotes a date relevant to neither); its tune has stuck in my head since I copied it out in 1973, and now I've heard it again I can't get rid of it. Here it is slightly underplayed. The bonus disc is fascinating, though the music is not easy to identify since composers' names are not given. One stunning performance is a *Lauda Jerusalem* by Bonaventura Rubino: 93 statements of the Bergamask looks excessive on paper, but it sounds exciting and witty. There's also a marvellous anonymous *Salve Regina*: again, a fine performance, despite being a bit slow. A black mark for adding violins running around in the Prologue to Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. But this is well worth investigating; I'd love to hear the recordings from which the excerpts were taken. CB

*The listing in Gramophone gives the other composers as Araujo, Zipoli and anon.*

**Monteverdi: Pianto della Madonna: motetti a voce sola** Maria Cristina Kiehr S, Concerto soave, Jean-Marc Aymes dir 62' 47" Harmonia Mundi HMC 901680

*Confitebor* (1650), *Currite populi, Ecce sacrum paratum, Exulta filia Sion, Jubilet in dialogo, Laudate Dominum* (1640), *O quam pulchra es, Pianto della Madonna, Salve O Regina* (1624), *Venite videte + Antegnati Ricercar X toni; Marini Sinfonie III & VI toni* (1655); *Merulo Toccate con minute*

The opening string sinfonia of *Confitebor* is enough to raise expectations of a recording that is something special. It took me several bars to adjust to the singer's tone, but it soon felt perfect for the music. If you like Monteverdi's solo music as much as I do, this is an essential purchase, and even outshines the Alan Curtis discs of the duets. Beautiful singing from a performer who thoroughly understands the music and sings with it – with none of those inappropriate gestures which can draw attention from those so carefully notated! (But I don't believe in *Jubilet* as an echo piece: something went wrong with the 1640 printing.) The image I had was of a domestic, not an ecclesiastical performance, in which the secular-style accompaniment worked well. The high-point is the *Pianto*, accompanied just with lute, that was performed in a thoroughly dramatic way with dynamic contrast, rhythmic variety and pacing, yet avoided the excess of most

operatic singing. I was occasionally worried that the singer did not tune every note to the accompaniment, but not enough to prevent me from giving it this disc the strongest possible recommendation. CB

**Sances Arie & Duetti** Le nuove Musiche (Mona Spägle, Nele Groß SS, Friederike Heumann vdg & lirone, Alexander Weimann kbd) 75' 28"

Stradivarius STR 33491

Bertoli *Sonata 1* (1645); Frescobaldi *Partite cento...* Gregori *Mai non disciolgasi*; Rognoni/Rore *Ancor che col partire*; Sances *Che sperasti ò mio cor, Chi sa amar? Lagrimosa beltà, Mi fai peccato, Perché Vecchia gli dissi, Presso l'onde tranquille, Si fera si ch'il pianto, Traditarella che credi*; Storace Ciaconna

Congratulations to Le Nuove Musiche for recording these delightful finds: 9 pieces by Sances (c.1600-1679), a Roman who worked in Padua and then in Vienna, at the Hapsburg Court. The ambitious writer of the programme notes attempts to convince us that Sances was the protagonist in the invention of the cantata, the development of Venetian opera and the great European expansion of Italian music; somehow I think this is rather far-fetched, but his music is nonetheless charming, though fairly predictable. The CD opens rather alarmingly with a highly rhythmic duet which tumbles along at top speed, led by a boomy pizzicato from the bass viol, and the words totally garbled by the two sopranos. This is followed by a re-write of Monteverdi's *Zefiro torna*, transformed by Sances into *Lagrimosa beltà*, and taken at a dirge-like speed. This ciaccona ground is a theme running through the CD: in all we have two vocal versions (that by Annibale Gregori far the most interesting) and one for keyboard solo. Things do improve: No. 3 has a ravishing lirone accompaniment, and No. 4 is an opportunity for some lovely sustained singing. The recording closes with Rognoni's viola *bastarda* divisions on *Ancor che col partire*, the tune being sung mournfully by one tired soprano. The voices are very sweet, good for petulant nymphs but not really cut out for tragedy. The organ (1997 - the year this was recorded) intrudes somewhat in the vocal pieces, and the player (Alexander Weimann) loses confidence and rhythmic precision in his solos.

Selene Mills

**Scheidemann Works for Organ, Vol. 2** Karin Nelson (Brombaugh organ, Haga Church, Gothenburg) 75' 51" Naxos 8.554203 £

I had the privilege of giving a recital of Scheidemann on this organ about three years ago at the end of the Gothenburg Organ Academy. It is an uncompromising reconstruction of a mid-17th century North German organ, complete with short octave and  $\frac{1}{4}$ -comma meantone tuning. With 23 stops over two manuals it is not large by North German standards, but it speaks with authority and considerable power, when needed, into a companionable acoustic. In comparison with Vol I of this imaginative Naxos series (recorded at Alkmaar), this organ is ideal for exploring

the documented 'sweetness' of Scheidemann's style. Karin Nelson (the organist of the Haga Church) plays in a style totally sympathetic both to the organ and the music. She lets Scheidemann speak directly to the listener, playing with commendable restraint and superb style. She is assisted in this by the beautifully musical winding of the organ, which adds its own touches of colour, as does the meantone tuning. Scheidemann was a pupil of Sweelinck, his career culminating on the huge four manual organ in Hamburg's Catharinienkirche. Most of his music was unknown until the 1950s and the unveiling of the Clausthal-Zellerfeld documents, and his importance in the development of North German organ music is now recognised, for example in his introduction of the style of ornamented treble chorale melody with manual and pedal accompaniment that culminated with Bach. Buy. In fact, at only £5, buy lots of them and give them away.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Christoph Strauss Missa Maria concertata a9** (1631); *Motetten* (1613) Concerto Palatino, Bruce Dickey & Charles Toet dir 76' 00" Harmonia Mundi HMC 901680

This is another of the Harmonia Mundi discs that I missed in July and am writing about on a single hearing. A whole disc of unknown music is rare, so I would have liked to have been able to return to it. But my initial impressions of the music itself were extremely favourable, as indeed (and predictably) of the performances. Listening to it between sessions with voices, sackbuts and cornets, I wished I had the music to try out at once. Strauss became director of the Habsburg court music in 1617; but when Ferdinand II succeeded Matthias in 1619, he fell into disfavour and from 1626 until his death in 1631 was Kapellmeister at St Stephen's cathedral in Vienna. The anthology contains one of the 16 large-scale masses in his 1631 publication and 11 of the 31 motets issued much earlier in his life. It might seem odd for a disc of church music to be credited to an instrumental ensemble, but the motets are in the Gabrieli tradition of ensembles of sackbuts and cornets with solo voices. Voices and instruments match perfectly, and this is another fine disc, all the better for bringing unknown music to life.

