

Early Music REVIEW

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It seems to me that the more efficient capitalism is, the more the major players in a market work towards a diminution of choice by producing competing products that are minimally different. So every record company needed its own version of Beethoven symphonies and Brandenburg Concertos, then when HIP came along, each company also needed to have its own authentic performances. But if you wanted to hear a mass by Hummel or a Passion by Telemann, you would probably be unlucky unless a smaller company with overheads low enough to be able to profit from niche markets had ventured into those particular gaps. Now the majors are largely reduced to living off their back catalogues, while the smaller ones still flourish. They are not paying the performers vast fees, and very often the musicians are subsidising the recording as a means of publicity. But they are also using sales of CDs at concerts as a way of building up relationships with audiences, which can be more productive and satisfying than minimally-earned royalty cheques (or am I being idealistic?)

The same converging competition happens with printed music. In this issue we review various editions of Bach from Carus. For many of the major works, there are now three German editions, from Bärenreiter, Breitkopf and Carus. Bach scholarship is moving on, and in some cases the new editions represent a distinct improvement, or the clearer publication of a specific version (as with the St John Passion score reviewed on p. 4). But often the differences are minimal, and had Bärenreiter published performance material efficiently in conjunction with the NBA scores, other editions would be superfluous. Sometimes the newer editions are better set-out, sometimes they are better value. Whether the individual performer can make an informed choice is debatable: there is often a brand loyalty as irrational as the favouring of one supermarket chain over another. This is not to denigrate the work of the editors, and musicians benefit from the rivalry. What it does show is that Germany still has a population that supports classical music publishing. CB

BOOKS & MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

COLLECTED FENLON

Iain Fenlon *Music and Culture in Late Renaissance Italy*. Oxford UP, 2002. xiv + 265 pp, £55.00 ISBN 0 19 816444 0

'Except for two still unpublished papers, all the essays, originally published between 1988 and 2001, first appeared in *Festschriften* and other collective volumes': thus the author describes this collection (p. viii). In several ways, it is rather different from the anthologies in the Ashgate Variorum series. First, the material is less accessible: of the Variorum volumes I've reviewed, I generally have the original publications of at least half of the contents, whereas I only have two of the ten items here. This is chiefly because the topics are mostly interdisciplinary, and were not published in core musicological journals; the reprints are therefore even more of a convenience to music students, since the new book can conveniently reside in the faculty library. Secondly, it is reset; so the volume looks better than the Variorum ones, but suffers from the inconvenience of losing the original pagination. Nor is it easy to see what second thoughts the writer has, since changes are incorporated. So those who know the original versions will have to read them again rather than just check a few supplementary comments. I wonder how many will bother, especially those working outside the sphere of musicology. It is particularly odd that in footnote 3 of chapter 3, the reader is referred to the original version of the chapter: if there is something there that has been cut from the revised version, the reader should be told more explicitly. The book is treated in some ways as a new entity, with its own extensive bibliography and index.

The topics concern Venice, Florence, Mantua, Milan and Rome, and apart from its intrinsic interest, this is a valuable read for musicians who focus too closely on music in isolation from its political and cultural associations. (Though some fields are over-tilled: has anyone yet written an article on 'The myth of the myth of Venice')? A few points could have been clarified: I presume that the *Oration di San Marco* (p. 15) must be 'Deus qui beatum Marcum', but it's not a description in common use among musicians; and non-experts might like an explanation of 'trombe squarciate' (p. 19). Quoting the opening of *The Canterbury Tales* in Nevill Coghill's translation without the original is uncharacteristically popularist (p. 24). There is a fascinating paragraph on p. 78 showing that the stress on the teaching of reading by Protestants was paralleled by Borromeo in Milan. It is interesting to read that Cavalieri was rehearsing the Florentine 1589 *intermedi* twice a day as early as six months before the performance: I suspect that one difference between church music (sung at sight if the story of only Holy Week music at the Sistine Chapel being rehearsed is typical) and major court events was the thoroughness of rehearsal at the latter. I don't know if the illustrations have been re-scanned, but they are remarkably clear.

LAWES a3

William Lawes *The Three-Part Consorts for Two Treble Viols (or Violins) & Bass Viol With Optional Basso Continuo* Edited by Mark Davenport. (English Consort Series LP ECS-3), Landmark Press, 2002. Score (ix + 26pp) & 4 parts, \$62.00

Landmark Press is a new publisher which I heard about through an email circular. It has a good web site (www.landmarkpressmusic.com) which shows the first page of the handful of items it has so-far produced, aimed chiefly at the viol/recorder market. Its proprietor, Mark Davenport, wrote his thesis on 'The Dances and Aires of William Lawes' (Univ. of Colorado at Boulder, 2001), and this is one of four projected Lawes publications to derive from it. It is nicely produced in a smart folder, thick enough to have the title on the spine, so easy to find on the shelf. The score is neatly set out with a movement per page and the parts are spacious (including two copies of the bass, perhaps a luxury, since unless there are two keyboards/pluckers, the optional continuo player can use the score). We tried them out a few weeks ago (just too late to get into the last issue) and were slightly worried that in the dim light of, say, a church or stately-home concert, the rather insubstantial stave lines might fade into the gloom, though with normal lighting there is no problem. We don't have that difficulty with our Sibelius output, so it is a printing rather than a software problem.

The editor has arranged the 26 ayres and dances into seven suites (in G, c, C, d, d, D, and g). For playing purposes, this is fine; if you are concerned about possible linking in the sources, you can assume that pieces with adjacent VdGS numbers survive together. It's a pity, though, that the location of each piece in the sources isn't given in the commentary, and also that the versions with other scorings are not shown there individually rather than together in a separate paragraph. The opinion of our auditioning panel was that they were certainly worth playing, but those who remembered the fuller-scored versions felt that they sounded a bit thin. This would have been even more so without theorbo or (in our case) organ; we used violins, and felt no urge to substitute treble viols.

FRETWORK

Thomas Lupo *The Three-Part Consort Music* edited by Richard Charteris. Fretwork Editions (FE18), 2001. xxx + 55 pp. Score + 3 parts, £27.00

This is a revised version of an edition that was published in 1987, along with other music of Lupo, by Boethius. That has not been available for some time, so a reissue, even if it had not been improved, would have been welcome. It joins the Charteris/Fretwork editions of the five- and six-part consort music. The most obvious

difference (most viol players would say improvement) is the change to four-minim bars. I don't know about the rest of the world, but in Britain that convention is universally preferred. The appearance of the older edition was somewhat ungainly so the neater look of the new one is an advantage, especially the score, which may be used if organ accompaniment is required (three of the early sources are in score, which may have had a practical use). Nos. 18-25 are for two trebles and a bass anticipating the trio-sonata layout; the apparent need for a continuo filling may be common sense, but may be reading back later sound-expectations. The remaining Fantasies and three anonymous pavans are for more varied scorings. The chief problem for the editor is to decide the extent to which he needs to record the mostly-minor variants his collation of the large number of sources reveal. Most involve accidentals. Sadly, Richard Charteris doesn't use the editorial policy he established in the editions of Gabrieli which we publish of repeating all original accidentals except on repeated notes: the more notes in a bar, the more sensible this is. Otherwise, the notation of repetitions of notes later in the bar is confusing and if the player is puzzled about a passage, he doesn't have the information available to think it through for himself. The detailed listing of variants is pointless if the existing accidentals are not clear. Fortunately, the publisher is prepared to set the commentary out spaciously, so there is no difficulty in reading it. Continual reference from music to commentary in the score, however, has within five minutes loosened the middle spread from the staples. (In a conversation a few days ago, Robert King mentioned that the King's Music practice of always using three staples makes our music more durable.) If you have the earlier edition, there is no immediate need to buy the new one instantly; but it is basic consort repertoire, and those who play regularly should make sure they have a set at hand.

For this and the other Fretwork editions reviewed this month, we quote the price for score and parts; they are also available separately, though I would recommend getting both.

John Jenkins Duos for Two Bass Viols and Continuo. Vol. 1 edited by Andrew Ashbee. Fretwork (FE19), 2002. xi + 51 pp score + 2 parts, £19.00.

The listing of 63 works by Jenkins for this combination in the VdG Society Catalogue is not entirely reliable (the real total may be about 50), and the repertoire has suffered from the loss of organ parts (from which, perhaps, we may deduce that organ part are also missing for music that less self-evidently needs them). Only three of the nine pieces here, mostly Airs with Divisions, have organ basses; the editor has devised them for the rest, and written simple realisations – the upper parts leave little space for much elaboration. This is music requiring a skill of playing beyond that required for consorts, with semiquaver arpeggios and demisemiquaver scales; even the staid opening Pavan has double stops. The viol parts are worthy of study, whether or not performance is the goal, for their indications of ornamentation and fingering.

Jean Nicolas Geoffroy The Music for Viols edited by Mary C. Tilton and Wendy Gillespie. Fretwork (FE16), 1999. v + 35pp + 3 parts, £12.00.

I must confess to a complete ignorance about the life and works of Geoffroy (died 1694). One MS of his works, mostly for keyboard, survives; its contents are listed in Bruce Gustafson's *French Harpsichord Music of the 17th Century*, vol. 3 pp. 1-69. This edition extracts the viol music, all for two trebles and bass: a Gigue in A, a *Dialogue pour le clavessin et des violes* in E minor and another in G with written-out parts for *clavessin ou pour l'orgue* and a short *Symphonie pour 3 violes* in G. The two dialogues are particularly interesting both in principle and practice. The edition includes a complete facsimile of the relevant pages of the MS (Paris BN Rés 475) and the publication provides players whose technique isn't up to Marais with attractive ensemble pieces, two of them in an unusual form.

CAMPRA REQUIEM

André Campra Messe de Requiem...Édition par Anne Baker, Partition générale. Carus (21.004), 2002. 104 pp, £39.80.

I hastened to include a review of Du Mont's Magnificat last month to make him a featured composer of that issue (though without any fuss, so I wonder how many readers noticed). Campra's Requiem was written for the memorial service of the Archbishop of Paris, 23 November 1695. The work appears to be scored for SATBarB choir and soli with five-part strings, two flutes and continuo. But as is usual in French music of the period, there is just one violin part in tutti sections, with two violins only in solo sections when the violas are tacet. The use of treble clef for the upper viola part is sensible in terms of performances by a modern orchestra, but the score reader needs to be aware of when the second treble-clef part is bracketed to the alto clef part. I was at first suspicious of the editor's assumption that the flutes were of the transverse variety, but there are low Ds in the Agnus Dei. The voices seem to be divided into a large and small choir, in addition to the ATB soli. I'm also suspicious of a non-solo semichoir, but haven't any information or knowledge to claim that the small choir might really just be the soloists. As in the Du Mont, the haut-contre part (alto clef) is transcribed in octave-treble clef, the bass-taille (F₃ clef) into normal bass clef. This is a substantial work, lasting (the publisher suggests) about 50 minutes – quite a long half-concert. A vocal score (and presumably performance material) are available. The Requiem is well worth performing, though the hard sell required to get an audience is a handicap.

VOICEBOX

Three Elegies by Purcell and Blow on the death of Queen Mary edited by Timothy Roberts. Voice Box (Vox 4), 2001. 43pp + part, £9.75.

Although with a different imprint, Voicebox comes from the same stable as Fretwork, with Bill Hunt and Julia Hodgson as general editors. These follow the sensible practice of previous volumes, with a realisation included in the main volume but a part giving in clear modern typesetting what was in the original editions – just the voice and occasionally figured bass. An additional copy of the duet would have been useful. It is convenient to have

the three Queen Mary pieces in one volume, as they were published in 1695; a performance with two separate singers for the solos, joining together for the duet, should make a nice chunk of a concert programme. The tessitura of the Blow is a bit high, but a transposition down a minor third is included. Both composers set *The Queen's Epicedium* for solo voice, Blow in English (*No Lisbia*), Purcell in Latin (*Incassum Lesbia*). Why Blow or his printer chose an unusual spelling of Lesbia for her first three occurrences but not the fourth is unclear; it's probably better to follow the usual spelling, as in the separately-printed poem. Both Latin and English are by an obscure 'Mr Herbert'. Purcell's *O dive custos* is a duet; the words are by Henry Parker, a somewhat provincial scholar of New College Oxford who seemed to think that the Cam was remote and quickly-flowing. The edition prints the complete poem: Purcell (mercifully) only set the first four of the ten stanzas.

Ten Erotic Songs by Purcell and his contemporaries edited by Timothy Roberts. Voice Box (Vox 5), 2002. 44p + part, £9.75

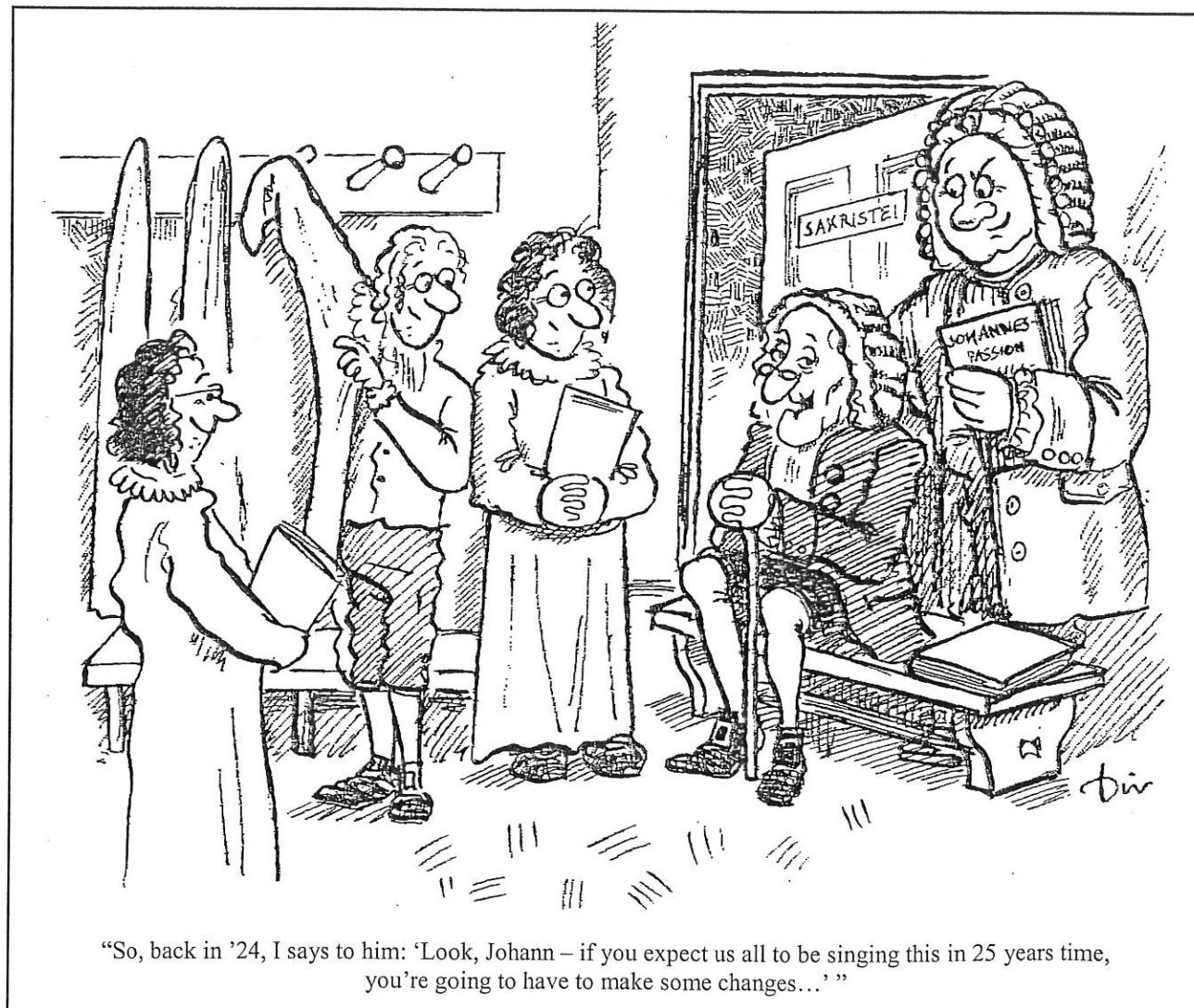
Erotic is perhaps too extreme a term for the salaciousness of most of these songs, but they offer plenty of opportunity to a singer who wishes to play up to the audience. The longest (and most serious) is Blow's *Sappho to the Goddess of Love*; the edition lacks a reference to the original

poem which is recognisable behind the 17th-century paraphrased translation. Other composers are (in the order of the volume) anon, Ackeroyde, Courteville, Eccles, Leveridge, Purcell (*Cease, anxious world*) and Weldon. I was puzzled to find a song by Eccles in F minor with the full four flats in the signature rather than three, which one expects from the period; fortunately King's Music has a facsimile of his 1704 *Collection of Songs*, which showed that the original was indeed thus. Checking the original did, however, make me wonder about the slurs, which do not correspond exactly, though they have no musical import.

