

# Early Music

## REVIEW

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November is normally a stay-at-home month, but normal work has been disrupted by several excursions. One was pure holiday – a trip to Poland to stay with Mark Caudle and Anna Lesinska, the only musical activity being our joint listening and discussion of the DHM reissues reviewed on page 42. Then came the London Early Music Exhibition. We were disappointed in sales, though there were plenty of people to talk to, and that is the main object of the exercise. A few comments on concerts are included on p. 16. I surprised myself by letting myself be enticed to the Ceilidh on the Friday night and even more by enjoying it; but there were very few people that I knew there, and it would have been more appropriate to have had a Playford Dance session. (I remember vividly the outdoor renaissance dance one night at the Urbino course some years ago with a hundred or two people following the barely-perceptible instructions of a leader in quite complicated manoeuvres to an alta band.)

Home for three days, then off to France in response to a short-notice invitation to talk to the Jeune Orchestre Atlantique at Saintes about editing romantic music – I'd only accepted because I thought I was being asked to talk to a baroque band. I had no time to prepare anything, and a three-hour session was quite daunting. The family insisted on coming too, so we had a couple of enjoyable days with Alan Lumsden, who lives a half-hour drive from Saintes. Someone really needs to visit Alan and record his endless supply of anecdotes of nearly 50 years as musician.

Then just as I should have been putting the last touches to this issue (though the last touches are still nowhere near in sight), there was the clash between the Handel Institute conference on Performing Handel – Then and Now (Nov 26-27) and the National Early Music Centre AGM on the 26th, which as chairman I couldn't miss. The main attraction, though, was a course with Robert Hollingworth which included Gabrieli's *Audite principes* and Rigatti's *Dixit Dominus* a8 and ideally 2 violins and three sackbuts. NEMA's main function now is to publish the *Yearbook* and *Early Music Performer*. A follow-up to its 1999 Conference (whose publication was reviewed in our last issue, p. 31) is mooted for three years time. The Handelians are thinking further ahead to 250th anniversary conferences in 2009. Meanwhile, there's Mozart in 2006: Tallis's turn is nearly over, and he won't return until 2035.

CB

## REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

## LUDFORD II

Nicholas Ludford II *Five- and six-part Masses and Magnificat* transcribed and edited by David Skinner (Early English Church Music 46). Stainer & Bell, 2005. xii + 240pp, £65.00. ISBN 0 85249 875 6

Ludford is a composer who owes his current reputation largely to a recording project, the four discs from The Cardinal's Music issued by ASV. It is probably a first for EECM to draw attention to a recording so prominently, in John Caldwell's general editor's foreword – though had he been referring to an edition, his conscience would probably have compelled him to give full bibliographical details rather than assuming that the reader can trace it. Vol. 1 (EECM 44) was reviewed in *EMR* 93 p. 2 with the concluding remark 'An excellent publication: more soon, please!' A second volume a couple of years later is good progress for a busy academic these days. Vol. I was devoted to works that survive incomplete. Vol II contains the masses *Lapidaverunt Stephanum* (G2 C2 C4 C4 F4), *Christi virgo dilectissima* (C2 C4 C5 F4 F5), *Videte miraculum* (G1 G1 C1 C3 C3 C5), *Benedicta et venerabilis* (G2 C2 C4 C4 F4 F4) and the Magnificat *Benedicta et venerabilis* (G2 C2 C4 C4 Ff F4), all of which are complete, together with the incomplete mass *Regnum mundi* (G1 C1 C2 ? C5): the edition prints what survives (including blank staves when parts are missing – as I recommended in my review of vol. I): the Gloria and opening of the Credo is completed by the editor, since four parts survive, but from then on the top part is missing as well as the tenor, making reconstruction too conjectural for a scholarly tome – but an excellent exercise for students nevertheless.

The main source is the Caius Choirbook, not the Lambeth one which has been issued in facsimile under David Skinner's supervision (buy quickly: stocks are already low) and which he is using to introduce singers to early 16th-century notation. The edition is worth singing from as a preparation for such an exercise, since it removes two hazards: unusual clefs and ligatures (which are written out). The modern clefs of the edition are not always a help, since the original clefs show that three of the works need transposing anyway. I'm not in a position to evaluate the critical commentary, but it seems thorough. I can strongly recommend that enthusiastic one-to-a-part\* singers should club together, buy two or three copies and enjoy singing, not just listening to or reading, this marvellous music. The price may look high, but it is quite reasonable for four and a bit masses and a magnificat, and the print is just big enough for two people to read from one copy.

\*not because the music is intended for soloists but on economic grounds.

## MORE LASSUS MOTETS

Orlando di Lasso *The Complete Motets 13: Motettetta, sex vocum, typis nondum uspiam excusa* (Munich, 1582) Edited by Rebecca Wagner Oettinger (*Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance*, 141). A-R Editions, 2005. xxii + 160pp, \$83.00 ISBN 0 89579 572 8

I've had a couple of volumes of the Breikopf edition of the Motets recently, but haven't received any of the A-R ones since the first couple of issues. I've described the differences of editorial policy in my reviews of the Breitkopf. The most obvious differences in A-R are that the first editions are retained as the prime means of organisation and as sources, and that modern clefs are used. As mentioned in connection with the Ludford reviewed above, use of modern clefs is not necessarily a virtue if singers need to transpose, and the presence of eight high-clef pieces and two ambiguous ones means that the whole volume cannot be read at the same pitch-level. It is confusing to transcribe the bottom part of *Hodie completi sunt* (C4 clef) in octave treble: it will be sung by basses (unless the choir can provide singers with top As for two tenor parts), and reading the wrong clef as well as transposing is an additional strain. While there is some sense in consistency in the use of modern clefs, to adopt a simple clef equivalent without considering *chiavette* is to ignore the type of voice singing each part allowing for the necessary transposition. The volumes are small enough to sing from, though not many choirs are likely to buy multi-copies.

The claim in the original title that the 1582 edition was the first printing of its contents is true apart from one piece, *O gloriosa Domina*. It seems odd to omit it from the edition, since I would have thought that its presence in a publication proceeding from the composer would be a better place than in a miscellaneous volume at the end of the series: it is also a pity that the numbering of the pieces in the volume is thrown by its omission: it should at least have been numbered, and would printing it twice have been a disaster? Marvellous music, though I was struck by a really awkward but prominent phrase in the top part at the end of *O altitudo divitiarum* (p. 99, bars 105-7). The editor doesn't like the Sapphic rhythm of *O decus celsi* (p. 43): I found it quite refreshing. Although I generally disapprove of irregular barring, here it would be sensible to follow the poetic form – i.e. maintain the barring of the first stanza throughout by having a six-minim bar at 8-9 and at the end of the other verses. The introduction has a description of each piece: I was surprised that the setting of 'non confundentur' in *Ad te levavi* (p.112-115) is not compared with the same words in another six-part motet *Timor et tremor* (which evidently influenced G. Gabrieli).

## CHEAP, CHOICE, BRAVE and NEW

'At Ye Recorder and Curtal: Cheap Choice Brave & New Music Editions' is a new name to me, and I was pleased that the editor gave me four titles at the London Early Music Exhibition. They are set up in various series, but I will just quote the order numbers. With its growly pitch, Josquin's *Absalon fili mi* (CCBN 16002) is hardly a 'fine knack for ladies'. Vince Kelly, the editor, does not put question marks round the composer's name in the title, but is aware that the attribution is questionable. The title page lists his market for the pieces as 'voices, viols or recorders', though with two octave-treble and two bass clefs, it isn't as user- (or lady-) friendly as it could be. It is printed a third above the older source (BL Royal MS 8 G VII) and a seventh below RISM 1540<sup>7</sup>, giving an overall range from the low bass D up to the C above middle C. I would have thought that down a fourth from the presumably-chiavette 1540 edition would have been more generally useful. A score and four parts are provided, each part having the music printed twice – not in alternative clefs, which would be useful, but in original and halved note values. My inclination would have been to have put the top two parts in C clefs for viols. Though most plausible scoring at this pitch would be four sackbuts.

Vince Kelly does use the idea of printing parts suitable for varying ensembles in **Thomas Lupo** (attrib. is added above the score but not on the cover) *Fantasia* for 3 bass viols (17002). Here there is one set in the key of the score and three alternatives for recorders. The ascription is plausible; the VdaG Society indexes it as *Fantasy* a3 [no 26]. It's a useful piece to have around in case you ever find yourself just with three bass instruments, and alternative parts give flexibility for recorders.

I mentioned in a CD review recently that **Sweelinck's** psalms were worthy of attention. *Psaume 105*, 'Sus, qu'un chacun de nous sans cesse', is for seven voices (SCHM7, part of a series to be devoted to companions for the Schmelzer seven-recorder piece. It fits the ensemble very well (S S A A/T A/T B B) and parts are provided, though alto-clef alternatives on the back might help viol players who are also playing Parsons (promised in the series). The vocal ranges, though, are less helpful. It's a chiavette piece (G<sub>2</sub>G<sub>2</sub>C<sub>2</sub>C<sub>3</sub>F<sub>3</sub>F<sub>3</sub>) and, despite the concluding bottom F, should presumably be sung lower; with mixed voices sung at pitch it suits S S A A A/T Bar B. There are several other seven-voice settings in the later Sweelinck psalm books. If I could remember her name, I'd put the editor in touch with the English specialist in seven-part music. We have some very fine Willaert a7.

Finally, an arrangement of Bach's A major accompanied sonata BWV 1015 for alto recorder instead of violin (EUT 001). It is transposed up a semitone, which makes it fit the instrument quite neatly, with few changes needed – either putting the solo part up an octave or swapping lines with the harpsichord. Such changes are noted in the score and

part. Vince Kelly ends his preface with the point that, since the recorder is quieter than the violin the trio texture should be more audible. I'm not sure if the acoustic relationship is quite as simple as that, but this certainly provides a worth-while addition to the Bach recorder repertoire. Commendably, a part is not provided for a superfluous accompanying cello.

The music seems to be carefully edited with print large enough for scores and parts to be shared if necessarily. The text of vocal pieces is underlaid in the parts, so they can be used by singers as well as players, though the series feels to be aimed more at the latter. There is one defect: none of the copies contains any indication of how to contact the publisher, and I haven't found a web site. However, he subscribed to *EMR*, so we have an address: 9425 67th Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta CANADA T6E 0N6

## BROADSIDE BALLADS

*Broadside Ballads: Songs from the streets, taverns, theatres and countryside of 17th-century England. Selected and edited by Lucie Skeaping. Foreword by Andrew Motion.* Faber Music, 2005. 168pp, £19.95. ISBN 0 571 52223 8

This good-looking book contains the full word and music of 70 songs plus *The Cheaters Cheated*, a jig from 1664. As one expects from a Citie Waite, there is a good proportion of vulgarity. It ought to have lost its ability to shock now that culture has changed so much over the last few decades and anything can be said in virtually any company, but it still seems to go down well. I've never understood how serious literary scholars can study the texts in isolation, but with a good tune, the ballads are fine material for performance. Only one stanza is underlaid: to sing a ballad you must have the tune in your head anyway, and can usually fit the sometimes-unmetrical subsequent verses without too much difficulty; once you've sung a song a few times, you can treat the verses more freely than an editor might feel he should. Lucie has done her editorial work thoroughly, though it is presented with a light touch. One might perhaps have expected specific sources to be mentioned, but most of them can be chased through Simpson – though (as I think I've written before) *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music* needs to be consulted along with supplement and review by John Ward in *JAMS* 20 (1967) pp 28-86 & 131-134. I like the idea of Lucie studying Pepys's collection of broadsides at his library at Magdalene while sitting at his own desk – though it is strange that one of the best collections of this vulgar material is held by what was, at least in my day, one of the most refined of Cambridge colleges.

Some of the tunes are not at all easy to sing, with wide ranges and awkward leaps: professional, not amateur music, and not folk songs of the sort imagined a century ago to be songs of the people. If the distinction made when I was a student between songs of the people and songs for them, these are mostly the latter. And they are not, of course, unaccompanied modal melodies. All have

underlying harmonies, which are indicated here by chord symbols, playable on any suitable and available instrument. Adding chords to 17th-century songs and dances often goes horribly wrong, but the Citie Waites have been getting it right for, probably, 35 years – don't try to work out Lucie's age, I don't think she was there right at the beginning. The book is a bit large to take along to the local pub on the offchance that someone might ask you to sing', but learn the songs from it and enjoy the contemporary woodcuts, whose stylised forms match the stylisation of the characters in the ballads so well. The format matches Jeremy Barlow's edition of Playford's *Dancing Master* (from the same publisher): both should sit side by side in any musical household interested in the more popular end of English musical culture. If you find the songs look dull on the page, find some Citie Waites recordings to hear how they can come to vigorous and vulgar life.

#### BABELL for VIOLIN or RECORDER

**William Babell Twelve Solos for a Violin or Oboe with Basso Continuo. Book I** Edited by Charles Gower Price. (*Recent Researches in the Music of the Baroque Era*, 140) A-R Editions, 2005. xviii + 82 pp + 19 facs, \$61.00 (part \$13.00). ISBN 0 89579 576 0

This edition falls between two stools. The professional player needs a facsimile (the posthumous edition of c.1725 may have inconsistencies, but it is not unplayable), the amateur wants a solo part and a score with keyboard realisation, while the scholar can manage with either. What we have is a score with two-staves (three when the editor adds his plain version of embellished movements), a separate treble part (which I haven't seen) and 19 pages of facsimile – about a third of the original. There is already a facsimile available from Broude (PF 186, with vol. II as PF 187), so perhaps this (though I disapprove of myself for suggesting it) might have been more useful as an old-fashioned edition with a realisation. The editor has taken great care to tidy up the notation of the original print, though left in a non-modern notation, the player takes it in his stride and has less expectation of consistency. There is a good introduction, with helpful information on performance practice and dance rhythms. Since the edition exists, I will praise it; but it does seem rather a waste of a *Recent Researches...* volume. The introduction could have been printed as an article somewhere – though it would look a little out of place in one of the major musicology journals.

#### THE NEW BACH

**J. S. Bach Aria Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn... for Soprano, two Violins, Viola and Continuo BWV 1127...** Edited by Michael Maul. Bärenreiter (BA 5246), 2005. viii + 4 pp, £13.00.

There is no doubt that the discovery of *Alles mit Gott und nichts ohn' ihn* by Michael Maul in the collection of the

Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Weimar, is a significant event for Bach scholars. It is already available in the Bärenreiter imprint, has a new BWV number and first recording (more are apparently planned) – all of which has happened since 17 May. Over the last fifty years there have only been a handful of finds (namely the Neumeister Chorales, and the fourteen canons on the Goldberg Variations – no vocal works at all) and virtually all have been made by Christoph Wolff (now head of the Leipzig Bach Archiv, in which Maul works).

Part of the significance for scholarship lies in the fact that this is the sole example of an elaborate strophic aria with a fully worked, independent continuo line (with ritornello segmentation) together with a full string ritornello between each verse. Bach contributed heavily to the *Schmelli Gesangbuch* in 1736 and also provided a few strophic arias in the second music-book for Anna Magdalena (begun in 1725). But the present example is really a genre apart and belongs to the Weimar years, just before he began his regular sacred cantata cycle there. It sets a twelve-verse text in honour of the fifty-second birthday (30 October 1713) of the reigning Duke, Wilhelm Ernst, whose name is spelt out acrostically within the first half of every verse. As Maul observes in his preface, Bach seems to have joined into the party spirit by including precisely 52 notes in the continuo introduction, something that will be immensely pleasing to those who seek comfort in numerical messages, however trivial. Given that this autograph is found at the back of one of two printed copies of what appears to be merely a congratulatory poem, one may wonder how many other similar contributions Bach may have made over the years, some such printed texts perhaps still lying in archives with their musical additions hidden within.

In style, this aria has much in common with the secular cantata that Bach performed earlier in 1713 *Was mir behagt ist nur die muntre Jagd* BWV 208. Indeed the aria 'Weil die wollenreichen Herden' (later adapted to become the famous 'Mein gläubiges Herze' from Cantata 68) has much in common with its quasi-ostinato continuo line, and the first vocal gesture is very similar. Bach also employs the modish 'motto aria' approach, by which the first sung line is isolated, then repeated and extended (also used in the aria 'Ein Fürst ist seines Landes Pan' from Cantata 208).

Now that we've learned a little more about Bach's courtly duties at Weimar it may be that other things could be rethought about his life and development as a composer in the fullness of time. On the other hand, it would be interesting to imagine what public reaction there would have been to this piece had it been by Telemann. It is, frankly, not a hugely significant contribution to the Bach oeuvre for the broader public, in terms of adding anything startlingly new to what we have already (and a performance of all twelve verses would surely be beyond the call of Bachian duty, although some, I know, are trying). There's plenty of extant Bach vocal music of stupendous quality that even many of us who claim to be relatively expert hardly know.

John Butt

There is a sort of *Parturient montes...* feel about this. If it had long been known and had been printed in BG and NBA, we'd probably hear very little about it: it would get an occasional airing, but there is no obvious context in which to perform it, especially outside Germany. Even the editor has little expectation of hearing all 12 verses and underlays only three of them. The publication is so slim and highly priced (over a pound per page) that it wouldn't have broken the bank to print the voice-and-bc section four times to enable all the verses to be underlaid. And inclusion of a translation of them would save concert promoters around the world having to find linguists capable of doing the job. There is a de-luxe version, which I have only seen briefly. It contains a complete facsimile (the cheap version reviewed here has the first page slipped in loose – but with a blank verso instead of the second half of the song) and the Gardiner CD (though the song hardly needs a conductor). It is good that it is readily available, but by now the excitement of its discovery is cold news, and as I said at the time, it is a pity that it couldn't be circulated while it was hot. For widespread use, yet a third version is needed with a keyboard realisation. CB

*I have a boxful of other new Barenreiter publications, but they must wait for our next issue.*



## KING'S MUSIC

### Monteverdi

#### Missa In illo tempore a6

This mass opens the 1610 publication that contains the Vespers. It looks back into the past with its use of themes from a motet by Gombert, but to the future in its harmonic control. In most respects the 1610 print is accurate, though the underlay of the Kyrie is very sketchy. I have left it that way.

The original uses high clefs (G2 G2 C2 C3 C3 F3) so would have been read a fourth lower (though perhaps at a higher pitch than A=440). The edition is available in three versions:–

Transposed down a fourth for A A T Bar Bar B  
Transposed down a minor 3rd for mS mS A T T B  
Untransposed for S S A T T B  
Price: £7.50

Gombert's motet *In illo tempore* is also available at the same three pitches at £1.50

Redcroft, Banks End, Wyton, Huntingdon,  
Cambs. PE28 2AA, UK  
tel.: +44 (0)1480 452076 fax: +44 (0)1480 450821

## ¿BACH? SARABANDE

**Johann Sebastian Bach zugeschrieben *Sarabanda con Partite* BWV 990... edited by Rüdiger Wilhelm. Carus (31.990), 2005. 27pp, £9.50**

In his *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach*, David Schulenberg expresses considerable enthusiasm for the piece and concludes 'A significant work, BWV 990 would considerably broaden our view of Bach's early style if it could be shown to be his'. The present editor doesn't push Bach's claims too far. The sources are late and yield no evidence (except for a spurious 'Da mio J. S. Bach') and the style isn't conclusive. It is, however, an interesting piece, with 16 variations more on the bass than the tune, including an Allemanda, Courante, Aria variata and Giguetta so that the set closes as a suite. It's nice to play and not too difficult, so a good separate edition is welcome, though a bit expensive.

## EASY ABEL

We have received five volumes from Edition Güntersberg containing Carl Friedrich Abel's *Six Easy Sonatas for the Harpsichord or for a Viola da Gamba, Violin or German Flute with a Thorough-Bass Accompaniment*. (G501; € is a facsimile of the 1771 edition by J. J. Hummel in Amsterdam – though it is suspicious that the publisher's name seems to be on a paste-on label and not part of the engraving. The sonatas are printed clearly on two staves with treble and bass clefs, with the bass figured, and should be adequate for any of our readers who want to play them – though gamba players will need to read the bass clef. Two copies are included in the price. For those who need a little more help, there is a modern edition in two volumes (Go62 & Go63, each €16.00) with realisation and two parts (in fact, two-staves as in the original), one in alto clef, the other in treble – if you are using a melodic instrument on the continuo line, its player uses the copy the upper instrument isn't. There is another version – two volumes with the sonatas transposed by various amount to fit the transverse flute (Go78 & Go79, each also €16.00) laid out in the same manner. All this does seem rather over-kill for some pleasing but not outstanding sonatas. Although they don't look particularly idiomatic for the gamba, they will probably be most successfully played by it, if only because music of this period on the gamba has a rarity value – though Güntersberg are doing their best to change this. As always, the production is excellent.  
Available from [www.guentersberg.de](http://www.guentersberg.de)

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More corrupt titles, this time offered by Madeline Seviour from her time working with Radio 3 request programmes in the late 1960s.