CB

**Uccellini Sonatas** Romanesca (Andrew Manze vln, Nigel North archlute, theorbo, guitar, John Toll org, hpsc) 65' 13" Harmonia Mundi HMU 907196

Op. 4 Sonatas 2, 5, *Corrente* 4, 9, 20, *Aria* 3, 9; Op. 5 Sonatas 3, 4, 12; Op. 7, *Sonata* 1, 3, 11; Op. 9 *Sonata* 1

Andrew Manze's fine booklet note draws attention to the incongruity of a picture of a rhinoceros rather than a dainty fine bird on the cover, but doesn't explain it. It is certainly not an emblem of monstrous clumsiness in the playing, which is as imaginative, witty, bold and poised as ever. Violin music of this period does not appeal to everyone: there is perhaps too much gesture and not enough continuity. But those who share my taste will need no

encouragement to buy what, I gather, is likely to be Romanesca's last recording, now that Nigel North has gone off to join Paul Hillier, Paul Elliott and Stanley Ritchie (to name just EM performers) at Bloomington. While I would not want to pass over the skills of the violinist, it is the continuo I particularly want to mention: what they play (and don't play) sounds just right, especially since I played this after the Maria Cristina Kiehr Monteverdi disc, where the continuo is at times a bit too clever. CB

**Bewitching Bracegirdle Act II** Evelyn Tubb S, Anthony Rooley lute 40' 18" Serendipity CTE 003

The second disc in the series, the first of which I reviewed last December (EMR 46 p. 22) generates much the same response: superbly theatrical singing, in a delightfully intimate style. It is brief: 40 minutes of music, plus a few short readings, charmingly done. This time the notes at least state that the readings are 'taken almost entirely from contemporary sources', perhaps in response to my description of them in my last review as being possibly pastiche. All but two of the arias are by Eccles, with four arias from *Semele*, smaller in scale than Handel's settings of Congreve's text, but very beautiful. There is an amusing ballad about the Italian opera, which takes the mickey out of the fashion, and Evelyn Tubb's semiquaver technique is sacrificed a little in the burlesque, but not her ringing top C. Her unmeasured embellishments are brilliant, original and apt. She is a potent combination of singer and actress, bewitching indeed. Robert Oliver

**Brass & Dance: Brass Music from the Early Baroque** Edward Tarr Brass Ensemble 60' 44" Christophorus CHR 4002 ££ rec. 1989 Dances by Adson, Hammerschmidt, Holborne, Pezel, Phalese, Susato; Aguilera de Heredia *Ensalada*; Locke *Five-Part Things for Cornetts*

There is a strange divergence of attitude between Tarr the musicologist and the Tarr who can accept the horn as making a sound suitable for any of this music and who, although well aware of the minimal overlap between cornett and trumpet repertoires, is happy to use the trumpet for music that it could never possibly have played. The Locke in particular suffers from the absence of the slightly vulnerable sound of the cornett. But if you are happy with the modernisation, you may well find the performances here enjoyable; they are stylishly done. CB

**D Buxtehude and his time** Harald Vogel (1984 dual-temperament Fisk organ, Stanford University, USA) 52' 24" Organa ORA 3208

Bach BWV 542, 614; Brähms *Praeludium in e*; Buxtehude *BuxWV 137, 155, 183, 196, 203, 219*; Scheidemann *Magnificat VIII Toni*

One of the contributions of the USA to the organ world has been the large number of historically informed new organs, including a number of copies of the finest European instruments. The 1984 Charles Fisk organ at Stanford is one such - a huge

**Bach Complete Cantatas Vol. 8** Dorothea Röschmann, Bogna Bartosz, Elisabeth von Magnus, Jörg Dürrmüller, Klaus Mertens SAATB, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir, Ton Koopman 190' 47" (3 CDs in box) Erato 34984-25488-2

Cantatas 40, 46, 60, 64, 65, 77, 81, 83, 89, 90, 109, 167

Vol. 8 presents 12 cantatas from Bach's first Leipzig cycle. These cover the period from June 1723 to February 1724 (Feast of the Purification) although not everything from this timespan appears in this volume and the cantatas are not in chronological order on the discs. Several employ some excellent brass, particularly horns, and the big orchestral effects are among the most successful in the series so far. Particularly notable is the opening of the Purification cantata no. 83 where there is great rhythmic zest, kaleidoscopic changes of colour and an excellent violin obbligato from Margaret Faultless (who also excels in the obbligato in Cantata 64).

Many of the more delicate textures are also beautifully presented: e.g. the alto aria from Cantata 46 for recorders and high bassetts for oboes da caccia. The solo singers are all generally good, sometimes excellent: e.g. Bogna Bartosz's recitative and aria in Cantata 89; Klaus Mertens's comforting arioso *Selig sind die Toten* in Cantata 60; Jörg Dürrmüller's tenor divisions in the storm scene in Cantata 81. There are not many exposed pieces for chorus but its performance in the openings of Cantatas 40 and 65 seems considerably more lively than in some earlier volumes. The opening chorus of Cantata 109 is performed by soloists alone (an interesting move for Ton Koopman, given his recent remarks on this sort of scoring), and very fine it sounds too.

Only occasionally does the recording seem to show signs of haste or laxity: one magnificent recorder wrong note gets through near the beginning of the tenor aria of Cantata 65; the famous opening of Cantata 60 *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort* is a little fast and loses intensity; the characters in the duet *Mein letztes Lager*, from the same cantata, could be more developed and differentiated; and the scrumptious aria opening Cantata 89 (presented here in both versions with and without horn) seems to lack the necessary gait.

Those who buy these volumes in order to hear Koopman's extravagant continuo playing will not be disappointed although here the recording balance is slightly more friendly towards those who find this nauseating. One very welcome development in the playing seems to be that the strings are taking more initiative in shaping the music rather than allowing themselves to burn while their conductor fiddles, as it were; there is even a sense of competition between the forces, as if Koopman goads them into action with his provocative accompaniments. In the final chorale of Cantata 109, the performance, complete with loud harpsichord and a shamelessly strumming lute, comes close to a vigorous Bachian jam-session where spontaneity does not compromise the overall shape, direction and detail.

John Butt

**Bach Mass in B minor** Judith Nelson, Julianne Baird, Jeffrey Dooley, Drew Minter, Frank Hoffmeister, Edmund Brownless, Jan Opalach, Andrew Walker, SSAATTBB, The Bach Ensemble, Joshua Rifkin 106' 25" 2CDs Nonesuch Ultima 7559-79563-2 ££ rec 1981-2

Whether you like the performance or not, this fully deserves reissue as a recording of major importance which aurally threw down the gauntlet for a major controversy in Bach performance: was concerted church music sung by a 'choir' in the modern sense or by soloists? The controversy died for a bit, but is topical again, especially with the spate of recordings building up to the anniversary next year. But this reissue has ignored its historical value by suppressing the documentation: Rifkin's original notes are replaced by an innocuous page of introduction, with no mention of performance practice. So if you have the LP, keep it. But even if as a musicological document this is defective, it is still well worth buying, and as a performance it needs no excuse. Not all individual aspects are ideal, but it is refreshing to hear the music as music, not smothered in the weight of its reputation. CB

**Bach Lutheran Mass Vol. 1 (BWV 235 in g & 234 in A)** Susan Gritton, Robin Blaze, Mark Padmore, Peter Harvey SATB, The Purcell Quartet 59' 06"

Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0642

Bach's four 'Lutheran' Masses have had a bad press for many years, mainly because of the old prejudice against recycling older music (although Bach's extensive use of parody in the Christmas Oratorio and, particularly, in the B Minor Mass seems hardly to have stigmatised these pieces). But now, in a more ecological age, perhaps the time of the shorter masses (comprising only Kyrie and Gloria, but making substantial pieces of some half-an-hour's duration) has come. Certainly, Bach seems to have worked on making the music fit in the new context and has often refined various details in the texture.