ST JOHN PASSION

Johann Sebastian Bach *Johannespassion... Fassung IV* (1749) BWV 245/BC D 2d mit der unvollendeten Revision BC D 2e (1739) im Anhang... herausgegeben von Peter Wollny. Full score. Carus (31.245), 2002. xv + 208pp, £80.00

The surviving performance material of Bach's St John Passion is complicated and needed an enormous amount of detective work by the editor of the Neue Bach-Ausgabe, Alfred Mendel. At the time he was working on it, the idea that one of the editor's jobs was to establish a single text of a work was still pre-eminent, so Bärenreiter published a single score called *Johannes-Passion* whose main text is, as Wollny states in his introduction, one that Bach never



himself performed. NBA did, of course, provide ample appendices and a separate insert with the facsimile of the 20 autograph pages of what was probably intended as a definitive copy which Bach began around 1739, and also printed a statement of the content of the various versions.

It was round about the time of the NBA publication, thirty years ago, that people started performing different versions of Handel's *Messiah*. Right back to the 18th century, scores had printed alternative versions, as did the standard editions of Novello (1959) and Bärenreiter. The AAM recorded it as first performed in Dublin in 1742, the Peters revised edition by Donald Burrows used as an advert an impressive table showing the settings of the variable movements Handel that performed each year, and eventually Oxford UP issued my edition with all the material within one cover. Readers of *EMR* will no longer expect the content of all *Messiah* performances to be identical. The same is beginning to occur with Bach's Passions (we will have an article in the next issue by Peter Holman on the 1727 *St Matthew Passion* which he is conducting in May), and this new edition will make the conductor's and performer's jobs easier.

Wollny's equivalent of Burrows' *Messiah* table is printed on pp. iv-v, listing the content of each of the five versions (1724, 1725, 1732, 1749 and the partially-autograph 1739 score). The volume has as its main text the version Bach performed in 1749, which corresponds more or less with what is known of the first version of 1724; an appendix includes the autograph section of the 1739 score, which has a host of minor differences. A significant one is apparent if the facsimile of the opening of the 1739 autograph score (p. xv) is compared with the first page of the edition (a pity that the facsimile isn't on p. xvi so that it was opposite p. i of the edition). The 1749 version has regular quavers in the continuo part, whereas 1739 has quavers for the cellos and bassoons but a series of crotchets and crotchet rests for organ and violone. It could well be argued that the 1739 score represents the precise notation of a performance practice that applied to the other versions: the prospective performer needs to do his homework and not assume that the specific score avoids the need for comparison of versions. And is the use of a *bassono grosso* rather than more than *bassoni* (plural) an essential characteristic of that version or an option that is unrelated to the choice of compositional variants? Keeping too close an eye on a specific version can lead to not seeing the wood for the trees.

The German (but not the abridged English and French forewords) list the surviving parts: strings 3,2,2,2 (on the assumption that the unfigured 'cembalo' is for a string instrument), four soloist parts that include the choruses, two for minor roles that don't, and four ripieno parts. Wollny assumes that there would have been 12 ripieno singers (reading three to a part), which is slipping past the controversy without a hint of argument. In the case of editions that represent a particular performance, it seems to me that information on what is in which part should be readily visible in the score, and that the heading to the parts in, for instance, the opening chorus should be explicitly 'Soprano concertato & Soprano ripieno' etc.

Not all readers will recognise the description BWV 245/BC D 2d. Schmieder's *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis* allots just one number, BWV 245, to the complete *St John Passion*,

with three movements not in the 'standard' version appended as BWV 245a, b & c. A new catalogue, *Bach Compendium*, (Peters, 1985-) devotes its Band 1 (in fact, four volumes) to the vocal works. This has its own, more logical, numbering system, which is useful for Bach scholars but has not been widely used as a way of identifying pieces to the general public. The Passions are work-group D. D1 is a lost Passion from Bach's Leipzig period. D2 (the *St John Passion*) is subdivided as 2a for the 1724 version, 2b for 1725, 2c for 1732, 2d for 1749 and 2e for 1739. The Carus edition follows the movement numbers of NBA, not of the usual English scores. It includes below the German text the freely-available one by Henry S. Drinker, somewhat stilted and archaic, and more useful a guide to the meaning than for singing.

I've only seen the score, which is excellently produced, easy on the eyes and to handle. There are (or will be) vocal score, parts, organ realisation and libretto. A companion edition of the 1725 version is also in preparation. This is a commendable enterprise. I would suggest that the whole introduction and the prose of the critical commentary be given in English if there is a reprint, and that the 1725 score issued thus; there could also be a little more on performance matters.

MORE CARUS BACH

Johann Sebastian Bach Motetten Kritische Neuausgabe.
Carus (31.224/10), 2002. vi + 138pp, £14.80

This compact volume is very good value at just over £10.00. It includes BWV 225-230 plus *Ich lasse dich nicht*, whereas the comparable Bärenreiter choral score costs the same for BWV 225-230 only (or £13.50 for the version with piano reduction) and you have to buy *Ich lasse* separately, along with the dubious *Jauchzet dem Herrn*, for £5.50 (see *EMR* 87 p. 4). The Carus edition has the advantage of a critical commentary. It has no editorial accompaniment or extrapolated continuo line, nor are the *colla parte* instruments in *Singet dem Herrn* and *Der Geist hilft* printed (though they might have been described in a footnote at the beginning of each motet); but Carus does have independent editions of these with parts, which presumably will be replaced by ones corresponding to the new edition. The essential continuo part of *Lobet den Herren* is included. Space is saved in the double-choir motets by sometimes omitting the staves of a choir that is silent in antiphonal passages; as a publisher, I know how tempting it is to do so, but clarity is lost. In other respects this is a useful and competitive publication.

Johann Sebastian Bach Magnificat in D BWV243...
edited by Ulrich Leisinger. Carus (31.243), 2002. vi + 70pp, £21.50

I'm rather less sure of the need for another *Magnificat*. There is only one significant source, the autograph score, which allows little scope for editorial difference. Carus and Bärenreiter treat the alternative underlay of 'Sicut locutus est' in the same way: just including both at the first entry. The Carus editor suggests in his introduction that the revised version with repeated 'locutus' be extended to the other entries, but does not notate it in his

score. He also wonders whether instruments might be added, but comes up with no specific orchestration so presumably nothing is included in the parts. The critical commentary carefully describes the stave layout of the autograph. Original clefs are not given, but the facsimile of the opening page confirms that they are as expected. Strangely, both Bärenreiter and Carus give the continuo part of *Suscepit* in a mixture of bass and treble clef, the former indicating both bass and alto as the original clef. I don't have the facsimile to check, but the earlier E-flat version is in the alto clef throughout. The modernisation is helpful for the inexperienced score-reader, but if that was a major consideration, why leave the trumpets and timps in C. If you want them at sounding pitch, use the Bärenreiter score. The prices of the two editions are comparable. The edition does not attempt to produce a hybrid including the Christmas inserts from the E-flat version: now that the latter is available in performance material (from Bärenreiter and from King's Music), it is sensible to use that for Christmas performances. The use of inserts was not, incidentally, just a Leipzig custom, as settings by Hieronymus and by Michael Praetorius testify. The Carus score is more spaciously set out than the Bärenreiter, but there is good sense in the latter's squashing of nos. 8 & 9 each onto a single opening and in getting *Quia respexit* onto a single page so that there is no turn for 'omnes'. Both this and the Passion scores are the same page-size as Bärenreiter scores, not the normal Carus format.

Johann Sebastian Bach *Wär Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit* BWV 14... edited by Ulrich Leisinger. Carus (31.014), 2003. iv + 736 pp, £18.00

This is not a cantata I know, nor do I have the NBA score (edited by Carus's St John Passion editor, Peter Wollny, whose industry was commended in our last issue), so I have little to say. Unless they have produced it since their 2000 Bach catalogue, Breitkopf doesn't have score and parts and Bärenreiter has very little performance material for its NBA cantatas, so Carus probably has the field to itself. It is one of the more chorus-friendly cantatas (assuming that you want to sing it with chorus in the modern sense) with a substantial chorale setting (unusually in 3/8) and a simple version as movement five, separated by arias for soprano and bass, with an intervening recit for tenor. The recit has elaborate runs for the continuo depicting the effect our foes would have on us without God's defence. The edition marks it *senza organo*, which is odd since the incipit in the *Bach Compendium* gives figures, as does BG. The soprano aria is scored for strings with a soloistic part for *Corno par force* in B flat; it also (in F) plays the chorale in the outer movements, negotiating as its third, fourth and fifth notes written F, F sharp and G above the treble stave. Two oboes, who double the horn in the chorales, accompany the bass solo, with the continuo, again here marked *senza organo*, though not in BC or BG. (The figured part, incidentally, is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and the figuring is in Bach's hand, according to Dreyfus.) It looks an exciting piece to perform.

Johann Sebastian Bach *Bach for Brass...* Vol. 3. Edited by Edward Tarr und Uwe Wolf. Carus (31.303), 2002. 88pp, £32.80

This is part of a series of 7 volumes containing the parts of all Bach's music that includes brass and timpani, an improved successor to the various *Musica Rara* publications. This is based on the latest research, and includes some facsimiles of the parts Bach's players used. Layout is sensible, and there are good, if concise, introductions to each work. Included here are the trumpet and timp parts of the B minor Mass, three Sanctuses, both versions of the Magnificat, the Christmas, Easter and Ascension oratorios and Bach's instrumentation of Palestrina's *Missa sine nomine* (though without the trombones). I can foresee players turning up to performances with better editions of their parts than those provided by the orchestra!

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach *Concerto per il Flauto traverso in D* BR WFB C 15...First edition... edited by Sergej Kudriachov & Peter Wollny. Carus (32.315), 2001. 36pp. £21.00.

Three recordings of this concerto have reached us so-far, the last (from Carus) proclaiming itself as the first (see p. 21). The work itself has appeared in various catalogues, but was not taken seriously since the source is anonymous, apart from a late, implausible ascription to Quantz. The Quantz thematic catalogue hives it off as QV 5: Anh.6; the W. F. Bach catalogue by Falck (1913) calls it spurious, a judgment with which Peter Wollny agreed in his 1993 Harvard thesis on WFB. There is some objective reason for the ascription: WFB's hand in the figuring of the continuo part was noticed two centuries ago. But study of the music (plus, a cynical observer might surmise, a desire to exploit the rediscovery of the Sing-Akademie library in Kiev) convinces Wollny, and probably the listener to any of the recordings, that the ascription is at least plausible, perhaps more. This edition is an extract from a future vol. IV/2 of a projected complete edition of WFB, so editorial commentary is deferred to that. Assuming that parts are available, it is a valuable addition to the flautist's repertoire; the accompaniment is for strings and harpsichord.

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach *2 Sonaten in e & F für Querflöte und Basso Continuo* (BR WFB 17 & 18). First edition edited by Peter Wollny. Carus (32.317), 2001. 20pp + part. £3.50.

These too have no explicit attribution to WFB, but two movements are transcriptions of genuine WFB keyboard sonatas, probably made in Dresden in the early 1740s. The flute writing is quite virtuosic, with an accompaniment that is fully written-out. The facsimile page mentioned in the foreword is not present, but there seems no reason to doubt the accuracy of the edition.

The final review in this Carus batch, Reichardt's Weihnachtskantilene, is deferred till next month.

In all the Bach editions reviewed this month, I'd have welcomed complete translations of the introductions and all the editorial remarks (except perhaps the listing of variant readings – though complete sentences should be bilingual). If these excellent editions are to reach musicians world-wide, they should be as user-friendly as possible; and until the Chinese take up Bach's church music in a big way, the international language is English.

RAVENS' VIEW

Simon Ravens

Sometime in the middle of last year, one of my better-informed customers asked me about getting hold of CDs by a French label, Alpha. It's usual for new record labels to hammer on the door of every shop and virtually beg for shelf-space, and since Alpha hadn't even knocked, I assumed that they had no commercial interest in Britain. I did find their web site, but it was infuriatingly 'under construction' (it still is, incidentally, despite having been flagged up on recordings dating back to 1999).

The first Alpha CD I heard was L'Arpeggiata's magnificent *La Tarantella* (reviewed by CB in the last issue). On the evidence of this, shortly afterwards I started selling the whole range of thirty-something CDs (the vast majority being early music releases). And selling is the word. I have discerning buyers who have already worked their way through half the catalogue, and who show no signs of stopping. In three months I have sold more Alpha CDs than all other full-price new releases put together (although the term 'full price' is perhaps misleading, since I can sell Alpha discs for a good deal less than I can their competitors). Ilkley is hardly large enough to provide an accurate sample for the recording industry, so the other companies needn't rip up their recording schedules just yet. But they might ask themselves some questions.

I'm not the first, and I dare say I won't be the last, to offer up a eulogy to the Alpha label. Until recently I would have laughed at the idea of offering an almost blanket recommendation to a record label, rather than picking from the music and performances it embraced. As far as I was concerned, the larger labels were too big to maintain absolute artistic control, whilst the smaller ones were unable to attract the very best performers. So, whilst a good recording could be issued on any label, no label guaranteed a good recording. These consistently seductive little French creatures, in their slinky black outfits, have made me think again.

And they really have made me think, because I suspect that even though the label's musical standards are very high, I am sure there are individual Alpha recordings which have a higher place in my affections than their purely musical qualities justify. Take Céline Frisch's Goldberg Variations, for instance. Is it really better than the efforts of Pierre Hantaï, Christophe Rousset et al? Perhaps not, but it's in the same class, and the plusses (many of which are standard for Alpha discs) are decisive.

For a start, there are aural ad-ons, in this case a 24-minute bonus CD, with the superb Café Zimmermann playing the 14 Goldberg Canons (BWV 1087) and Dominique Visse singing the folk songs of the Goldberg Quodlibet: things I should have known but didn't. Then there are the visual plusses. On the glossy cardboard slipcase there are beautiful reproductions of Haussman's portrait of Bach, and a curious Quodlibet painting by Samuel van Hoogstraten: inside are good essays on both. Finally, there are the invaluable artist photographs. Now, anyone who hasn't seen Alpha's artist photographs might reasonably wonder just how vital any such images can be.

Very, I would say. If it hasn't happened already, I suspect that in years to come Robin Davies' wonderfully evocative photographs of Alpha recording sessions will be the stuff of serious exhibitions. Refreshingly devoid of posing or preening, they take us inside the event of each recording, persuading this listener, for one, that he is hearing real people really making music.

Ultimately, though, at the heart of any successful record label will be the music and performers it records. With Alpha there seems to be a fine balance of luminaries (Leonhardt, Bach) and the obscure (Louis Marchand, Hélène Schmitt). But it's Leonhardt, (as organist, incidentally) we hear illuminating Marchand, and Bach affording a deserved place in his spotlight to Schmitt. These are matches which bathe everyone – listeners included – in a flattering light.