*The Tedium* by Berlioz  
*Daisy Ray* from Verdi's Requiem  
*Britten's Lazy Luminations*

## RETURN TO THE NATURAL TRUMPET

Mike Diprose

A gentle revolution is slowly occurring in sections of the baroque music community which are keen to investigate what could become another excuse to re-record a considerable amount of repertoire (the fragile state of the record industry notwithstanding). Along with the emergence of the holeless natural trumpet come, in sympathy, other subtle but significant (and not wholly welcome) developments in historically informed performance practice.

Some of you may have missed *Partial Success* in February's edition of *EMR*. I reported on the rediscovery, by JF Madeuf and others, of the 'lost art' of playing the trumpet in clarino (high) register in the original way – without latter-day alterations such as vent holes to assist tuning. This instrument was referred to as the 'holeless nat'. Aside from the perilous task of playing it, the issue of temperament (and a current dearth of skilled players) was identified as being the main obstacle to the assimilation of the holeless nat into modern early-music performance. Although, especially in England, audiences seldom hear holeless nats, the revolution is nevertheless seeping into our consciousness through the bells of a few forward-thinking baroque (not hand-horn) horn players. Names supplied on request!

It would appear that a difference of opinion similar to the English 4-hole/German 3-hole trumpet systems exists in the horn world. British players mainly use holes, though accept their inauthenticity, and are at odds with players on the continent, who tend to use hand technique in their bells, for which there is also, during the baroque era, no supporting evidence. No pictures of horn players from these times depict them hand stopping and there is no mention of it in contemporary literature. So holeless playing could be a way of finally uniting Europe! I'm off to the EU for a grant...

'Like playing golf on stilts, or violin music, at pitch, on a cello' would be an accurate comparison for the challenges faced by whoever dares to learn the holeless nat. Needless to say, the odd note can get a bit *surrounded* (in the words of Crispian Steele-Perkins). A French verb for *mistake* is *se tromper* and children in Poland, after erring in some way still say 'Jestem Tromba' or 'I'm a big trumpet' (diminutive *Trabka*). You do the math! It's called character! I'd challenge anyone to find a musician after a performance who would honestly admit that he or she hadn't made some slight error. For me, this is part of the appeal of playing such a difficult instrument in public – to imagine part of an informed audience's anticipation as a cultured, but morbid fascination, similar to how a boy feels at his first dog fight (or fox hunt, depending on his breeding). Needless to say, part of the skill of playing this instrument in ensemble (used to this day by orchestral modern-horn players) is what you might call discrete selection.

During my studies at the Schola Cantorum in Basel in the

last year, in an environment keen to investigate change, we have rehearsed and performed frequently with oboists who, using original fingering patterns and sympathetic ears, blend and tune effortlessly with holeless nats. Expanding on the work of Bruce Haynes in his book *The Eloquent Oboe*, oboist Johanne Maitre, a student at the Schola, has compiled fingering charts from 12 contemporary sources 1689-1770. It would appear that, to cede to the widespread use of the Valotti temperament (publ. 1779), baroque oboists and other wind players are currently using patterns and some hole positions from the 19th century.

Amongst string players, there is also a shift towards the use of unwound gut strings. Catherine Martin and Oliver Webber (Oliver also makes them) are two violinists in Britain playing almost exclusively on unwound gut. It transpires that, contrary to what one might think, a violin strung with thick, Italian-style strings (at greater tension) made from this material, is louder than a modern violin strung with whatever it is that they use nowadays. So no balance problems there! Although a violin strung with French-style thinner gut strings will be a bit quieter, the repertoire usually requires many players on each part.

The challenge for next semester is to investigate the application of different temperaments by willing violinists and violists. An interesting trumpet-related subject, since their open strings (tuned in pure fifths) are in accordance with a D trumpet's notes – a coincidence? Except the bottom G that is, but violins are never required to play this note with a trumpet. One of the violinists at the Schola has also played a great deal of Renaissance music and is familiar with the quarter-comma-mean-tone temperament used for such repertoire. She was quick to adjust her ears and fingers to our current favourite – Silbermann (sixth-comma mean tone).

When asked how he composed his music, Stravinsky famously said: 'with an eraser'. There are many subtle alterations musicians can make to accommodate the character of the holeless nat. For instance, continuo players, when modulating to the dominant (e.g. an E or E7 chord in the key of D), if the trumpet has a G#, which is naturally flat, simply omit this note from the voicing on the keyboard, avoiding a clash. The third (B) can also be left out of a sub-dominant G chord, when necessary. These and many other little gems can be found by studying orchestral scores, particularly the works of Bach which include trumpets. Harmony is, after all, mainly about creating tension and release. The greater the tension...

You may by now be wondering why all this fuss about holeless trumpets in the first place? There are two reasons: 1) At the time, the trumpet was a very important instrument, both for its vital military role as means of signalling (trumpeters also carried out the delivery of diplomatic

communiqués) and as an 'instrument of joy' ('Sound the Trumpet' from Purcell's *Come ye Sons of Art*)), bringing that extra something to rousing choruses and (mainly) happy arias, and a general sense of celebration. Imagine Handel's Hallelujah Chorus without! Incidentally, trumpeters were also by far the highest-paid musicians in these times.

2) Composers actually wrote music for these instruments and I'm quite sure that it was written to sound good. The holeless nat has certain limitations by modern standards, but they are what they are. We are doing now what would have been done then – working together to achieve the best possible results. This is a fantastic opportunity to build on the work and experience of our predecessors and get that little bit closer to what might have been.

The youngest member of Madeuf's course at the Schola is 34. One could easily argue that players don't have enough experience even to contemplate taking on the holeless nat until then. This need not be the case. We need players who are very talented, patient, charismatic, young and truly fearless beyond the usual machismo of the young shavers found in music colleges. Someone with enough money not to need the work, and enough confidence and PR skills to form a group or two and take this all-too-human instrument to a paying public and make them return (having bought the CDs).

Speaking of which, the French orchestra Le Concert Spirituel, under the inspired guidance of Hervé Niquet, released in 2002 a CD of those perennial favourites Handel's *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (Glossa GCD 921 606) featuring nine holeless nats and nine holeless French horns – *cave canem!* The CD makes very interesting listening, and it's nice to know that things are moving forward. Ironical that the French, with an historically less great trumpet tradition than the English and particularly the Germans, should now be leading the world in this field! Some of the great players in the Concert Spirituel have a job in the Musique de la Gardiens de la Paix, where they perform frequently on holeless nats.

Since being based in Basel, I have been lucky enough to work with Le Concert Spirituel playing this and other programmes, and it really is a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Situated on the borders of three countries, Basel is an incredible place: multicultural, quite spiritual and liberal. It is oozing with history and culture – a veritable hub of many things; affluent, but with a sense of money well spent.

To study at the Schola isn't as expensive as one might think. The fees here are a fraction of those of the colleges in the UK, rent is much cheaper than London and, being a small town, one can easily walk or travel by bicycle. These savings far outweigh the higher price of food and that most essential of essentials, booze. All is not lost, though, as Basel is on the French and German borders and but a short stagger by tram. The Schola is now registered with the Learning Skills Council in the UK, which means that interest-free, deferred-payment (for the duration of the course) career development loans are now available to us Brits ([www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk) or 0870 900 6800).

## Temperaments

Harpsichordist Bridget Cunningham, amongst others, has spent much time on this subject. The best one we have found so far is Silbermann, or 6th Comma mean tone, starting from D for trumpet in D (with a slightly lowered B) and, predictably, C for trumpet in C, although much of the Italian C trumpet repertoire was written at high pitch (A=465), which translates to trumpet in D at A= 415.

Temperament need not be quite so fixed, though. Recent study of Bach's scores has identified the strange squiggles on some of them as tuning instructions. Different works can use different temperaments, depending on the keys of inner movements. Of course, the many notes which the trumpet doesn't play can be tuned to wherever sounds best.

## Instruments: where can I buy one?

Makers of good holeless trumpets are quite rare and their products are subject to personal tastes of players. The first model one should buy is an Ehe II or III or Haas copy, followed by a Bull and then a renaissance coned-bell. Unless one can acquire a second hand (and later) model by the retired Canadian master Robert Barclay, one can approach:

Graham Nicholson: +31 625 060 09; [Graham.Nicholson@inter.NL.net](mailto:Graham.Nicholson@inter.NL.net)

Matthew Parker: +44 (0) 1558 650 606; [matthewp@gxn.co.uk](mailto:matthewp@gxn.co.uk)

Blechblas-Instrumentenbau Egger: +41(0)61 681 42 33

[info@eggerinstruments.ch](mailto:info@eggerinstruments.ch)

David Edwards: [david.edwards13@dtm.ntl.com](mailto:david.edwards13@dtm.ntl.com)

More information available at [www.earlybrass.com/nattrump.htm](http://www.earlybrass.com/nattrump.htm)

Let's hope that the early music world gradually embraces these changes and doesn't fall into a complacency of procedure to which our pioneers were offering an alternative. *Viva la musica!*

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## RAVENS VIEW

Simon Ravens

There is a received wisdom amongst musicians that the older a piece of music, the less time is needed to prepare it for performance. Give the conductor of a symphony orchestra a programme comprising a Mozart symphony and a symphony by Tippett, and there is little doubt which work will be allocated the most rehearsal. When time is at a premium (as it always must be when as many as a hundred professionals are involved) if a piece can 'take care of itself' it is left to do precisely that. The stark reality is that a professional ensemble, competently led, will not collapse in unrehearsed Mozart: even in rehearsed Tippett, stranger things have been known.<sup>1</sup>

On the face of it, there is good historical justification for not rehearsing early music. When we head back in time beyond the classical period, there is plenty of evidence that individual musicians practised assiduously. Yet there is little to suggest that the same performers took their own art into an ensemble situation and rehearsed with similar diligence. In its sixteenth century heyday, the choir of the Sistine Chapel 'rehearsed' only once each year, although in all likelihood this meeting bore no relation to a modern choir practice. On the Monday of Holy Week the singers assembled, but only to clarify and allocate the division of solo work in the elaborate services leading up to Easter Day. The kind of activity we associate with the word rehearsal – practising the execution of musical details within an agreed interpretative framework – they evidently found quite unnecessary.

There appears, then, to be a good precedent for the approach of the professional English early music choirs towards performing the music of Palestrina and his ilk.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, since at the very least such choirs will always practise starts and finishes before a performance, one could say that our rehearsal methods nowadays are more diligent than those of the choir we nominally emulate.

How, then, can we justify the approach of Vincent Dumestre and his Paris-based ensemble *Le Poème Harmonique*? For a recording of Holy Week music by Palestrina's near-contemporary from Rome, Emilio de' Cavalieri, *Poème Harmonique*'s level of preparation – in time-scale and scope – almost defies belief. In fact, in the course of an hour-long interview with Dumestre I received only one hesitant reply, and this was to my question about how long he rehearsed the Cavalieri before the red light went on at the first recording session. He paused for thought when I asked this, looking non-plussed. Thinking that he was trying to remember a precise rehearsal schedule, I tried to help him with the prompt 'just roughly... in hours'. Now he looked completely baffled, and glanced at the interpreter for help. He thought he must have misheard me.

To understand this breakdown in communication it perhaps helps to know something about the work of *Poème Harmonique*. Formed in 1997 by the young lutenist Vincent Dumestre, *Poème Harmonique* centres its activity on music of the early Baroque. Not exclusively, though. With Alpha, the French record label with whom *Poème Harmonique* have a symbiotic relationship, Dumestre's group has also recorded discs which stretch out the hand of early music towards French folk traditions, world music, and even the unique contemporary musical language of Daniel Brel. Geographically Dumestre's approach is similar: although it is French music which forms the core of *Poème Harmonique*'s repertory, he also makes forays into Italian and English music. All of this is accomplished with a diverse line-up of musicians – singers and instrumentalists – the only constant amongst whom is Dumestre himself. Yet if this implies a musician who is literally self-centred, or egotistical, nothing could be further from the truth. In performance, Dumestre seems to be the eye of the storm. Whilst those around him whip themselves into frenzies of intensity, Dumestre seems stillness itself. The poise of any lutenist – cross-legged, slightly stooped over a softly-strung instrument – suggests introversion, yet in Dumestre's case this image is heightened not just by gallic diffidence, but by foppish hair which masks his face. He sits there, plucking away at simple ostinatos which form the foundation for the extraordinarily decorative work of those above him in the musical texture.

The evening before our meeting I heard *Poème Harmonique*, in a programme of 17th-century music and poetry from the French court, at Château Bosmelet in Normandy. From experience, the idea of listening to a candle-lit concert in a period setting tends to place my critical faculties on to red alert. Is this theme-park early music we are about to hear? Is the ambience designed to enhance or obscure the quality of the performance?

My cynicism is disarmed within seconds of the concert starting. There is a level of intensity to this music-making which would be arresting whatever the context. The three musicians are joined by the actor Benjamin Lazar, although I hesitate to refer to him as an 'actor' in case that might imply that soprano Claire Lefilliâtre is not. She is a supreme actor. But then again, Benjamin Lazar also sings. All of which underlines how impossible it is to label neatly these performers or, come to that, the work they produce. And so, I suspect, it should be with a group called *Le Poème Harmonique*. Such is the fusion between the sung, played and spoken word that the group could really have no other name. For the hour and a half that the performance runs, there are no grinding gear-changes between the spoken words of Racine, the instrumental

music of Marais and the chansons of Lambert. In the heat of a French summer, a small room with its acoustic deadened by an audience packed like sardines, and with the performers literally at an arm's length from me in the front row, I would expect to hear (and would be happy to forgive) blemishes. There are far less than none. Yet however polished are the details of the performance, it is the whole which leaves the most lasting impression. It is a performance which has been lived in, and confidently invites us, as listeners, to do likewise. The response of the audience is predictably ecstatic.

For all the opulence of Château Bosmelet, and the accomplishment of the performance, there is an unmistakable humility to the musical persona of Vincent Dumestre. It does not surprise me, then, that my meeting with him the following morning is not scheduled for a hotel lobby, but for the vestry of the church in the nearby village of Arques-la bataille. Jean-Paul Combet, the director of the Alpha label, happens to be there, but I sense that this is more out of genuine curiosity towards our conversation than protectiveness towards his golden egg-laying goose. And the interpreter that has been provided just happens to be the world's greatest photographer of musicians at work, Robin Davies. Somehow it is all gloriously haphazard. When I try to ask a question in stumbling French, Dumestre gallantly answers in faltering English: in his confusion Robin Davies, an Englishman who has been living in Paris for twenty years, promptly tries to translate these words back to me in French.

It is easy to miss, but one feature of Poème Harmonique's work is that for all the beauty of their recordings and performances, very little of the music itself could be described as first-rate. They will perform Cavalieri or Coppini rather than Monteverdi, or base whole projects on a virtually mythological figure such as 'Il fasolo'.<sup>3</sup> Even leaving aside the subjective nature of the quality they perform, it is undeniably obscure. One Pergolesi *Stabat Mater* aside, there is hardly a note in Poème Harmonique's discography which has been recorded before. What, I wonder, leads Dumestre away from the mainstream towards these byways? 'It is personal, but for me I love the challenge of music which is stubborn and doesn't yield its secrets straight away. If I open the score of a Bach cantata with a good singer, after one, perhaps two readings, we have something of beauty already. The beauty is there staring at us from the score. Yet I remember the first rehearsal for our first-ever project, of Domenico Belli, after ten minutes in my apartment there was a silence. The musicians were all looking at me, as if to say "surely you must be joking. There is nothing in this". And yet I said "no, I am sure there is, although I don't understand yet what it is".' And Dumestre is quick to point out that if we cherry-pick known masterpieces, as did the first generation of early musicians understandably did, then there can be no new projects.

So it is that Dumestre can often be found sitting behind a simple ostinato on his lute. I wonder whether he ever – I

can't put this tactfully so I don't even try – gets bored. 'No. I like repeating. Not, I should say, just for the sake of doing the same thing again, but as a way of always pushing further. Growing. I like to go to the full limits of each performer, and I believe that in this way we can create something very strong.'

One thing which quickly becomes apparent from listening to Dumestre is the extent to which his 'projects' are like living organisms. A musicological friend, or a personal discovery, may plant the seed of an idea in his mind, but it may be years before this idea finds its way on to the concert platform. And years more before it braves the glare of the record producer's red light. Yet even then the idea continues to grow. 'For instance', he tells me, 'I am currently working with a number of circus acrobats on the Fasolo project. The idea of Fasolo was something which began when the musicologist Jean Lionnet gave me a few scraps of music from a manuscript in his collection. I played around with these myself, and then together with a couple of singers, and eventually this became the material for a concert programme. A year or so later we recorded the concert for Alpha, but the idea has not ended there. We continue to present Il Fasolo as a concert – perhaps now twenty or twenty-five times – but always we look to move the idea on. To grow. So next year we present it for the first time in another way. This is carnival music, and we have taken the logical next step of turning it into a show. A spectacle.'

The thought strikes me, as Dumestre is talking, that for all the awards and accolades his recordings have garnered, a CD of Poème Harmonique is like a photograph of a hurricane: it can do no more than hint. Even a small-scale performance, such as the one I have seen the previous evening, is as much drama as music. Now, no-one should imagine that any other media form will represent a Poème Harmonique performance fully, but none the less I ask how long we will have to wait for their first DVD. 'In three weeks', announces Alpha's Jean-Paul Combet from the back of the room, 'we release a DVD of their staged *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*'.

Eventually we come to the question of rehearsal. It is obvious to me that at every step, the achievements of Poème Harmonique are grounded in the rehearsal room. I ask him about the mechanics of working with his ensemble. 'There are perhaps ten musicians who spend as much as 90-95% of their time working with Poème Harmonique. But I still encourage them to work with others as well. For me it is simple that I devote myself purely to the group, but it is important for the others that they nourish themselves with other work.' The financial implications of what Dumestre has just said are, of course, significant, but a glance at the back of any Poème Harmonique CD shows a pin-cushion of sponsors' logos. 'We are fortunate, Dumestre says, 'that in France the musician is still seen as having a special status'. It is one thing having the money, and with it the time, to spend rehearsing. It is quite another to know how to use it. I ask

him specifically about their Cavalieri project. In particular, there are two pieces of falsobordone<sup>4</sup> on their Cavalieri disc which stretch credibility. Through the course of these 10-15 minute pieces, the six singers rise to ever-more virtuosic feats of ornamentation. With a solo singer and accompanist, this might raise few eyebrows, but for a group to ornament in this way without ever losing their sense of ensemble is virtually unique. What is really exceptional, though, is that however air-borne the ornamentation becomes, the music's very strong core of spiritual intensity is never lost. This is multi-tasking of a high order. On this whole topic, my question to Vincent Dumestre is brief. How?

'Firstly I worked for a long time with the singers individually. I played a little ostinato figure on the lute, and encouraged them to ornament, to be free, but always in tempo. I am not a singer myself, but I would throw out an ornament, a figuration, on the lute, and then ask them to reproduce it. Some are naturally gifted with ornamentation, but for many singers the prospect of improvising is terrifying. But by encouraging freedom, they eventually became relaxed within the interpretation. When the singers felt free, then was the time that, if necessary, I reined their embellishments in to fit with the stylistic evidence provided by the treatises. At that point we were able to start working as an ensemble. I think that through this process we have created something very strong. But it is difficult, because we are trying to rediscover a lost tradition.'

It is this last sentence which justifies a preparation process which bears little relation to either the efforts of other vocal groups working in this particular repertory, or of course to the practices of singers in Cavalieri's Italy. I might suggest that Poème Harmonique are not making serious efforts to rediscover traditions, but also to learn new musical languages. In theory, once fluent in the language of (in this case) falsobordone improvisation, Dumestre's singers should be able to offer us a genuinely radical version of Allegri's *Miserere* at first sight. In practice, though, it is not that simple, because where Cavalieri or Allegri's singers were dealing with only one language, Dumestre's are required to be familiar with as many styles as there are Poème Harmonique projects. Lully is not Cavalieri, and if Dumestre's presentations of either are to be distinctive, a continual sifting and separation of influences is called for. And that also takes time.

When Dumestre has described this whole process, I realise why my question about how long the Cavalieri rehearsal process took in hours must have sounded ridiculous. I might as well have asked Proust to calculate how many minutes he had spent on *A la recherche*. The best answer Dumestre can eventually hazard is 'about five years'.

1. At the premiere of Michael Tippett's Second Symphony in 1958, the BBC Symphony Orchestra broke down in the first movement, leading the conductor, Sir Adrian Boult, to turn to the audience and apologise for having 'misled the orchestra'.

2. Preparing for a recording of Palestrina's Holy Week music with my own choir, Musica Contexta, we had one three-hour rehearsal. That the recording went on to be short-listed for a major award suggests there was at least nothing ragged about the final result.