The Purcell quartet's first volume of Masses (G Minor, BWV 235 and A Major, BWV 234) is very welcome. The quartet is fleshed out with viola, violone and the appropriate woodwind and the vocal parts are supplied by Susan Gritton, Robin Blaze, Mark Padmore and Peter Harvey. In other words, the performance uses the smallest possible forces (smaller, incidentally than those suggested by Joshua Rifkin's one-to-a-part theory, in which the violins are normally doubled). If this sometimes leads to a little Anglican preciousness (quite the opposite of Harnoncourt's rough and ready boys' choirs, for instance) the clarity of texture is superlative, making this an excellent introduction to these pieces. All the vocalists can shape their lines musically but also blend well together (Robin Blaze perhaps presents the most committed performance). Apart from a little thinness in the violin tone in the 'storm' music for the A Major Gloria (entirely the result of the single-string

scoring) all the instrumental playing is vivid, intelligent and sensitive. John Butt

**J S Bach Organ Works** Ewald Kooiman.

**Vol 1 Toccatas** BWV 538, 540, 564-6 (1735 Müller organ, S Bakkerkerk, Haarlem) 71' 09" Coronata COR1213

**Vol 2 Trio Sonatas and Fantasias**

BWV 525-7, 537, 562, 570, Anh 205 (1712/22 Kamp/Schnitger organ, Mariakerk, Meppel). 61' 09" Coronata COR1313

**Vol 11 Klavierübung III (2)**

BWV672-5, 677, 679, 681, 683, 685, 687, 689; Duets BWV802/4; Canon variations BWV769a; Präludium und Fuge BWV544. 65' 54" Coronata COR2213

Kooiman is one of a number of influential scholar/teacher/players from the Netherlands, known for his searching out of the more obscure bits of organ repertoire as editor of the *Incognita Organo* series. His playing style is distinctive, and I am afraid that I find it less easy to listen to now than when I first heard him many years ago. Then we were still in the grip of the typewriter players, accurate to a fault, but with little musical expression. Kooiman oozes musical expression but can be inaccurate to a fault. Either the editing is poor or the poor editor understandably gave up altogether – only 34 seconds into Vol 2 we have a bass note that is missing altogether. Kooiman does wild things with the rhythm and pulse, sometimes jerkily delaying or pushing ahead on individual notes. So is this the work of a musical genius, giving us new insights into the expression inherent in Bach's music, or just quirky playing? I still incline towards the former, but accept that others will differ. Kooiman was one of the first I heard who gave the Trio Sonatas a real instrumental feel for each line, and playing like that was an important influence on my own playing. But as a new generation has come along, increasingly willing to bring musical expression into their organ playing, the style of their teachers can begin to sound dated. That said, there is much that is admirable in these CDs and much to learn. Kooiman plays from the heart, and I can forgive a lot for that. The programmes are sensibly put together, the theme of each CD still allowing for variety of texture and imaginative registrations. First released in the early 1990s, they are still well worth a listen. Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Bach Complete Organ Music 7-8: Third Part of the Clavier Übung** David Sanger on organ of Garnisons Church, Copenhagen (Lund, 1995) 2 discs: 67' 37" & 74' 40"

Meridian CDE 84377 & 84378

2 discs issued separately

Vol. 7: BWV 552(i), 669-680 + 537, 588 & 595

Vol. 8: BWV 681-689, 802-5, 552(ii) + 544 & 563

This is the first of David Sanger's Bach CDs we have reviewed. His earlier ones have used modern English organs, but this uses an impressive-sounding Danish instrument built in the style of Schnitger (and rather closer to the Bach organ than

Bromley Parish Church). Bach inconveniently wrote slightly too much to fit on a single CD and Sanger has hit on the nice idea on opening and closing the *Clavier Übung* pieces (themselves framed by the Prelude and Fugue in E $\flat$  by other pieces, rather in the fashion of pre- and post-service music – a neat combination of Anglican and Lutheran musical traditions. Sanger's playing is stylish and musically enlightened, with the degree of restraint that is often heard in teacher-performers. His registrations are pleasant rather than dramatic, using fewer reeds than Bach might have done on an organ like this. It is worth comparing the two *Clavier Übung* recordings reviewed this month. Unlike Johannsen, Sanger quite correctly uses the pedal 2' *Cornet* in its normal North German role (in the double-pedal, 6-part *Aus tiefer Not BWV686*) to sound the chorale in both the bass and treble registers, but eschews the expected reeds and mutations in the tortured lines of *Vater unser* (BWV682). Huw Morgan's booklet notes are intelligent and readable and present David Humphreys' credible explanation for the inclusion of the Duets. An entirely different argument (but reaching the same conclusion) is presented in the Johannsen CD notes. Well worth a listen. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

*Bach Clavier Übung, Dritter Theil* Kay Johannsen (Erasmus Biefeldt organ, 1736, St. Wilhadi, Stade) 100' 44" (2 CDs in box) Hänssler (Bach Edition 101) CD 92-101

I was impressed with Johannsen's last two CDs in this series, and remain so with this CD. Unlike the David Sanger *Clavier Übung*, there are no additional pieces, so you only get 100 minutes for your money. The organ was restored to its 1736 state in 1990 after some dire treatment, and offers an interesting comparison to its more famous and older neighbour in St Cosmae. I played both earlier this year, and was less impressed with the Wilhadi organ than I thought I would be – the chorus sounded slightly shrill and unhomogenous to my ears, and the opening Prelude on this CD rather supports my feelings. But Johannsen makes full use of the organ's resources, including the very Bachian combination of a *Viola da Gamba* and *Gedact in Christ, unser Herr* (BWV685). His playing is strong, but stylistically appropriate and takes account of the hugely complex theological interpretations of the most spiritual of Bach's creations. His interpretation of the angular opening of *Jesus Christus, unser Heiland* (BWV688) portrays the wrath of God separated from mankind while the counter-subject interweaves as Christ intervenes on man's behalf. The booklet expounds the number symbolism that may be present and makes interesting reading.

*Andrew Benson-Wilson*

*Bach Scales from Weimar* Martin Lücker (organ of Katharinenkirche Frankfurt a.M.) Hänssler (Bach Edition 91) CD 92-091 58' 48" BWV 553-560, 564, 579

After my critical review of Martin Lücker's playing in July's *EMR*, I unwrapped this

CD with some trepidation. I am glad to say it is not as bad as his last effort, but do listen before you buy. If you learnt the organ in your youth, the last thing you may want to hear are the so-called *Eight Little Preludes and Fugues*. Almost certainly not by Bach (and now demoted from the Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis) they are increasingly felt to be the work of his favourite pupil, Krebs. And, to be honest, they are not bad pieces, although I wonder if Martin Lücker takes them rather more seriously than their quasi-galant style warrants. There are some curious choices of registration and pulse, including an almost inaudible and painfully slow Fugue in E minor, and the eclectic organ is not as convincing as an interpretation medium for Bach than many modern organs might be. CD notes are detailed and sensible, and list registrations. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

*Bach Goldberg Variations* Kenneth Gilbert 66' 46" rec. 1986  
*Harmonia Mundi Musique d'abord* HMA 1901240 ££

Much of Kenneth Gilbert's disciplined but at times brilliant and invariably stylish playing continues to appeal through re-issue and here a special feature to note is the contrast between a semi-pianistic *legato* and many shorter note-lengths originally perhaps deriving from pianistic traditions – but here, always so gracefully executed. A good complete account, but lacking all repeats. *Stephen Daw*

*Bach Works for Lute-Harpsichord* Robert Hill Hänssler (Bach Edition 109) CD 92-109 71' 43" BWV 883, 907-8, 921/1121, 996-9