By operating like this, the Alpha label is in the process of turning minor figures into major players. Those who haven't yet heard Christina Pluhar's L'Arpeggiata or Vincent Dumestre's Poème Harmonique can start rubbing their hands in anticipation. I had always wondered what really would lie beyond the back of the authenticity wardrobe, and thanks to these two groups, I think I now have an idea.

Packed with humanity but completely lacking in ego, the six solo voices of Le Poème Harmonique bring with them to the microphone much of the performance-practice baggage which nowadays we might expect. Yet there is nothing leaden-footed about their performances, which take flights of imagination at every turn. In a multi-verse chanson by Guédron, they may use every combination of voices and instruments in their line-up, but with infinite subtlety. No tired, formulaic, verse-bound blocks of 'variety' here. And there are no tired formulas in their approach to ornamentation. Although they are a genuinely witty group, of their eight recordings for Alpha to date it is their Cavalieri Lamentations which really stands apart. The first few chords of *falsobordone* assure us that the performers have made all the right spiritual connections, and for the next hour, however exotic and airborne the ornamentation becomes (and I've heard nothing, ever, to equal it for execution and effect) the performance never loses this mooring. As a fellow performer in the field this recording should, by rights, fill me with a blinding, seething envy, but it's too good for that.

Whatever wonders Le Poème Harmonique achieve vocally, the plucked strings of L'Arpeggiata match them instrumentally. All of their Alpha CDs are special, but *La Tarantella* is, as they say, something else. Ironically, perhaps, the obvious star of this recording is a singer, Marco Beasley, who has one of those voices which attaches clasps to the heart. The ensemble's kaleidoscopic sonorities in the individual pieces are melting; but should you want to be caught in their web, listen to the disc as a whole. If the programming and production of a recording can ever betray genius, this would be the evidence. Joy on a disc.

MUSIC IN LONDON

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Perhaps reflecting their recent woes, the Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists (with Sir John Eliot Gardiner) bought an emotionally intense programme of Mozart (Kyrie in D minor and Symphony 25) and Haydn (Nelson Mass) to The Barbican (7 February). Whether written to impress potential employers in the Court in Munich in 1780/81 or the church authorities in Vienna in the late 1780's, Mozart's large scale Kyrie in D minor seems to express a massive sense of inner turmoil beneath its surface grandeur. Using huge orchestral forces, including clarinets and four horns, Mozart pulls the listener into his angst-ridden and almost desperate pleas for mercy (or for a job?). His extensive use of pedal points and repetitions of single notes add to the sense of insistence. The choir and orchestra sounded splendid, although there were moments when the direction lacked the subtleness required to make it magical, notably in the final three hushed chords. Hints of darkness also pervade Mozart's Symphony 25, written aged 17 in apparent response to Haydn's recent moves into what was to become known as the *Sturm und Drang* style. Haydn's *Missa in angustiis*, despite the grandeur that it shares with the other five of his late great mass setting, was also written at a time of musical and political turmoil. The Esterházy court had more or less disbanded its musical establishment, for lack of princely interest rather than any specific political reasons, leaving Haydn with little to compose except an annual mass for the name day of the latest Prince's wife. Although completed at the time of Nelson's involvement in the Napoleonic war between Austria and the French, Nelson's name only became attached to the work two years after it was composed. So what motivated the extraordinary outbursts? Were the 'straitened' times those of international politics, domestic musical life in central European Courts, or something more personal to Haydn? Whatever the reason, it is the military aspect which is projected most strongly, and that was the case in this performance. Despite the programme note promising the original Haydn version with a prominent organ part replacing the disbanded wind band, we heard a later version, orchestrated by Haydn's colleague Johann Nepomuk Fuchs and sanctioned by the composer, with wind parts added and the organ reduced to an accompanimental role. As in the Mozart Kyrie, the performers were on top form, although I had worries about some of the soloists, all drawn from the choir. Some had inconsistent pronunciation, notably the bass, who managed to give alternative versions of both 'peccata' and 'miserere' in the same phrase. He also lacked sufficient power at the lower end of his register to match the orchestral forces at moments when they just couldn't play any quieter. The first soprano role is a major one in this work, but I am afraid that the chosen singer was not up to it. Apart from similar problems at the lower end of her register, her persistent vibrato, unsteady hold on notes, resort to portamento and

a curious habit of adding tiny slithers up to notes that started with a consonant all made for uncomfortable listening. Her entry in the Gloria was frankly overdone, with explosively overemphasised articulation and enunciation. To be honest, her unfortunate stage manner made things worse. What might be taken for devout evangelical zeal in a revivalist meeting just seemed to me to be sanctimonious and self-aggrandizing. A shame, because her voice is clear, and she has quite a pleasant tone.

The Royal Opera House's new production of *Die Zauberflöte* follows a long and complex history of English revivals over the past hundred years or so, including one from 1919 when the schoolboy Queen of the Night had to leave part-way through to do his paper round. Director David McVicar had no such worries, although the weight of history and popular appeal must be difficult for any director approaching this daunting work. McVicar has avoided the pitfalls of so many recent revivals of works like this in that he stayed comfortably on the side of sensibility with no hollow gimmicks or bizarre re-settings to get in the way of what is still an intriguing story. Indeed, he allows himself far more historical allusions than is normally thought appropriate for the 21st century opera stage, including several examples of Mozartian staging. The values of the Age of Enlightenment briefly shine through this generally dark production with a brilliance that illuminates more than just the stage. Shedding light onto a background of science, astronomy and freemasonry, hitherto inaccessible, even magical, arts, the response of Mozart's characters to the human potential of the new age is slowly revealed. Conducted by Colin Davis (and David Syrus on the night I attended), and with an impressive line-up of soloists, this was a well-paced performance notwithstanding the not-entirely-authentic credentials of the ROH orchestra. Diana Damrau made a fine ROH debut as the Queen of the Night, winning huge applause for her showcase top Fs. Will Hartmann was impressive as Tamino (although his voice didn't always quite slot into the expected tessitura), as was Dorothea Röschmann as Pamina, Adrian Thompson as Monostatos, Ailish Tynan (a participant in the ROH Young Artists scheme) in her ROH debut as Papagena and Simon Keenlyside as Papageno. Franz-Josef Selig was a very solid bass Sarastro. Of course, the opera hinges around the roles of Papagena and Pamina, the two characters with potentially most to gain from the Enlightenment. Röschmann and Keenlyside excelled in these roles, exposing more of the extremes of sensuality and comedy respectively than is usual. If Tynan's Papagena had something of Dolly Partonish voluptuousness about her, the three boys were pure Just William – two momentary lapses from 18th century style. The spoken dialogue was well paced, well spoken, well pronounced and even well acted! An excellent production and performance.

As part of the continuing Haydn: the Creative Genius series, The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment gave a concert of three Haydn symphonies and the E flat Trumpet Concerto (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 14 February) under Frans Brüggen. The two halves of the concert contrasted early and late Haydn, starting with Symphony No 6 in D *Le matin*, a four movement work written when Haydn was about 29 and had just started his association with the Esterházy family. One of three symphonies based on the time of day, a commission from a Vivaldi-loving Prince, it shows the youngish Haydn displaying his love for orchestral colour and texture, with solo roles for many of the instruments. Once the dawn had dawned, via a giant crescendo, the flute dominates the rest of first movement, representing bucolic charm. The flute's opening phrase is a bit fanfare-like, a point picked up later in the movement when the first few notes are given to the horn before the flute takes over. Clearly designed to show off the individual talents in the Princely orchestra, the slow movement, in three parts, is dominated by the violin showing more than a passing reference to the Prince's love of the baroque with its Corelli-like structure of slowly evolving upper voices against a walking bass and with a central duet for violin and cello. In Brüggen's reading I wondered if this movement had taken on rather more gravitas than Haydn might have intended. The Trio has a lovely dialogue between a mournful bassoon and a jaunty double bass, later joined by the viola. The Finale lets everybody have a go, notably the violin. As ever, there were some excellent solo performances from the OAE players, particularly Catherine Mackintosh *violin*, David Watson *cello*, Lisa Beznosiuk *flute*, Andrew Watts *bassoon*, and Chi-chi Nwanoku *double bass*.

Some ten years and a complete change of mood, separates *Le Matin* from the *Sinfonia Lamentatione* (No 26 in D minor). Usually assigned to the *Sturm und Drang* movement that, in fact, is more correctly associated with a literary movement some years later, this work shows Haydn in uncharacteristically less than jovial mood. The mood of the piece is difficult to grasp, perhaps not surprisingly given the Holy Week associations, but there seems to be more than just an outpouring of religious fervour going on in this powerful work. At times the violence of the writing is distracting, notably in the opening movement. Anthony Robson contributed some exquisitely mournful oboe playing of the various Passion chants that Haydn weaves into the orchestral texture in the first two movements. As in *Le matin*, there are a number of baroque allusions, particular in the chorale trio writing that at times sounds just like a Krebs chorale trio for organ – even to extent of some distinctive changes of registration, like adding stops, towards the end. Any lyrical moments in the final Menuet (it is a matter for debate as to whether this Symphony is unfinished) are short lived, with frequent incisive interruptions from full orchestra.

Although the *Sinfonia Lamentatione* is probably more *Drang* than *Sturm*, the Trumpet Concerto in E flat is far removed from either emotion. And for most of the audience, we were now in far more familiar territory. Played on a reconstruction of the new keyed instrument developed by Haydn's friend, Anton Weidinger, this was a remarkable insight into the sound-world of the turn of the

19th century. It apparently took about four years after the concerto was written for Weidinger to perfect the technique to play it in public, and soloist David Blackadder wrote in his programme note that he was trying to imagine the novelty value that a work and instrument like this must have generated at the time. What the Weidinger trumpet lost in martial power and incisiveness, it gained in lyricism and flexibility, both qualities revealed in this performance. The very opening has the trumpet in a far from traditional role. It seems almost reluctant to take part at all, allowing the orchestra to take centre stage and outline the scene. When the trumpet does decide to join in, it does so with a nervous little beep and a fragment of a fanfare (no doubt echoing earlier times) before setting off on a gentle dialogue with the orchestra, so far removed from anything that Viennese audiences might have expected from a trumpet. David Blackadder is very used to the baroque trumpeter's usual role of creeping on to the stage well towards the end of a work, giving a few very loud blasts, and then receiving the sort of adulation normally reserved for top soloists. Now it was his turn to be that soloist, and he seemed rather reticent about the whole idea. Perhaps he was reflecting the different role of his instrument, and at times he seemed to be underplaying a bit. But the audience loved it all and he got his well-deserved adulation at the end. The concluding cadenza showed just what the added valves could do, with explorations of various registers and some sweet little slithers up to notes. Blackadder also used the playing position of the trumpet well, slightly changing it between phrases to give contrasts of tone and colour in various parts of the audience.

As Richard Wigmore pointed out in his comprehensive programme notes, the concluding Symphony, No 102 in B flat, should have the nickname of *The Miracle*, but for some unaccountable reason that has been attached to the wrong symphony – No 96. The miracle in question was the collapse of a chandelier onto the centre of the stalls of London's Haymarket Theatre that happened just as the occupants had moved forward from their seats to watch Haydn take his seat at the pianoforte to direct this work. And that raises a specific point about this performance. Where was the pianoforte? Although we had a harpsichord in the two early symphonies, and despite the very clear indication from contemporary sources that Haydn directed this work from the pianoforte at its premiere, pianoforte was there none! It seems an unusual slip up for the normally meticulous Brüggen and OAE. The first movement of this work show Haydn at his most complex and intense, although things relax considerably by the time we reach the forthright Menuet and jovial Finale. The sensual Adagio shows Haydn as the colourist, with muffled drums and muted trumpets adding to the impressionistic feel. David Watkin's attempt to turn this movement into a cello concerto were just irritating – why do cellists feel the need to come over all Du Préish at moments like this? It was difficult to work out just what conductor Frans Brüggen had added to the proceedings. I have not seen him in rehearsal, but he so often gives the impression in concerts of being a bystander, just letting the OAE play in automatic pilot – something they fortunately do extremely well.

The Corelli anniversary celebrations continue with the inclusion of two of his works in the sell-out concert by The Academy of Ancient Music (St John's, Smith Square, 17 February). These were Nos. 5 & 7 from his celebrated Opus 6 Concerto Grosso collection, written for performance by huge orchestras in Rome. Although much smaller forces were used on the night, something of the grandeur of Corelli's original conception was revealed, particularly in the opening movements. Corelli's sense of contrast harks back to traditions from the earlier part of the century, but still sound fresh in his own creations. Quickly switching from lyricisms to virtuosic drama via academic fugal writing and the occasional dance, there is always something surprising awaiting the listener. Despite the runaway train momentum of the final Allegro to No. 5, it was refreshing to have a quiet ending. Muffat describes hearing these works in Rome, noting the frequent contrasts of speed and volume that ravish the ear. His own Sonata No. 2 in G minor, from *Armonica tributo* is his tribute to Corelli, in whose house he had performed during his visit to Rome in 1681. Muffat also bought a considerable French influence to his Sonatas, as he did with his keyboard music, and this was particularly evident in the broadly arching opening.

The influence of Corelli on English music is well documented, not least in opening of the flood gates for Italian performers, including Geminiani, whose Concerto-Grosso arrangement of Corelli's violin sonata Op. 5 No. 2 was played. Although a number of musical theorists criticised Geminiani's 'reheating' of Corelli's music, they found a niche market in England, a market that continued well into the 19th century. I am not sure if the last chord is indicated in the score as to be played quite as punchily as it was, but this has become something of a house style for the AAM under Andrew Manze (this was his last London concert with them). Punchy chords also featured in Giuseppe Torelli's Concerto in A minor for 2 violins (Op. 8 No. 2). Torelli worked in the vast basilica of San Petronio in Corelli's birthplace, Bologna, and extended the language and structure of Corelli's concertos by introducing the three-movement form that was to dominate music for the following 200 years, influencing Vivaldi and Bach along the way. The whirlwind opening for 2 violins gave Andrew Manze and Rachel Podger a chance to show their wares and gives me a chance to counter my horse-whipping of Manze in the last issue of *EMR*. When put in this context, as opposed to a solo role, he usually does manage to behave himself, more or less. There was none of the silliness that spoilt, for me at least, his solo Wigmore Hall concert, and it was a relief to hear. Both he and Rachel Podger are, of course, consummate musicians and capable of the highest degree of virtuosity, but both, on the basis of this performance at least, generally showed the sense to know how to use that virtuosity.

Vivaldi's homage to Corelli is, of course, his Trio Sonata in D minor, *La Folia*, a reworking of the Folia variations that conclude Corelli's Op 5 sonatas. Of course this piece always brings out the showman in violinists, so I will forgive the Manze/Podger duo a bit of silliness in this piece. Rather like a fiery couple of lovers covered in massage oil, they slithered all around the notes (and each other), slipping and sliding their way through some rather naughty chromaticisms in a performance that bought the

house down. In some of the gentler moments, William Carter made several attempts to turn it into a *ménage à trois* with a series of counter melodies on theorbo that just didn't fit – he clearly was not up to joining in the fun.

Although Bach is somewhat removed from Corelli, the Italian influence runs through much of his music, not least the Concerto in D for two violins (BWV1043), a piece that stole the thunder from Corelli and his followers by standing head and shoulders higher than anything we had heard before in this concert. Somehow pulling together all the accumulated music from generations earlier, from the wild extravagance of Corelli to the more structured simplicity of Torelli, Bach transcends the merely technical to produce music of true Enlightenment. Bearing in mind some of my comments last month, I must say that the Largo showed how it is possible to play with extremes of expression whilst staying within the bounds of normally accepted historically inspired performance. It was also good to hear two independent voices from the violin soloists – the subtle difference in phrasing of similar passages gave a musical depth that can be missing when soloists try to imitate each other too closely. After 6 or 7 years as Associate Director of The Academy of Ancient Music, Andrew Manze is to become Artistic Director with the English Consort, where I am hope he will continue to do naughty things. However exasperating he can be to this po-faced reviewer, he is a breath of fresh air.