3. Il Fasolo (literally 'the bean') is the name given to the composer of an early seventeenth-century publication of carnival-inspired music. The real identity of Il Fasolo (if indeed it was only one person) has never been fully established.

4. A technique by which a piece of Gregorian chant is harmonised by a composer and then extemporised by singers following the rules of ornamentation found in contemporary treatises. Allegri's *Miserere mei* is the most famous example of this type of music, although most listeners know it only in a skeletal form, since in most modern performances the singers do not add their own embellishments.

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## MUSIC IN LONDON

Andrew Benson-Wilson

## FLORILEGIUM

I am finalising these reviews on one of the coldest days of the year so far, so memories of a swelteringly hot and humid Wigmore Hall (the air conditioning had failed) on 23 September are welcome. Florilegium and soprano Johannette Zomer gave a concert of Bach's 2nd Suite, the 5th Brandenburg Concerto and Cantatas 199 and 82a. Given the atmosphere in the hall, the instrumentalists were rather brave to omit the usual on-stage tuning before starting, but seemed to get away with it. Apart from a slightly lumpy Polonaise, the opening Suite was given a stylish reading, as was the Brandenburg – the latter was particularly effective in the delicate filigree passages for flute and violin (Ashley Solomon and Kati Debretzeni). Johannette Zomer seems to have made a very successful change of career from microbiologist to singer. She has a beautifully clear voice, which she projects well, using the subtle natural inflexions in her voice as a special effect, rather than allowing them to dominate. Her voice has a mezzo-ish tinge that was particularly effective in the elegiac aria 'Stumme Seufzer, stille Klagen' (from Cantata 199: *Mein Herze schwimmt im Blut*), during which she was well supported by Alexandra Bellamy, oboe. The recitatives were sung with expressive conviction although the combination of sustained string chords and short, detached organ chords seemed to be a bit of a distraction.

## AVISON ENSEMBLE

Pavlo Beznosiuk (leader of the Newcastle based Avison Ensemble) and I share childhood roots in Walthamstow, so their concert in St Mary's Church Walthamstow (29 Sept – part of the 'Music in the Village' series) felt quite homely. Avoiding any works by Avison himself, the programme concentrated instead on his arrangements of violin sonatas by Geminiani, together with a violin concerto by Tartini and a cello concerto by his north-eastern contemporary, John Garth – one of the first of this genre. Despite the expert attention of cellist Richard Tunnicliffe (and despite some rather pedantic harpsichord continuo playing which didn't quite keep pace), it was clear that the latter was perhaps not music of the greatest emotional intensity, although Garth certainly knew how to spin a good tune. We heard one possible bit of original Avison in the lengthy Andante for violin and cello alone that he added to the Sonata Op. 1/6, perhaps in place of the improvised variations expected by the Newcastle audiences (who sat through concerts lasting from six in the evening to two in morning).

The Academy of Ancient Music continued their tradition of innovative programmes with violin, flute and harpsi-

chord concertos by J. S. Bach, C. P. E. Bach and Telemann (Wigmore Hall, 5 Oct) with soloists Rachel Podger, Rachel Brown and Richard Egarr (a natural successor to Andrew Manze as AAM director). The concert started with Bach's triple concerto. But which Bach? Although all movements are based on JSB originals, in his direction, Richard Egarr reinforced his introductory talk proposing WF Bach as the arranger of this work by emphasising the contrasts of colour, volume and mood more characteristic of the *Empfindsamkeit* era of JS Bach's sons. In the outer movements, the role of the flute and violin seemed to be pourers of balm on the agitated harpsichord. Telemann's triple concerto (in A from *Tafelmusik* I) added obligato cello to the violin and flute duo and gave Joseph Crouch a chance to take a deserved solo role on cello after his excellent continuo contributions. Telemann's flute concerto TWV51: D2 bought Rachel Brown into focus. The two fast movements have more than a hint of Polish influence, the bucolic charm of the delightfully lyrical *Largo* leading to the pastoral prancing of the final *Vivace*. The cadenza to the first *Allegro* was one of the simplest I have heard for a while – it was particularly effective. Rachel Podger gave a thrilling account of Bach's Violin Concerto in A minor (BWV1041), full of drive and energy. The ostinato in the central *Andante* was pushed to an intensity not often experienced in this movement, and I also liked the way Rachel hung on to the high upward suspensions in the final movement. Richard Egarr applied his effervescent energy to CPE Bach's harpsichord concerto (Wq 23) and delighted me, at least, with his teasing cadenza – one way for a director to make sure his forces listen!

## GALEAZZI AT TEN

The Galeazzi Ensemble, finalists in the 1999 Early Music Network Young Artists Competition, celebrated their 10th anniversary with a concert in St James's Church, Piccadilly (7 Oct). Unlike their usual themed programmes, this one was based a selection of each of the four performers' favourite pieces. With a combination of flute, violin, viola and cello, there is clearly going to be some use of arrangements, and this concert included Mozart's version of one of Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues (sounding thoroughly Mozartian) and early 19th-century arrangements of quartets by Mozart and Haydn. One of the most interesting pieces was the Flute Quartet Op. 19/2 by the Bohemian Adalbert Gyrowetz (1763-1850) – a fascinating character whose eventful, and not always lucky, musical life included a friendship with Mozart and Beethoven (he was a pall-bearer at Beethoven's funeral), a meeting with Napoleon, a successful career in Vienna and London alongside Haydn and the championing of the young Chopin, whose Viennese debut, aged 8, included a Gyrowetz concerto.

Although this quartet was very much focussed on the flute, it also featured some high cello playing, largely forgoing its bass role, and some lively contributions from the viola. The final *Ronda* was like a pleasant country dance, with occasional rumbles of thunder and lightening flashes – if it wasn't programmatic, it should have been. This impressive group play with a sensitive attention to detail, tone, phrasing, articulation and expression – they recognise the different approach that is needed from the traditional string quartet and are careful to make sure that the flute is not dominated. Bearing in mind the fate of so many young groups, they are also to be congratulated on staying together for 10 years. I am sure there will be many more.

### EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

The festival celebrating the thousandth anniversary of the birth of Edward, King and Confessor, founder of Westminster Abbey, included two early music concerts: 'Numbered with thy Saints – festal music by Purcell & Handel' and 'A Kindly and Guileless King: words and music to honour Edward the Confessor'. The first (6 Oct) was given by the Choir of Westminster Abbey and St James's Baroque in the splendidly historical surroundings of Westminster Hall in the Palace of Westminster (it is not often that concert promoters need to acknowledge the Lord Great Chamberlain and the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod). The concert reflected the musical history of the choir and the two most notable composers associated with the Abbey, concluding with Handel's *Dettingen Te Deum*. This is the first time I have heard a choir and orchestra in Westminster Hall: apart from some booming from the bass and timps, the acoustics were surprisingly good. Although there were some exposed choir entries of varying quality, the trebles and most of the solo voices were on good form, notably Benjamin Turner and Leigh Nixon in Purcell's *Rejoice in the Lord alway*, David Martin in *My beloved spake* (which also featured some fine violin playing by Matthew Truscott) and Julian Empett in the *Te Deum*. This was first performed in the Chapel Royal, rather than the much larger acoustic that it was written for (Handel had assumed a major celebration in St Paul's Cathedral, but miscalculated the importance to the British of the Dettingen victory in Bavaria, led by George II in his capacity as Elector of Hanover rather than King of England). The orchestra was on fine form throughout, as was James O'Donnell's direction, with his usual sense of scale, structure and musical restraint. Big Ben also made a well-timed entry as the angels cried aloud.

Over in the Westminster Abbey (11 Oct), Ensemble Giles Binchois performed in honour of 'Edward the Confessor – a Kindly and Guileless King'. This celebration in Latin and Old English words, sung and spoken, included some of the earliest English poetry and polyphony as well as religious songs and sermons illuminating aspects of Edward's spirituality. It started with the Introit *Gaudeamus omnes* (still sung annually on the feast of Edward's 1163 translation) with its gentle mordant and upward third ornaments. A sequence of works from Winchester Old Minster

manuscripts (now in Corpus Christie College, Cambridge) explored the very beginning of polyphonic chant. Among many fascinating works was the only known example of a scribal colophon (the end-piece to a book with publishing details, in this case, from a Psalter) set in three-part polyphony, and possibly never intended to be performed at all. It certainly included some remarkable harmonic clashes in the final stanzas. Without going into questions of whether female voices would have been used in any of this repertoire, the use of the various vocal colours was most effective. All the six singers had clear, slightly metallic voices, which carried well in the cavernous acoustic of the Abbey. Of the individual voices, I particularly liked that of Anne-Marie Lablaude – a simple and unaffected voice but with sufficient musical flexibility and fluidity to create aural depth.

### ROYER'S ZAÏDE

Joseph-Nicolas-Pancrace Royer had the misfortune to live for fifty years from 1705, which means that his major anniversaries both fall this year, so he is likely to be forgotten for another 50 years – it pays to plan your death at either 25 or 75. He is best known today for his *Pièces de Clavecin*, but it is not often that we hear one of the operas that some of these keyboard works are drawn from. Billed as 'the first complete modern performance', the Nonsuch Singers gave a concert performance of his 1739 *Zaïde, Reine de Grenade* at St John's, Smith Square (15 Oct) to mark both the 300th anniversary of his birth and the 250th anniversary of his death. After an allegorical Prologue between Mars, Venus and Cupid, the substantive plot is set in the sumptuous court of Granada's Alhambra, and tells of the battle between scions of the rival houses of Zégris and Abencerages, respectively baddies and goodies, for the hand of the heroine, Zaïde. Although the setting was Moorish Spain, the music was entirely French, with none of the Turkish effects that Austrian audiences, for example, might have relished. Even the African Dance was set entirely within the normal strictures of the French school. The five soloists acquitted themselves well, with notable contributions from Mark Wilde and Jacques Imbrailo as Alzamzor and Zuléma, Jeni Bern and Daniel Auchincloss. The other soprano soloist's voice was clouded by excessive vibrato. The choir produced a splendid sound, clear, crisp and coordinated. Although there were one or two moments when *notes inégales* were not quite coordinated between the four bass instruments, the playing of The Band of Instruments was effective and stylish. Graham Caldbeck kept the pace and tempo up well, although once or twice his tempos seemed to be at odds with what the soloists wanted. An enterprising performance by one of London's best chamber choirs.

### CLORI TIRSI e FILENO

The Early Opera Company bought Handel's *Clori Tirsi e Fileno* (aka *Cor fedele, in vano spero*) to the Wigmore Hall (27 Oct). This extended Roman cantata is, in effect, a pint-sized opera, all neatly contained within two hours, including

interval. Caught up in a passionate love triangle, Clori tangles with the emotions of the Tirsi and Fileno, who renounce the fickle nature of women when they discover her game. Mhairi Lawson sang Tirsi, but took a while to adapt the volume of her voice to that of the players – *Quell'erbetta che smalta le sponde*, for example, was far too loud. Her prominent vibrato also meant that trills were all but unnoticeable. However, she showed much greater promise when in more restrained voice, notably in her final aria *Un sospiretto, un labbro pallido*. Claire Booth demonstrated a much greater subtlety of tone and timbre, notably in *Amo Tirsi, ed a Fileno*, although she also showed herself capable of histrionics in the earlier *Barbaro! Tu non credi*. Hilary Summers was excellent as Fileno, and showed just how to control and use vibrato. Christian Curnyn directed from the harpsichord with his customary sensitivity and feel for detail, and was supported by fine playing, particularly from Matthew Truscott violin, Jennifer Morsches cello and Richard Sweeney theorbo.

#### HAYDN AT ESTERHÁZA

The Classical Opera Company's Haydn at Esterháza concert at the Wigmore Hall (28 Sept) gets an honourable mention in the opera category on the grounds of the inclusion of opera arias in a medley concert that ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. The sublime came in the form of the gorgeously melodic 'Et incarnatus est' from the *Missa Cellensis in honorem BVM* and 'Vidit suum' from the *Stabat Mater*, both written shortly after Haydn became Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Nicholas Esterházy. Andrew Kennedy sought the inner depths of these works and, with conductor Ian Page, enhanced some key moments, notably with the lengthy pause before the final repeat of the final line of 'Et incarnatus es' and in the key central line of text in 'Vidit suum', with its bleak orchestration and the careful spelling out of the words *moriendo desolatum* (dying, forsaken). In complete contrast, Andrew Kennedy enjoyed himself enormously and delighted the audience as the amiable buffoon, Don Pelagio, from Haydn's earliest opera, *La Canterina*, and in Mengone's 'constipation' aria from *Lo Speziale* – one of the funniest moments in opera, with Haydn's wonderfully apt word painting. Also from *Lo Speziale*, Lucy Crowe sang Volpino's fiery revenge aria 'Amore nel mio petto si è' and her delightful ditty 'Salamelica', with its cod-Latin nonsense words as Volpino disguises herself as a Turkish pasha to fool the hapless Mengone. After some shaky moments earlier on, the orchestra peaked in Symphony 49 *La Passione*, producing the most coherent sound of the evening, avoiding their earlier intonation problems. The Classical Opera Company's instrumentalists (The Classical Ensemble) is made up of excellent players but, over the years, I have often got the impression that they have not been pushed towards the musical excellence that they deserve. With enterprising programming and repertoire and some very impressive backers, it is time that more attention is paid to providing consistent musical excellence.

#### REDISCOVERING BACH'S ST JOHN PASSION

Under the title of 'Bach Reinvigorated', the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was led by Mark Padmore (who also sang the Evangelist) in Bach's St John Passion (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 22 Sept). This was an extraordinary performance for many reasons, not least that the choir (members of I Fagiolini) and orchestra had spent about a week preparing for a performance (first given at the Snape Maltings in Aldeburgh a few days before), with input from a theologian, an art historian and a musicologist, and detailed reflections on the words, including encouraging the orchestra to read and sing through them and to reflect on the beliefs behind the work. Indeed, during the performance, some members of the orchestra joined in the singing of the chorales and the funeral motet *Ecce quomodo moritur justus* by the 16th century composer Jacob Handl/Gallus that, following St Thomas's practice, followed immediately at the end of the Passion.

It is perhaps one of the biggest secrets of British concert-going that most concerts are given with very little rehearsal time. There are few orchestras that could even envisage such an approach, and it says much for the outstanding Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and I Fagiolini that they not only appear to have taken to it so well, but went on to produce an inspiring performance – given to a well deserved sell-out audience with long queues for returns. A fascinating pre-concert discussion with Mark Padmore, Anna Crookes and Henrietta Wayne was led by The Times reviewer Richard Morrison and explained the background to the project. Mark Padmore made the salutary comment that most members of the audience will have listened to the St John Passion many more times than Bach himself did. The audience was immediately pulled into the intimate world of the performers by the fact that they were mostly on stage as we entered. With no conductor or director, there was no obvious starting moment – something that unfortunately seems to have confused the front-of-house staff who continued to let late comers in for at least 15 minutes after the planned start time, an irritation we could have done without.

In this work in particular, the interpretation of the instrumental introduction can set many different moods – in this performance, the focus was on the steady heartbeat of Chi-chi Nwanoku's double bass and the two flutes (unusually more prominent than the oboes). A very touching idea was that the eight singers of I Fagiolini stood one by one during the introductory bars, rather than all together. This immediately made us aware that we were experiencing an intensely personal interpretation. We were all bystanders as the horrible events unfolded – as the theologian had commented during rehearsals, Bach turns something terrible into something beautiful. The choir voices were intermixed, again giving the impression of individual reflection, as did the reduction down to a single soprano voice towards the end of the opening chorus. Richard Wyn Roberts sang the

first aria beautifully, his gentle countertenor voice only just sounding above the orchestra and thereby drawing the audience's focus into his world. Anna Crookes was the contrasting bright-eyed innocent reflected in the second aria. Nicholas Mulroy turned towards the orchestra at times during his vigorous rendering of 'Ach, mein Sinn', seemingly reflecting the shock and fear of a bystander trying to work out what it all means. Matthew Brook interpreted Pilate as a strong and imperial character who nonetheless struggled to retain his authority as events that he didn't really understand unfolded around him, his increasing exasperation carried over into the beginning of the bass aria 'Eilt, ihr angefochtenen Seelen', his voice softening towards the end as he returned to his role for Pilate's confident declaration 'What I have written, I have written'. Clare Wilkinson and Mark Levy (mezzo and viola da gamba) together bought an intense poignancy to the first part of 'Es ist vollbracht!', although the ending was confident and affirmative as the moment of death approached (this passed without the customary pause). Carys Lane's voice seem to shake with emotion in the final soprano aria. The final chorus and chorale, with its confident crescendo was a further moment of high drama, heightened by the simple homophony of the Gallus motet. Mark Padmore and Richard Harvey were outstanding as the Evangelist and Christus. The central sermon was replaced by a reading of TS Eliot's 'Ash Wednesday' by Stephen Dillane – a lengthy and rather impenetrable work in contrast to the personal insight of this memorable performance.

#### IMPROVISATIONS – THE SOUTH BANK EARLY MUSIC WEEKEND (16-18 SEPTEMBER)

Under the Artistic Direction of Tess Knighton, the latest South Bank Early Music Weekend focused on the role of improvisation and imagination in music ranging from 12th century Spain to present day Italy. The concerts were held in the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and the shared foyer.

Ensemble Organum recreated a Vespers service for the feast of St. James, based on the repertory of the Codex Calixtinus currently preserved at the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The Purcell Room is not the most obvious venue for liturgical reconstruction or processions, and their attempts at the latter were frankly little more than aimless wandering about. The music was fascinating, as was the wide range of musical textures and the elaborations that were applied to this early polyphony. But I have difficulty in working out how to review the vocal qualities of the eight unaccompanied male singers. If they were all professionally trained singers, then it was a remarkable achievement to sing so badly. Does this sound really reflect medieval practice in North-West Spain? And, if so, why does it sound so similar to their singing of 7th-century Byzantine to 18th-century Parisian chant? In the frequent lengthy unison melismas, notes seemed to be arrived at, or not, by some form of majority vote. There were several passages that ended up being sung in a type

of heterophony in parallel seconds which I imagine was not deliberate, and unison cadences frequently featured microtones spanning a semitone or more around the fundamental pitch. Many of the notes were well outside the comfortable range of the singers, melismatic lines were slithered over rather than articulated, the intonation of individual notes was wayward, the tone nearly always unsteady, the pitch relationships between sections of the same piece seemed haphazard and there was little variation of volume or tone. That said, there was an enthusiastic response from most of the audience.

Ensemble San Felice (from Florence) celebrated the anniversary of Carissimi with a foyer performance of semi-staged and costumed interpretations of three of his oratorios, together with instrumental intermezzi by Frescobaldi, Castello and Uccellini. Although the acting occasionally seemed a little self conscious, there was some attractive singing, notably from Maria Chiara Pavone.

The musical standard was raised to much higher levels the following day by the viol consort Phantasm in a programme of music by Tallis, Byrd, Alfonso Ferrabosco I and Robert Parsons which might be seen to correspond to the sanguine, melancholic, phlegmatic and choleric temperaments. Although the programme note initially proposed that the four composers reflected the different temperaments, it was clear from the music (and, indeed, from the note) that musical, and human, emotion is a far more complex combination of elements from all the temperaments. This was an outstandingly professional performance by any standards, well planned and brilliantly executed.

The mid-afternoon discussion between John Milsom, Timothy Day and Peter Phillips, 'The Sound of Tallis', veered some way from the billed topic (500 years of interpreting Tallis' music) and concentrated on the history of post-war English recordings. This was followed by Gustav Leonhardt's 'Flights of Keyboard Fantasy,' played on Malcolm Rose's recent copy of the harpsichord part of the 1579 Theewes claviorgan – a most impressive instrument that gave a much clearer aural representation of the Elizabethan keyboard repertoire than later ones. Although this was clearly one of the star concerts, pulling in the national press and an enthusiastic audience, I found the performance rather matter of fact, the persistently methodical pulse and articulation failing to get beneath the surface of the music. There were far too many note slips for comfort (notably in the tiny Tallis pieces and Byrd's *Carifica me, pater* – although some of them might have been curious interpretations), and lengthy sequences of semi-quavers rarely seemed to have any sense of direction. The frequently abrupt lift of cadential chords was also disturbing. In Byrd's *Fantasia* (IX, played without its attendant *Praeludium*), far more could have been made of the inherent drama of the work, its syncopated sections passed by almost unnoticed, and there was nothing of the dance in the triple-time section – the hiatus before the final toccata was devoid of that essential element of temporary repose. However, the virtuosic conclusion to

Strogers' Fantasia and Gibbons Pavan both caught the mood well.