Robert Hill, the American musician and scholar based in Freiburg, has served the Hänssler *bachacademie* series well already, with his Art of Fugue discs as well as those upon which he accompanies Dmitry Sitkovetsky. To display what was formerly regarded as Bach's music for hand-plucked lute all on the keyboard instrument which Bach is known to have acquired and played from the late 1730s is quite a bold idea. The instrument can indeed be so sensitively played that it can sound almost identical with a lute, or it can simply sound like a harpsichord of unusual tone; Professor Hill seems mainly to opt for a compromise between these two, with little serious loss to all of this music, some of which would be very tricky indeed for even the most expert lutenist to accommodate with orthodox baroque tunings. *Stephen Daw*

*Bach Sonaten* BWV 1027-1029 & 1038 Ekkehard Weber *gamba*, Robert Hill *Lautenwerk* 53' 30"  
Ars Musici AM 1231-2

The idea of playing the orthodox three *gamba* sonatas with an active continuo played on the lute-harpsichord has logical support from the story of Sebastian's life: he had such a keyed instrument made in the late 1730s, soon after which the only autograph (of 1027) was written, and he is

reported to have taught Carl Friedrich Abel – the son of Bach's Köthen gambist who was later to collaborate with Johann Christian Bach in London. Another imaginative idea was to incorporate the trio BWV1038, using the lute timbre for the top part, the gamba for the tenor and the bass of the *Lautenwerk* for the bass. All goes well musically and the interesting commentary written by Peter Wollny of the Leipzig Bach-Archiv added considerably to my enjoyment. *Stephen Daw*

*A. M. Bononcini La Decollazione di S. Giovanni Battista* (1709) Maurizia Barazzoni, Daniela Piccini, Fernanda Piccini, Micael Van Goethem, Virgilio Bianconi (SSAcTB), Orchestra dell'Opera Barocca di Guastalla, Sandro Volta dir 64' 09"  
Tactus TC 675201

What a mixed bag this is! The playing is largely quite stylish, though the harpsichordist lacks imagination, except in one aria with a particularly horrid chromatic anticipation; but the singing is mostly unspeakable. Approximate rhythms and tuning abound – I take my hat off to the players for holding various arias together. The notes mention nothing of the way the score is savaged, although there is enough spare time on the disc to record the complete work. There is a rather annoying technical quirk, too – the tracking takes the last second or so of the previous movement over. As far as the music concerned, it's very nice: there are several potentially beautiful arias, including one for bass with two obbligato cellos and strings, and the choruses are tautly worked and quite powerfully. Sadly, this recording does not do Bononcini justice. *BC*

*The booklet has the text only in Italian; like many other Italian oratorios recorded of late, the score is available in the Garland facsimile series.* *CB*

*G. B. Bononcini Cantate Italiane* Cristina Miatello S Gloria Banditelli A, various insts. Tactus TC 672701 58' 13"  
*Ah non avesse, Care luci del mio bene, Che tirannia di stelle, Cieco Nume tiranno spietato, Il Lamento d'Olimpia, Vidi in cimento*

This is worth having for the first item alone: *Il Lamento d'Olimpia*, sung by Gloria Banditelli, the creamiest voice I have heard for ages. The piece begins with a cheerful, rich-textured and low-lying *sinfonia*, but once the voice begins there is no doubt about the tragic nature of the piece. Banditelli pitches her numerous leaps perfectly, and her *legato* singing is a wonder. The ensemble of the recitatives is amazing: the instruments sing every word, so that the phrasing is entirely unanimous and expressive. Soprano Cristina Miatello sings four of the six tracks. She too has an excellent voice for this repertoire, but lacks the thrill and drama of the alto, and altogether gives a less convincing performance. There is some fine cello playing from Andrea Fossà. I suppose the pieces were published in this order, but the programming would have been improved by mixing the soprano and alto pieces, rather than giving away the best at the

beginning. The booklet has texts but no translations or photos, and only very brief notes (in Italian, English and French).

*Selene Mills*

**Campra Motets** Philippa Hyde, Rodrigo del Pozo, Peter Harvey STB, Canzona, Theresa Caudle *dir* 75' 35"  
Etcetera KTC 1201

At a first complete hearing this recital may come across as rather bland. In fact, a more piecemeal audition will reveal that there is almost an excess of detail: a lot of often unfamiliar words, a lot of phrases and a lot of good singing, not to mention music which, if not absolutely out of the top drawer, is sufficiently inventive to have attracted large crowds to the first performances in Notre Dame. Among the singers Peter Harvey is for me the star, really getting stuck into the eventful setting of Psalm 148, complete with its dragons and abysses. By comparison, his companions are a little cautious, though always in control. The instrumental ensemble provides excellent support, though the violins are a little distant in the aural spectrum. But this is only a very minor blot on an interesting and enjoyable release. *David Hansell*

**Johann Ernst Eberlin Neun Toccate und Fugen** Karl Maureen (1754 Balthasar Freiwiß organ, Klosterkirche Irsee) 67' 43"  
Coronata COR 1220

This is the third CD of the complete Toccatas of Eberlin in the past few years and is the best of the lot. My view of Eberlin as a composer hasn't changed (see *EMR* 39 p. 17 & 42 p. 23) – his Fugue VI (track 14) must surely be one of the most boring ever written. But by careful choice of registrations and sensitive playing, Karl Maureen has at least allowed Eberlin's few moments of charm to become apparent. The organ is not known to me, but sounds a fine example of the wedding-cake baroque abbey organs that sprang to life in the mid 1700s, with their distinctively reedy-sounded flue choruses and wide palette of 8' and 4' colour stops – just the thing for the unfortunate Herr Eberlin. The sleeve is only in German, but has specifications and registrations for organ buffs.

*Andrew Benson-Wilson*

**Falckenhagen Sonatas for solo lute, op. 1**  
John Schneiderman 74' 28"  
Titanic Ti-237

It is good to see that the later lute repertory is finally receiving attention; until very recently the public could have been forgiven for thinking that the lute died with Weiss. This collection of sonatas, published in 1740, was dedicated to Sophia Wilhelmine of Bayreuth, (elder sister of Frederick the Great of Prussia), a player of the lute and noted patroness of lutenists. These are attractive works in the galant style, employing all of the musical devices of the day, whilst at the same time avoiding great technical demands. However, there is plenty of scope for an accom-

lished player to demonstrate his artistry. Schneiderman's readings tend towards the reflective rather than the dramatic, and their poignancy repays repeated hearings. But he demonstrates a considerable turn of speed in some of the Vivace movements, and plays with exemplary clarity throughout. I found the tone of the lute somewhat curious; it sounds almost as though it has been shorn of its octaved basses, which gives a rather boxy bass sound, no doubt a quirk of the recording arrangement. But this is a small quibble on an otherwise very attractive disc. I hope Mr. Schneiderman will go on to record Falckenhagen's Op.2

*Linda Sayce*

**Handel Julius Caesar** Janet Baker, etc. English National Opera, Charles Mackerras 183' 56"  
Chandos CHAN 3019(3) *see p. 20*

**Handel Arias and Instrumental Music from Alcina, Giulio Cesare & Rinaldo** Graham Pushee *cT*, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Paul Dyer *dir* 65' 35"  
ABC Classics 446 272 *see p. 18*

**Kuhnau, Zelenka, J. S. Bach Magnificat** Miah Persson, Yokari Nonoshita, Akira Tachikawa, Gerd Türk, Chiyuki Urano SScTTB, Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki 71' 31"  
**BIS CS-1011**  
Bach in D BWV 243, Kuhnau in C, Zelenka in C, ZWV 107 & in D, ZWV 108