I have enthused about Matthew Wadsworth's theorbo playing ever since I first heard him play in the bowels of the Royal Academy of Music some years ago, so it was lovely to see him achieve what is possibly a first – a solo theorbo recital at the Wigmore Hall (21 February). At least, the first half was completely solo and, with all due respect to the players that joined him after the interval, I think most of the audience would have been happy for him to have continued solo throughout. Matthew Wadsworth really is a quite extraordinary musician. His ability to vary the tone and texture of individual notes and to get into the heart of the music is exceptional. He also has an enormous ability to draw an audience into his own world of sightless music. This was apparent right from the start, which featured one of his characteristically lengthy periods of silence. At times this can become unbearable, as we sit surrounded by the noise of silence. But then a single low note is sounded on the theorbo and all attention becomes focussed on the music. Most of the first half was of music by Alessandro Piccinini's *Intavolature di Liuto e Chitarone, Libro Primo* of 1623, and contrasted Toccatas with other styles of music. The opening Toccata XIII was exploratory in style, and was followed by the *Partite Variate sopra La Folia*. The second Toccata (X) was more organised, with some teasing interplay between various motifs. Particularly noticeable in this piece was Wadsworth's ability to let individual notes sing out amongst the surrounding texture. He uses the whole length of the soundboard, producing a wide variety of tone as he approaches or moves away from the soundhole. After the interval he was joined by Gary Cooper harpsichord, Mark Levy lirone, viola da gamba & violone, and Eligio Quintero guitar, for works by Kapsberger. Mark Levy also gave a stunning solo performance of three pieces from Diego Ortiz's *Tratado de glosas*, and Gary Cooper added several of his own ideas,

including an improvised introduction, to Bernardo Storace's rollicking *Ciaccona* in C. But it was Matthew Wadsworth that we had come to hear, and the Kapsberger works included a piece that has become his theme tune, the deliciously simple *Arpegiata*. The repetition of these simple four note arpeggios are all that it takes to demonstrate the sureness of tonal colour and musical insight of a fine musician. (see also p. 19)

BACH IN HALIFAX

Peter Holman's performance of the supposed second version of Bach's *St John's Passion* was performed by the Leeds Baroque Chorus and Orchestra with authority but less than usual drama at St John's Church, Halifax, on the afternoon of Sunday 16 March. The substitutions that remove a number of the more anguished tenor arias, besides the earlier opening chorus, depend strongly on the expert delivery of the movements specific to the 1725 version if these are to make their maximum impact, and on this occasion the impression strongly enhanced by a persuasive Evangelist was somewhat less immediate overall in the adjustments dating from the year of Bach's chorale cantatas. Nevertheless, we are lucky to be accorded opportunities to hear this best-documented *St John Passion* at all, when even the NBA relegates it to Appendix status in the late Arthur Mendel's otherwise dependable score. A rather better account of the work in this version was conducted by Peter Holman in Alcester Parish Church in 1996/7. Perhaps we can look forward with pleasure to even more imaginative versions of the two Bach Passions in the future.

Stephen Daw

We will print next month an article by Peter Holman on the 1727 version of the *St Matthew Passion* that he is using for his performance with his Essex Baroque forces. The topic of editions of the *St John Passion* is discussed above on p. 3. CB

CORRECTIONS TO HAYDN'S ENGLISH TRIOS

In Issue 38, pp. 14-15, the '7' for footnote 7 does not appear in the text, and the last footnote should not have read 'loc. cit.' but 'unpublished material housed at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna'. Derek McCulloch

A valuable original Baroque Violin belonging to Birmingham Conservatoire was taken during a burglary of a private Residence in North London on Thursday 13 March 2003. Please contact Martin Perkins at Birmingham Conservatoire if you have seen this instrument.
Baroque Violin by Thomas Perry, ca. 1770
Dark brown, branded 'Thomas Perry' on the button
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Martin Perkins, Birmingham Conservatoire
 Paradise Place, Birmingham B3 3HG
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 martin.perkins@uce.ac.uk

AIM MOVES

Last summer, the publications of the American Institute of Musicology were acquired by A-R Editions. From the performers' viewpoint, the series most likely to be used is *Corpus mensurabilis musicae* with 109 sub-series, some containing many volumes, including complete works of composers like Dufay, Fayrfax, Gombert, Willaert, Clemens non papa, Arcadelt, Verdelot, Rore, Wert and G. Gabrieli, and editions of sources like *The Old Hall MS*. Prices seem to have gone up a bit (but I am comparing them with a catalogue nearly a decade old!) Other series include the *Corpus of Early Keyboard Music* (mostly 17th-century), *Musicological Studies and Documents*, *Corpus scriptorum de musica* (mostly medieval), *Renaissance Manuscript Studies* and the more-or-less annual *Musica disciplina*. (King's Music can take orders or enquiries for any of these.)

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Mouton: Ave Maria
in vocum cantiones centum (1541), No. 46

Petreius's *Trium vocum cantiones centum* (1541), No. 46

CD REVIEWS

MEDIEVAL

Gautier de Coincy *Miracles of Notre-Dame*
The Harp Consort, Andrew Lawrence-King
Harmonia Mundi HMU 907317 70' 07"

Last November I welcomed a fine recording of Gautier de Coincy from Philip Pickett and the New London Consort (Decca 360 794-2). The sort of detailed comment I made there on how the sources were treated is irrelevant here, since the AL-K approach is much more free, in accord with the improvisatory basis of so much of his music-making. There is enormous imagination, vigour and vitality on display here from an ensemble of ten singers and seven players, and it isn't particularly helpful to look out the 1959 edition by Jacques Chailley as a guide to what one hears. Were this the only version on disc, I'd recommend it with caution – there are some sounds I can't believe to be 13th-century; but it offers an enjoyable extreme of possible interpretations – try Ian Harrison's beautiful solo shawm playing on track 17, for instance. There is an excellent booklet note (offering our attentive reader the challenge of working out how old AL-K is), with translations into French and English supplemented by German and Spanish on the www: why no Italian! CB

O Roma nobilis Music, songs, voices of a medieval pilgrimage Ensemble Orientis Partibus, Gruppo vocale Armoniosoincanto, Franco Radicchia, dir. 58' 52"
Bongiovanni GB 5613-2

This is an anthology of songs linked with pilgrimage, ending with the oldest (the title piece) and including some Alfonsine *Cantigas* and songs from the *Llibre Vermell* of Montserrat. I'd have preferred an introduction that said more about the words and music or how the performers decide to interpret the sources and less about the philosophy of reviving the past; this is in Italian and English*, but the translations are only in Italian. The Ensemble Orientis Partibus (risky name, since one is tempted to call them 'The Asses') are a skilled group of seven, two of whom sing; an additional six female singers are supplied by Armoniosoincanto (easier to read if hyphenated, as accidentally happens in our heading). I would have enjoyed this more if I had listened to it before the Gautier; in comparison, it is somewhat stolid, with the girls' group offering the most pleasing sounds. CB

* with trecento translated as 300s, not 14th century.

15th CENTURY

Binchois *Chansons, Missa Ferialis, Magnificat* Clemencic Consort, René Clemencic dir. 52' 12" (rec 1979)
Musique en Wallonie MEW 0209

The opening *Mon cuer chante* with over-emphatic alto and percussion is enough to put anyone off, but it is worth persevering since this is followed by a moving instruments-only *Triste plaisir*. As the booklet note by Philippe Vendrix tactfully suggests, this isn't quite the currently-fashionable style, but there are so few recordings of Binchois that the reissue is worth hearing. A pity the percussion couldn't have been excised! Incidentally, Clemencic's two altos, Gerard Lesne and Sergio Vartolo, and tenor Dominique Vellard are all now very familiar names. CB

Isaac *La Spagna* Odhecaton, Paolo da Col dir, Paolo Pandolfo gamba, Liuwe Tamminga org. 74' 03"
Bongiovanni GB 5607-2
Massa La Spagna, Quis dabit capit, Tota pulchra es, + Cabezon, Kotter, Luzzaschi, Ortiz, Rodio, Trabaci

This disc is built round a performance of Isaac's mass based on the basse-danse *La Spagna*. This is performed vocally, with good strong if fractionally slow singing, but no attempt to imitate the shawms or crumhorns that one often hears playing the second *Agnus Dei*. The name of the group (composed of ten Italian male singers) is appropriate, since the work survives in a Petrucci print of 1506. The mass is interspersed with instrumental settings from the following century to make a surprisingly effective programme, ending with Polizian's touching lament on the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent in 1492 (which was printed in Petrucci's *Motetti B*, a complete edition of which we will review next month along with a facsimile of the 1501 *Odhecaton*). CB

15th CENTURY

Pierre de La Rue *Missa de Sancta Cruce*
The Clerks' Group, Edward Wickham
Gaudemus CD GAU 307 63'09"
La Rue Considera Israel, Salve Regina III, Vexilla regis; J.de Quadris Lamentations

I was unfamiliar with this particular Mass by Pierre de la Rue and was immediately struck by its attractively extrovert character and melodic adventurousness. The Clerks' Group are the ideal ensemble for this repertoire, a fact partly explained by the photograph in

the booklet which shows them clustered round a single choirbook, allowing them to approach as closely as possible the practice of the Mediaeval and Renaissance performers of church music. This and many years of specific experience with this repertoire leads to a confidently idiomatic and entirely engaging performance of the music by de la Rue. It is just as well that the entertainment factor in this part of the programme is so high, as the two-part Lamentations by Johannes de Quadris seem a singularly dreary piece. It is of course important for a complete understanding of the music of this period to perform such 'miniature' settings as these which make up a substantial part of the repertoire, but which are routinely overlooked by most groups intent on cherry-picking larger more impressive works, but these Lamentations seem to have little to recommend them. Perhaps it was due to my boredom that I also became unduly aware of slight pitching inaccuracies from the two performers. However, although they seem longer, they only take up some 18 minutes of this otherwise excellent disk. D. James Ross

Alta Musica: Ciconia, Dufay, Wolkenstein Ensemble Alta Musica 46' 45"
Carpe-Diem 16260
Grenon, P. de Molins, Morton & anon

Alta Musica comprise four shawms, a soprano and a fiddle. Three of the shawmists also play soft instruments. I'm a bit disappointed that the soprano doesn't sing with the shawms: the only time I've heard it, it worked surprisingly well. This is not exactly comparable with the alta band Les Haulz et les Bas, who improvise much of their material: I haven't checked every piece against the score, but the repertoire here sounds notated, and the booklet lists 14 sources for 20 pieces. So it lacks the excitement of that group. But it's still worth buying, despite the short running time. I'm not being rude when I say that it is quite long enough – it's a very satisfying programme. CB

16th CENTURY

Tielman Susato *Het ierste en tweetste musyk boexken* Egidius Kwartet & Consort, Oltremontano & Guests 130' 33" (2 CDs in a box and sleeve)
NM Classics 92123

A double CD (one for each book) of Dutch songs from Susato's publishing house. The third, *Danserye*, is probably how most people know Susato, so it is very interesting to hear songs from the

less-familiar Books I & II. As Susato himself comments, it is commendable to hear songs in his own language, as a change from the more prevalent French chanson and Latin motet: 'I bid every one of you, O you artful souls with a lust for musical composition, that you should now and again allow yourselves to display your art in songs in our mother tongue...' The music is well-made, and the words alternately from the pens of rhetoricians, and tavern-goers. The renditions are a capella or accompanied very skilfully on viols or cornett and sackbuts, as the publisher suggested. The singing is harmonious and characterful – what a pleasure to hear Dutch, an excellent language for song. The tavern songs were a little too obviously so in their rendition – there are probably ways of communicating jocularity without so much sacrifice of musical precision or line. But the set is well worth having, and useful to gain a more rounded view of Susato – condemned in our minds to live forever under 'the sign of the crumhorn'. *Stephen Cassidy*

Albrecht von Brandenburg und die Reformation Johann Rosenmüller Ensemble, Arno Paduch 73' 23"

Christophorus CHR 77254

Music by Brack, Bruck, Clemens non Papa, Festa/Senfl, Gombert, Heintz, Hofhaimer, Luther, Schlick, Schönfelder

I must confess that the only musical link I could make with the name Brandenburg dates from a couple of centuries later and Albrecht of that ilk (1490-1545) was not a name I had remembered. As Archbishop of Mainz (among other places), his path crossed that of Luther, to whom he was a little more sympathetic than might have been expected. The booklet note is informative on his life and the programme. It is perfectly possible to enjoy the music without following the theme: indeed, at my first play-through without sight of the booklet, I imagined a different scenario of domestic music in a household like that of Luther himself. The ensemble comprises five singers and five players, and the music is a mixture of various styles. Most of it sounds convincing, though the opening motet (Gombert's *Felix Austriae domus*) and Clemens non Papa's *Misit me viviens pater* are too shrill, especially with the soprano's tight vibrato (presumably they are *chiavette* pieces not transposed). About the only piece that is well-known is the Festa/Senfl 'second-hand funeral motet': amazing what a catchily-titled academic article can do to encourage performances! The composer chiefly featured is Schlick; his *Maria zart* is perhaps the most memorable piece here. I wonder if much of the music is a bit slow: the more-syllabic pieces would flow better if sung nearer to the spoken tempo. Otherwise, this is a well-chosen and finely performed anthology. CB

The Medici Wedding: 13 Motets of the Medici Codex Ring Ensemble 67' 03" Alba Records ABCD 154

Music by Divitis, C. Festa, Mouton, le Richafort, Santier, de Silva, Willaert

The Medici Codex is a presentation manuscript of 53 motets well-known to scholars thanks to the sumptuous, three-volume edition by Edward Lowinsky, though it has been called upon for performance less than one might have expected. That is perhaps because the origin of the MS as persuasively described by the editor has been hotly disputed, and there may be some suspicion of the merits of an anthology originally compiled out of music available in Rome or wherever merely on the basis that the first letter of the text had to build up an acrostic. The booklet doesn't mention the academic controversy but does make an excellent case for the music. I've been playing it all day, partly as background, but breaking off from other activities to concentrate on individual pieces, which is a good way to enjoy the 19 items. It is always a problem to judge the merits of pieces one knows against the unfamiliar, but Mouton's eight-out-of four-canonic *Nesciens mater* stood out, whereas (even before I noticed Lowinsky's commentary 'without doubt, the poorest piece in our manuscript') the anonymous *Confundantur superbi* was notable as weaker than the rest of the programme. The performances are effective, though the absence of high voices in Willaert's *Virgo gloria* shows some weakness in the lower ones – but not enough to prevent me recommending this disc very strongly. CB

*Incidentally, I would welcome comment from singers who know *Nesciens mater* whether they prefer a score with the parts arranged in pitch order or set out with the two sets of canonic parts as separate choirs. I've tried the latter: it seems logical, but I find it confusing to relate it to what I hear.* CB

17th CENTURY

Allegri Miserere mei The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, George Guest dir 73' 16" (rec 1988)

Meridian CDE 84163

+ Agazzari, Anerio, Antonelli, Frescobaldi, Landi, Orgas, Palestrina, Quagliati

This is an intriguing anthology, and even discounting the over-recorded *Miserere* (the attribution of the edition to the conductor doesn't imply any difference from the usual post-war English version), there is an hour of post-Palestrinian Roman music assembled by Graham Dixon, the writer of the booklet (printed in minute type). I'm not sure that the St John's Choir is ideal; from what I've read, most Roman choirs were pretty small, if not one-to-a-part. But George Guest always produced lively and strong performances, and makes the best of the handicap. From our viewpoint, this is a

better memorial to him than some of his more famous performances. CB

Banchieri L'organo Suonarino Paul Kenyon (1524 Facchetti organ, San Michele in Bosco, Bologna), Coro Tactus 49' 16" Tactus 60202