What was billed as an open rehearsal with The Tallis Scholars turned out to be a lengthy hiatus while millions of casual singers were shepherded onto the stage in colour-coded groups – and then a single 'Singalong a Spem'. There was not even a rehearsal of that, let alone the promised rehearsal for the evening concert that many of us has sat patiently waiting for. But presumably they managed to rehearse in secret, because their evening concert (all Tallis) found them in extremely good form. They started and finished with *Spem in alium* and also included the first of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, *Loquebantur variis linguis*, *Salve intemerata*, and the nine Parker tunes. There were some magical moments, not least the pivotal section in *Sancte Deus*, on the cadence of *miserere nobis* and the following *Nunc Christe*, which was beautifully captured. They produced a particularly good tonal blend, with the upper voices being more than usually restrained and using only minimal vibrato, although they did get rather close to the wrong side of straining at the higher pitches in *Salve intemerata*. The final cadence of the Lamentations, for example, settled onto a beautifully clean and pure sound.

James Gilchrist (tenor) & Elizabeth Kenny (lute) gave a late night concert called, appropriately, *Welcome Black Night* with works by John Dowland, Thomas Campion, Anthony Holborne and two very impressive works by the present day composer, Rachel Stott. Her *Woee her, and win her* featured some extremely complex lute writing, which Elizabeth Kenny bought off brilliantly. I have raved about James Gilchrist's singing many times before, but I don't think I have heard him in such an intimate repertoire. Perhaps he is used to singing in much larger venues than the Purcell Room, or he was just trying to project too much, but on this occasion I was disappointed with several aspects of his singing, including a rather forceful tone. His vibrato created rapid variations of pitch on most high or long-held notes, including cadences, and his frequent swoops between notes was similarly disturbing. He even managed to swoop within words on the same note, notably in Dowland's *Cease these false sports* when the words 'Good night, yet virgin bride' frankly sounded a bit creepy. But there were some delightful quieter and gentler moments and some nice ornamentation. I fear I was not the only one to get the giggles when the Purcell Room lights were dimmed to darkness on the final refrain.

The Sunday concert started with Sonnerie's entertaining journey into the world of Haydn and the Gypsies. At Esterházy, gypsy bands played verbunkos (recruiting music) in the courtyard to accompany the lively dancing of soldiers and works such as Haydn's famous Gypsy Rondo were inspired by the music of the wandering Roma, often labelled as being in the Hungarian style. Many gypsy inspired works (or works by composers with gypsy origins) were written or transcribed for piano, and for this performance Sonnerie used some of Linda

Burman-Hall's transcriptions of these piano versions back into instrumental form. Matthew Halls (piano) was plucked from the ranks and given solo billing – deservedly so, for these virtuosic works were a far cry from his normal continuo organ or harpsichord role. Indeed, the whole group revelled in doing all the things they would avoid in their 'normal' repertoire, with portamento, rubato and string vibrato very much in evidence. Wisely, the performers resisted the temptation to treat this music as a joke, and revealed some remarkable musical depth in this overlooked and largely misunderstood repertoire. An exciting and inspiring concert, even if there were times when I couldn't quite get my mind off hours spent in Budapest bars.

A foyer performance by Apollo and Pan followed – an insight into the Birth of the Baroque with sonatas, capriccios and ciaconas by Marini, Castello, Rossi, Merula, Vierdanck and others. Against an unhelpful background of staff walkie-talkies, hubble-bubble from the bar and café areas, and (at one point) a loud cry of 'Ben, stop it!', they managed to retain their sense of propriety and decorum and gave us an extremely sensitive and musical performance. (Sonnerie's repertoire would have been better suited to this environment than Apollo and Pan's.) Violinists Tassilo Erhardt and Ben Sansom managed to avoid the excesses and unnecessary effects that seem to be popular today (particularly in Castello cadences). Sally Holman's dulcian provided a very effective contrast of tone to the strings and an audible bass line in the troubled acoustics, and Steven Devine provided excellent continuo support on organ and harpsichord. Given the audience and acoustic, concluding with a 'walk into the sunset' fade-away (in Vierdanck's rather disjointed *Capriccio auf quotlibtische Arth*) was probably not the best idea; but overall this was a concert that deserved a great deal more respect than the foyer venue offered – they deserve to be moved to the Purcell Room next year.

The Dufay Collective are masters of stylish presentations, and their stunningly staged Queen Elizabeth Hall performance of the seven *Cantigas de amigo* by the Galician troubadour Martin Codax (from the court of Alfonso the Wise) was one of the most effective I have seen from any group of musicians. While the instrumentalists struck statuesque poses stage right in what seemed to be white pyjamas, Vivian Ellis sang within an elongated diagonal triangle of light defined by a white rope spanning the stage area and lifting up to the top corner of the stage. Spot lights occasionally picked out the singer, or one or more of the players, while the hall was in total darkness. The setting, the repetitive nature of many of the words, and the steady pulse of the accompaniment combined to produce an almost hypnotic effect. The *Cantigas de amigo* reflect the feelings of a woman awaiting the return of her lover from the sea, and is set in Vigo on the northwest coast of Spain – a quest that eventually proves to be fruitless, as the lover does not return. The sound of the sea (produced on what I guess could be called 'wave drums') opened and closed the concert, and formed a backdrop to a number of the pieces, each of which was

linked by a continuous instrumental tapestry using psaltery, oud, flute, vielle, harp and gentle percussion. A most effective presentation of beautiful and moving songs.

David Owen Norris was billed to discuss the improvisation of cadenzas in the early piano concerto, with demonstrations at the fortepiano but, in practice, spent much of the time talking about Gershwin and David Owen Norris – with equal enthusiasm.

The Akademie für Alte Musik gave a concert based on 'Baroque Improvisations', exploring the elaboration and ornamentation of a simple structure, such as the rhythmic patterns of a dance or a sequence of chords, and weaving melodies and variations over it in an improvisatory manner. They included works by Biber, Muffat, Vivaldi and Geminiani, starting with *Ouverture-Suite 5* by the under-rated Philipp Heinrich Erlebach. Midori Seiler gave an outstanding performance of Biber's *Passacaglia* for solo violin – indeed her contribution to the whole concert was exemplary, as was that of the extremely keen cellist, Jan Freiheit, and Björn Colell, lute. In recent years I have found the Akademie für Alte Musik have veered towards the aggressive, but there was no sign of this in this performance, which combined vigour with musical sophistication.

The final concert of the weekend was L'Arpeggiata, one of the most interesting of the improvisation-based groups around. They combined modern Neapolitan songs by their exotically earthy singer, Lucilla Galeazzi, with works by Monteverdi, Cazzati and Strozzi and free improvisations on them. In these they were joined by jazz clarinettist, Gianluigi Trovesi and an extremely impressive young counter-tenor, Philippe Jaroussky. The latter's expressive, agile and technically superb voice (which approaches the tone of a male-soprano), combined with his excellent communication and stage skills, mark him out as a singer to watch.

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#### GREENWICH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL & EXHIBITION OF EARLY MUSIC

11 - 13 November 2005

Peter Grahame Woolf

Recorders dominated my attention amongst the numerous competing attractions, many of them simultaneous, at this year's Greenwich Early Music Festival.

The **Flautadors** (Ian Wilson, Celia Ireland, Catherine Fleming, Fiona Russell, recorders) were more impressive live in the ORNC Chapel than on their Rubbra/Britten CD. Bach's double violin concerto was dazzling and sounded entirely self-sufficient on a quartet of recorders! Contemporary development of the instrument was illustrated in two innovative ensemble pieces composed for them by Leo Chadburn and ensemble member David Murphy, a tour de force for some ten instruments of different sizes, two in a mouth simultaneously most of the time! Another CD waiting to be made.

The Moeck/Society of Recorder Players **Solo Recorder Playing Competition** looked daunting on paper; four 40-min recitals in the Peacock Room, only the first of them not unaccompanied. Insufficient time to snatch lunch in the ten-minutes gaps, and long queues for the single loo!

Selection of the finalists (normally three, but four this year because standards were reckoned so high and close) was by submission of a promo CD, choice of music free but with a compulsory modern item. The programmes were contrasted and carefully designed for maximum variety and for extension of the instrument's repertoire, so that in actuality there was no risk of audience fatigue.

No British applicants were short listed. There was, however, universal satisfaction with the Spanish-born winner **María Martínez Ayerza**, now doing advanced studies in Amsterdam. Her Moeck first prize included a recital next November at the Greenwich Festival 2006. For a dazzling account of a piece by the contemporary Japanese composer Itoh, María took also the SRP Walter Bergmann prize; a reminder to me of the teacher who took my first recorder classes in the '50s. One oddity was that María is a pupil of the leader of the jury, Paul Leenhouts, as were also two of the other finalists; they know each other well in the renowned Amsterdam recorder world. Probably no harm done, but ought not Leenhouts to have stepped down when he became aware of that situation?

**Astrid Knöchlein** gave a pleasing recital with some of her items accompanied by baroque guitar and harpsichord. In Giorgio Tedde's *Austro* she gave an impressive demonstration of circular breathing. Astrid had a little technical problem which needs attention; the ends of her last notes were not as precisely considered and achieved as should be. **Stephanie Brandt** brought absorption and intensity to a programme from medieval to experimental, fielding a strange sub-bass Partzold recorder which she put through its paces. One of Isang Yun's *Chinese Pictures* inflicted painful difference tones (unavoidable in the Peacock Room) and she gave an impressive account of Berio's innovative *Gesti*, which should really be numbered as one of the *Sequenzas*. I look forward to hearing her again and would have been content had she been awarded the palm.

The technical authority of Netherlands virtuoso **Erik Bosgraaf** gained praise from recorder students listening, and the award of 2nd prize for his unlikely arrangements for recorder – including a Telemann flute fantasy, Bach's 1st cello suite (how do you take a breath in the semiquaver runs?) and a Stravinsky clarinet *étude*. [Arrangements are now so much in favour that perhaps it is time that my own arrangement for treble recorder of Mozart's sonata K 570, which I made in the 1950s to fill a perceived gap, should see the light? The work is featured in the collected piano sonatas but also to be found amongst the violin sonatas, with the violin part added by an unknown hand – so no sacrilege, I felt, in those long ago days before arrangements of the classics became big business. Enquiries welcomed.]

*Continued at foot of next page*

## THE FULL & FINAL MONTEVERDI

Clifford Bartlett

I Fagiolini's imaginative performance of Monteverdi's Book IV has previously been enthusiastically reviewed by Andrew Benson-Wilson (*EMR* 102, p. 12), but I return to it because it impinges very much on the question of working within a *tactus* that I have raised several times in the last few issues. Robert Hollingworth phoned me just as I was despairing of getting the October issue out in time and pleaded with me to go to the performance in Cambridge on Monday 26 September as the last chance to see it in the UK. What I had picked up from reviews of previous performances had made me curious, but what swayed the balance was the rest of the conversation. Robert expressed interest in the reported discussion on *tactus* in Biber between Brian and myself (*EMR* 107, p. 25), and it emerged that one feature of the Monteverdi performance was its observance thereof. So I was intrigued, though of course I had no intention of giving it black marks for every time the rhythm slipped.

Queens' College has pleasant Monteverdian memories from the *Poppea* I saw there a few years ago, ingeniously staged in different parts of the college, with the audience moving round from one scene to the next. The Hall reminded me more of William Morris' than the Ducal Palace in Mantua, but the size was ideal – musically, if not financially, since there was only room for six tables. 12 people sat at each – those in the know realised that two of them were performers, a singer and an actor at each table. The show began with two sopranos piercing the chatter with a unison moving into harsh suspensions. The whole book of 20 madrigals was sung without a break. The sequence worked fluently. I only noted one awkward tonal relationship between pieces, and only one was transposed. Even though the book is not systematically arranged by finals, this is probably not accidental. I'm not sure whether I would often want to hear an hour of music of such concentrated intensity. Except for an occasional event like this, time is needed between the pieces to recover.

The performance aspect is that each singer<sup>2</sup> is paired with an actor, and they act out a series of stories expressing the amorous nature of the texts and music – I might have written 'erotic', but these days that would have implied rather more exposure and action than is offered. A friend who was allowed to watch from the gallery could see the variety of different stories happening simultaneously; those of us at ground level tended to concentrate on what was happening virtually within reach. I was tempted to join the game, but didn't know my neighbour well enough to guess how she would react. I wouldn't want to see something like this too often, but it revealed what the music was about, and avoided having to worry too much about not understanding the words. Like the duet concert

by Mark Tucker etc. at Pickett's *Orfeo* weekend a couple of years ago (to which Peter Grahame Woolf objected so strongly), the presence of texts and translations would have been a distraction. I wondered whether the actors were really necessary, since the singers acted equally well; but silent partners were required dramatically since Monteverdi was only providing music for one side of the relationship.

The musical performance was not just powerful but stimulating. It was fascinating to hear voices coming from different and varying places: I've never heard polyphony so clearly. The ear easily adjusted to the different volumes of voices at unequal distances. The tuning was pretty good, and the transition between madrigals worked perfectly. One always assumes, indeed instructs small ensembles without a conductor to co-ordinate by eye contact. But here there was very little – not even any obvious glances at the beginning of madrigals. But playing it by ear was helped by the placing of the notes within a rigid *tactus*. Occasionally I checked that it was strict: it was, but the singing was always incredibly dramatic and expressive. I commented on this singing in time to my other neighbour, whom I didn't know but gather was a singer, and she didn't believe me! I previously assumed that one of the differences between ecclesiastical and chamber singing was that the latter was freer. Here the freedom was enhanced by actually being within a strict background.

<sup>1</sup> The ceiling is in fact by him.

<sup>2</sup> Not quite each, since the regular bass was ill and the substitute hardly had time to memorise the music between 2.30 and 6.30, so was allowed to sit with a score. I would like to mention them all, but no cast list was provided.

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A last word about three of the Exhibitor Demonstrations in the intimate, panelled Admiral's Room; music was to be heard throughout the weekend all over the campus, and too in St Alphege's Church nearby – a trade fair and much besides. Frank James showed how well Field and Beethoven sounded on fortepiano and square piano in his breathless half-hour allotted; Ibi Aziz (the first Early Music winner of Trinity College's Gold Medal) with Sarah Cunningham and Jenny Bullock played early French music on a trio of Jane Julier's bass viols, and Tim Cranmore and a colleague illustrated their roles as recorder player/maker and baroque flute maker/player respectively.

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Clifford Bartlett

## COLLECTED HUGLO

Michel Huglo *Chant grégorien et musique médiéval*. Ashgate Variorum, 2005. xvi + 380pp, £62.50. ISBN 0 86078 950 0

Michel Huglo *La théorie de la musique antique et médiéval*. Ashgate Variorum, 2005. xvi + 338pp, £62.50. ISBN 0 86078 946 2

Probably because chant is somewhat peripheral to my main musical activity (as King's Music I'm a baroque specialist, and as player or singer I'm most at home in the 16th and 17th centuries) and because the musicological journals to which I subscribe are English-language ones, the name Michael Huglo is more familiar to me from the writings of other scholars and citations in footnotes than directly from his own writing. So I am very pleased to have these compilations of his articles. Each volume has a brief introduction by the author in French with an English translation by Barbara Haggh; the articles themselves are in French – perhaps summaries in English might also have been useful. Apart from the easy availability of the articles, this series has added value in the indexes, with separate ones for MSS, place names, personal names, and chant texts. Huglo's range of work is extremely wide, and there are two earlier volumes collecting his papers on medieval sources and the old repertories of chant. It would take a couple of pages to even describe the contents in any useful way, so I won't try. Much of the information is very detailed, but that is its value. Ideas change, but solid research can survive, and much of Huglo's work is of that nature.

## CHANSONS WITHOUT MUSIC

Mary Atchinson *The Chansonier of Oxford Bodleian MS Douce 308: Essays and Complete Edition of Texts*. Ashgate, 2005. 580pp, £90.00 ISBN 0 7546 0125 0

It is perhaps odd that an edition of an important MS in Oxford is not automatically published by the University's own publishing house – perhaps it is more concerned with promoting its own scholars than its own collections. Anyway, thanks to Ashgate for taking on this important project. The early-14th-century *chansonier* is one of seven independent books copied as an entity, one of them now existing separately as BL Harley 4972. The *chansonier* lacks music, but is of considerable interest to musicians. The various types of poems are separated into sections introduced by an illustration. That for the *estampies*, for instance, shows three ladies who appear to be seated and clapping their hands under the direction of a smaller figure – smaller, perhaps, because the conductor is of a lower status than the singers? The author assumes they are singing, but that could be disputed. It is, however,

clear that they are not dancing. The introduction concentrates chiefly on the layout of the MS and the identity of the scribes, with a section on the illuminations. Each poem is identified by the number in Hans Spanke G. Raynauds\* *Bibliographie des Altfranzösischen Liedes*), but motets and rondeaux are identified by Hendrik Van der Werf *Integrated Directory of Organa...* 1989, with a note of the MS of concordant musical settings). The editor stresses, however, that the 500 poems here, whether originally meant to be sung or not, were copied as free-standing poems

\* quoted with an English apostrophe *Raynaud's* in the bibliography

## HABSBURG CHAPELS

*The Royal Chapel in the Time of the Habsburgs: Music and Ceremony in the Early Modern European Court* Edited by Juan José Carreras and Bernardo García García, translated by Yolanda Acker, English version edited by Tess Knighton The Boydell Press, 2005. x + 402pp, £95.00. ISBN 1 84383 139 2

It is very unusual for volumes of scholarly essays to be translated, but this first appeared in Spanish in 2001 as *La Capilla Real de los Austrias*. Knowledge of the Spanish language and culture is fairly rare in Britain: Spain is popular for holidays and retirement, but I would guess more among those wanting to sunbathe all day and drink all night than with academics. I had been to virtually every country in Western Europe before setting foot in Spain three years ago. Not that this is only about Spain. It has chapters on the English court chapel, Florence and Venice, the Imperial chapel and the Chapelle Royale, all of which could profitably be read by those interested in the background to court music of the 16th and 17th centuries. It should also be remembered that the Habsburgs ruled in places other than Spain, though the book abandons the Netherlands at page 135 and strays abroad thereafter only for one chapter on court etiquette at Naples in the 18th century. The final section is less relevant to the musician, describing the seating plans of court chapels and their significance. Some illustrations seem to appear in several places (I am avoiding page numbers, since between writing the last two sentences my copy of the book has disappeared – last seen in a Holiday Inn in Greenwich). As in France (see the next review), order and protocol was paramount, and the position of your seat in the royal chapel was a matter of vital importance.

The chapter that interested me most was on the way Spanish scholars over the last century had insisted on the Spanishness of 16th-century music, despite the fact that Morales and Victoria worked in Rome and they and other

leading Spanish composers had international publishing careers. The myth that Spanish music was particularly mystical has affected both Spanish and non-Spanish performances. Fortunately, Spain is now part of Europe again.

It is impossible to convey and comment on such a substantial book with 20 contributions. Some are of more interest to historians, but there is plenty to make anyone interested in Spanish music read a few chapters at least.

### ARMS AND THE MAN

**Kate van Orden** *Music, Discipline and Arms in Early Modern France*. Chicago UP, 2005. xiv + 322pp, £28.00. ISBN 0 226 84976 7

When I was at school, I found it difficult to understand how someone who could praise (perhaps even invent) the Socratic stance 'I'm wiser than others because I know that I know nothing' (expanded by Rumsfeld in connection with the Iraq War) could also produce the weird assertions of *The Laws* and *Timaeus*. Reading this book, I was fascinated by the extent to which renaissance and post-renaissance France (I translate the period of the title into language more familiar to musicians) took up the Platonic ideas in preference to Christian ones, especially at a time when France was torn apart by the wars between catholic and protestant. (The chapter 'The Cross and the Sword' does deal with religious topics to some extent.) Was classical learning so important because it sidestepped religious controversy? The artificiality by which French aristocratic society lived seems to be primarily a way of separating it from the lower groups, with the learned, willingly or not, playing the game and providing a dubious intellectual backing for it. Kate van Orden doesn't question the structure, but expounds in depth the significance of dance, the Te Deum, drumming, horse ballets, and other topics generally ignored by musicologists. It is difficult for us to take battle-music seriously. Janequin's much-borrowed *La guerre* would not be among most people's list of their favourite chanson, and his bird piece is far better music; Monteverdi's *canti di marte* only work because the martial style is used so sparingly.

I am out-of-sympathy with what it describes and when reading it, my mind kept on going off at tangents. I don't like the Art of War, I have no interest in riding horses, both of which are key topics in it. It is, though, helpful to be told why they were important to the leading artists of the time. One can find here many examples of metaphors and symbols taken to their extreme. 'Ballet insisted upon a political order that... was in some sense beyond question and in which dancers participated as though mobilized by its eternal forms.' (p. 234) Contrast this with the 20th century, when dance reveals increasing freedom from control, but with a more fluid relationship between art and politics, and at times (e.g. the 1920s) the 'free' dances were quickly adopted, if not invented, by the ruling classes.

This is an important book for those concerned with the

cultural relationships of music. But the problem with the culture described here is that it seems not to have required or inspired music of the quality that comes from contemporary societies that were less controlled. 'Music was a magic tool of command' (p. 284), but perhaps it was a lower grade of magic, which suppressed the deeper magic of the arts that flourished in Italy and elsewhere.