It's always difficult to decide how to fill out a CD of Bach's Magnificat: very few works can stand direct comparison, so Suzuki's choice is inspired. Personally, I would have loved the chance to hear the setting Graupner submitted in 1722 in support of his application for the Thomas-kantor position, and a Dresden setting by J. F. Fasch which (apart from the trumpets) is quite similar to Bach's. Whatever the chosen repertoire, the Bach Collegium Japan is never going to disappoint: their somewhat understated, rather lightweight Bach is revelatory – I've never heard the oboe trills in the last movement before, for example, and the use of harpsichord continuo means that the pedal notes of the Gloria have no sustained harmony and leave the voices to fill the texture alone. The Kuhnau vindicates Robert King's convictions a few months ago that his music has been neglected for too long. The two Zelenka Magnificats are briefer (presumably because they formed part of the Dresden Vespers services which Heinichen timed), but no less impressive. The D major is given in the version with trumpets. The solo singing is excellent, with a new name among the stars, Swedish soprano Miah Persson, of whom I hope we'll hear more. Maybe BIS can be persuaded to record Bach's original E flat version along with the two other Magnificats I have suggested. *BC*

**Madin Masses & Motets** Ensemble Almasis, Iakovos Pappas *dir* 63' 35"  
Arion ARN 68432  
Missa Dico ego opera mea regi, Missa brevis Velociter currit sermo eius; motets

The sacred music of Madin was researched to honour his tercentenary (b.1698) though has only now reached us. I found this a real revelation despite the over-enthusiasm of the note, which almost reads like special pleading! The melodic lines are expressive, the harmony rich, the counterpoint fluent and the singing very good indeed. The masses are one each in *longa* and *brevis* styles, though neither feature instruments beyond the continuo. A pair of violins flavour three of the six *petits motets* and these, too, are delightful. A definite 'must hear!' (Listening hint – I enjoyed the music even more when the motets were programmed among the mass movements, a DIY concert spirituel, in fact.) *David Hansell*

**Colin's Kisses: The Music of James Oswald** Catherine Bott, Iain Paton ST, Concerto Caledonia, David McGuinness *dir* 66' 49"  
Linn CKD 101

Oswald is not one of the greatest names even in Scottish music. Most of his output consists of short songs or instrumental pieces, often with a strong Scottish flavour. There is some delightful singing – not in Scots: Oswald lived in London from 1741 and most of his music was published there. 'Charming' is probably the word that fits the songs best: the high-minded may find them trivial, the broad-minded will be delighted. The disc includes 10 of the 12 songs in the series *Colin's Kisses* (1742) with rather conventional words by Robert Dodsley, the leading publisher and bookseller in London at the time. The most substantial work is the cantata *The Dustcart*, often mentioned but rarely heard: Oswald's style doesn't seem to me to be incongruously high enough to make it very funny, but others disagree. No, King's Music doesn't publish any Oswald, despite the score in the director's photo. *CB*

**Porpora Il Gedeone** (1737) Kai Wessel, Ulf Bästlein, Linda Perillo, Henning Voss, Jörg Waschinski, Johannes Chum *cTBSCTST*, Vokalensemble Nova, Wiener Akademie, Martin Haselböck *dir* 111' 41" (2 CDs in box) cpo 999 615-2

This two-part oratorio was too grandiose for its original purpose – trying to secure a position at the Viennese court. Porpora failed to recognise the conservative nature of Habsburg sacred music, and his arias were considered too operatic and too showy. If he made some allowances by writing a monumental chorus with counterpoint to close the first part (it is cut down in this performance), still there was too much self-expression and not enough pious reflection. History aside, *Il Gedeone* is a very fine piece, confirming Porpora's reputation as a first-rate melodist (the two arias for the title character are among the most lyrical): it isn't surprising that he was head-hunted as a rival in London for Handel. The singing and playing on the recording are very good, although soprano Jörg Waschinski and countertenor Henning Voss cannot always quite get around the coloratura. There are

various delightful touches, like the gentle fading away of the first part's final chord. I hope this will re-kindle interest in Porpora's output. BC

Rameau *Castor & Pollux* (Highlights) Les Arts Florissants, William Christie 69' 32" Harmonia Mundi *Musique d'abord* HMA 1901 501 £ rec 1992

This disc is drawn from the 1992 complete recording, featuring amongst the soloists several who have now gone on to even greater things - Mesdemoiselles Gens, Piau and Daneman, for instance - alongside others who were already established in the repertoire. All acts of the opera are represented and each extract can be placed in context using the helpful synopsis. A new recording would probably be a little tidier with some orchestral and choral details but this is nonetheless a noble reading of Rameau's emotional epic, supported by full-scale booklet. Bravo HM.

David Hansell

Vinci *Il zite 'ngalera* (1722) Roberta Invernizzi, Emmanuela Galli, Maria Ercolano, Roberta Andalò, Daniela Del Monaco, Giuseppe De Vittorio, Rosario Totaro, Giuseppe Naviglio, Pietro Naviglio, Maria Collina SSSSATB BarBS, Cappella de' Turchini, Antonio Florio 133' 13" (2 CDs) Opus 111 OPS 30-212/213

I listened to this opera three times without once referring to the libretto - the music and the performance are so enthralling that I didn't feel the need. The singing (which ranges from 'straight' period opera singing of the very highest calibre to the silly voices routine of opera buffa) is carried off with amazing aplomb, and the instrumental playing (the string orchestra is augmented by oboes and trumpets) is stunning. I wish I'd been asked to review a video of the piece (preferably with subtitles), as wonderful as the recording is, I feel sure something is lost by it being a purely aural experience. This is, however, the most outstanding opera performance I've heard in a very long time - yet another brilliant release in opus 111's *Tesori di Napoli* series: the accompanying literature includes a list of forthcoming issues - to include four more operatic sets from this group. I can't wait! BC

Vivaldi *La Stravaganza*, op. 4. Vol. 1: nos 1-6 Andrew Watkinson vln, City of London Sinfonia, Nicholas Kraemer 51' 37" Naxos 8.553323 £

CDs like this are among the most difficult to review, not because of their quality, but because it seems patronising to pat modern players on the back for leaving their real personae at home for the day and producing something of such quality. Where the Italians involved in Naxos's complete Vivaldi series go for passion and real red-blooded (if not red-haired!) expression, Nicholas Kraemer has instilled these performances with typical enthusiasm and a sense of excitement. Unusually for a 'modern'

chamber orchestra, there is plucked as well as keyboard continuo. During solo passages, accompaniments drop to single strings (often recalling Simon Standage's Leclair concertos on Chandos). The allegros are never too fast, nor the largos too slow, and Andrew Watkinson, perhaps best known as first violin of the Endellion Quartet, ornaments away with the best period players. Overall, this is the best Naxos Vivaldi recording I've heard and is very heartily recommended. One curiosity: the French notes have transplanted the Swedish city of Lund to Switzerland. BC

BC knows the music well, since he typeset the edition, so King's Music has op. 4 complete in score & parts.