This is one of the worst CDs I have ever heard. Both playing and singing are dreadful. The player wallows in what might be inappropriate mannerisms, but what I fear are often just examples of inaccurate and scrappy playing. He seems incapable of keeping to any sense of pulse, and the main singer has similar problems with pitch. Perhaps wisely, they have chosen not to say anything about themselves on the booklet notes, although there is a photo that I can throw darts at. All this is most unfortunate as the programme of the CD is potentially an interesting one. Banchieri, organist at the church in Bologna where this is recorded, wrote his *L'Organo Suonarino* in 1605 in response to Clement VIII's *Caerimoniale Episcoporum* of 1600. The first part of the (mercifully short) CD is a reconstruction of a Mass setting and the rest is short and relatively inconsequential organ solo pieces which are not treated as seriously as they need to be. *L'Organo Suonarino* is an important document, particularly for its instructions on the use of the organ in its liturgical context. It includes, for example, specific occasions on which the organ should not be played – unfortunately, this CD is one such occasion.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Buxtehude Sacred Cantatas Emma Kirkby, Suzie LeBlanc, Peter Harvey SSB, The Purcell Quartet 75' 33" Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0691

BuxWV 12, 38, 47, 48, 56, 60, 73, 94, 174

This is an excellent anthology of Buxtehude's small-scale vocal pieces. The varied programme includes Italianate outpourings (*Cantate Domino*), a piece on a basso ostinato (*Herr wenn ich nur dich habe*) and one of his few settings of a chorale (*Jesus meine Freude*). There is also the meditation on death, *Ich habe Lust abzuscheiden*, where the lilting lyricism creates a mournful sweetness. The three singers on this disc make an ideal ensemble; in the duets for two sopranos, the voices of Suzie LeBlanc and Emma Kirkby intertwine and blend perfectly. The recording is close, giving expressive effect to every detail and allowing a focus on timbre and tone. The booklet claims the pitch is A=415 but it is actually a semitone higher, which gives a better tessitura for the bass in *Mein Herz ist bereit* although still considerably lower than Buxtehude's pitch in Lübeck. Having said that, we do not know where these chamber pieces were originally performed and currently

I am investigating one likely venue, a salon of noble ladies at the Stockholm court. This disc is a fine advocate of the repertory and has spurred me on to do more research on the performing context. Perhaps The Purcell Quartet will now investigate the vocal music of other composers from the Baltic region, such as Kaspar Förster, Johann Theile or Johann Valentin Meder. *Stephen Rose*

D'India *Madrigali e Canzonette* María Cristina Kiehr, Concerto Soave, Jean-Marc Aymes 64' 57'
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901774
+ keyboard pieces by de Macque, Mayone & Trabaci

I have written before of my admiration for María Cristina Kiehr, and d'India displays her talents well. Her evocation of a nightingale (*Odi quel rosignolo/ Mormora seco al quanto*) illustrates the full technical repertoire of what this singer – and this composer – can do, and such skills are used sensitively and effectively throughout the performance. The strophic *canzonette* are charming, with some unusual intervals – 7ths and 9ths – and quirky harmonic shifts, but they are for the most part given intense treatment, as suits Kiehr's voice, though she can also throw off a song lightly, as in *Un di soletto*, where the interest is sustained just long enough through variation of tone and ornamentation, though a tinge of sadness still seems to hang in the air. The monodic madrigals such as *Infelice Didone* are where Kiehr really comes into her element – highly expressive, and contrasting the utmost tenderness with raging fire (*Venite, o furie...*). She can transport a single note from one extreme of emotion to another, or transform an interval on repetition (*Cada... cada... cada...*) while always maintaining a creamy smooth line and beautiful control. Somehow she manages to make the difference between a minor and a major third absolutely ravishing – her minors are so tragic! This fine singer is epitomised by *La Virtù*.

The instrumental playing is, on the whole, very attractive and supportive of the voice, and there are some lovely instrumental verses to pad out the songs. Occasionally the theorbo and keyboard playing is a little heavy and clunky, but no doubt that is deliberate, for example to emphasise the weirdness of Mayone's chromatic toccata, apparently played in virtual unison on harpsichord and organ. In Trabaci's *Gagliarda*, the transitions between duple and triple time are smooth, but the hemiolas are all punched out rather heavily. There is no list of players or their instruments, but an imaginative variety of combinations of continuo instruments is used, to good dramatic effect and in appropriate style. The first song opens with a wonderful

instrumental sigh, lasting half a minute, presumably improvised. There is an amazing descending flourish at the end of *Mentre che 'l cor* which sounds almost sitar-like. The instrumental items are well-chosen to set off the songs; it is just a shame that no instrumental music by d'India survives. *Selene Mills*

Gibbons *O clap your hands: Sacred music*
The Choir of Manchester Cathedral, The Rose Consort of Viols, Jeffrey Makinson org, Christopher Stokes conductor & org

Herald HAVPCD 278 63' 31"
Almighty and everlasting God, Behold I bring you glad tidings, Glorious and powerful God, Grant O Holy Trinity, Great Lord of Lords, Hosanna to the Son of God, O clap your hands together, O Lord in thy wrath, O thou the central orb, See the word is incarnate, This is the record of John, We praise thee O Father; Organ: A ground, Fantasia; Viols: Four-part Fantasia

A warm welcome to the idea behind this recording, and to its execution. The choir has a fine robust, forward treble sound, and sings expressively with good articulation of the words. The music itself is outstanding. The organ solos are beautifully played with a clear-sounding, articulate approach which gives them a domestic rather than a liturgical feel. The Rose Consort plays with characteristic expressiveness one of the four-part fantasies, the great bass making a lovely nutty sound, and accompanies the choir and its soloists in several verse anthems, the most famous of them *See, see the word is incarnate, This is the record of John*, as well as *O thou the central orb*, and *Glorious and powerful God*. Here I have some reservations. It has been said that viols might not have been used in church, but to accompany devotional performances at home, and this could explain why these performances work less well than, for example *We praise thee O Father* accompanied by organ instead of viols. Here the detached, liturgical style is entirely suitable. However, the same approach with the viols sounds precious, obedient and over-formal, particularly from the soloists. I went back to my 10-year-old Amon Ra performance of some of the same pieces by the Rose consort with Red Byrd – 'old-speak' and perhaps a bit rip-roaring, but so vigorous and full of life. However the Choir's performance is never less than very good, and in the full anthems in particular, is exciting in its brilliance and expressiveness.

Robert Oliver

Kapsberger, Piccinini 14 *Silver Strings*
Matthew Wadsworth theorbo, Gary Cooper organ, hpscd, Mark Levy gamba, lirone, violone
Deux-Elles DXL 1044.

Kapsberger and Piccinini, those two great exponents of music for solo chitarrone in

early 17th-century Italy, between them created an extraordinary world of extravagant sounds, grandiose gestures, with a rarefied atmosphere of bittersweet harmony, where moods alter drastically and unpredictably, asymmetrical, unconventional, outrageous, yet extremely beautiful. It is utterly baroque. Matthew Wadsworth offers a very convincing interpretation. His playing is graceful, expressive, unhurried, slick, clean and accurate, with considerable variety of tone. His theorbo was made by Klaus Jacobsen.

The CD begins with a deep, throaty thwack on a low A, an octave below the bass stave, (and actually an octave below the A minor chord as notated in the tablature), announcing the start of Toccata IX. Kapsberger provided a figured bass accompaniment for many of his pieces, and here we have the eerie combination of organ and lirone, sustaining the slow-moving harmony in the background, while the theorbo weaves a patchwork of broken chords, lushly spread chords, super-fast slurred scales, campanellas, and a motley assortment of rhythms. In Toccata X the theorbo is accompanied by the organ alone. The two instruments work well together, each providing what the other cannot: sustain on the organ, and attack on the theorbo. The viol provides a good foil in Kapsberger's *Ballo Primo*. Less successful is the harpsichord in the Passacaglia in A minor, which blends less well, and its exuberance sometimes overshadows the theorbo.

According to Matthew Wadsworth, who wrote his own interesting and informative booklet-notes, Piccinini intended to provide a separate continuo part for his theorbo solos, yet none survives. The solos by Piccinini on the CD are not accompanied. His interpretation of the chromatic Toccata III is particularly expressive, as he weaves his way through Piccinini's various shock tactics. The CD ends with Kapsberger's gently swaying *Canario*, the theorbo's variations supported first by some tasteful plucking from Mark Levy's viol, and joined later with a nice back-up from Gary Cooper's harpsichord. All in all an exceptionally fine record. (see also p. 10) *Stewart McCoy*

A. Scarlatti *Il Dolore di Maria Vergine*, Rosita Frisani Maria, Anna Chierichetti San Giovanni, Gianluca Belfiori Doro Nicodemo, Mario Cecchetti Onia, Alessandro Stradella Consort, Estevan Velardi, 143' 23" (2CDs plus CD ROM) Bongiovanni GB 2324/5-2

This outstanding performance of one of Scarlatti's most religiously and musically inspired oratorios is beautifully presented by Bongiovanni. It comes accompanied by a CD ROM containing a facsimile of the score (I RcsG MS Mus 115) and with a booklet featuring a fine analysis of the

structure and content of the piece by Lino Binachi as well as an essay on the work's sources and musical affinities by Velardi himself. Scarlatti wrote *Il Dolore di Maria Vergine* (listed in New Grove as *Le vergine addolorata*) in 1717 and though representative of his mature compositional style it stands out even from so remarkable a corpus by virtue of its astonishing emotional intensity and the subtlety with which the composer uses his predominantly string orchestra. Trumpet and oboe appear to occasional, telling effect, most especially when news of the condemnation of Jesus to death on the cross is signalled by a mournful D on the solo trumpet which announces and confirms a sentence that must, in the mind of a believer, both torture and redeem. The fact that the dramatic theme of the oratorio is drawn most centrally around the character of Mary, who is most movingly sung by Rosita Frisani, should not allow us to forget the admirable contribution of the other three members of the cast, who represent St. John and two priests of the temple, divided from each other by their opinions on the guilt or innocence of the figure of Jesus. Velardi directs the period-instrument players with an attention to style and detail which is at least equal to that of any better-known international specialist in baroque performance. If the Passions of Bach provide a musical innation of the spirituality of Lutheran Germany, then this wonderful oratorio by Scarlatti, so different yet no less deeply felt, seems to occupy, if not exclusively, an equivalent place in the musical heritage of Catholic Italy. We are indeed fortunate that here it receives so assured a presentation by artists who clearly understand and can so perfectly convey its import, both musical and religious. This is an essential buy for all collectors of baroque vocal music and may even prove a classic in the history of such recordings.

David J Levy

Steffani Duetti da Camera Rossana Bertini, Claudio Cavina, S Ct, Ensemble Arcadia, Attilio Cremonesi, 57' 50"
Glossa GCD 2K0902 ff (Recorded 1994)

Do not miss this mid-price reissue of seven of Agostino Steffani's exquisite chamber duets. The singers, soprano and countertenor, are first rate as they intertwine in a succession of rich harmonies, taut suspensions and telling dissonances, accompanied by an ensemble of harpsichord, gamba, harp and theorbo, each of whose players also provides a tastefully improvised prelude of his or her own between and before the vocal items. Steffani was an exceptionally accomplished man – a diplomat and churchman as well as a distinguished composer – and also, as an Italian based for most of his long life (1654-1728) in Germany, a musician more than usually open to foreign, mostly

French, influences. In these duets, it is the Italian style that predominates in a form of composition that Steffani made particularly his own. It is a pity that the booklet that Glossa provides, while biographically thorough, neither gives us the texts that he sets nor identifies the various dates of the works' composition; most, I would guess, were written in the 1680s and 90s. If, however, you can forgive this failing you will certainly not be disappointed by what is, otherwise, a most pleasing recital of late 17th century vocal chamber music.

David J. Levy

Le Nuove Musiche Balletto Terzo (Brigitta Borchers *ms*, Sigrun Stephan *hpscd*, Andreas Nachtsheim *chittarone & baroque guitar*, with guest Bruno Aßmacher *percussion*) 68' 17"

Marc Aurel edition MA 981

Italian songs of Caccini and Peri, interspersed by harpsichord solos by Frescobaldi and chittarone pieces by Kapsberger. Rather weirdly, several of the songs are accompanied by a drum – including *Freddo core che in amore*, which in my mind didn't suggest ardent beating. There is a slight bandwaggon-y feel about this, and although braveness of interpretation is to be commended in general, in this case it did not work at all. Brigitta Borchers' voice is clear and has a tone which attracts the ear to the words, so does not benefit from distractions. The marvellous pathos of *Amarilli mia bella* suits Borchers' natural metier. The lighter ditties often seem to trip by with no consequence – a fundamental difficulty and challenge with much of this repertoire. Perhaps a less fussy, ballad-style treatment would be less wearing. The harpsichord playing of Sigrun Stephan is excellent, somehow reconciling the changes of pace inherent in Frescobaldi with keeping a forward momentum. The instrument sounds slightly heavy for an Italian model, but that may be my CD player. The quirky eccentricity of Kapsberger is brought out with great style by Andreas Nachtsheim.

Stephen Cassidy

Zion spricht Autore alemanes en el siglo XVII Banchetto Musicale quinteto de violas ARSIS 140157 62' 45"

Music by Frank, Froberger, Grabbe, Haßler, Lechner, Rosenmüller, Scheidt, Schein

The 17th century was perhaps the heyday of the viol, with the wonderful consorts of the English school, its use in France by, for example, Charpentier, and in Germany by such composers as are represented on this recording, which is dated 1998. Some of the pieces are unquestionably violin music, and some idioms transfer to viols less readily than others – the Rosenmüller suites of dances which open and close the recording, for instance. But it is the music

of Schein which really stands out. It is worth buying the recording just for his suite from the publication from which the group takes its name, and his *Canzona* is a honey of a piece – very expressively written (and played) with daring harmonies, all of which work wonderfully. Though it suits viols very well, one could also imagine it being played on cornetti and sackbuts. Hassler, Grabe, Scheidt and Froberger also contribute lovely music, in the form of transcribed vocal or keyboard pieces. The playing is always expressive and uncluttered but the balance bothered me at times. The trebles are often pushed into the background by a rather boomy tenor, and there could be more variety of dynamics and intensity, but the record is very enjoyable.

Robert Oliver

Laudate Dominum: Psalmen und Cantica Meinderd Zwart *cT*, Jan Ernst (1989 Ahrend organ, The Bach Grove, Tsukuba, Japan) 74' 39"
Carpe Diem 26252

This is quite a refreshing CD. The combination of (in this case, largely German) vocal and organ works is one that works well in concert, although it is rarely heard. The programming is sound, although some opportunities have been missed in terms of links between the pieces and in historical integrity (Monteverdi, for example, does quite fit with the rest of the composers). Solo organ works by Bruhns, Bach (including BWV545 with the addition of the slow movement from *Trio Sonata BWV592*), Buxtehude, Reincken and Scheidt are interspersed with vocal works by Schütz, J. W. Franck, Grandi and Monteverdi. The singing is clear and bright, but there is something about it that, to my ears, makes it sound just a little bit out of tune – perhaps it is. If you are used to the sound of English choirboys, you will know what I mean. The playing is solid, if a trifle unimaginative. Registrations are excellent, taking account of contemporary styles. The organ sounds a fine example of the historically inspired organs that Ahrend is famous for.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

LATE BAROQUE

Bach: O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort Johanna-ette Zomer Ingeborg Danz Jan Kobow Peter Kooy SATB, Collegium Vocale Gent, Phillippe Herreweghe dir 53' 20"
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901791
BWV 2, 20, 176

Rather than trying to record Bach's complete cantatas, Herreweghe is more selective and periodically releases a programme united by a textual or liturgical theme. The three 'Cantatas for Trinity' heard here are among Bach's most imaginative pieces, as exemplified by

their opening choruses. BWV 2 starts with stern motet-writing underpinned by a choir of trombones, while in BWV 20 a macabre French overture heralds the arrival not of an earthly king but of the terrifying Last Judgement. BWV 176 begins tersely with a chorus so condensed that there is no instrumental prelude. Herreweghe performs these choruses with energy and richly characterised timbres. The arias are also vivid, whether the oboe trio with bassoon for the righteous clockwork of God's law (track 11) or the trumpet awakening the dead (track 14). Sometimes his sensuous delight in rich sounds can seem at odds with the sheer nastiness of the words. Cantata 20 expresses disgust at the ugliness of the mortal world yet he minimises many of the emotive words such as 'Angst', 'Hunger' and 'Schrecken'. A histrionic rendition would be undesirable, but Herreweghe goes in the opposite direction, submerging details in a wash of sound. That said, this is a most persuasive disc and I have enjoyed listening repeatedly to it.