### HYDRA-TUNES

**Musical Voices of Early Modern Women: Many-Headed Melodies** Edited by Thomasin LaMay. Ashgate, 2005. xv + 454pp, £50.00 ISBN 0 7546 3742 5

This book is further subtitled 'Women and Gender in the Early Modern World' amplifying its historical and cultural context. Although each chapter homes in on women musicians and/or composers and patrons, the contextualising reaches out to other art and social forms: painting, theatre, educational treatises, and the differential expectations of courtly men and women in terms of gender.

The editor's introduction points to recent scholarship on gender and women's place which suggests that the 'early modern' period (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with an occasional nod back to the last part of the 15<sup>th</sup>) began to open up possibilities for women's participation in the arts – and that this then became constrained by the social 'silencing' which, explicitly and implicitly, accompanies efforts by women to achieve parity in many professional and social activities.

So the book is nothing if not ambitious. It ranges over Europe, France, Italy, Spain and England, and each chapter, as befits an academic book, distils a massive amount of research. Indeed, there are many pages where the footnotes take up more space than the text itself, a constant reminder not only of the richness of the material, but also of its (still) relative newness. This makes the book a demanding read – rather different from an earlier, similar collection, *Women Making Music: the Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick. However, in the end this is not a drawback, since it represents a confidence in presenting such scholarship.

LaMay's book goes beyond celebrating and list-making of women's musical achievements, but explores around such recuperation by showing how complex the answers are to apparently simple questions: why were there so few women composers? Why were women musicians so circumscribed, compared to their male counterparts.

Some gender-based research has already become part of our mainstream repertoire; composers and performers Hildegard of Bingen, Barbara Strozzi, Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, patron Isabella d'Este, the paradoxical position of the nun-musicians in Venice. To this latter, LaMay's book adds some fascinating information about the 21 conventual institutions in mid-17<sup>th</sup> century Siena (12% of the female population lived there), and the 31 similar

houses in Madrid. Other chapters range further afield with research about Russian serf theatre in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (a bit late for 'early' modern...) in which women acted and sang, and were commonly sexually exploited and cruelly treated. Behind the celebration of musical achievements by women often lurk darker conditions.

Many chapters share certain themes: Castiglione is invoked in a number of places, since his courtier-conduct book was so influential across Europe – Spain and France, as well as England. Similarly, we return again and again to the strictures and advice in such books. Gender differences are revealed: English treatises approve of women learning musical instruments, as long as they are the more seemly ones – virginals and lute, for example. Others make more rigid divisions: the most pernicious of these seems to be a treatise by Juan Luis Vives, who, in a volume dedicated to Catherine of Aragon in 1523, encourages men to learn to dance for physical exercise, and castigates women musicians as out of order.

Finally, there are some interesting discussions about the erotic meanings construed from women's musical involvement. A chapter about Madalena Casulana (late 16<sup>th</sup> century) raises questions about the 'bodily act of erotic singing', focussing on the mouth and throat. Another chapter points out that Princess Elizabeth Stuart, the only surviving daughter of James I and inspirer of *Parthenia*, the first collection of English music for virginals, would have necessarily had to move arms and upper body to encompass the range of the written music. More women, more music, more body movement, more eroticism – more – what – excitement? Danger? Cause for suppression?

In sum, the book provides additional hard, scholarly knowledge about under-sung women musicians in the past, and raises important and provocative ideological questions about the kinds of meanings derived not just from the words of songs or texts, but from the gender-based provenance of their production. Music may be thought of as pure and abstract, but it is written and performed by real men and real women, and even the most reactionary person out there is unlikely to think men and women are exactly the same. The issue finally turns on whether one thinks gender difference is important, problematic and necessary to consider. This is a solid contribution to the debate. Its price and scholarly discourse are unlikely to make it a presence on everyone's bookshelf, but it should certainly be in every library.

Micheline Wandor

#### STEFFANI

Colin Timms *Polymath of the Baroque: Agostino Steffani and His Music* Oxford UP, 2003. xviii + 422pp, £60.00. ISBN 0 19 515473 8

Musicians on the whole do not move on from their chosen career into other walks of life – though I noticed a couple of days ago a list of recently-deceased musicians that included the name of Edward Heath, who incidentally lived very close to a keen conductor and subscriber to

*EMR* whose day job is that of bishop. That was the position which Steffani attained – not entirely to his satisfaction, since the emoluments were not adequate to the lifestyle he felt he needed to sustain a place in society necessary for the dignity of his office, that of Apostolic Vicar of North Germany. (His nominal see was in fact Spiga in Turkey.) His ministry seemed chiefly to the rulers and nobility of his Protestant northern Europe; perhaps that was logical at a time when the religion of a state was thought to depend on the religion of its rulers. His musical activity was concentrated in the first part of his life, during which he also engaged in diplomatic activity. So there is a wealth of biographical material available. Timms presents this in some detail, even though his main concern is Steffani as musician. Somewhat more than half of the main text is allocated to an account of the music, which is preceded by the life. Both sections are readable, apart from the small type, which is fine in good light but is very hard going in the sort of lighting usually provided in hotels – this is not a book to take on tour, and it is quite heavy to hold as well. It has the great virtue of making the reader want to hear the music. There is a full list of works with references to editions (not readily distinguishable by those not used to the standard scholarly abbreviations).

Steffani wrote church music, operas and 'chamber music': Timms uses the term for small-scale secular vocal music, his reputation being primarily for his duets. Over 80 survive, all except three written before 1702. They circulated widely in manuscript, and are well worth reviving. Hawkins (who wrote a life of Steffani around 1750, based on information from Handel) stated that they were written for the ladies at the court of Hanover. A dozen of these were edited by Timms (A-R Editions Baroque 53), and Timms also edited a volume in the Garland *Italian Cantata* facsimile series. In England, his most famous piece was a five-part madrigal *Gettano i re dal soglio* which he composed for the Academy of Vocal Music in London in 1726; he was elected President of the organisation in 1727. He did not visit London, but sent other music, including his *Stabat mater*, one of his last works, which may have been written for the Academy. This is a fine book, whetting the appetite for the music. I'm intrigued, for instance, by his 1674 publication of double-choir psalms, of which there is a 1968 Italian edition that I haven't seen. I apologise that this review appears belatedly two years after publication, but I only received a copy recently.

#### CLAVICHORD DIRECTORY

*International Clavichord Directory: a source book of clavichord information.* Edited by Judith Wardman, with contributions from Peter Bavington, Francis Knights and others The British Clavichord Society, 2005. 100pp, £5.00. ISBN 0 9551217 0 1

This compact A5 booklet offers a wide range of information, from points to bear in mind if composing for the instrument to a directory of people who make or play the clavichord. The variety of styles of self-contributed

biographies might have been lessened by clearer editorial guidelines: why is just one lady called 'Miss' when everyone else has bare christian and surnames? There is an annotated discography of available recordings, a bibliography, a list of instruments in museums, sources for technical drawings, suppliers of make-it-yourself kits, a list of society and magazines (*EMR* is described as 'a serious but lively organ'). There is a page about the net: [www.clavchord.info](http://www.clavchord.info) is worth checking; I'm intrigued by the reference to a clavichord/guitar version of something from *Porgy and Bess* by Oscar Peterson & Joe Pass. I don't have a copy of the first, 2001 edition for comparison (or if I did, it isn't on the shelf with my other books on the clavichord), so I can't say whether you need to update; but anyone interested in the instrument who doesn't have it should certainly spare a fiver for it. Much of the information is on the web site mentioned above, but this is more user-friendly.

Available from the editor at [bcs@nildram.co.uk](mailto:bcs@nildram.co.uk): you are requested to include 'clavichord' in the message title.

#### PENGUIN OPERA

*The Penguin Concise Guide to Opera* Edited by Amanda Holden. Penguin Books, 2005. xii + 593pp, £9.99 pb. ISBN 0 141 012682 5

My out-of-syllabus education was chiefly through Penguin Books. On the new-titles publication day every month, a friend and I would spend the lunch break poring over the them at the school bookshop and deciding which we would buy now, which we hoped to afford before the next month's new batch appeared. Penguin no longer dominates the market in the way it did in the 1950s, and (for instance) no longer publishes miniature scores. This publication derives from the 1993 Viking Opera Guide, which became the *Penguin Opera Guide* in 1995 and the *New Penguin Opera Guide* in 2001. What happened to first and second editions? you knew what you were dealing with then. *The Penguin* does not appear as part of the title on the cover. I do not have the predecessors, so won't review by comparisons but from the rather specialist viewpoint of our target audience.

The book is primarily a series of plot summaries arranged under composer in chronological order with brief biographical introductions. Peri and Caccini are not here (there is no reason to expect them) but the three Monteverdi operas receive excellent accounts and a two-page introduction (as much as Mozart) by Tim Carter. The only minor criticism is his underplaying the power of the recitative in *Poppea*. Only *Dido* is listed under Purcell, but Curtis Price gives the semi-operas their due in his introduction. Donald Burrows chooses (or is allowed) ten Handel operas; the first and last are perhaps surprising: *Agrippina* has only recently been performed at all widely, and *Semele*'s status as an opera, is questionable, although it works brilliantly and the various recent performances seem to be influenced by that of the ENO. The synopsis should surely mention when the most famous aria occurs,

even if 'Where'er you walk' does little to advance the plot. The rule for listing first performance is peculiar: after the 18th-century premiere comes the first British and the first American performance, so the only UK revival listed is that of *Agrippina*, since it was originally performed in Venice, not London; I would have thought that the first modern revival was a more significant date for early operas, perhaps distinguishing between those that mangled the original from those that more-or-less presented original scoring and shape. Rameau's *Les Boréades* gets six premieres, though I remember Graham Sadler (the article's author) telling me that there was a French revival c.1904, which should be included if true. Rameau is suprisingly well represented with six titles.

Plot summaries without text incipits for important arias are unhelpful, and this does not fall into that trap. I do, though, have worries about their usefulness. Most of the repertoire is (as the discographies show) available on disc, and, at least in their original issues, these usually come with synopses, texts and translations; and if you go to an opera, unless you arrive late you can read the synopsis in the programme. (One function of the overture – ruined if played with the lights out – is to give time to read the programme.) Only for broadcasts is a synopsis useful – I find those read by announcers generally unhelpful. Back in the late 1920s the BBC published translations to assist listeners of opera broadcasts – I've copies of some, including *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* on 16 Jan 1928; more recently listeners were offered detailed, timed synopses. No doubt the equivalent of surtitles will be soon sent out to digital listeners along with the sound. Meanwhile, I would recommend this on more general grounds than just for looking up the stories: the sections I have read (and not just the 'early' ones) have interesting and sensible things to say about the works. But surely striking musical features should be mentioned: eg, in Act II of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the pervasive chords reminding one of Mendelssohn but also diatonically twelve-tonal, or in Act III of Verdi's *Otello*, that 'A terra!... sì...' begins a massive ensemble – synopses in general are not very good at giving any clue to the musical spacing of a scene. Personally, I'd always rather follow a broadcast with a score than the text alone.

#### BERNARDO GRAZIANI

1604/5–1664

#### Tecum principium

This is taken from Bernardo Graziani's posthumous *Antifone per diverse festività di tutto l'anno*, Op. 14, Rome, 1666, where it is listed as being for Christmas. The text, from Psalm 109/110 'Dixit Dominus', is the antiphon to the first psalm of Vespers on Christmas Day. Graziani spent his working life in Rome.

*Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae, in splendoribus sanctorum, ex utero ante luciferum genui.*

Thine is the foundation in the day of your power; in the beauty of holiness I have born thee from the womb before the morning star.

## B. Graziani: Tecum principium

Soprano 1

Te - cum prin - ci - pi-um in di-e vir-tu-tis tu - ae, te - cum prin-ci - pi

Soprano 2

Te - cum prin - ci - pi-um in di-e vir - tu-tis tu -

Bass

Te - cum prin - ci - pi-um in di-e vir-tu-tis tu - ae,

Continuo

6 6 4 6 6 7 6 # 4 3 4 3

8

um in di-e vir-tu-tis tu - ae, vir-tu-tis tu - ae, in di-e vir - tu-tis tu - ae,

- ae, in di-e vir tu - tis tu - ae, te - cum prin - ci - pi-um in di-e vir

te - cum prin - ci - pi - um in di-e vir - tu-tis tu - ae, te - cum prin - ci - pi-bus in di-e vir - tu - tis

6 7 6 2 5 # 4 3

14

in di-e vir - tu - tis tu - ae, in splen - do

tu - tis tu - ae, in splen -

tu - ae, vir - tu - tis tu - ae; in splen - do - ri-bus san - cto - rum,

6 4 3 4 3

23

ri-bus san - cto - rum; ex u-te-ro an-te lu-ci - fe

do ri - bus san - cto - rum; ex u-te-ro an-te lu-ci - fe-rum ge

in splen - do - ri-bus san - cto - rum;

4 3 6 b

30

rum ge - nu-i, ge-nu-i te, ex u - te-ro an - te lu - ci - fe-rum ge -

nu-i, ge-nu-i te, ex u - te-ro an - te lu - ci - fe-rum ge -

ex u - te-ro an - te lu - ci - fe-rum ge - nu-i te,

4 3 4 3

34

nu-i, ge-nu-i te, ex u-te-ro an-te lu-ci-fe-rum ge-nu-i, ge-nu-i te,

nu-i, ge-nu-i te, ex u-te-ro an-te lu-ci-fe-rum ge-nu-i te,

ex u-te-ro an-te lu-ci - fe-rum ge - nu-i, ge - nu-i te, in splen - do -

4 3 6 6 4 3

40

in splen - do - - - - - ri - bus,  
ri - bus san - cto - rum, in splen - do -

4 3 b

49

ri-bus san-cto-rum; ex u-te-ro an-te lu-ci-fe-rum ge-nu-i te,  
in splen-do-ri-bus san-cto-rum; ex u-te-ro an-te lu-ci-fe-rum ge-nu-i, ge-nu-i te,  
ri-bus san-cto-rum; ex u-te-ro an-te lu

# 4 3 5 4 6 6 4 3 6

55

3

ex u-te-ro an te lu-ci-fe-rum ge-nu - i te, ge - nu-i, ge - nu - i te, ge - nu

ex u-te-ro an te lu-ci-fe-rum ge-nu - i te, ge - nu-i, ge - nu - i te, ge - nu

ci-fe-rum ge - nu-i te, ge - nu-i, ge - nu - i, ge-nu - i te, ge -

4 3 6 5 4 3 4 3

59

i, ge - nu-i te, ge - nu-i ge - nu-i te.

i, ge - nu-i te, ge - nu-i te.

- nu-i, ge-nu-i te, ge - nu-i te, ge - nu-i te.

4 3 5 6 4 4 3

## GOOD CD GUIDE?

*The Classical Good CD & DVD Guide 2006.* Haymarket, 2005. lv + 1414 pp, £24.99. ISBN 0 860 24972 7

I'm not quite sure what to put in the heading. The editor, David Roberts, is one of 116 names (excluding individual contributors) on the back of what one might call the title page, though it also contains a short introduction. The body responsible is the magazine *The Gramophone* and with the name of its sponsor, Bose where one might expect to see the publisher. Bose has several pages of glossy adverts, so we may thank them for keeping the price down. The reader, however, would have been better served if an inside cover had been allotted to a key to symbols and abbreviations, which are not very easy to find on pages liv and lv. Some comment on the criteria for inclusion would have been useful. Instead, the introductory section has some brief, broad but sensible articles covering the history of Western music with recommendations for essential and exploratory listening – Fabrice Fitch's on 'early music' (i. e. pre-1600) is particularly good – and David Vickers distills interviews with Colin Davis, John Eliot Gardiner, Christopher Hogwood, Charles Mackerras, Neville Marriner and Roger Norrington (which is the odd one out?) on 'Why Mozart matters'. One quote: 'More than any composer, [Mozart] can capture the paradoxical emotional impressions of innocence and complexity' (John Eliot Gardiner).

There is a list headed '100 Great Recordings' which is mostly the same as 'The 100 Greatest Recordings' in the December *The Gramophone*, the 1000th issue of that venerable magazine. There, it is acknowledged as the outgoing editor's personal selection of '100 recordings than have become part of his life'. It's an odd selection, firmly rooted in core repertoire – nothing post 1950 except Britten's *War Requiem* (Boulez is in the Guide list but not the magazine version) and only three discs of music before 1700: the Page Hildegard, Munrow's *Art of the Netherlands* and some Tallis Scholar's Josquin, and a penchant for Richard Strauss, who contributes 5% of the total. No Monteverdi, no Purcell, only *Porgy and Bess* from across the Atlantic – what percentage of readers will that offend? Even ClassicFM's Hall of Fame has a wider repertoire, though its inclusion of short pieces makes direct comparison impossible. I hope the new editor, James Inverne, has more catholic taste. In the magazine itself, it is acceptable as a personal list; but one would expect something more representative in an authoritative reference book.

The bulk of the books (1156 pages) is devoted to reviews listed by composer, each preceded by a short biography supplied by Grove (GROVEMUSIC, to be precise), arranged within composer by the usual *Gramophone* convention with orchestral first and opera last. A big problem for those seeking to find the best recording to buy is that each review is separate, and there are sometimes favourable mentions of alternatives that are not reviewed. The recordings are selected because they are good, but the

greater discrimination between levels of goodness which is often apparent from the grading symbols is not justified by the text. It would have been more helpful if the reviews of a single work had been subsumed under a one heading and treated to more comparison – though the Penguin guide, which does use a single heading, still tends to give a paragraph per disc. I haven't checked with the magazine (my decades of back-issues are in our storeroom which has been infected by spores which have a bad effect on my breathing), but I assume they are taken more-or-less from its columns. But one item is missing; the name of the author. Most readers of a magazine will trust some writers and are suspicious of others, and even if a review has been worked over editorially, its authority would be increased by knowledge of the mind behind it. Popular works are given, in addition to reviews, a column listing half-dozen or more recordings with sentences on each: for the *Fireworks* and (except the last) *Water Music*, for instance, the list has Niquet, Savall, Norrington, Pearlman, McGegan, Marriner and Mackerras, but not Pinnock, whose *Water Music* is described in the fuller entries as 'the best performance on the market'.

A problem is dealing with shorter works. The recordings of the Pachelbel Canon must run into three figures now, but the only one shown under the composer is Marriner: surely it needs at least one three-violin-and-continuo versions as well as orchestrations with viola fill-ins. The other baroque piece that became popular at about the same time, Albinoni's *Adagio*, is snootily ignored under Albinoni, though where else would the innocent listener look it up? On page 1203, in a New College Choir vocal recital, misascribed to Allegri and conducted by one of our subscribers, although Albinoni/Giazotto is mentioned in the review. I've been bugged by feeble beginnings to Tallis's *Sancte Deus* recently, and wanted to check a few more: but there's just one under Tallis – but plenty of *Spems*. Personally, I'm not sure that I want a recording of it: a score and a memory are better. The recommendation in the list is for Alistair Dixon. Yet why no entry for his Complete Tallis, which at around £50 is a real bargain and probably cheaper than some of the Wagner recordings included.

This isn't the answer to the early-music maiden's prayer: there's too much enthusiasm to help readers other than those who are both wealthy and unemployed – though that is partly because there are so many good recordings now. We should encourage the tendency towards finding fresh music to record rather than continually re-treading old ground.

*This is a suitable place to congratulate The Gramophone on its 1000th issue. Not even in the war, with its paper shortages, was a month missed. It may have some limitations – what magazine doesn't – but it has performed a great service in fostering the circulation of good music on disc and surveying the output with a mostly benevolent but not sycophantic support for the performers and the activities of the recording industry. And with its vast store of information, it is the archive for the history of the recording of classical music for the last 83 years.*

## TRUST ME, I'M THE CONDUCTOR

Jill Mitchell

### With 'Cardinall' Carwood in Andalucia

*Jimena de la Frontera, April 2005*

There are a few details I ought to mention  
That would replay your serious attention...  
The Altos have picked up some subtle sign  
That leads them to prefer their speed to mine.  
Now, leave me to conduct and call the tune –  
You could regard that as some sort of boon.  
You're lab'ring on in such a stolid slow-grind,  
Apparently those minims make you snow-blind.  
Trust me, trust me! I'm the one conducting  
And *ad libendum's* thoroughly disrupting...  
Now what was *that* pedantic phrase about?  
Too many heavy accents stretched it out.  
Your reasoning, p'raps, was theological,  
When *apostolicum* near ground to halt.  
But I believe it quite illogical,  
Nay – *vestra culpa!* – 'twas a grievous fault.  
A whole bar, Ladies, to look up at me  
(My shirt this morning is a joy to see)  
Make contact early, gaze upon my face:  
Your entry will fall perfectly in place.