Vivaldi *Stabat mater, Nisi Dominus, Longe mala* Graham Pushee cT, Auroral Musicale, Lucinda Moon leader, John Liddy Artistic dir ABC Classics Antipodes 456 636 2 54' 55" see p. 18

*Baroque Arias* Vol. 2 Yoshikazu Mera cT, Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki 74' 11" BIS-CD-1029

Ahle *Magnificat* a7, Zwing die Saiten in Cithara; Bach BWV 63/2 & 5, 71/5, 106/3, 155/2, 161/4, 172/5, 182/5; Buxtehude 5 arias from *Membra Jesu nostri*; Handel *He shall feed his flock, O Death where is thy sting, If God be for us* (Messiah) see p. 18

## CLASSICAL

C. P. E. Bach *The Complete Keyboard Concertos* Vol. 8 Miklós Spányi tangent piano, Concerto Armonico 79' 59" BIS-CD-807 H440, 443, 444 (=Wq 30, 33, 34)

I had already heard an organ version of H444 on CD from Capriccio, but this is a harpsichord revision: both seem to come from Emanuel's Berlin years, and this account once more reminds us what a serious mistake musicians have made for a quarter of a millennium in not recognising the expressive mastery of this major composer. Spányi plays an unusually large 'tangent piano', which, in his hands, emerges and contrasts with the delicate point of the Budapest-based Concerto Armonico. This series, vol. 15 of Spányi's 'CPE Bach complete keyboard music edition', is setting new examples of excellence even as it introduces a whole new repertoire. Stephen Daw

Boccherini *Cello Concertos* Vol. 1 Tim Allen, Scottish Chamber Orch, Anthony Halstead Naxos 8.553571 £ 73' 51" Nos. 1-4, G477, 479-481 in C, D, G, C

Another of Naxos's complete editions gets under way with fine performances from soloist and orchestra alike of four cello concertos. Anyone familiar with Tim Hugh's Hofmann recordings will know that he is a stylish cellist, equally at home with simple cantabile lines or complex virtuoso writing: listen to the cadenzas in the first concerto for effortless high position work and double stopping (with virtually seamless changes of position).

The Scottish Chamber Orchestra accompany sympathetically (as is their wont), and this disc is a fine introduction to Boccherini. BC

Hagen *Sonate a Liuto solo* Robert Barto Symphonia SY 98164 67' 02"

It is somewhat unusual to find a whole disc of solo lute music by a composer born in 1720; in his informative note Barto describes Hagen's works as 'the last substantial contribution to the lute repertoire'. All survive in a single manuscript, and are true examples of the *empfindsam* style well known from the keyboard repertory. By turns startling and affecting, the six works recorded here are fascinating and required listening for anyone with the smallest interest in the lute. The performances of this challenging music are, as anyone familiar with Barto's Weiss discs will expect, exemplary, and the authoritative interpretations make arresting listening. The typical figurations and counterpoint of earlier generations of lutenists have given way to an intricate melodic line with bass, projected with virtuosic ornamentation and singing tone. The lute, a triple-headed 13-course made by Andrew Rutherford, sounds wonderful, and has been superbly captured by the recording engineer. A treat throughout. Lynda Sayce

Another disc of Hagen's lute music played by Robert Barto will be reviewed next month.

Haydn *Nelson Mass, Ave Regina* (H.XXIIb:3), *Missa brevis* in F (H.XXII:1) Susan Gritton, Pamela Helen Stephen, Mark Padmore, Stephen Varcoe SmSTB, Collegium Musicum 90, Richard Hickox 63' 15" Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0640

The orchestral playing is superb, and very clearly recorded; the choral singing is crisp, with clear words, although the occasional *heavy-num* ending spoils a few phrases. The soloists are good all-rounders, with a few particularly ravishing moments such as the opening of the *Et incarnatus est*. Overall, the speeds are nicely judged, although I can find no explanation for the strange changes in the *Credo*. Apart from this, everything is right with the performance, but personally I did not find it particularly inspiring, although the Nelson Mass is one of my favourites. The *Ave Regina* is a sublime little work, more 'religious' in flavour, and taken at a contemplative speed which gives Susan Gritton ample time to spread her wings with some really beautiful singing. The *Missa brevis* was unknown to me (though it will be very familiar after the Parley of Instruments' summer school in August), but has many charms at the lively tempi taken by Hickox. Selene Mills

Pichl *Symphonies* (Z16, 21-24) London Mozart Players, Matthias Bamert 68' 07" Chandos CHAN 9740

This latest release in the LMP's Contemporaries of Mozart series reveals another perfectly able and extremely tuneful

composer in Václav Pichl. The playing is what we expect of this excellent chamber orchestra under Bamert, and the only problem I had was that the music just did not rise above dinner party standard – ideal for having on in the background, but certainly not making any demands on the mind. It is, of course, players' music – the flute variations in Z22 are not so taxing that a decent amateur couldn't have coped in 18th-century Vienna – and certainly not anywhere near the sophistication of Wolfgang. Still, a pleasant enough soundtrack for a haunch of venison. BC

**Soler Concertos for two organs** Tini Mathot, Ton Koopman 60' 00" rec 1990  
**Fandango, Sonatas 12, 15, 49, 54, 56, 69, 76, 84, 90** Scott Ross hpscd 54' 50" rec 1988 Erato 3984-27005-2 ££ 2 CDs

This set comprise two completely independent discs, having only a leaflet with one page of notes in common. But if you don't have the original recordings, they are certainly worth getting. The two-organ concertos are delightful, mostly jolly pieces: at times I was reminded of the fairground rather than the church (I don't know about Spain, but the Dutch carousels we have encountered often have genuine instruments). I was slightly put off the keyboard disc by the opening 'Fandango'. It's a piece I first heard played by Rafael Puyana: not one of the most authentic of players, but he brought a panache to the piece that is missing here. But without such a comparison in my mind, I enjoyed the sonatas. CB

**Stepán Music for Fortepiano** Robert Hill fp 65' 32" Dabringhaus & Grimm MDG 620 0870-2 Capriccio 1-5, Sonatas 2, 5

This playing exhibits a wonderful skill and panache which makes the music sound rather better than it really is. Stepán had sunk into oblivion in his lifetime, and although his ideas do not in themselves contain the mark of a great composer, his improvisational style is unusual and bears hints of Haydn and Schubert. The capricci are free in form and Robert Hill's unerring sense of style enables him to unify the frequent tempo changes, with some exhilarating speeds and crisp articulation that breathe life into the music. Unfortunately the fortepiano is not described in the booklet, but the sound has character and sufficient resonance to enhance the dramatic aspects of the music, and the recording is excellent. Margaret Cranmer

**Musica Sacra do Brasil** Vox Brasiliensis, Ricardo Kanji dir 61' 06" K617 K617096

This anthology of church music of the 18th and early 19th centuries is selected from two CDs which are themselves the prelude to a 15-programme TV series (what is the chance of a satellite company relaying it here?) linked with five further CDs. It is certainly a tempting sampler. Most of the

music is in a classical style that is handled by the composers with considerable skill and vitality. Singing and playing are stylish. The booklet has the word *colonial* added to the title: this is rather more civilised and skilled than any music likely to have been composed in the British colonies of the time! CB

*A booklet included with the disc draws attention to other 'ethnic baroque' recordings from a series called 'Chemins du Baroque': details from <http://www.CD-baroque.com>*

## 19th CENTURY

**Reicha 24 Trios pour Trois Cors, op. 82** Deutsche Naturhorn Solisten 66' 23" Dabringhaus und Grimm MDG 605 0864-2

This astonishes first for the amazing sound: real virtuoso playing by three natural horns, in music mostly far away from hunting fanfares. While it is at divertimento rather than string-quartet level, it is worth continuing to listen once you have got over the amazing technique and musicality of the players (five of them: we are not told who plays which pieces). Definitely a disc to take in small doses, but nevertheless well worth the taking: it will fill you with admiration for the enterprise of the composer as well as the brilliance of the playing, and will put some of the 'difficult' horn writing in contemporary orchestral works into perspective. CB