Stephen Rose

Sounds of Bach Terence Charlston (1994 Tickell and 1978 Tamburini organs, Douai Abbey, Woolhampton, Berkshire) 70' 37" Lammes 150D
BWV 565, 731, 720, 598, 542, 737, 545/529ii, 590, 738, 727, 572.

Bearing in mind the jingoistic Benedictine slant in the potted history of the organ over the past 1000 years, it is interesting that this demonstration of the new Tickell organ has turned to Bach, that most Protestant of composers. That said, the programme is a good representation of Bach's works, with some items of interest that lift it beyond the church-stall sales pitch. One interesting idea was linking *Pedalexcitium* directly to the opening of the Fantasia in G minor, almost in the style of many of the pre-Bach North German Praeludia that start with a lengthy pedal solo. Although the style of the Fantasia (far from North German) is contained and formal and therefore has no need of such an introduction, this was a worthwhile experiment, even if the linking passage added to Bach's unfinished pedal solo seems to go one step too far. Although Terence Charlston is better known in the early music world as a harpsichord player than an organist, his organ playing credentials are sound and he plays with conviction. There are, however, a few occasions where some rather dated ideas on Bach performance surface. The frequent changing of manuals in track 14, for example, is relatively surreptitious, but not terribly authentic. And although there are some good registration choices (for example, track 5) there are also some ideas that are usually frowned upon nowadays, par-

ticularly the tinkly registrations with gaps (8+2, 8+4+1', 8+1, 8+Sesquialtera etc). Although this doesn't always sound as odd as it can do, it is particularly strident on track 18, recorded on the smaller Italian-style organ. The same instrument features a horribly chippy Principale stop, which produces a sound like little drops of water plinking and plonking all over the place. The piece that this intrudes upon is the *Pastorella*, so I suppose it conjures up a suitably English bucolic mood. The detached chords in the left hand of the second movement of the same piece also take a bit of getting used to – on first hearing, combined with the ornamented melody, they seem to do something odd to the rhythm in the opening few bars. Although the Tickell organ owes no direct allegiance to any one historical style, it suits this repertoire well: the main problem is that the pedal is tucked away round the back and sounds distant – it is interesting to hear the player's attempts at overcoming this. There also seems to be some probably unnecessary reliance on coupled manuals and the addition of non-essential stops. But these are all very minor points and should not detract from some musically intelligent and thoughtful playing on one of the better of the UK's recent organs.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Flute Sonatas Barthold Kuijken fl, Ewald Demeyere 64' 06"
Accent ACC 22150
BWV 1030, 1032-5

Attentive listeners to this incomparable repertoire will hardly be surprised to receive yet another outstanding recording from Barthold Kuijken. His highly distinguished new keyboard partner Edward Demeyere (still better-known on the Continent) is so thoroughly competent an accompanist in either of the roles he assumes here that the overall effect is, indeed, an improvement on previously issued recordings. Barthold Kuijken's recent disc of unaccompanied flute music is expertly characterised by a richly sensitive flexibility in matters of pulse and exact rhythm; Demeyere's playing is more strictly disciplined, with results that I find both more enjoyable and closer to my impression of what Johann Sebastian would have liked.

Stephen Daw

Bach Complete Harpsichord Concertos Trevor Pinnock, Kenneth Gilbert, Lars Ulrik Mortensen, Nicholas Kraemer *hpscds*, English Concert, Trevor Pinnock dir 199' (3 discs)
Archiv 471 754-2 ££ (rec 1979-81)
Contains BWV 1052-58, 1060-65

I've been playing these on and off for the last three months without actually listening to them carefully with the scores and

getting round to writing anything about them. I can't continue to dally, so will put down the almost predictable remarks that they are very good, they wear their age well, and they are certainly worth getting if you want an economical package. You may find better recordings of individual concertos, but these will not lead you astray or give you false ideas about the music. I hate to damn with apparent faint praise, but they are the sort of performances that are ideal for such complete repertoire collections: not so self-conscious that they accustom you to the music in so individual a way that they stop you enjoying alternative versions. I enjoyed them.

CB

Bach The Art of Fugue, Pieter Dirksen *hpscd* 75' 32"
Reconstruction by Pieter Dirksen
Bona Nova PCCC-10015

Pieter Dirksen, an accomplished and serious musician well-known in the low countries but far less so here, is indeed 'good news' (to quote the label). His reading of Bach's fugal testament is very capable and sensitively delivered, with the dignity as well as the humour and contrast we would expect of the mature Bach. All of the project is, indeed, a success. The disc includes a *First Version* 1742 (described as 'World Première Recording') with later added movements c. 1747; though a recording which claims novelty as a virtue when this simply denotes what the composer himself seems later to have regarded as not-yet-adequately completed seems to me to be somewhat obtuse.

Stephen Daw

Barsanti Concerti Grossi Op. 3 Auser Musici 47' 11"
Tactus TC 690201

This is the second Barsanti disc I have from Tactus, and it's by far the better of the two. I'm surprised how rarely his music has been revived by English groups looking for concertos of the Handelian period, because they really are very good indeed – the fact that he published them in Edinburgh might, of course, have something to do with that. They are also slightly more interesting than your standard set of concertos because the first five of the set (of ten) use two horns as the wind interest, while the second five have trumpet and two oboes. Despite the German-looking name, Auser Musici are totally Italian and deserve to be more widely known, if these splendid performances are anything to judge them by. I hope the other five concertos are planned for another disc.

BC

£ = bargain price ££ = mid-price
All other discs full price, as far as we know

Handel Rinaldo Marilyn Horne *Rinaldo*, Cecilia Gasdia *Almirena*, Ernesto Palacio *Goffredo*, Christine Weidinger *Armida*, Natale de Carolis *Argante*, Orchestra del Teatro La Fenice di Venezia, John Fisher *cond 129' 49"* (2 CDs in box)
Nuova Era 6813/4 (rec 1989)

The existence of the Decca recording of the complete 1711 version of *Rinaldo* under Christopher Hogwood, with Cecilia Bartoli, David Daniels *et al*, as well as a new recording from René Jacobs (to be reviewed next month) allows this version to be treated with some indulgence. It is taken from a live production at La Fenice in 1989 and was first issued in 1991. (The present issue is not newly processed, but seems to be new promotion of old stock.) The performance has the characteristics of its period and place: a text heavily cut and adapted to fit the cast and the production, a modern orchestra, and full-blooded operatic singing. Vocal lines in *da capo* reprises become wild descants unrelated to the original notation and are occasionally capped with even wilder cadenzas. Most of the music is from the 1711 version, but Goffredo is a tenor as in Handel's much-altered 1731 revival. The most startling deviation from any of Handel's own versions is signalled in Act 1, when Rinaldo's great lament 'Cara sposa' is omitted, with Horne delivering an exaggeratedly weighty account of her next aria ('Cor ingrato') to compensate. 'Cara sposa' then turns up in Act 2, at the moment when Rinaldo, tricked by Armida, believes he sees his beloved Almirena again. Even if one admits some awkwardness in the original position of 'Cara sposa', the move can hardly be regarded as an improvement. But the performance does not seem to me at odds with the spirit of the work, however much it diverges from the letter, and is never frivolous. John Fisher's direction has the intensity and dignity sometimes missing from period instrument performances, yet is lively enough when required. Horne's coppery contralto, even in its power above and below the stave, is a phenomenon in itself. A bonus for keen Handelians is the inclusion of a *scena* added in the 1731 revival – the only substantial new music composed for that version – in which Rinaldo contends with an enchanted wood. It is only two and a half minutes long, but is otherwise unavailable and may tip the balance for anyone thinking of acquiring this version.

Anthony Hicks

Handel Israel in Egypt; Zadok the Priest; The King shall Rejoice Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner *103' 27"* (2 CDs)
Philips 473 304-2 (rec 1990/93) ££

I first wrote 'Good value if you like this sort of thing', which sounds churlish, but

was not intended to be. I generally find that Gardiner just gets carried away by his ability to mould a choir the way he wishes, and it comes out as sounding as almost a caricature. But many like the style, and it is certainly impressive. I was also a bit worried by the extremes in dynamics: the performances must definitely be listened to seriously on proper equipment sitting in the proper place, or the contrast between loud and soft won't work. A pity there was no recording by JEG of the original first part of *Israel*, the *Funeral Anthem*, most buyers are likely to have at least *Zadok*. CB

Handel Händel in Dresden Batzendorfer Hofkapelle *65' 58"*

KammerTon KT 2012
Orchestral works as arranged for Dresden: versions of overtures to *Il pastor fido*, *Radamisto* and *Saul*; trio sonata HWV 392; concerto Op. 3 no. 1 (HWV 312)

Handel went to Dresden in 1719 when recruiting singers to perform in London for the newly-formed Royal Academy of Music, but composed no music there. So is this another ad hoc compilation, with the Dresden visit used as a dubious peg? Happily, no. According to the accompanying notes, the Dresden Hofkapelle in the time of Johann Georg Pisendel (i.e. from about 1712, when he joined as a violinist, to his death in 1755) had several of Handel's works in their repertory, but often arranged or augmented to suit local requirements. The performances here are based on MSS of these versions preserved in the Saxon State Library, and reveal the existence of material which, as far as I know, has not been explored by Handel scholars. It needs to be said, even if altered for Dresden, it may have been based on good sources and have readings relevant to modern Handel editors. The overture to *Il pastor fido*, for example, has the second bassoon part and the Largo/Adagio with solo oboe has the middle section missing in some sources (though the bassoon solo is played on a cello). More interestingly, the second slow section of the first movement differs significantly from the published version, though remaining entirely idiomatic. (The statement in the notes that 'Handel's original five-movement version has here been modified to have six movements' is untrue: the original has six movements, all present here though not in the published order.) It is well known that the Dresden library holds the prime source for the trio sonata in F major, HWV 392, but I have seen no reference to the existence of versions for orchestral performance, one of which is played here. The *Radamisto* overture is extended by five extra movements, while the overture to *Saul* consists of a new Largo introduction followed by a neatly trimmed version of the original first movement. The opening Allegro of Op. 3 no. 1 is

followed by an *Adagio staccato* which seems to be related to the Sarabande in G minor from Handel's first set of keyboard suites, and the final movement, usually felt to be perfunctory, is extended by an extra 23 bars in the Dresden version, again keeping within Handelian idiom. The Batzendorfer Hofkapelle under its Konzertmeister Daniel Deuter sometimes attacks the fast movements a little too violently for my taste, and too much is heard of theorbo and archlute on the continuo, plucking their way even through sections where the bass is silent (or is this implied in the Dresden sources?) Generally, though, the performances are very satisfying. The main interest of this disc must in any case be what it reveals about hitherto unexamined material relevant to Handel studies.

Anthony Hicks

Quantz Concerti from Dresden & Berlin

Jed Wentz, Musica ad Rhenum *56' 21"*
Challenge Classics CC 72059 ££

Last month I took delight in recommending recordings of Quantz and by Wentz – this month I can combine the two. This is another excellent disc, full of High Baroque gems (well, not quite full – plenty of room for another of the numerous concertos, of which I'd have particularly liked to hear one for flute with two violins and continuo). As I commented last week, there's a lot of Fasch in these pieces, but I fear it may be the other way round, as, if anything, the overall structures are stronger and broader. These recordings (made a decade ago) really do not deserve to have been removed from the catalogue in the first place: buy the disc and see what I mean. BC

Domenico Scarlatti La Contesa delle

Stagione Silvia Picollo Primavera, Elisa Franzetti Estate, Vera Marenco Inverno, Vito Martino Autunno, Il Concerto Ecclesiastico, Luca Franco Ferrari *53' 07"*
Bongiovanni GB 2304-2

This is a fine period instrument and historically informed performance of the first and only surviving part of a large-scale serenata that Scarlatti wrote to celebrate the birthday of Queen Maria Ana Josefa of Portugal in 1720. In the nature of such pieces, its theme, the dispute between the seasons, is loaded in advance toward the claims of Autumn by virtue of the fact that the Queen herself was born in September; and therefore the character of that season of mists and mellow fruitfulness is not only privileged by being given two arias, as opposed to one, but each is graced by the presence of obbligato instruments, a pair of horns in the first and a transverse flute in the second. Scarlatti's musically extrovert and effective piece begins and ends with a pair of extended choruses in which the orchestra includes a pair of beautifully

played natural trumpets. Luca Franco Ferrari's continuo group of harpsichord, theorbo and viola da gamba provides firm support in the recitatives that lead into the competing solo arias of Winter, Spring and Summer; and only Autumn, again naturally enough, is granted the privilege of an orchestrally accompanied recitative that prepares the way for its inevitably successful plea for the honours of its supremacy among the seasons. What raises this otherwise typical piece of baroque musical flattery above the norm of such works is Scarlatti's unfailing melodic and harmonic inventiveness which is easily comparable to that which Handel so readily employed on similar occasions. The revival of period instrument performances may have come relatively late to Italy, but groups like Il Concerto Ecclesiastico display once more the special qualities of colour and conviction that Italian musicians so often bring to forms of music that are ancestrally their own and to which they still respond with a spirit of living engagement which is both true to historical evidence and mercifully free from the distancing grip of coldly antiquarian research. All in all this is an exceptionally pleasurable issue that is well worth acquiring.

David J Levy

Tartini The Violin Concertos Vol. 10 Carlo Lazari, Federico and Giovanni Guglielmo vlns, L'arte dell' Arco 125' 02" (2CDs) Dynamic CDS 399/1-2
D19, 20, 22, 83, 94-96, 117

One has to admire the dedication and determination of this ensemble whose labours include not only Tartini's violin concertos (135) but also his rather smaller output for other instruments. This is no small achievement, given the editorial difficulties engagingly described in the booklet) that had to be surmounted and then the technical demands of the music – three soloists share the concertos here recorded. In musical style these are more early classical than baroque – moderate crotchet pulse and triplet semiquavers, expressive chromatic inflexions – and will take some getting used to if you are expecting to hear quasi-Vivaldi. But do stay with it as there are some rich musical rewards and much to admire in the playing, especially the ornamentation, which is florid but stays on the right side of silly, and the sweet but never cloying tone of the soloists. One feature of the interpretations that I did not always find convincing was the deliberate changing of tempo – even after several listenings there are places where it simply sounds as if the ripieno have come in at the wrong speed. But don't be put off by this: it might not bother you. This is a series well worth exploring.

David Hansell

Vivaldi Concerti per la Pietà Ruth Van Killigem rec, Marcel Ponseele ob, Jan de Winne fl, Il Gardellino 56' 58"

Clara MMP 020

RV 428, 433, 439, 441, 445, 535

I enjoyed this CD. The playing is very good, and although none of the pieces is unknown/unusual, they make a nice, balanced programme. The packaging bothered me slightly by highlighting only certain of the players – is the second oboist in the Concerto for Two Oboes not worthy of mention? Or the violinist in the two quartet concertos? Koen Uvin's statement that 'Vivaldi wrote for the most diverse of instruments... or for somewhat unusual combinations of instruments, such as his concerto for two oboes' reveals a certain ignorance of what was and wasn't usual. Indeed, (at least) a good page and a half could easily have been cut from the notes. If you don't have any of these pieces on CD, this is a nice set. If you do, spare yourself the expense of a second set.