Bass quality I need that's full and round,  
A Vienna-Philharmonic-cello sound;  
It's totally *emulsioned*, Bases: read the signs,  
Point up the verbal accents, shape the lines.  
Don't mindlessly give thump to the first beat,  
The textual rhythm isn't quite so neat.  
The accent often doesn't coincide,  
And bar-lines prove themselves a doubtful guide.  
You often have to be prepared to find  
Important syllables have been consigned  
To *wrong* parts of the bar, so note these latter  
And seek the crucial ones that really matter...  
Do not announce Saviour's joyful Rising  
In tone that savour more of curdled milk,  
Evoking moods of boredom, or chastising  
(And memories of Father Charlie Dilke).  
Let vowels be bright, and pure Italo-Latin  
And consonants be clean as polished rapier;  
Your mouths, alas, seem stuffed with silky satin  
(And bring to mind dear Father Michael Napier).

On *per prophetas*, Sops, I'll buy your *dim*,  
But your consumptive frailty is grim:  
You sound about to teeter and expire,  
Dames aux Camélias we don't require!  
Power it through – the phrase is on the move –  
Dress it with purpose, rise above the groove;  
For loud and quiet singing, I would claim,  
Are both, in one respect, the same.  
*Piano* does not signify more tame,  
Or rhythmically listless, lank, and lame.  
Beware those dotted crotchets, as I've said;  
Don't let them lose momentum, bulge and spread.  
Keep their integrity, their rhythmic spring  
With drive and with direction as you sing.  
Supply the consonants, but keep the flow:  
They're music too. Don't break the line, but grow.  
And on those quavers please don't rush: be steady! –  
As I have told you several times already.  
Those *Mimi* tones again! Oh, Sops, you must  
Endeavour to be healthily robust,  
Not langourous, tubercular, effete –  
Like wilting wantons, robbed of life and heat...

Forget to breathe, and life is rendered fraught –  
It might become significantly short –  
And, Gentlemen, grouped thus behind me here  
Your poor ensemble can't escape my ear.  
You'll get away with nothing there, I fear;  
Each wobbly hesitation's loud and clear.  
That second beat was lazy, uninvolved,  
And going nowhere – tension quite dissolved!...  
As one, with proper preparation, prime  
Your breathing to be perfectly in time.  
Your first note then will scarcely fail to please  
Me with its well-produced and focused ease.  
Remember, too, I have some great upbeats,  
So be prepared for *dic nobis* repeats, –  
No, Bases – trust me – yet again you're late;  
But Tenors, you were quite immaculate!...  
These pointers listened to, and not ignored,  
Victoria and Vivanco will applaud  
(In heavenly and harmonious accord)  
Our celebration of their Easter Lord.

*Jill's poetic distillation of the rehearsal sayings of various  
conductors must make one wonder if all choirs have the  
same failings.* CB

## CD REVIEWS

## CHANT

*Canti Gregoriani Nativitas* Schola Gregoriana "Scriptoria", Nicola Bellinzano dir. Tactus TC 100006 75' 57"  
+ Pastorales by Bach, Meneghetti & Zipoli

The first half of the disc contains chants from the feast of the Birth of St. John the Baptist, the second chants of Christmas, both sets calling on the Mass and Vespers. Groups are separated by jolly organ pastorales, sometimes nearer gigue than siciliana, with some particularly intriguing chromatics in the Zipoli. The contrast emphasises the subdued quality of the singing. It sounds terribly holy, much more like stiff-upper-lipped Anglicans than full-blooded Italians. 'Sing unto the Lord a new song', but surely not so discreetly. The choir performs well within its chosen style, but from where does that style derive? The booklet begins with a dubious and simplistic history of catholic chant, and the texts (not translated) have no accents for the St John items but a smattering of graves and acutes as Christmas decoration. CB

*Epiphany: Medieval Byzantine Chant for the Feasts on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>*. Cappella Romana, Ioannis Arvanitis, Alexander Lingas dirs, 71' 14"  
Gothic Records G 49237

It is a delight to welcome to the Early Music scene a rendering of Byzantine chant which is both meticulous and accessible. The listener is led pleasurably into the litany by the warmth of tone and depth of texture achieved by an extremely successful blend of sonorous bass and resonant bass-baritone. The distinctive rhythms of Byzantine music, associated with the movements of celebrants around the church at various points during a service, are reinforced by a clarity of diction, care with the placing of stress and grouping of words, and perfectly coordinated teamwork among the singers. Here the drone is especially sympathetic, subtly backing produced with faultless breath-control and a fine ear for the soloist's enharmonics and modulations. The accomplished melismatic solo singing and antiphonal exchanges sustain the interest and, through creating a range of moods – whether solemn, yearningly evocative, soothing or, finally, rousing – help to interpret the sacred words. The heavens truly ring with angelic voices.

All this could not have been achieved without the enthusiasm and commitment

of Alexander Lingas (Artistic Director), Ioannis Arvanitis (Guest Director), Mark Powell (Executive Director), the production staff and all those who contributed to the rigorous training essential for performing Byzantine music. The CD cover is inviting to the music-store browser, particularly in the festive season. The booklet offers absorbing background knowledge about the historical evolution of Byzantine sacred music, equips the reader for attentive listening to the content of each track and provides clear texts in Greek and English translation.

Diana Maynard

## MEDIEVAL

*Chansons de Troubadours* Millenarium Ricercar RIC 243 63' 10" (rec. 2000) ££  
Music by Beranguier de Palol, Bernard de Ventadorn, Gaucelm Faidit, Thibaut de Champagne & anon

I'm puzzled by this. The booklet goes on about the ideas of courtly love. Such ideas can only be expressed in words, but the emphasis of the disc is instrumental. Irrespective of the perennial discussion of 'primo le parole' or 'prima la musica', it seems odd to cut verses of the poems to make room for laid-back instrumental interludes (or commentaries?) I've no objection to the instrumental pieces being rather free – there are so few of them that they need refreshing; but whether they are dances or by-products of the Notre-Dame style, they are notated with regular rhythms and I would imagine that to be an essential element, but not here. Similarly, the more freely the voice is interrupted, the more the form of the poem vanishes. It is all marvellously performed – but I question its philosophy. The title is given as *Joy* in the booklet, but not on the outside of the package; it is presumably coincidental that the author of *The Allegory of Love* (the pioneering English study of courtly love) also wrote *Surprised by Joy*. CB

This 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary issue for the excellent Ricercar label comes with a catalogue.

*Stella Maris* Trio Mediaeval 65' 46"  
ECM New Series 476 3021  
12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> cent. Music from England and France;  
Sungji Hong *Missa Lumen de lumine* (2002)

It is difficult for a girls' medieval group to avoid comparison with the anonymous quartet, but the Trio seems to engage a little more deeply with the music. I wonder whether the tendency to exaggerate the sectional nature of much of the music

really is an essential part of the style. It carries over into Hong's impressive Mass – if you are suspicious of 21st-century music, try the Sanctus first. I wonder, too, whether it was a good idea of the composer to exploit their upper range so much: going back to the medieval pieces, it makes them seem a bit constricted. But it's at the end of the disc, so one could think of it as a development. I found this a very enjoyable recording. CB

14<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

*Machaut Messe de Nostre Dame, Felix virgo/Inviolata* Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, Mary Berry 75' 49"  
Herald HAVPCD 312

To quote the first word of the introit, 'Gaudeamus': what a different style of chant from the glum Tactus disc reviewed above. Not that there is any artificial jollification. The steady and strong movement isn't entirely a whim of Mary Berry's imagination. She takes a tempo that relates to that of the polyphony, avoiding the usual clash of styles when they meet. (Her PhD addressed this topic, though from a later period.) The recording was made at Rheims Cathedral, though not, unlike another disc, actually at the place where Machaut lies, which no longer has an altar. The mass may not always have the panache of the very best of the rival recordings, but the total effect is moving and convincing and Machaut's texture sound like solid chords with ornaments in a way that is unique. Buy it! CB

15<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

*Dufay Chansons* Tetraktys (Jill Feldman S, Kees Boeke *vielle*, fl, Martia Christina Cleary *harp*, Jane Achtman *vielle*) 58' 54"  
Olive Music OM 005

Ultimately your reaction to this very neat collection of rondeaux, ballades and virelais by Dufay will depend on your reaction to the voice of the group's singer, Jill Feldman. An artist of considerable international reputation, the American soprano has a very distinctive voice which is not everybody's cup of tea, and while I am quite happy to listen to her contribution to Les Arts Florissants and other ensembles, I found this extended exposure to her solo voice a patchy experience. Intermittent vibrato, occasionally flawed intonation and some swallowing of cadences were all annoying, and I'm afraid in my case this outweighed her many

virtues as a singer of this challenging repertoire. This was a shame, as the choice of chansons was intriguing and the playing of her colleagues in Tetraktys was flawlessly beautiful. As I say, not everybody will share my reaction and many of you may even wonder what I am talking about – to you I have no hesitation in recommending this recording. *D. James Ross*

**Dufay *Quadrivium*** Cantica Symphonia, Giuseppe Maletto *dir* 77' 49"  
Glossa GCD P31901

Part financed by the Mathematics Department of Turin University, this recording is underpinned by a cerebral article on tuning and proportions by the mathematician (and organist) Guido Magnano – all you ever wanted to know about temperament and proportions, and perhaps a little more. The most important aspect for the performances seems to be the argument in favour of moving the 'truest' tunings to suit the 'core' key of the piece so that the 'wolf' fifth is either avoided entirely or almost entirely. This seems to make perfect sense, except for the obvious objection that it would have taken hours to set up instruments for each piece. As Cantica Symphonia use a mixture of voices and instruments, including organs, this would seem to present a bit of a problem in the live performance of more than one piece. Having said that, the playing and singing of the Dufay motets on this disc are exquisitely beautiful, and quite the most accomplished use of 'pre-mean' tuning I have heard.

The very inventive alternation and combination of voices and instruments as well as the stunning blend they achieve makes this entire disc a delight. Even motets such as *Ecclesiae militantes*, which I have hitherto found easier to admire than to like, were thoroughly enjoyable, while old favourites such as *Nuper rosarum flores* and *Flos florum* received thoughtful and beautifully expressive performances.

*D. James Ross*

*This is unhelpfully packaged: the design is intriguing, but there's no indication on the outside of the point of the anthology, and the shrink-wrap stops any potential purchaser from looking inside.* CB

**Dunstable *Sweet Harmony: Masses and Motets*** Tonus Peregrinus 70' 08"

Naxos 8.557341 £  
*Quam pulchra es, Veni Sancte/Veni creator* & Mass movements

Founded by the composer/producer Anthony Pitts in 1990 to sing music ancient and contemporary, Tonus Peregrinus apply their skills here to various mass movements by John Dunstable as

well as the motets *Veni Sancte Spiritus* and *Quam pulchra es*, perhaps his most famous single work. Like their previous disc for Naxos of music from Notre-Dame Cathedral, this recording is made in the spacious acoustic of Chancelade Abbey, although on a less stormy day than the previous one. The approach is dynamic and yet makes good use of the large acoustic, ranging in from a crisp forte to a whispering pianissimo. The singing of the stratospherically high solo voices in the Sanctus (*sine nomine*) is stunning, but the star of the show is the newly deciphered canonic Gloria with its splendid passing dissonances. The ensemble has a highly developed sense of line (which allows the music time to speak), as well as of ensemble; and if the voice types aren't always a complete match, the sound is ravishing. *D. James Ross*

**Obrecht *Missa De tous biens playne, Missa Fors seulement, Missa Cela sans plus*** A. N. S. Chorus, János Bali 70' 51"  
Hungaroton Classics HCD 32319

A commendable recording of two masses a3 and one (*Cela...*) a4 sung by 13 singers whose names look very Hungarian and a Nigel. The performances are enjoyable, though some might find them a little relaxed. My only criticism is of a lack of body in the shorter notes: one doesn't want them to stick out, but neither does sliding across the surface give the right effect. The usefulness to the listener without score is increased by the tables showing the structure of the first two masses. CB

## 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**Byrd *The Great Service*** The Choir of Westminster Abbey, Robert Quinney *org*, James O'Donnell 76' 15"  
Hyperion CDA67533

+ *Christ rising again, How long shall mine enemies, O Lord make thy servant Elizabeth, Out of the deep, Prevent us O Lord, Sing joyfully, Fancy & Voluntary for my Lady Nevell*

Recordings of the Great (or, indeed any other) Service are rare outside labels aimed specifically at the church-music market, so this is very welcome; it also includes a batch of Byrd's finest English anthems, which too often early-music choirs tend to pass over in favour of the motets. In many ways, it is a fine performance, but whether you like it depends on one issue: the use of trebles. In principle, it is absolutely authentic. But irrespective of timbre, what worries me is the way that in the verse sections, the other voices have to be restrained not to drown them so sound a bit pathetic. Sometimes the

music makes sense with a quiet verse followed by loud chorus; but often when the text demands a full sound, the effect is silly. I wonder if the producer and engineer have made too honest an attempt to capture the actual rather than an ideal sound. I imagine that Byrd's boys were older and were trained to give a full-blooded rather than ethereal noise. But if that doesn't worry you, do buy this fine recording of what should be as familiar as Byrd's masses but probably isn't. CB

**Gombert *Credo a8, Media Vita, Haec dies, Vae vae Babylon, Salve Regina 'Diversi diversa orant', Lugebat David Absalon etc*** Henry's Eight, Jonathan Brown *dir* 69' 54"  
Hyperion Helios CDH55247 (rec 1996) ££

The only motet by Gombert that I know is the one which Monteverdi tore apart and reassembled. This disc was a revelation. Real depth of sound in the eight-part Credo, and a sombre clarity in most of the rest of the music – I am complimenting both Gombert and Henry's Eight. Noel O'Regan reviewed the first issue with enthusiasm (*EMR* 23 p. 13). He recommended it highly, and so do I – and it's now more affordable. When is one of the Early Music Fora going to organise a day singing Gombert? CB

**Jachet de Mantoue *Lamentations, Messes et Motets*** Ensemble Jachet de Mantoue, Les Sacqueboutiers de Toulouse, Michaël Lonsdale 180' 24" (3 CDs)  
Calliope CAL 310.2

(orig. CAL 9310, 9340, 9342, 2001-4)

A three-disc set of Jachet of Mantua (1483-1559) is something that his fans could only dream about, but here it is – and very good to boot. Astonishment might be slightly tempered by the fact that the box contains three pre-existent discs. The first has the mass a5 *Anchor che col partire* (published in 1554, the year before the Rore's madrigal upon which it is based was published. This is accompanied by Marian motets by Jachet, Berchem and Mouton. The second disc has his set of Lamentations; since they were written for Mantua, it is odd that biblical texts are read in a French translation – perhaps a sop to the sponsor, France Télécom. The final disc contains the *Missa Enceladi Coeque soror* with motets by Jachet and Willaert, including the Mass's source, a motet in honour of the Gonzagan horses. The five-voice Ensemble Jachet de Mantoue presents the music stylishly: everything is right, and the excellence of the composer is made evident without any exaggeration. In the last disc, they are joined by the Toulouse sackbutters. A magnificent issue. CB

**Tallis Latin & English motets & anthems**  
The Rodolfus Choir, Ralph Allwood 70'34"  
Herald HAVPCD 305

I used this to put me in a Tallisian mood on my way to a weekend of singing his music. It wasn't entirely successful, apart from making me look forward to singing that, while technically less good, would represent the music in a less 20/21st century way. What has become my test track in Tallis recordings, *Sancte Deus*, opens the disc, and almost made me abandon it. Admittedly, I've heard worse, but as I wrote recently, this is surely a strong piece – we are back to the spurious holiness of our opening plainsong disc. (Elgar set virtually the opening words pretty forcefully for Gerontius). The build-ups of phrases start too quietly and end too early. Things improve, and there is plenty to enjoy here. But non-specialist choirs (like St John's College, Oxford: see p. 39) are able to sing with strict tempo and long phrases shaped from within rather than externally imposed. I wonder if Ralph Allwood, excellent choir-trainer though he be, could get such results if directing from a single partbook. Of course, he might not be interested in the idea, but some of us see freedom in that constriction. *Salvator mundi* has vigour and shape, apart from the *rallentando*, and sounds much better. If you are happy with the cathedral style, you will enjoy this; but I felt a clash between style and music. CB

**Stockmann Musica Nuptialis** Capella Hafniensis, Ole Kongsted cond, Allan Rasmussen org 56'50"  
Dacapo 8.226024

I reviewed the score in August (*EMR* 108, p. 3). The performances fall into to trap I mentioned – that the editor made no mention of the need to transpose those in *chiavette* – which is most of the motets. For much of the disc the soprano part is uncomfortably high and the balance below also feels unsatisfactory. This is a shame, since otherwise the one-to-a-part singing does Stockmann proud. The disc ends with a group of organ intabulations which would have been better placed as contrast among the motets. CB

**Valderrábano Silva de Sirenas** Carlos Mena cT, Armoniosi Concerti (Juan Carlos Rivera, Consuelo Navas, Juan Miguel Nieto vihuelas) 77'  
Harmonia Mundi HMI 987059

Little is known about the life of Enríquez de Valderrábano (c. 1500–c. 1557). His collection of music for the vihuela *Silva de Sirenas* was published in Valladolid in 1557, and according to John Griffiths'

sleeve notes, took at least 12 years to compile. The collection is divided into seven books, with a total of 171 pieces. Juan Carlos Rivera's Armoniosi Concerti present a wide selection: fantasies, sets of variations, dances, intabulations of sacred works, and polyphonic pieces called *Soneto*, the first of which reminds me of a *ricercar* by Francesco da Milano. The playing is ever varied, yet maintains a dignified restraint, evoking the rarified atmosphere of music at the Spanish court. Particularly noteworthy are intabulations of two motets by Morales: an extended (nearly six minutes) *Quanti mercenarii* and *Jubilate*, the latter having some surprising dissonances. The *secundae partes* of these motets do not appear in *Silva de Sirenas* but they are included on the CD, played on three vihuelas of different sizes. Many of the pieces will be familiar to early music buffs, but not necessarily with Valderrábano's distinctive gloss. The *Tres diferencias sobre la Pavana* is a setting of La Gamba, but with the inclusion of interesting harmonies and virtuosic divisions running up and down the fingerboard. His elaborate variations on *Guardame las Vacas* are very different indeed from the well-known set by Luis de Narváez.