**Schubert Mass in A flat** Deborah York, Sally Bruce Payne, Neill Archer, Michael George SmSTB, Monteverdi Choir, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, John Eliot Gardiner Philips 456 578-2 73' 28"  
*+ Hymnus an die Heiligen Geist* D948, *Psalm 92* D953, *Stabat mater* D175

An interesting and important addition to the Schubert discography. The use of period instruments, expertly played, helps bring out the originality of the earlier of Schubert's two great masses, here heard basically in its final form. Gardiner prefers the original 1819 version of the *Cum sancto spiritu* fugue, and he presents the earlier draft of the *Et incarnatus est* as an appendix. The interest of the issue is enhanced by the inclusion of the early *Stabat mater* (D175) and two of the late sacred works, the *Hymn to the Holy Ghost* (D948) and *Psalm 92* (D953), the latter a Hebrew setting written for Salomon Sulzer and the Vienna synagogue, though here sung in Moses Mendelssohn's translation. The recording, like the performances, is of the highest quality. Peter Branscombe

## MISCELLANEOUS

Arno Raunig Soprano Arno Raunig, Markus Volzellner piano (1993) 64' 12" CAFFA CD 001

Farinelli Arien Arno Raunig S, Paul Weigold pf 66' 21" CAFFA CD 002

see p. 18 for repertoire list and review of these recordings of a male soprano.

**If Love be the Food of Musick** Zoë Vandermeer voice, hpscd, harp 53' 09" Voce Classics IL378

This 1996 disc arrived together with a 1999 release of Zoë Vandermeer singing her own songs. Her repertoire is wide, ranging from Rognoni/Rore *Ancor che col partire* (popular this month) to Purcell, then branching into folksong and finishing with her own popular-style setting of the Rore (which could probably sell a million if sung by Charlotte Church). In the early tracks she emphasises the little-girl aspect of her voice, but lets it mature as the music gets later. The long notes that begin *Sweeter than roses* show up a slight lack of precision in intonation: it must be very difficult to concentrate on that while also playing the accompaniment. Her sustained unaccompanied singing in *Ca' the yowes* is entirely convincing. She can get round the difficulties of Rognoni's divisions with agility and confidence. I was impressed, and suspect that she would be even more impressive live. CB

**Two Worlds of the Welsh Harp** William Taylor 68' 50" Dorian DOR-90260

This eagerly anticipated debut solo album by the leading exponent of the early Welsh and Scottish harps has to be heard to be believed. The performances could hardly provide more dramatic contrasts, alternating between the darkly obsessive contents of the Robert ap Huw MS with the smugly enlightened 18th-century tunes recorded by Edward Jones. The ap Huw material, receiving here its first convincing performances, is quite unlike anything else I have heard from the period, and the player and recording company have taken the courageous decision to present the material in uncut form, allowing the tunes and their variations to weave their full narcotic magic. Some of the more dexterous elaborations are simply stunning in their virtuosity, while many of the daring harmonic progressions make the jaw drop. William Taylor uses three instruments – a small, sweet-toned 12th-century romanesque harp, and two sizes of the buzzing bray harp, an instrument that he has argued convincingly was the most widely-used popular harp of the middle ages and renaissance throughout Europe. While this important disc presents a compelling aural case for further investigation of the unique ap Huw material, Mr Taylor's detailed and authoritative booklet notes (in English and Welsh) provides a fascinating context and whets the appetite for more. Anyone who buys this disc expecting a gentle stroll in the Celtic twilight is in for a rude awakening – and about time too! D. James Ross

£ = bargain price ££ = mid-price  
 As far as we know, all other discs are full-price.

We regret that some discs have been held over to next month. Some have been delayed because of holidays; but foreseeing the length of this issue, we have not chased contributors

## DORIAN RECORDS

I first encountered Dorian Records at a posh press gathering at the Ritz, put on by their then distributor Select. I was intrigued by the description we were given of their base in Troy, near Albany NY, in the former premises of the Troy Savings Bank, which had its own Music Hall (not, I think, in the UK usage of the term) at the top of the building. This became a fine recording studio. When we drove through Troy on a Sunday afternoon soon after, we spotted the building, but it was closed (as, indeed, was the whole town). They have since tried several UK distributors and are now with Nimbus. The following new issues are in their recent lists, but have not been received for review: for James Ross's review of William Taylor see page 37.

*Sephardic Journey: Spain and the Spanish Jews* La Rondinella 65' 37"  
Dorian DOR 93171

*Folie Douce: Renaissance Improvisations* Ensemble Douce Mémoire 74' 47"  
Dorian DOR 90262

*Sol y Sombra: Baroque Music from Latin America* Chatham Baroque, Carol Ann Allred S 74' 05"  
Dorian DOR 90263

*Pachelbel The Complete Organ Works* vol. 1 Antoine Bouchard 73' 37"  
Dorian DOR 93173

*Vivaldi Concerti for Strings* Les Violons du Roi, Bernard Labadie 58' 13"  
Dorian CD 90255

*Other discs of apparent interest noted in imports' lists but not made available for review*

*Jarzebski Canzoni e concerti* Ensemble Mensa Sonaora, Jean Maillet dir 52' 59"  
Pierre Vétry PV 799032

*Celebrations of Spring in the Middle Ages: Courtly Poetry of the 12th & 13th Centuries* Perceval and Sanacore, dir Katia Caré & Guy Robert  
Arion ARN 68385

## ZENOBLA RECORDS

We have received a press release from Zenobia Records, which is about to launch a new label specialising in early music, concentrating on young artists and less usual repertoire. Some financial input from the performers, chiefly the absence of fees, is expected, with the chance to recoup their costs from sales of the CDs (something that may well happen already rather more than meets the eye). With the major record companies cutting back on new releases, this may be a way for any young group (such as the York competition finalists) to achieve the recordings needed for credibility.

The first release, due this month, is The Burgundian Cadence performing a CD of Medieval English Christmas Music (Sarum Chant and Carols). Further details from Zenobia Records, 28 Venn Street, London, SW4 0AT.

tel/fax +171 720 8887 e-mail zenobiarecords@hotmail.com

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Although we are in touch with the main importers, and Lindum Records are very helpful in linking us with the more obscure labels, our attempt at comprehensive cover of the early-music CD output depends on record companies sending discs as they are released. We hope that performers who record for smaller companies (or for Sony: see p. 27) will make sure that their recordings are sent to us.

We chiefly review recordings that show some awareness of historical performance practice. For music earlier than about 1700, we only exclude discs that are obviously unsuitable (we would avoid, for instance, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir singing Monteverdi). We include modern-instrument recordings of 18th-century music if the repertoire is unusual, but would ignore Mozart symphonies from the ECO and the Brandenburg Concertos from the ASMF. With 19th-century music we would only review recordings that were consciously attempting to recreate the original style and using early instruments. This is a matter of setting limits, and does not reflect on the quality of other recordings. CB

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## J. F. Fasch – Concerto in B minor, FWV L:h1

## 2. Largo

Flute

Violin 2

Viola

Basso  
Continuo

4

7

11

## LETTERS

Dear Clifford,

Thanks for the considerable benefits of your Review. As for your last editorial, just a couple of observations. Historically the choir schools of Europe have been the seed-bed of musical talent, particularly with regard to children's experience of music-making at a professional level. I think this still registers in the UK: from my admittedly narrow vantage point I can tell you that the choristers we pass out have a musical competence of considerable sophistication, and that many of them have made and will go on to make distinguished contributions to our national musical life in their own right. The educational benefits of the experience are increasingly part of the account rendered. As for what the visitor makes of it, the question is irrelevant. This may sound grotesquely off-putting. The point is simply that the office of the Church recited/sung is a self-sufficient act needing neither congregation nor approval. Only when we enter the concert hall or the recording studio do other criteria apply. And by this I do not mean to excuse low standards in the office, only to say that the question of standards becomes a *public* issue only when such a choir as ours chooses to enter the market, and not before.