BC

Vivaldi Six Concertos for One, Two and Four Violins from L'Estro Armonico Op. 3 Arcangeli Baroque Strings, Michael Sand dir 52' 49"

Meridian CDE 84455 (rec 1991) ££

Nos. 1, 6-8, 10, 11

This American Ensemble produce some stunning playing in six of the set of twelve concertos for one, two and four violins, with two violas, cello, violone and harpsichord, performing them as Vivaldi intended, namely as one-to-a-part concerti. There is much well-thought and detailed shaping of the phrases, with careful adherence to the text, though with some sensitive and stylish added ornamentations. The concertos are sensibly grouped in three according to the keys – namely 8-7-6, 11-10-1, rather than in the somewhat random order of the edition. With the forward sound of the recording, the performances have an immediacy that made me, listening to them straight through, feel as though I was at a live performance rather than a recording session. On careful and repeated listening one may pick out the merest hint of uncertain intonation – what group can achieve the pure tuning of the chromatic octaves in the *largo* of no. 1? Michael Sands' playing is perhaps more directional than the other solo violinists, and the violone may occasionally be a little too prominent in the accompaniment of some solo passages. These are minor criticisms in a thrilling, lively performance which must be thoroughly commended. I look forward to the remaining six of the set.

Ian Graham-Jones

Vivaldi String Concertos Vol. 3 Collegium Musicum 90, Simon Standage 62' 27"
Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0687

RV 110, 115, 118, 129, 134, 142, 145, 151, 156, 158, 161, 166, 167

In contrast to the string octet chamber scoring of *L'Estro Armonico* reviewed above, Simon Standage's approach to a further collection of the string concertos is firmly orchestral. These are all three-movement *concerti à quattro*, works for four-part strings, though whether they were all intended for orchestral, rather than one to a part, is arguable. Those entitled *Concerto ripieno*, however, were clearly meant for orchestra. There are some fine works amongst this collection, those in E minor (RV 134), F major (RV 142) and G minor (RV 156) being particular favourites of mine. Two of the concertos have doubling oboes, and the ensemble uses both harpsichord and theorbo continuo, the latter occasionally impinging in some slow movements with some slightly over-ornate arpeggiations. This is a disc to dip into rather than listen to in one go, as the fuller string textures, combined with the composer's clichés can tire on the ear. There is nevertheless some good playing by a fine English band here.

Ian Graham-Jones

Flute concertos Musica Antiqua Köln, Reinhard Goebel dir 77' 31"
Archiv Produktion blue 471 729-2
Barbella, Mancini, Vivaldi

This CD combines tracks from two previous MAK releases (the Mancini from 1978 and the Vivaldi from 1981), both of which I loved at the time: Wilbert Hazelzet plays three flute concertos by Vivaldi and Gudrun Heyens two sonatas by Mancini, one by Barbella (all three from the Naples manuscript of concertos and sonatas) and a concerto by Vivaldi. The string players also give us Vivaldi's trio sonata on *La Follia*. The performances are as outstanding as they sounded twenty years ago, and will rarely be matched today. Very much a 'must have'. BC

CLASSICAL

C. P. E. Bach Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu Uta Schwabe, Christoph Genz, Stephan Genz STB, Ex Tempore, La Petite Bande, Sigiswald Kuijken 72' 47"
Hyperion CDA67364

The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus (1778) is a bold, beautiful work which holds an important place historically between Bach's father's Passions and a work like Schubert's *Lazarus*. Mozart directed a performance of this noble score in Vienna in 1788. It has been fortunate on disc, thanks to fine, if now elderly, versions under Philippe Herreweghe (Virgin Classics) and Hermann Max (Capriccio), both of whom had the services of Christoph Prégardien in the tenor part. The new CD (made in Bruges last summer) is thoroughly delight-

ful: clearly and atmospherically recorded, well paced, with very fine playing from La Petite Bande and singing of distinction from both soloists and the small, stylish Ex Tempore choir. Christoph and Stephan Genz are equally eloquent in recitative and aria; Uta Schwabe has less to do, but does it very well. Ramler's text is clearly laid out in the booklet, with a note and neat English translation. Above all, it is Sigiswald Kuijken's exuberant and expressive direction that makes this a CD to acquire.

Peter Branscombe

C. P. E. Bach *The Solo Keyboard Music 9 'Damensonaten'* Miklós Spányi, clav
BIS-CD-1088 72' 42"
Wq 54/1-6 (H204-7, 184-5)

Miklós Spányi's CPE Bach project, to record all of his solos and solo concertos for keyboard, has got off to an authoritative start on both fronts, and these six *Sonatas for Ladies*, dating from 1765-6, prove a very appealing series of challenging pieces. The authoritative notes by Darrel M. Berg tell us many useful things about them; the instrument and performances tell us more, and we are left wondering how it is that all six of these appealing pieces have so long remained virtually unknown. It is far from surprising that they recall Beethoven rather than any of Bach's closer contemporaries. It is his delight in exploring the resources of an already highly sophisticated instrument – even directly to appeal to feminine sensitivities – that justifies such a comparison.

Stephen Daw

C. P. E. Bach *Sonatas* Petra Aminoff fl, Annamari Pöhlö hpscd & fp 63' 46"
Alba ABCD 165
Wq. 83, 84, 86, 161/2 (H505-6, 509, 578)

This stylish Finnish pair remind us of CPE Bach's sensitivity as an artist and his distinction as an accompanist. The instruments here are a comparatively modern-sounding traverso accompanied by an undistinguished fortepiano (in H. 506 & 578) and a harpsichord which sounds too long-in-the-tooth to reveal the subtleties of this most exquisite music. But the disc is still worth hearing for its musically sensitive playing of delightful repertoire.

Stephen Daw

W. F. Bach *Concerti* (Die Bach-Söhne I) Karl Kaiser fl, Michael Behringer & Robert Hill hpscd, Gottfried von der Goltz vln and dir., Freiburger Barockorchester Carus 83.304 75' 04"

Concertos for Flute (D), fortepiano (e), two harpsichords (E flat) and Sinfonia (d)

This disc is the third to include the recently re-discovered Flute Concerto in D major, being peddled (somewhat unrealistically, I'd say) as the much-needed boost for WFB's flagging reputation, but the first to claim it as a world

premiere release (cf review of the Carus publication, p. 4). The present disc also includes a double concerto (i.e. the item missing from MAK's *bachiana* disc last month), but I fear they may have decided it was too dull to record. The other two pieces here, though, are very good: the E minor fortepiano concerto is much more than a watered-down effort for an aristocratic patron and demands some superb playing, and the D minor sinfonia, which Wollny places in Dresden, is excellent – it's slightly strange that he doesn't mention the strong resemblance of a passage in the slow movement to the *Lachrimosa* of Mozart's Requiem. Von Der Goltz and his orchestra are in superb form, especially in the flute concerto.

BC

Ramón Ferreñac *Musica d órgano para quarto manos* José Luis González Uriol and Jesús Gonzalo López organs (1802 Julián de la Orden and Fernando Molero organ, Santa María de Ateca, Aragón)
Arsis 4110127 64' 22"

The repertoire on this CD might be a little late for many *EMR* readers, although it is certainly fun and could be used to alarm the neighbours. The recording level is quite high, so adjust the volume control before the first chord has a chance to do much damage. Ramón Ferreñac (1763-1832) is, according to the sleeve note, one of the leading Spanish composers of the 19th century and founder of the Zaragozo school of 19th century organ composition – a repertoire that seems to have passed me by. Notwithstanding, all but one of the compositions on this CD are from the 18th century, and all are broadly in the late classical style, with few concessions to early romanticism. Whatever his local reputation, I fear his music rarely surpasses the everyday. Fine for sending people out of church in a hurry, but perhaps not for the concentrated listening that a CD usually supposes. The organ is contemporary with the pieces and does show a move towards the 19th century style. Although the reeds are appropriately fiery and Spanish, there is a general toning down and smoothing out of the timbres of the mature baroque organ style. Most Spanish organs are ferocious enough with one player, but four hands add considerably to the volume. A curious repertoire – I do wonder for what occasion they were written.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Gossec *Chamber music for strings* Helios ensemble 63' 05"
Musique en Wallonie MEW 0208

If, like me, you know nothing more than Gossec's name and some miscellaneous facts about his life and output, buy this superb Belgian disc and put that situation right. There are two two-movement

string quartets, two duos (one for a pair of violins and one for violin and viola) and a lovely little trio. The Helios ensemble play on 18th-century instruments (the cello is a modern copy) and certainly deserve to be better known than they are, as indeed do Gossec's chamber pieces. Since the disc is sponsored by, amongst others, Musique en Wallonie, there is hopefully a good chance that more releases will be forthcoming. BC

Haydn *Twelve canzonettas, Arianna a Naxos* Elisabeth von Magnus ms, Jacob Bogaart pf 70' 39"
Challenge Classics CC72109

Peter Branscombe

The pick of this recital, as well as easily its longest track, is the cantata *Arianna a Naxos*, which Haydn wrote for an unidentified purpose in 1789, originally intending to orchestrate it. Its sequence of recitatives and arias in various moods finds Elisabeth von Magnus at her best: passionate, fluent, and savouring the words in a manner that she less often achieves in the English canzonettas, where she sounds tentative at times, with unidiomatic diction. Jacob Bogaart is a sympathetic partner who relishes the occasional chance to do more than merely accompany the voice. Full texts (with a good translation of the cantata) are included in the booklet, and the recording, though lacking something in intimacy, is rounded and clear.

Peter Branscombe

Lidarti *Musica da camera e concerto per clavicembalo* Paola Poncet hpscd, Auser Musici 53' 40"
Tactus TC 73370r

This is the first recording of cheerful and melodious music from a composer who flourished in Tuscany in the second half of the 18th century. It follows the style of Martini and Jommelli and the finest work is the concerto, which happens to be the only piece available in a modern edition. The performances capture the mood of the music perfectly throughout the disc and there is a lovely rhythmic bounce, enhanced by fine articulation, in the allegro of the duet between the flute and the harpsichord. It is a pity that the notes on Lidarti's life are only in Italian because they contain an interesting amount of detail. The notes on the music itself are translated into English and French and it is good that the locations of the MSS are given.

Margaret Cranmer

Mozart *Complete Serenades & Divertimenti* Consortium Classicum, Dieter Klöcker 492' 20" (7 CDs in box)
cpo 999 822-2 (rec 1973-86)

This compendium of elderly recordings emerges freshly refurbished. They are not period performances, but they will be welcomed by those for whom neat music-

making and an aura of completeness are important. On this question, the table of contents reveals surprising differences between this set and the corresponding volume of the Philips Complete Mozart Edition, Klöcker including a number of doubtful pieces. To my ears, there is some lack of wit and insight in the performances of the greatest of these works; there is efficiency, fleet-footedness and many a neatly-turned phrase, but too seldom does the music smile, or quite have time to relax and enjoy itself. Other listeners may be more generous. The recorded quality is good throughout, if uneven, and there is useful and quite detailed documentation and introductory material in German, English and French. One silly feature is the enclosing of each CD in a sealed envelope, making it difficult not to tear the cover on first opening it; and the ordering of the works is odd.

Peter Branscombe

Mozart Requiem (compl. Robert D. Levin) Karina Gauvin, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, John Tessier, Nathan Berg SATB Alain Trudel *trmbn*, La Chapelle de Québec, Les Violons du Roy, Bernard Labadie Dorian DOR-90310 52' 55"

This recording was made at a live performance in New York nine days after the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001. Not surprisingly, it is an eloquent, deeply moving account of the work. It uses an edition by Robert Levin (evidently not yet published), notable mainly for an attempt to get away from Süssmayr's solecisms – though some will think Levin's revision of the lead-in to the reprise of the *Hosanna*, for instance, is itself questionable (I rather like it!). A well-balanced solo quartet and lithe, strong choir and orchestra (they do not play period instruments) make this an impressive performance, though in a field as well filled as the *Requiem*, it is not an obvious first choice. Good notes, silent audience and well-balanced recording add to the attraction.

Peter Branscombe

The note on the back of the box 'Recorded at a live concert at the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall in Troy, New York [State], as part of the 105th season of the Troy Chromatic Concerts' made me wonder about programme-planning meetings where pieces were only passed if they had the required degree of chromaticism. The 'music hall', incidentally, is a proper concert hall (US usage differs from British) in the upper part of the Savings Bank's office block. We stopped outside it one Sunday afternoon, but it was closed.

CB

Mozart Concert Arias for Tenor Christoph Prégardien, L'Orfeo Baroque Orchestra, Michi Gaigg 77' 09" cpo 999 810-2

This CD contains the eight completed concert arias (including recitatives, where they exist) for tenor, plus two orchestral works to fill the disc: the very first

symphony, K16 in E flat, and the Divertimento in F, K138. Prégardien is his usual stylish self, though his voice no longer has quite the bloom of yore. He is especially impressive in the superb accompanied recit that leads into 'Auro, che intorno spiri', which Mozart wrote for Valentin Adamberger the year after the latter had created the role of Belmonte in *Die Entführung*. The lively, accomplished little orchestra enjoys its spotlights, and provides sensitive and polished accompaniments.

Peter Branscombe

Piccinni Didon Sibongile Mngoma *Didon*, Daniel Galvez-Vallejo *Énée*, Davide Damiani *Yarbe*, Teresa di Bari *Elise*, Angelica Girardi *Phénice*, Antonio Signorile *Araspe*/ *Ombrা*, Coro & Orchestra del Teatro Petruzzelli, Arnold Bosman 126' 08" Dynamic CDS 406/1-2 (2 CDs)

Premiered in 1783, *Didon* was perhaps the most well-received lyric tragedy that Piccinni wrote for his Paris audience. It owed this success to the masterful way the composer combined the melodic fluency of his Italian formation with the vivid use of chorus and orchestra demanded by a French operatic tradition already altered and influenced by the impact of Gluck's Parisian dramas. This is not, as it claims, the first recording of Piccinni's *Didon*. That distinction belongs to a 1991 issue, conducted by Mario Rossi, and published by Arkadia. However that set has long since been deleted and this new production, recorded live in Bari but with minimal audience noise, is doubly welcome both because of the quality of its cast and as a notable example of the skill with which Piccinni mastered the demands of a form of musical theatre quite alien to his roots in Neapolitan opera.

This is a work conceived in the form of extended dramatic scenes in which the typically Italian alternation of aria and recitative is integrated and transcended, not least by the continuous use of a sensitive orchestral accompaniment, in manner embodying the ideals of an operatic style that gives equal weight to musical beauty and theatrical effect. There is nothing in Piccinni's tragedy that quite achieves the raw impact of Gluck's more intense moments; but against this must be set the overall quality of elegiac pathos that Piccinni achieves in his sustained depiction of a heroine doomed to lose both love and life to the destructive association between her lover's personal ambitions and his divinely directed fate. On these discs Sibongile Mngoma is a suitably appealing Dido, while her Aeneas, Daniel Galvez-Vallejo, has a virile musical presence that is equally apt in a work that is thoroughly worth at least an occasional production on the contemporary operatic stage. Piccinni's works are presently enjoying something of a revival in recorded form and this issue

from Dynamic is certainly one of the most distinguished issues in the current commemorations of the bicentenary of the composer's death.

David J. Levy

Piccinni Le Finte Gemelle, Eliana Bayon *Isabella*, Célia Cornu-Zozor *Olivetta*, Valeri Tsarev *Belfiore*, Camille Reno *Marescial*, Orchestre de Chambre de Genève, Franco Trinca, 102'47" (2CDs) Dynamic CDS 378/1-2

Piccinni was at the height of his reputation as one of Italy's foremost composers of comic operas when, in 1771, he presented this lively two act *drama giocoso*. Setting a predictable but coherent text by Giuseppe Petrosellini, best remembered as the librettist for Paisiello's *Barber of Seville* of 1782, the piece combines elements of Venetian domestic intrigue, derived from Goldoni, with a melodic fluency rooted in the best traditions of the Neapolitan theatre. *Le Finte Gemelle* is a consistently enjoyable work that will neither challenge nor disappoint the contemporary listener. Franco Trinca directs with an incisive pace well suited to the composer's style and his four soloists play their allotted roles with a proper sense of what the individual features of their admittedly conventional characters require. The quality of the recording, taken live from performances in Geneva in 1999 but only now released, is acceptable if not exceptional. One need not be a narrow devotee of the byways of pre-Mozartian opera buffa to take pleasure from music as melodious and well-wrought as this, making *Le Finte Gemelle* a good place to start for collectors new to the genre.