For six of the 26 tracks the vihuelists are joined by Carlos Mena, whose unhurried countertenor voice floats above their gentle plucking, often with some exceedingly long notes. I am less happy with a slight wobble in his voice, and audible sniffs from the vihuela players. Nevertheless it is fine music played very well. All in all a very listenable-to CD. Stewart McCoy

**Victoria Devotion to our Lady** The Sixteen, Harry Christophers 52'21"  
Coro COR 16036  
*Missa Salve* a8 + Marian Antiphons a8, *Ave maris stella* a4 & *Magnificat* a8

The Sixteen continue their exploration of the devotional music of Victoria with this exquisite recording of the double choir *Missa Salve*, as well as the motet on which it was based and a clutch of other mainly eight-part Marian motets. Underpinned by organ and *bajón*, the sound is opulent, perfectly balanced and supremely rich, while the articulation from such a large ensemble (21 singers and two instrumentalists) is extremely impressive. The complete reliability of the choir in every respect allows Harry Christophers to imbue the music with a powerful muscularity and a dark religiosity which are entirely appropriate for Victoria's emotionally charged style. This is one of the finest recordings by the Sixteen and one of the best CDs of Victoria's music I have heard recently. Thoroughly recommended. James Ross

**Frottole** Accordone, Marco Beasley voice, Guido Morini dir 69'03"

Cypres CYP1643

Music by Azzaiolo, Beasley, Borrono, Cara, Dalza, Fogliano, il Giuggiola, Lasso, Lurano, Morini, Scoto, Stringare, Trombonico

This is a stunning record. At times I would have welcomed a contrasting soprano, but Marco Beasley sings so well, mostly simply (though with a bit of an edge so that it isn't impossibly beautiful), while the instruments provide a wealth of embellishment – most notably Bruce Dickey on the cornetto, who almost makes it speak, as Ganassi recommends for the recorder. There is also some fantastic ensemble plucking: Dalza's *Piva* for lute duet sticks in my mind, but perhaps because it is there already from concerts by Jim Tyler and Tony Rooley of 35 years ago. This music is harmonically so clear: this is where the bass took over from the tenor as the structural voice, but in these performances it isn't over-stressed. CB

**Paston present** Cantiones Renovatae 56'05"  
Meden MSD10

Music by Arcadelt/Ortiz, Byrd, van Eyck, Holborne, Nicholson, Stroggers, Taverner, R. Whyte, van Wilder

I would normally have sent this to Stewart McCoy to review; but he is one of the four players, and devised the programme based on music in the Paston lute books. His companions are Richard Lindsay (alto and recorder), his mother Kathleen Berg (kbd, recorder) and Margaret Westlake (viol, recorder). I heard it playing at the Lindum Records stand during the Early Music Exhibition and was impressed, and enjoyed playing it. This is, in the minuscule versions of the Paston MSS, domestic music that benefits from players who don't quite have the panache of the stars in the early-music firmament, though can produce excellent performances nevertheless. One expects the sound of viols for much of this music; the more varied ensemble here lacks the gravity of a viol consort of the period, but the music is certainly easier to listen to in this more varied presentation. I presume the woodcut of the group in the booklet is intended to be a joke – it could win a prize for the worst group picture ever, though the colour pictures are fine. CB

**Allegri Miserere** Palestrina *Missa Papae Marcelli*, Mundy *Vox patris caelestis* The Tallis Scholars, Peter Phillips dir 68'40"  
Gimell GIMSE 401 (rec 1980) £

I remember the effect of my first hearing of *Vox patris caelestis* (either from this recording or a broadcast). I'd had the score since it was published in vol. 2 of

Early English Church Music in 1963 but I could make no sense of it at all until the Tallis Scholars performance revealed the glory of the mid-century antiphon. This disc celebrates a quarter-century of the choir. I can't claim to be their greatest fan, but this bargain reissue of their first recording is worth buying for the Mundy alone. I suspect that readers will already have quite enough alternatives of the usual version of the Allegri why are they all so similar?, but the Palestrina makes an amazingly contrasting companion to the contemporary Mundy. *CB*

# 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**G. B. Bassani *Balletti, Correnti, Gighe e Sarabande op. 1 (1677)*** Ensemble Armonico Cimento 79' 34"  
Tactus TC 642701

This disc got off to a great start, and I really enjoyed the first few tracks, but then the tuning started to get a little shaky and my first impressions wore off. It's such a shame, especially as there are so few recordings devoted solely to Bassani's music. Already by Track 3 there are too many twangs from the pluckers, and the violins aren't quite together at cadences. They make a pleasant enough sound and the balance between trebles and basses is mostly good, although the viola da gamba is sometimes left to resonate after the violin tone has died away. I don't like the idea of one continuo instrument dropping out for a repeat of a section, and I like even less when the absence of any continuo team unsettles the tuning. Why anyone should mistake the optional viola line in the Sonata Sesta for a melody (complete with virtuoso but quiet violin part just in case it distracts us from the delightful viola part) is quite beyond my comprehension. *BC*

**Bernhard *Geistliche Harmonien 1665 and other Sacred Concertos*** Soloists of Rheinische Kantorei, Das Kleine Konzert, Hermann Max 61' 24"  
cpo 777 046-2

Although many readers will be familiar with Bernhard's treatises on composition and on singing, his vocal music remains barely known. This disc thus fills an important gap in our awareness of German music in the generation after Schütz. Bernhard travelled twice to Italy, and his knowledge of Italianate singing is heard in monodies such as *Anima sterilis* with its extremes of tessitura and extravagant melismas. He also experimented with devices for structuring larger pieces, such as the ostinato passage that recurs like a ritornello in *Herr, wer wird wohnen in*

*deiner Hütten*. And although he spent most of his career at the Dresden court, this disc also represents his time in Hamburg with funerary pieces such as *Ich sahe an alles Thun*, where a plangent sinfonia frames a strophic setting of a stoical text. The singers on this disc relish the virtuoso lines (notably Ekkehard Abele on tracks 4 and 5), but sometimes they choose such a fast tempo that the words cannot be effectively projected (as on track 1). It is also a shame that the booklet does not indicate the source of each piece, because despite the disc's title, only half of the pieces come from the *Geistliche Harmonien* of 1665. Otherwise, though, this is an engrossing release. *Stephen Rose*

**Biber *Missa Christi resurgentis*** New York Collegium, Andrew Parrott 73' 53"  
Kleos Classic KL5135  
*Resurrection Sonata*, Sonata 1676 nos. 8 & 11,  
**Kerll & Poglietti** kbd pieces;  
**Stadlmayr** *Resurrexi* a5,

Unlike the other recording of this mass I've reviewed in these pages, Andrew Parrott and his New York forces put Biber's music into a liturgical context by adding an Introit by Stadlmayr, instrumental substitutes for the Gradual and the Offertory, plainchant for other parts of the office and organ preambles to the Credo and Agnus Dei. The opening sonata is reprised at the close of the mass, and the disc is rounded off by Ingrid Matthews performing the 11th of the composer's *Rosary Sonatas* (aptly enough, 'The Resurrection'). With one singer per part (i.e. one soloist and one ripienist per line), the sound is less choral than the English Concert set. The fact that the solos in the upper parts are taken by boys should also be taken into consideration by anyone choosing between the two. Much as I commend Parrott's choice of boys for the upper parts, I must also recognise that Andrew Manze's version features some lovely female solo singing. So the choice comes down to your contextual preference. *BC*

**Bohm *Four Cantatas*** Irmela Brünger, Inga Schneider, Beat Duddeck, Jörn Lindmann, Markus Flaig SSATB, Capella Sancti Georgi, Musica Alta Ripa, Ralf Popken 62' 16"  
cpo 777 143-2  
*Ach Herr komme hinab, Das Himmelreich, Meine Freund ist mein, Wie lieblich sind*

For many years I had been dissuaded from exploring Böhm's vocal music by the dismissive comments in Grove. This disc therefore came as a revelation, showing that he composed imaginative and inventive cantatas. Most impressive

are his techniques for structuring pieces that last up to 15 minutes. Thus in the setting of the parable of the wedding feast, he intersperses dramatic narration with verses of *Wachet auf*; or in his version of the Song of Songs (*Mein Freund ist mein*) he combines solo arias with instrumental ritornelli and a framing motet. Ralf Popken's solo singers are alive to the eloquence of this music, relishing the dramatic rests in the sinfonia of *Ach Herr, komme hinab*, or the repeated figures with which the ungrateful wedding guest is rendered speechless. Just occasionally, though, the instrumentalists could shape their lines more persuasively (especially in track 6). Popken also uses a two-part ripieno choir, but this larger ensemble is deployed sparingly, in appropriate textures such as the motet writing in *Mein Freund ist mein*. This is a highly rewarding release: if you thought that Böhm was limited to simple keyboard chorales, buy this to discover another side to the composer. *Stephen Rose*

**Gesualdo *Quinto Libro di Madrigali (1611)*** La Venexiana 64' 15"  
Glossa GCD 920935

This is a very fine recording which allows Gesualdo's late tortured voice to shine through. The words are sung with a conviction perhaps only really found with Italian singers; this is allied to an acute sensitivity to tuning which allows listeners to enjoy each brief cadential repose before the next extreme lurch in a new direction. A distinctive feature is that the goodly number of pieces in *chiavette* are sung a fourth lower, taking the bass down to a low D in places and adding to the sense of claustrophobic intensity of these highly-strained settings. Late Gesualdo is not for everyone but this group allows the listener to follow closely the composer's idiosyncratic meanderings which are always closely allied to the text. *Noel O'Regan*

**Gesualdo *Madrigali Libri I-III*** Gesualdo Consort, Harry van der Kamp 142' 53"  
cpo 777 138-2 (2 CDs) (rec 2001-2) ££

Gesualdo's first three madrigal books from 1594-5 do not indulge in the extremes of his later books. There are some fine performances here though the same standard is not always consistently maintained through all sixty-four madrigals. The intention seems to have been to make a definitive recording with all pieces performed by five singers, so the single madrigal sung by solo soprano with lute accompaniment is repeated, as are the three madrigals intabulated by the

harpsichordist Alexander Weimann. Lute and harpsichord are successfully used to accompany some pieces but more variety in scoring would have been welcome: one song about the pains of frustrated love can begin to sound much like the last and there are lots of them here. Harpsichord intabulations amount to just spreading chords and adding a small amount of ornamentation and are not like the more extensive contemporary intabulations of Frescobaldi or Mayone. Overall, though, this recording makes Gesualdo very accessible, emphasising his individuality while not dwelling unduly on his idiosyncracies. *Noel O'Regan*

**Monteverdi Madrigals Book 4** Delitiae Musicae, Marco Longhini 73' 46"  
Naxos 8.555310 £

I couldn't work out what was happening on the first note: it seemed more like an electronic sound than a voice, and the break between *Ah* and *dolente* wasn't the expected rhetorical catch of breath but just an abrupt gap. The singers adopt the wide range of tempo variation that Italian ensembles favour without actually biting into the music and getting to its emotional core. It was perhaps a pity that I heard this just at 7, which demonstrated that the tempo variation is carefully written into the notation: loitering and rushing is gilding the lily. *Sfogava con le stelle* isn't helped by keyboard twiddles, especially during the recitativo sections: the first one sags because the break after *Sfogava* stops it leading through to climax on *STEL-le*, and similarly later in the piece the breaks interrupt the expected strong movement towards *pietosa si*. If they could sort out the verbal stress (I feel rather timid at writing that about Italian singers), assume that what is written works, and leave the theorbo, harpsichord and perhaps director at home, this group (AATTBB) could make a successful recording of the music. It is a pity that Naxos is so unlucky with its Monteverdi discs. *CB*

**Monteverdi Madrigali live in Corsica** La Venexiana 64' 13"  
Glossa GCD 920015

I feared more Italian excesses and was pleasantly surprised at the excellent singing and flowing movement of this live recording, mixing classic five-voice madrigals with more soloistic pieces. Rhythm is sometime a bit too free for my taste, but I've heard worse! If you need a sample selection of Monteverdi madrigals (which these days generally come as complete books), seek no further. A Glossa catalogue is included. *CB*

**Monteverdi Sacred Music 4** The King's Consort, Robert King 69' 24"  
Hyperion CDA67519

*Beatus vir* (1650), *Domine ne in furore* (1620), *Exulta filia* (1629), *Laetatus sum* 45 (1650), *Laudate Dominum I* (1641), *Magnificat* 44 (1641), *Salve Regina* (1625), *Salve Regina/Audi caelum* 42 (1641), *Salve o Regina* (1624)

I'm enjoying this new series. I'm slightly puzzled by the recording itself – I have had to play it five or so notches higher (in volume) on all of my machines than the other discs I've listened to this month. There's nothing wrong with the performances, though. A thoroughly impressive line-up of singers (*soli* and *tutti*), and a very fine band (including two fiddlers who, at last, take great delight in decorating Monteverdi's lines on CD) tackle some lesser-known big pieces, including the opening track, a terrific setting of *Laetatus sum*. There are also motets for solo voices and three for choir. If you aren't already collecting this set, it's time to start! *BC*

**Muffat Armonico Tributo** Les Muffatti, Peter Van Heyghen 70' 25"  
Ramée 0502

This CD might be a year late for the tricentenary celebrations, but it definitely deserves to be a great success: *Les Muffatti* are certainly a force to be reckoned with. This version of Muffat's *Armonico Tributo* has gone right to the top of my playlist. There's something about their playing that just had me singing and dancing along with every single movement on the disc. Yes, I know the music inside out, but they make it seem so fresh, so lively. Even the darker movements (long chains of suspensions over a Corellian walking bass) are broad rather than gloomy and never lacking direction. The great *Passaglia* at the end is a triumph. I hope we'll get to hear lots more from *Les Muffatti*. *BC*

**Purcell, Dowland Muse** Daniel Taylor, Da Sonar, Les Voix Humaines 113' 43"  
ATMA Baroque ACD2 2389 2 CDs ££  
+ Blow, Cutting, Hume  
Repackaging with minimal booklet of  
*On the Muses' Isle* ATMA ACD2 2133  
*Tears of the Muse* ATMA ACD2 2151

The two disc set displays the art of Daniel Taylor, countertenor. In the first, devoted to Purcell, he sings *Fairest Isle*, *Music for while*, *Here the deities approve*, *Evening Hymn*, two versions of *O Solitude*, and part of Blow's setting of Dryden's *Ode on the Death of Henry Purcell*. The rest is made up of trio sonatas played by an ensemble new to me, Da Sonar. The performances are very fine. Taylor has a beautiful sound, particularly his upper register, and is very

expressive, without the mannerisms that one sometimes hears from countertenors. The instrumental playing is also very enjoyable, the violins making a lovely clear and full sound. Although everything on this disc has been frequently recorded, it's well worth having for the quality for the singing and playing. Its companion, shorter disc is also shared, this time by Les Voix Humaines, who accompany, and provide instrumental versions of the songs. Your enjoyment will depend on how you like your Dowland – he sings with little emphasis or painting of the words, but compellingly beautiful line and control. We also have Dowland's lute version of *Can she excuse* Cutting's *Galliard* to Mrs Anne Markham's *Pavan* and versions of the songs played on bass viol duet: *Lachrimae Antiquae*, *Can she excuse*, and *Lachrimae Amantis*. These arrangements follow the song itself, and sometimes are added to Dowland's lute accompaniment. The song Dowland published as *Sorrow stay* also survives in a consort song version by William Wither as *Sorrow come*, and they have used that as their basis. The versions are all idiomatic and effective, and, it goes without saying (but I'll say it) beautifully played. They also play Hume's *My hope is revived*. My only complaint is about the accompanying leaflet. It has a biography of Daniel Taylor, a picture of him, and the list of contents of the two discs, and that's all. It should have information about the accompaniments, and detail those parts which are arrangements or extracts – there's no mention of William Wither, for example, and the final song, *Go from my window* is sung as the simple ballad it is, unaccompanied, but the booklet tells the listener it is by Dowland, who then perhaps expects a lute song. The recording is aimed at a wide audience, and deserves it, for the quality of the music making. It's a shame that information is withheld from the curious. *Robert Oliver*

**Rosseter When Laura smiles: Lute solos & songs from Elizabethan England** Matthew Wadsworth lute, James Gilchrist T 62' 45"

This contains a dozen of the 21 songs by Rosseter in his joint publication with Campion and eight lute solos. James Gilchrist sings with a restrained beauty, balancing the lute without seeming to sing down and lightly touching the high notes, while Matthew Wadsworth is the perfect accompanist, and a fine soloist too. Rosseter isn't the most profound of the lute-song writers: the emotional songs don't have complete conviction and he is far better at charm than passion; he seems more intense when there are no words to guide him. This is a fine disc,

and it isn't insulting to say that it is excellent background music: let it play and notice a few tracks each time round. CB

**Sainte-Colombe *Concerts a deux violes esgales Vol. 3: Concerts 36 à 50*** Les Voix humaines (Susie Napper, Margaret Little) 100' 49" (2 CDs)  
ATMA Classique ACD 2 2277

I looked forward to listening to this very much. Les Voix Humaines visited New Zealand earlier this year, and gave a stunning performance of Sainte-Colombe's music, including one of the pieces on this record. The music itself is astonishing – even to those familiar with the repertoire. The clear sonority of the viol pierces the heart, and two equal instruments comfortably span a wide enough range to structure chords so satisfyingly. Sainte-Colombe understood these things well, and with his adventurous harmonic imagination, and his melodic invention, provides seemingly endless variety – intense and poignant slow preludes with agonising clashes, lively skipping gigue to dance to. Quixotic changes of metre, unmeasured trills and runs set against a rhythmically defined countermelody set formidable challenges to players who approach these pieces, but the rewards are rich for listeners and performers. This two-disc set is the third volume in a project to record the complete *concerts*, an endeavour which deserves high praise for making all the music available, rather than the few choice morsels commonly (and deservedly) recorded and performed.

However, I do have reservations. They play with enviable freedom, confident in their breathtaking mutual understanding, but this results in very few bars played straight. Sainte-Colombe clearly expects flexibility, but not everywhere. Even gigue and gavottes (given that he sometimes interrupts them with a change of metre) get pulled and stretched so that a listener without a score would struggle to detect the intended beat patterns. This unrelenting rubato, together with a consistent avoidance of brisk attack, giving every bar and every gesture great significance, actually ends up by robbing intensity. These players, with their formidable techniques, great understanding of the music, and their superb ensemble, could, and indeed can, present this music better than anyone, and there is much to enjoy and cherish in these performances, but it's best listened to in part, rather than straight through. Robert Oliver

£ = bargain price (up to £6.00)

££ = mid-price

All other discs full price, as far as we know.

**Sanz 'La Preciosa' Guitar Music** Gordon Ferries 66' 20"  
Delphian DCD34036

It has been a pleasure to review this excellent CD of guitar music by Gaspar Sanz (c. 1640–c. 1710). Ferries plays cleanly and expressively, and brings out the considerable variety of textures in Sanz's music. There are tender moments with rolled chords in the first section of *Pavanas por la D*, followed by a section consisting entirely of campanellas (scales where each successive note is played on a different course, allowing the notes to ring on like little bells). There are exciting strums and taps on the soundboard in *Zarabanda*, and exotic discords reminiscent of flamenco in the first *Jacaras*. By the way, *Pavanas por la D* is in A minor, but it is 'por la D', because D is the letter for A minor in the guitar *alfabeto* notation.

Ferries opts for the tuning described by Sanz, where both strings of the 4th and 5th courses are tuned an octave higher than on the modern classical guitar. He eschews a high octave on the third course (favoured by William Carter in his recent recording of music by Corbetta). The result is a high, tinkly sound, where there is much duplication of notes at the same pitch. For example, an imitative passage may look on the page as if two voices are an octave apart, but with Ferries' tuning they sound at the same pitch. Yet, although the overall range of the instrument is reduced by a seventh, the ear quickly adjusts. The notes on the 4th and 5th course may be at the same pitch as those on higher strings, but they have a different tone colour, which helps pick out the imitation, for example in *Marionas*. One advantage of this tuning is the clarity of campanella passages. If the lower courses were both tuned in octaves, the music would sound very strange, with some notes of a scalar passage doubled an octave lower, and other notes not. The disadvantage is that there is a distinct lack of bass, most noticeable in slow, sustained chordal passages, something that Ferries overcomes (to some extent) by rolling chords. Stuart McCoy

**A. Scarlatti *Stabat Mater*** Emma Kirkby, Daniel Taylor, Theatre of Early Music  
ATMA Classique ACD2 2237  
+Concerto XXI

This is a more adventurous *Stabat Mater* than the Pergolesi setting reviewed on page 36. The ensemble comprises single strings with lute and organ continuo. Here the blend of voices and instruments is more homogeneous than in the Pergolesi performance: the drama of the music is painted and its chromatic twists

and turns sumptuously milked. The work is a remarkable composition. The style is unashamedly Neapolitan with chromatic chords and 'signpost' augmented sixths yet, composed surely by 1720, there is much that anticipates the pre-classical. The depth of emotional content in the work comes as a surprise and in many ways the work out-ranks the more famous settings of Pergolesi and Vivaldi. The *accompagnato* recitatives 'Fac ut portem' and 'Fac me cruce' come as a shock, while the final duet's chromatic descending thirds in 'Quando corpus morietur' are particularly striking. The work concludes with the expected fugal Amen. The Concerto for treble recorder, two violins and continuo is another interesting work – the listener will be taken aback by the 11-second 'Veloce' movement! The performance by such well-known artists is, as to be expected, stunning, and the recording is thoroughly recommended. Ian Graham-Jones

*The translator falls into the trap of calling the Stabat mater a 'hymn': the original French text note carefully uses a non-technical term 'poème prière'. The paragraph on the Concerto and its Naples MS is confused in both languages. CB*

**Scheidt *Ludi musici I, II, III & IV: selection*** Musica Fiata, Roland Wilson 76' 56"  
cpo 777 013-2

Scheidt's 1621 collection of instrumental ensemble music is well known; it was followed by three further sets in 1622, 1625 and 1627, of which the title of the second, *Ludi musici*, is applied to all in Koch's thematic catalogue and here. Only the alto & Bc parts survive of Book II and the treble and Bc of Book IV. There is nothing of Book III, except that it is known to have included at least one piece in seven parts. Roland Wilson found a seven-part setting of *Am Wasserflüssen Babylon* including trumpets which can be attributed to Scheidt and that concludes this disc. It is played on two tpt, 2 cnt, 3 trmbn & bc, but the instrumental listings in the running order are not intended to indicate original scorings. Apart from the pieces with explicit scorings, Book I generally sounds best to me on strings, but the wind emphasis that Wilson the cornettist naturally favours is convincing. I hope the reconstructions will be published. This is an exciting disc, both for the playing and for its presentation of new music by a leading composer. CB

**Schütz *Symphoniae Sacrae III*** Cantus Cölln, Concerto Palatino, Konrad Jung-hänel 126' (2 CDs)  
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901850.51

It is only during the last few years that I have had a chance to play many of the

last of Schütz's sets of *Symphoniae Sacrae*, with its rich mixture of small and large-scale writing for instruments and voices: apart from *Saul, Saul*, they are not performed enough, perhaps because the choral contribution is often quite small. The performances here are utterly convincing. My mind worries a bit about the occasional replacing of violins with cornetts, but it works and without the score or facsimile I wouldn't know any better. Go and buy it. CB

**Altre Folie 1500-1750** Manfredo Kraemer, Rolf Lislevand, Michael Behringer, Mauro Lopes, Arianna Savall, Hespèrion XXI, Jordi Savall 77' 15"

Alia Vox AVSA9844

Music by Albicastro, Cabanilles, Cabezón, Corbetta, Corelli, Falconiero, Piccinini, Sanz, B. Storace, Vivaldi & anon

This is a much more substantial disc than I expected, with none of the licence of the Savall family extravaganza that I reviewed briefly last month (p. 49). The musicality of this group of outstanding players illuminates the history of the one renaissance standard that wasn't forgotten, thanks chiefly to Corelli. The centrepiece is a fine performance of his op. 5/12. Fifteen folia-related pieces on the trot may be thought too many for one sitting, but I wasn't tempted to switch off. CB

**The Baroque Christmas Album** Gardiner, McCreesh, Minkowski, Pinnock cond ££ Archiv 00289 477 5762 69' 55" (rec 1991-2001)  
Music by Bach, Charpentier, Corelli, G. Gabrieli, Praetorius, Schütz

If you want a mixture of Christmas baroque classics, this is as good as you are likely to get. I'd be happy to have it in the background while EB was preparing the Christmas dinner. There are a few extracts, that would make one suspect that the disc is aimed more at ClassicFM than Radio 3 listeners (first chorus of Cantata 62, last chorus of *The Christmas Story*, two bits of Charpentier and Corelli's Christmas Pastoral). But there are also complete pieces from recent McCreesh CDs: Gabrieli's *Audite principes, O Jesu mi dulcissime* (the well-known 1615 setting) and *Salvator noster*, and 19 minutes of the Praetorius Christmas Mass compilation, including what I sometimes think is his best piece *Puer natus in Bethlehem* and the multi-trumpeted *In dulci júbilo* to give the CD a good send-off. It could solve some of your Christmas present problems. CB

£ = bargain price (up to £6.00)

££ = mid-price

All other discs full price, as far as we know.