Edward Higginbottom

*You and I may be satisfied that the office requires no audience (like the continual existence of the tree in the quad despite the absence of human viewers); you may be confident that New College choir is funded independently of a secular-minded bursar who might feel that a chair in polishing soundbites would be a better use of the money. But I am worried that the theological justification of the office might seem to be old-fashioned and its continuation dispensable for the modern church.*

Dear Clifford,

Shame on you for not going to your local cathedrals! The standards really are good these days. Paul Trepte has worked wonders at Ely, completely resuscitating the choir – the sound of their new Tye Masses on ASV (see p 28) is very good: well drilled, unified trebles (not many other cathedral/collegiate trebles sound convincing in that repertory) and good lower voices. The problem is that many people are unaware of the improvement in quality of such choirs. Equally, the standards at many parish churches have plummeted: organ playing and choral skills seem to be in grave danger of extinction outside our major cathedrals and colleges, so we really must support the latter while the RSCM etc work at regenerating the former, local skills. In this connection, I agree with you that the girls/boys debate is irrelevant – it misses the point.

Chris Hodges

Dear Clifford,

In spite of working only a few yards from Trinity College Chapel (Cambridge), I find plenty of excuses not to hear the choir sing there regularly – and the loss is mine, because

when I do go, I find the choir's day-to-day singing wonderfully uplifting and highly conducive to worship – much more successful than you find their recordings!

But the value of such colleges and cathedral choirs lies not only in the regular leading of worship, but also in their contribution to the 'real world' of music once they have left the cloisters. Where would Britain's early music be without the church music tradition? Count the number of singers from our leading vocal ensembles – Gothic Voices, Hilliard Ensemble, Tallis Scholars, Clerk's Group, etc – who have *not* had a grounding as chorister or lay clerk, and you will be left with a very small handful.

I am continually saddened by the regular products of our conservatories: singing machines who cannot read music and have little conception of how to sing with other singers and instrumentalists, apart from one faithful piano accompanist who will bow to all their whims. Invariably it is those who have sung for the church who do not need to struggle over the notes but get straight to the heart of the music, while retaining the discipline to play their correct role in an ensemble.

Selene Mills

*Christopher Page wrote an article around the importance of the English choral/collegiate tradition in Early Music XXI/3. The latest issue of The Singer has an article disparaging the need for sight-singing: musical literacy has been over-rated!*

Dear Sir,

I am pleased to be able to inform you that, contrary to your article in your June 1999 editorial, Associated Board examinations are available in both ensemble playing and choral singing. Syllabuses are available on request and can also be viewed on our website – [www.absrm.ac.uk](http://www.absrm.ac.uk)

Philip Mundey, Director of Examinations

*Apologies for my mistake. I assumed that, since the Huntingdonshire College had about 200 students taking all sorts of exams, but none in ensemble playing, there was no such option: I too readily blamed the system rather than the College. I didn't even have the excuse of not having the information to hand, since I received fairly recently copies of the complete AB syllabuses as background for my contribution to the AB's forthcoming book on performing baroque music.*

Dear Mr Bartlett,

While rehearsing *Elijah* under Stephen Cleobury in C.U.M.S. [Cambridge University Musical Society, established in 1844] I have been wondering about the earlier members of English choral societies. Who were these people who came together in Birmingham in the 1840s and 1850s? Sixty male altos, for example! The nearest fictional society I can think of is that of *Hard Times*, but I can't imagine Gradgrind supporting anything artistic, or Bounderby among the

basses. Might Louisa and Tom have sneaked off to *Elijah* rather than to Sleary's circus? Where in fiction is there anyone who could have read enough music to sing the Creations and Messiahs? Who in Jane Austen, Hardy or Trollope was of the right social class, educational ability and with the necessary interest? Darcy off on his horse to rehearsals? Mrs Proudie being told to watch the beat and not sing flat? The mind boggles. Sue Bridehead is the only possible soprano I can think of. Does Dickens mention in his novels the sort of person who had choral singing as a hobby? My musical and my literary knowledge seem to have no meeting point.

Colin Bassett

*Would the skilled church musicians that George Eliot describes in Amos Barton, when banished from church, have joined a choral society or amateur orchestra?*

*Colin also wonders if the lute was still used and practised in the mid-18th century and reckons that it does not feel like a recondite, arty metaphor. I am more sceptical: the trumpet/lute contrast would have been familiar from Odes to St Cecilia's Day.*

In view of the two 18th-century lute music recordings this month, readers may be interested in this quote from *Tristram Shandy* (VI, 35).

Softer visions – gentle vibrations stole sweetly in upon his slumbers; – the trumpet of war fell out of his hands, – he took up the lute, sweet instrument! of all others the most delicate! the most difficult! – how wilt thou touch it, my dear uncle Toby?



## KING'S MUSIC

It has been suggested that we should occasionally write something about our current activities for our web site: there is very little to see there at present, though we hope to have our catalogue there in the not too distant future.

We thought that Handel might give us a rest after last year's *Messiah*, but no: editions are still in demand. As mentioned on page 26, we have been involved in the provision of material for the English National Opera. First came *Semele* (we reviewed the production in our last issue), and we were then asked for *Alcina*. That was the first Handel opera I edited, both for Andrew Parrott (for a one-off performance at La Scala, Milan) and for The Opera Stage, which mounted an imaginative production in Christ Church, Spitalfields, under Richard Hickox then recorded it. Back in 1985, we were not equipped for computer-setting, so the score was corrected Chrysander with parts produced by cutting and pasting – not a very satisfactory procedure, since Chrysander's format gives lines that are wide in proportion to their depth. BC has, over the years, managed to get the parts on computer, but we had never produced a score. ENO are, of course, performing it in English, so we now have a bilingual score with Amanda Holden's text printed above the Italian. At some stage we will reverse the order to give a proper score with the original text.

We have also been preparing *Theodora* for Archiv and Paul McCreesh. First BC typeset a rough score direct from Chrysander, except that, as usual, my copy had acquired various corrections and supplements over the years. Our proofs were then meticulously checked against the autograph by Tim Roberts. We ran off an interim version for a performance in France in late July, but there is still further source-checking to do before it is ready for recording early next year.

Otherwise, Brian has been busy with Fasch (see the advert on p. 26 and sample on p. 38) and also producing parts for a variety of Handel arias: we don't keep a catalogue of them, but are gradually working through the most popular arias from the operas (and a few from the oratorios). It is always worth asking us if you need any: if we don't have them, we can produce them quite cheaply.

This being school and college holidays (John has now left school and will join Clare at Huntingdonshire College, with even longer holidays), our output has been diminished by the need to take them out each afternoon, as well as by the heat. I have a conscience about the madrigal and part-song volume in John Rutter's Oxford Choral Classics series that I should have delivered at Easter. A few items have already appeared as pre-publications in the OCCA series: one is mentioned on page 4. If any reader has ideas for first-rate 19th-century short, secular choral pieces, please let me know. CB