David J Levy

Pratsch Chamber Composer at St Petersburg Playel-Trio St. Petersburg 77' 38" Christopherus CHR 77250

This disc brings together all the works by Pratsch that have been discovered in libraries; unfortunately most of his compositions have not survived. The cello sonata is a real find because he uses the instruments in an inventive, concertante style and looks forward to the early German romantic period. Although it is based on the theme of the sonata for cello and basso continuo by Johann Facius, the music and the performance are both dynamic. The rest of the disc is also good and well recorded, although I found the arrangement of Mozart's piano quartet for two pianos less interesting because I missed the timbre and contrast of the stringed instruments. The notes say that a 1793 Dulcken fortepiano is used in Op. 1 sonata, but on the back of the booklet it says that it is played on an 1804 Broadwood fortepiano and I think that the latter is correct. The rondo is definitely performed on the Dulcken and both splendid, expertly

restored, instruments are used in the Mozart.

Margaret Cranmer

Salieri Falstaff Pierre-Yves Pruvot *Falstaff*, Salomé Haller *Mistress Ford*, Simon Edwards *Mr. Ford*, Hjördis Thébault *Mistress Slender*, Raimonds Spogis *Bardolf*, Nigel Smith *Mr. Slender*, Libiana Faraon *Betty*, La Grande Ecurie et la Chambre du Roi, Les Chantres de la Chapelle, Jean-Claude Malgoire 154' 38" (2 CDs) Dynamic CDS 405/1-2

Jean-Claude Malgoire's recording is taken from performances given at Tourcoing in North-Eastern France in April 2002 and is the first to use an orchestra of period instruments in an opera that has previously received at least two more than acceptable entries in the catalogue. The first, by Tamas Pal for Hungaraton, is intermittently still available to those willing to search it out with a little patience. The second, under the directorship of Alberto Veronese with a predominantly Italian cast, was issued by Chandos (CHAN 9613-2) in 1998 and provides a well-sung and idiomatic reading of Salieri's spirited and fast-moving score. I mention these older issue because, despite the undoubtedly advantage of a period orchestra, some may prefer the straightforward approach to the music and the superior sound quality of the Chandos recording to a performance by Malgoire that has many merits but is occasionally wayward in its approach to rhythm and, more rarely, intonation. We know little about Salieri's librettist for Falstaff, Carlo Prospero De Franceschi, beyond the fact that he was active in Prague and Vienna in the final five years of the 18th century and that, in adapting Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, he provided the composer with a text replete with genuinely comic situations and vividly drawn characters. Salieri responded with one of his most accomplished scores to create an opera buffa in which the lecherous and almost loveable anti-hero is repeatedly outwitted and humiliated by his intended victims. In order to maintain the pace of the action the composer kept both arias and recitatives short while reserving a longer, often segmental structure for the frequent ensembles and, more especially, the eventful finales that bring each of the opera's two acts to a conclusion. Everyone is familiar, perhaps too much so, with the fictional Salieri of theatrical and cinematic legend. Fewer have much acquaintance with the less sinister but more musically interesting figure who deservedly earned the respect and affection of contemporaries, including even the notably touchy Beethoven, for his work as a composer and teacher of exceptional talent. Dynamic's issue of *Falstaff* will certainly do something to redress the balance, especially for an

audience who place a premium on performances that at least try to recreate the sound-world of a work's original creation.

David J Levy

Salieri: La Passione di Gesù Cristo Matteo Lee Young Hwa Pietro, Chiarastella Onorati Giovanni, Michaela Scalburlati Maddalena, Roberto Abbodanza Giuseppe d'Aramatea, Wiener Jeunesse Chor, Ensemble Salieri Wien, Giovanni Pelliccia, 110' 48" (2 CDs) Fonè O12

Salieri composed his setting of Metastasio's *Passion Oratorio* in 1776 for the benefit of the Tonkünstlersozietät, a charitable foundation established for the benefit of the widows and children of musicians by his mentor Florian Gassmann. The libretto was first set by Antonio Caldara in 1730 (available from Virgin Veritas under Fabio Bondi 7343 5 45325 8) and had subsequently been employed by many of the best Italian composers of the century, notably by Jommelli in 1749, a particularly expressive version once available in a period-instrument recording from the German label Accord issued in 1984. Salieri's setting is, in every way, a worthy successor to these precursors, and, though the work of a young man, is a profound and sensitive response to Metastasio's text, cast in the style of a mature and dignified Viennese classicism. Salieri's score is richly orchestrated, melodically appealing and marked by a liberal use of a chorus that is foreign to the original text of 1730 but wholly faithful to the religious impulse of the librettist's *azione sacra*. It is, indeed, one of the greatest virtues of Metastasio's poetry that it responds so well to the very different styles with which it was associated, if often in more or less revised form, for a century from the 1730s. This is an issue, beautifully performed and generously subsidised, *inter alia*, by the Italian Ministry of Culture, that can only add to the reputation of Salieri as one of the most important musicians of the classical period. Booklet notes, on both librettist and composer, are ample and informative, if sometimes quaintly translated, making this an issue well worth acquiring.

David J Levy

Sacred Vocal Music from 18th Century Switzerland The Choir of Gonville & Caius College Cambridge, Geoffrey Webber dir, The Cambridge Baroque Camerata, Jonathan Hellyer-Jones dir 60' 20" Guild GMCD 7248

Bachofen, Egli, Meyer, Schmidlin, Walder **The Seasons in Zurich: Choral Music from the 18th Century** The Purcell Singers, Mark Ford dir. 73' 56" Guild GMCD 7255 Bachofen, Ott, Schmidlin

It's a little unkind to compare these two discs with London buses, but just how

often do two such esoteric discs appear on the market at the same time? Shrouded by the mists of time for a couple of centuries, Bachofen, Schmidlin and co. suddenly take the world by storm! In fact, the discs are very different, both in content and in style. Webber uses solo voices from his choir to create a sort of country church feel (that's possibly more an English concept than a Swiss one), while Ford uses his choir rather more. Although there is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach, it does make the sound slightly less focused than the Cambridge College choir. The soloists on the Ford disc sound too professional, if that's not a ridiculous thing to say – there's no hint of the church choir, it's much more a staged performance, where Webber manages to create a sound which could, indeed, be quite similar to what the composers might have heard. Bachofen comes across the best composer. If you're intrigued by the repertoire, try the Webber disc first.

BC

19th CENTURY

Cambini Sei Trii concertanti, Op. 26 Trio Tourte 65' 31" Tactus TC 740302

This recording is not really an *EMR* thing. The three soloists (for that is what they come across as, and none more so than the viola player, who really enjoys his time in the limelight) are very good of their sort, but this is about as far from what we'd consider *HIP* as it's possible to imagine: vibrato that would shake the house down, rubato that almost kills the flow and portamenti any ice skater would be proud of. Not for the faint of heart. BC

Schubert Quatre Impromptus, Douze Danses Allemandes, Fantaisie dite 'de Graz' Trudelies Leonhardt fp 71' 16" Cascavelle VEL 3053

Scholars are not absolutely certain that the *Fantaisie 'de Graz'* is by Schubert, but it is a most attractive work, interpreted with feeling and expression on this disc. There are many fine recordings of the Op.142 impromptus, but I prefer Alfred Brendel's performances on a modern piano; his recording of the fourth impromptu is three minutes shorter than Trudelies Leonhardt's and his slightly wild tempo makes the work exciting and brings it to life. Trudelies Leonhardt performs the first impromptu at a speed that is more of an andantino than an allegro moderato, nearly four minutes longer than Brendel or than Paolo Giacometti's recording on a fortepiano. Not only is the basic tempo slightly slower but she has a rubato that pulls the tempo around rather noticeably at times. However

there is some lovely legato playing in the first and third variations of the third impromptu and she uses the four pedals intelligently. She is also well recorded. The notes contain a potted history of the piano, but the third pedal introduced in 1874 is known as the *sostenuto* rather than the *sustaining* pedal. Margaret Cranmer

Del Amor... Marta Almajano S, Michel Kiener pf 5' 16"
Harmonia Mundi HMI 987032
del Adalid, de Ledesma, Carnicer, Garcia, Robres, anon

Anyone who knows anything about Spanish singers will tell you that they *become* the song they're performing. It's not enough to try to express the words, one has to feel them with every bone in one's body. Marta Almajano, well known to readers of *EMR* for her early music recordings, makes a vivid impression with this latest release of early Romantic songs, in which she's accompanied by Michel Kiener on an 1813 Fritz piano from Vienna. Although she's never shy in the *zarzuela* repertoire for which she is perhaps best known, these passionate songs allow her to put her heart and soul into exploiting her voice to the full, and what a voice! I've heard recitals of Spanish songs by non-Spanish singers and found them quite moving, but it's only when a native speaker gets into character that the real passion emerges. I didn't know any of the music on this CD before I heard it, but there's absolutely no reason why – it's superb! BC

MISCELLANEOUS

Kinloch's Fantasy: a Curious Collection of Scottish Sonatas and Reels Puir a Baroque (David Greenberg vln, Terry McKenna gtr, David Sandall hpscd) Marquis Classics 7 7471-81211-2 7

This collection of music from mainly 18th-century Scottish sources is played with enormous and idiomatic energy by the Canadian ensemble Puir a Baroque (a pun on the name for Gaelic mouth music), but several shortcomings soon become apparent. The overall acoustic is very small, and David Greenberg's violin sounds particularly dry, accentuating his occasional misplaying of notes, which is a shame as his technique is generally deft and engagingly rhythmical. As so often with this type of cross-genre recording, the players take liberties with the music beyond what would normally be acceptable in early music circles, and while the resulting arrangements generally go with a birl, it is hard to picture some of them in an 18th-century drawing room. There are some lovely Baroque ornaments, but there are also broader figures which owe more to contemporary traditional playing

than anything which would have been familiar to the 18th-century Scot. If you like your Scottish Airs with attitude then this is the CD for you, but I found it a bit over the score. D. James Ross

Mermaphilia Zefiro torna 68' 23"
Eufoda 1343
Music by Alwyn, Binchois, Dowland, Encina, Hume, Machaut, Malvezzi, Monteverdi, Portis, da Plaja, Playford, Purcell, Uredé, Vivaldi & anon

This is a collection of songs about the sea, mermaids and sirens. We are all familiar with themed discs whose theme is barely perceptible to the listener; no problem with this one, thanks to the presence of the aquatic sound effects and several bits of Dutch spoken text. It is an interesting blend of processed sounds and 'real' music; but I can't imagine listening to it more than once, whereas the individual performances would have repaid more frequent repetition had they stood unencumbered. The disc suffers from putting all its eggs in one basket rather than being multi-functional. I was impressed by the three singers (with a slightly raw sound that I find attractive) and four players, and on the strength of their *O sia tranquillo il mare*, I'd certainly like to hear them on a less clever disc. The programming groups the disparate music sensibly, with none of the abrupt collocations that the alphabetical list of composers given above might suggest: even William Alwyn next to Dowland works. But waves at beginning and end would have been enough! CB

Proporcions to the minim Trio Viaggio Covello Classics 20204 64' 13"
Music by Baldwin, Bevan, Boismortier, de Bononia, Daman, Dornel, Dufay, Dunstable, Ferrabosco II, Henry VIII, Isaac, J. Martini, Ruffo, Tye, Woodson

This is a strange programme, with rather less emphasis on proportional relationships than I expected, though lots of contrapuntal curiosities: *Ut re mi fa so la* by Damon, Ferrabosco II and Woodson, two *La Gambas* by Ruffo and *Brownings* by Baldwin and Bevin. The order isn't chronological, so it is a pity that it begins with two pieces that are in the minus-one category without their words (*Vergine bella* and *O rosa bella*). The three young players (former pupils of Han Tol at Bremen) play with skill and shape the music eloquently, though by the end I longed to hear some 8' instruments. CB

Despite reviewing some 60 CDs, we still have a fair number which, for various reasons, should have been included in this issue but are left for next month, with another 50 waiting to be sent to reviewers. So there is no shortage of material. There are also several DVDs, which I haven't been able to watch because the control for our TV disappeared for several weeks. CB



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MICAELA COMBERTI

It was with shock and a deep sense of sorrow that many of us heard of the death on March 4th of Micaela Comberti, aged 50. I cannot claim by any means to be the most appropriate person to submit these words, other than that I can claim with some pride to have booked Mica thirty years ago for her earliest jobs on what was then the relatively rare baroque violin. In the intervening years Mica played with great distinction and commitment as soloist and in a wide range of orchestras and ensembles, most notably perhaps with the Salomon Quartet.

Mica's playing was marked by its finesse, sensitivity and technical assurance. If Bach remained her abiding passion, it is her interpretation of the Biber Rosary Sonatas that I will remember most. In her person Mica was a blend of serious and good humoured, assertive (though not aggressive), and yet also gentle to the point of vulnerable. For all her fame Mica remained loyal to those she knew, and was not too superior to play for us three years ago in a concert in the Windsor Fringe Festival held in the cafe area of the Royal Railway Station.

The secular funeral on March 12th at Golders Green Crematorium, comprising moving tributes by her three school-age children, her brother Sebastian and husband Gustav, interspersed with short musical items impeccably played (and sung) by those who had shared their musical careers with her, said it all. The crammed chapel, with all standing space taken, barely accommodated half of those who came to show their respect. The world of early music was there in unbelievable strength, their grief and devastation everywhere manifest.

Mica will be greatly missed by her innumerable friends, colleagues and admirers.

Derek McCulloch



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LETTERS

Dear Clifford,

Picking up on something you wrote in your obituary for Ted Perry, I can say that Hyperion was very much 'the result of a burning, life-long ambition.' Ted was the first to record the Hilliard Ensemble – this was back in his Saga Records days – and I remember him talking both then and later about his plans to build an independent record label. We did three LPs with him at Saga, and then one more when he formed Meridian with some colleagues. When he left Meridian, it was to go his own way, very purposefully, and I recognised in Hyperion the brilliant realisation of those ideas he had outlined earlier.

The first two LPs we made were recorded in a south London school during summer holidays and weekends. Ted's equipment didn't run to a voice monitor, so we had to rely on his shouting the start of each take from the next classroom; this encouraged us to go for whole takes. But, if I'm not mistaken, Ted was also the one at Saga who recorded a number of LPs with singers such as Janet Baker and John Shirley-Quirk, covering a large range of English song including Purcell. I hope someone will research this era properly and bring us the story of those independent or independently-minded record producers who helped shape our musical life more than we sometimes realise, and who had of course a very significant impact on the early music movement.

Paul Hillier

Dear Clifford

Having read with interest your review of J. B. Christensen's *18th Century Continuo Playing in translation* (March *EMR*) I have just purchased the book. In agreeing entirely with all your comments, I would just mention that the 'fine English translation' should read 'fine American translation', for we have to endure the usual glut of quarter notes and leading tones, as well as 'practicing'. What to me was the most revealing feature was the 18th century practice of filling out chords with extra notes (or should I say 'tones'?). Having regarded the second inversion dominant seventh as a 'decadent' chord, to be avoided in baroque realisations, it seems that what would have been given as 6 on the supertonic should be played as a 6/4/3 chord, called, somewhat perversely, the *petite sixte*, or *petit accord*, even though it contains an extra note. Another eye-opener was the practice of adding a 7th and even a 9th to a #5 figure, which one usually assumes to be a straight augmented triad. In connection with your remark about the avoidance of doubling major thirds in 6 chords, I have noted the third doubling seems to be common feature of 18th century realisations (e.g. Pasquali), the only proviso being the avoidance of doubling a third when it acts as a leading note. This is certainly a book that will make me change my ideas about continuo realisations.

Ian Graham-Jones

We haven't quite caught up to schedule: the magazine will be run on the 28th, but the diary isn't quite ready yet. We hope to do better next month.