**Esa Noche Yo Bailé: Feast and Devotion in High Peru of the 17th Century** Música Ficta (Jairo Serrano T, perc, Julián Navarro gr, vihuela, Carlos Serrano fl etc, Elisabeth Wright hpscd) 69' 41"

MF 004

I reviewed an earlier disc by this group and was disappointed by the singing. Well, I'm afraid my verdict of this selection of music from South American archives (aren't these just flavour of the moment?) is the same. The music is enjoyable enough, but Serrano's voice is just too flat and lacking feeling even for my (perhaps too Anglo Saxon) ears – there's nothing of the relish of the repertoire I've heard elsewhere. I must add, by way of a qualifier to my review, that my Spanish flat-mate instantly identified the music as Peruvian and the style as 'typically Andean folk, though with some classical influence'. BC

www.musicafictaweb.com

**Bellissimo Splendore: Musique à la Cour de Bruxelles au début du XVIIe siècle** La Caccia, Patrick Denecker 53' 13"

Ricercar RIC 241

Music by Cavaccio, Gastoldi, Ghersem, Gistou, a Kempis, Lassus, Pevernage, Philips, Verdonck

The cover shows the famous painting by Denys van Alsloot of that collection of town musicians which is often used to justify certain cornetto embouchures or sackbut hand grips. This time it is reclaimed as a procession in front of Notre Dame du Sablon in Brussels and as the basis for using very similar mixes of brass and reeds for a fine collection of music from the Low Countries. In the absence of extant partbooks, such as the famous Lerma cathedral books, the disc conjectures a similar mix of instrumentally arranged vocal pieces, with some instrumentally conceived pieces. The group produces a very accomplished and confidently paced sound (I think I hear Basel training) and produces well-chosen combinations and sonorities to suit each piece. Grand architecture is given real majesty, and light dance passage work is handled with neatness and direction. There are some truly excellent renditions of Pevernage, Verdonck, Gistou, Lassus and Ghersem. As well as the well chosen changes in sonority, there is a real sensitivity to the changes in playing style – very noticeable in the cadence (not in the 'ending' sense) of the two Italian pieces (Gastoldi and Cavaccio). Great playing of excellent music: highly recommended. Stephen Cassidy

**Love is Strange** Le Poème Harmonique (Pierre Hantaï virginals, Eric Bellocq lute, cittern, 4-course guitar, Massimo Moscardò

lutes in G and A, tiorbino, Benjamin Perrot lute, bass lute in D, Jean-Luc Tamby lute, archcittern, Vincent Dumestre mandore, lute, cittern, theorbo & dir.) 61' 14"

Alpha 081

Music by Coprario, Cosyn, Daniel, Dowland, Holborne, J. Johnson, R. Parsons, Robinson, anon

What an extraordinary start to a CD: the four descending notes of the ground to John Johnson's *Wakefield on a Green* played at a very low octave, (I think) on a theorbo. The other instruments soon start scurrying about above, the lutes sharing fast divisions with the virginals. Most of the tracks involve an arrangement of some sort, because very little ensemble music survives for this fine array of plucked instruments. The overall effect is a Lute Society playing day, but with everything played rather well. The divisions on *Callinoe* from Dd.3.18 are played at breakneck speed – too fast for my taste, but Holborne's *Decrevi* is particularly beautiful. Robert Parsons' *Ut re mi fa sol* is an extended work where the group's ensemble is heard to good effect. There is much contrast: Sellinger's *Round* races on with divisions unbelievably fast, while Thomas Robinson's monotonous *Twenty Ways Upon the Bells* actually becomes pleasantly soporific. The gigantic archcittern (the *ceterone* of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*) can be heard to good effect alongside a cittern in Holborne's *Spero*. Least satisfactory for me is *Gray's Inn*, where the rhythm is pulled about so much that it sounds more French than English. One temptation when writing for lute ensemble is to have too thick a texture, with a faint treble and bass, and lots of chord fill-in. Not so for Poème Harmonique, whose arrangements are always lightly textured. The different voice parts may be heard clearly in their exciting rendition of Orlando Gibbons' *In Nomine Crye*. Altogether a very fine CD. Stuart McCoy  
See also *Simon Ravens* on p. 8

**Paradiso Armonico: Italian Chamber Music in the Low Countries** Constanza Backes S, More Maiorum 68' 32"

Klara Etcetera KTC 4012

Music by a Kempis, Buonamente, Casati, Castello, Cazzati, Gastoldi, Grandi, Huygens, Merula, Rasi, Sweelinck, Uccellini, Van Eyck, Van Wichel

I liked the look of this CD, but was ultimately disappointed by it. It's another of those discs that try to convince us that the violin/recorder combination really does work, and sadly fails. There is some lovely music in the programme (which combines Italian material such as Grandi, Cazzati and Merula with music from the Low Countries like Sweelinck, Huygens and van Eyck). I'm not saying the performances are not good, but the programme

as a whole just did not work for me. I found Castello on high pitched recorder and bass violin a bit too Polyphemus with his little flute, for example. Handle with care. BC

**Requiem para Cervantes** La Grande Chapelle, Schola Antiqua, Angel Recasens 59' 52"

Lauda LAU002

**Lopez de Velasco** *Tota pulchra es*; **Mateo Romero** *Requiem pro Defunctis*; **Ruimonte** *Ne recordaris, Qui Lazarum*

How do you market the first-class music of three little-known 16th- and 17th-century Spanish composers and secure funding at the same time? The answer here is to tie the music in with a literary household name like Miguel de Cervantes, even though that link might be largely spurious. In his note on this 'Requiem for Cervantes' Louis Jambou is at least honest enough to admit that there is no record of what music was used at the author's funeral, and while the lists of references to music in Cervantes' works become wearing, there is also plenty about the actual music we hear and its composers, so I suppose in the end there is not much harm done! The music is sonorously impressive, performed here by ten choral singers, a battery of bajóns and sackbuts, strings and organ, while the chant is sung by a large and expressive cappella. The polyphonic Requiem at the heart of the recording is the not-unfamiliar eight-part setting by Mateo Romero, one of the many unfortunate Flemings taken from their homeland to serve at the Court of Spain, succeeding Philippe Rogier (another such) as Maestro di capilla. The *ablutiones* are supplied by Pedro Ruimonte, a Spanish pupil of Robledo, while the concluding eight-part *Tota pulchra es* is by Sebastián López de Velasco. This latter piece is an extraordinary ornate and energetic work, indicating that our standard image of the Spanish music of this period has been formed without full knowledge of the broader picture. D. James Ross

**Si tu veux apprendre les pas à dances...  
Airs & ballets en France avant Lully** Le poème harmonique, Vincent Dumestre dir 190' 36" (3 CDs in box)

Alpha 905 (previously Alpha 005, 019, 057)

1. Moulinié *L'Humaine Comédie*
2. Guéron *Le Concert des Consorts*
3. Boeset *Je meurs sans mourir*

This is a re-packaging of three discs released separately in 2000, 2002 and 2003 which between them give a comprehensive overview of the pre-Lully air de cour via the music of its three most important com-

posers. The presentation is not as miserly as on many re-issues with full notes, texts and translations, including the comments on the various illustrations which are a feature of this company's issues. I still feel, as I felt on hearing the originals, that the group's realisations are more effective and convincing the simpler they are (CD 1/4 is just silly on disc, though is doubtless audience-enlivening in concert) but there is no doubting their devotion to their cause and every reason to be grateful for it. David Hansell

## LATE BAROQUE

**Ariosti 'The Flowering and Fading of Love' (Six Cantatas)** Musica Solare 78' 50" Naxos 8.557573 £

Ariosti *Six cantatas* (London, [1724]): *La rosa*; *L'amore onesto*; *L'olmo*; *Libertà acquistata in amore*; *Il naufragio*; *La gelosia*. Locatelli *Trio sonata in e op. 5/2*; Vivaldi *Trio sonata in D RV 84*

A disc that can be given a limited welcome for its content, but not for its presentation. On the back cover of the box we read that 'the cycle of *Six Cantatas 'The Flowering and Fading of Love'*, only recently discovered and here receiving its first recording, forms a sonnet sequence about the journey of love ...'. The cantatas are listed, each indicated to be a 'world première recording'. In the booklet note, Darja Grossheide, the flautist of Musica Solare, expands the claim: 'We found the present cantata cycle ... a few years ago in the manuscript collection of the Lower Saxony Land Library in Hanover [i.e. the Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, which now prefers to be known as the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek]. The work was written in 1723-24 and dedicated to George I, then King of England and also of the Kingdom of Hanover ... The present cantatas form a sonnet sequence ... [which] has suggested the title *The Flowering and Fading of Love* ... As far as we know there has been no previous recording of this wonderful music ...'

In fact the six cantatas are those published by Ariosti himself in London in 1724, with a dedication to George I and (in some copies) a long list of aristocratic subscribers. The publication is mentioned in the main booklet note, but not in connection with the content of the CD. It is usually called *Six cantatas and six lessons for viola d'amore*, though the title page simply reads *Alla Maestà di Giorgio Rè della Gran Britagna &c: &c.*. A facsimile edition was issued in 1980 in the Biblioteca Musica Bononiensis series. So the cantatas are by no means a new discovery, and there are modern practical editions of at least two of them (*La rosa* and *L'olmo*). The texts are not in 'sonnet' form, they do not form a

cycle, and there is no 'journey of love'. Texts and translations are not provided with the CD, but the Italian texts (only) are available via the Naxos web site. They are set out and punctuated in exactly the way the texts are printed at the start of the 1724 publication, so someone on the Naxos production line clearly knew of it and must have been aware that the notion of a 'discovery' was untrue. The claims of first recordings also need qualification. This is almost certainly the first recording of all six cantatas, but three of them appeared on LP around 1968 (Da Camera SM 92604, re-issued as Musical Heritage Society MHS 1712), and *La rosa* is on a CD by Berlin Baroque called 'Musik aus Schloss Charlottenburg' (Capriccio 10459). The unhelpfulness extends to the Locatelli trio sonata, which in the English version of Grossheide's note is merely said to have been 'published in Amsterdam', though the German version adds a date of 1736. It turns out to be no. 2 of Locatelli's Opus 5, but the listed tempo marks of the movements (*Andante/ Largo Andante/ Allegro/ Vivace*) are those of no. 1 of the set: they should be should be *Largo/ Andante/ Allegro/ Allegro*.

Assessment of the performances needs one further reservation. Three of the cantatas require two treble instruments specified by Ariosti to be violins, but Musica Solare use flute and violin. The combination works acceptably in slower movements where the instruments echo each other, as in the soulful first aria of *L'olmo*, but where power and speed are required, as in the 'storm' music at the start of *La rosa* and in the accompaniment of *Il naufragio*, the mismatch of flute and violin weakens the effect. Nevertheless, there are good reasons to buy this CD. The cantatas show the shadowy Ariosti to have been a composer of considerable merit, and a recording of the whole set is long overdue. In their personal discovery of the music Musica Solare reveal its quality, especially in its darker moods, and bring to it the intelligence and the passion it deserves. Singers Laurie Reviol (in the three cantatas for soprano), and Truike van der Poel (in the three for alto), both spirited performers, are alert to verbal sense and embellish sensitively. The two trio sonatas are amiable fillers. Shame about the packaging. Anthony Hicks

**Bach Cantatas vol. 10** Monteverdi Choir, English Bach Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner SDG 110

**19th Sunday after Trinity** Cantatas 5, 48, 56, 90 from Erlöserkirche, Potsdam

**Feast of the Reformation** Cantatas 79, 80, 192 from Schlosskirche, Wittenberg

Joanne Lunn, William Towers, James Gilchrist, Peter Harvey SATB (both discs)

To be reviewed by John Butt in the next issue.

**Bach Cantatas vol. 24** Monteverdi Choir, English Bach Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner  
SDG 107

**Jubilate Sunday** Cantatas 12, 103, 146 from Schlosskirche, Altenburg.

Brigitte Geller, William Towers, Mark Padmore, Julian Clarkson SATB 76' 53"

**Cantate Sunday** Cantatas 108, 117, 166 from St Mary's, Warwick.

Robin Tyson, James Gilchrist, Stephen Varcoe ATB 51' 48

Now that recordings are being released of Gardiner's Bach Pilgrimage, it is possible to evaluate the musical merits of its concerts, independent of all the media hype that the enterprise attracted in 2000. These releases on Gardiner's own Soli Deo Gloria label are lavishly packaged, with a lengthy note based on the conductor's diary from the year. (I must complain, though, about the use of white type on black pages, which does not make for legibility.) Compared to studio performances, a few details are lost, and there are occasional lapses of intonation. Yet these blemishes are offset by the sense of continuity and occasion that comes in live performance. In particular, there is a keen awareness of how the constituent movements of a cantata combine to give the overall effect of a musical sermon. The venues used (St Mary's Warwick and the ducal chapel at Altenburg) also enhance the sense of occasion through their distinctive, flattering acoustics. Particularly enjoyable is the use of the 1739 Trost organ at Altenburg for the obbligato in Cantata 146: the rich timbres of the 16' and 32' pedal reeds add grandeur to the Sinfonia, making a far more memorable performance than those using box organs. The discipline of the choral singers is evident in the first chorus of Cantata 12, where Gardiner moulds peaks and troughs of dynamics, and imposes detached articulation on the words 'Angst und Noth'. On the other hand, in the arias of Cantata 166, I did not feel that the performers were responding to each other with the sensitivity found in some recordings with smaller forces. Hence this series is not for those who like their Bach cantatas as chamber music. Instead it gives Gardiner's vivid interpretations spiced with the adrenalin of live performance.

Stephen Rose

*The recordings of Gardiner's 2000 Bach Pilgrimage, abandoned by DG have been rescued by the conductor and associates under a new label Soli Deo Gloria. They appear in neat book-style packaging, with hard covers and with a disc in the front and back endpapers. The cast lists show a variety of performers: singers and players didn't devote a year to performing the cantatas. It must have been an exhausting as well as a rewarding year for the conductor (I passed him at Heathrow when he was on his way home from the Christmas stint and he looked absolutely drained). There are now several complete Bach Cantatas series; the pressure of tour-*

*ing added to that of the tight timing may have been a distraction, but it may have led to live performances with an urgency, vitality and awareness of time as well as eternity that the other cycles lack – we will find out as the series of CDs progresses. CB*

**Bach Cantatas vol. 9** The Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir, Ton Koopman 206' 05" (3 CDs in box)

Antoine Marchand CC72209 ££

Cantatas 37, 48, 66, 70, 86, 138, 153-4, 166, 173a, 194

This triple CD volume was first issued on the Erato label way back in late 1998, having mostly been recorded that October. Ton Koopman's manner of treatment for Bach's cantatas has remained very largely consistent, with the elegant leading of Margaret Faultless shining here in cantatas 66, 194 and 173a in particular, and, as has become customary, a really dependable consort of oboes. This set features a very rich vein of the cantatas, with examples from Weimar (70), Köthen (173a, which besides 173, contains a first version of a delightful violoncello piccolo aria from 175) and Leipzig, finishing with the dedicatory Stormthal work composed in 1723 and thereafter used for Trinity Sunday, the culmination of the Thomasschule academic and church year. All the performances contain numerous enlightening touches, with Christoph Wolff as sound a guide as ever.

Stephen Daw

**Bach Cantatas vol. 17** Sandrine Piau, Johanette Zomer, Sibylla Rubens, Bogna Bartosz, Nathalie Stutzmann, Paul Agnew, Jörg Dorfmueller, Christoph Prégardien, Klaus Martens SSSAATTTB, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir, Ton Koopman 189' 52" (3 CDs in box)

Antoine Marchand CC72217 ££

Cantatas 13, 17, 19, 32, 35, 56, 57, 58, 84, 169

If Bach's third cycle of cantatas (1725-27) lacks the cohesion of the earlier two there are several tendencies (e.g. interesting obbligato instruments, large-scale textures, such as BWV 19 to much smaller ensemble cantatas based around solo singers or duets) that make them extremely attractive. Moreover, Bach was clearly in his stride as a composer, preparing his Matthew Passion and building on many earlier works and models. We also find Ton Koopman and The Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra and Choir well in their stride, having already completed 16 volumes. The orchestral playing is always assured and dynamic in ensemble (perhaps the bass instruments lack a little drive at times, as in the last aria of BWV 17), and the choir's (yes, there's still a choir!) rhetorical presentation of dramatic texts (particularly 'Es erhub sich ein Streit' opening BWV 19) extremely impressive. Klaus Mertens shines particularly as the soloist in BWV 56 and

partner in BWV 32, 57 and 58. And, if in the past you have sensed Ton Koopman's restless fingers guiding every continuo lily coming his way, here he has the chance to shine as organ soloist in BWV 35 and 169. The playing is extremely impressive and virtuosic, although Koopman's relentless staccato coupled with what is essentially a 2' organ does perhaps hint at the character of a mobile ring-tone. John Butt

*Apologies for this delayed review, which should have appeared in April.*

**Bach & Duruflé Frauenkirche Dresden: Organ Music** Samuel Kummer at the new Kern Organ 67' 05"

Bach Concerto in d BWV 596 (after Vivaldi op. 3.11), *Partite diverse sopra il Corale Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig* BWV 768, *Pièce d'orgue* BWV 572, *Trio super Herr Jesu Christ, dich zu uns wend* BWV 768; Duruflé Suite op.5

This was drawn to my attention at the Greenwich Early Music Festival, after attending James Johnstone's Buxtehude masterclass and Bach/Buxtehude recital. It is the first recording of the new Kern organ at the restored Frauenkirche at Dresden, recorded 16-20 September 2005, before the official opening.

Carus-Verlag Stuttgart, who were exhibiting at Greenwich, publish good critical editions of a vast range of choral works as well as some instrumental music (eg BWV 990, reviewed on p. x) produced to the highest technical and scholarly standards. They are far too little-known in Britain. [If Brian Jordan hadn't taken the complete Mozart church music box at Greenwich, I would have reviewed that in this issue as well, but must wait for another set to arrive by post. CB]

This CD is a masterly production in every way. The young organist puts through its paces, in a suitably chosen programme, the new Kern organ, which is based on the Silbermann instrument destroyed in the church in 1945, but has an additional swell manual in the French romantic style.

The Vivaldi/Bach concerto sparkles, the Partita on *Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig* is an ideal choice for introducing the capacities of a new instrument, and the suite by the young Duruflé (1934) is a fine example of this attractive composer's style, which relates to that of his teacher Dukas, and ends with a bravura Toccata in the Debussy/Ravel tradition.

The playing is lively and idiomatic, with a rich, clear sound that is perfectly caught by the engineers. The presentation has everything that most listeners could want to know about the organ, with photos, full registrations and (less usually) details of the registrations of the Bach works, including the individual variations of the Partita. The Duruflé registrations can be downloaded from <http://www>.

carus-verlag.com/download.html, a good solution when the booklet space is limited. Recommended unreservedly!

Peter Grahame Woolf

*I also received (I can't remember how) another souvenir, Musik aus Dresden, with movements by WF Bach, Hasse, Heinichen, Homilius, Pisendel, Ristori, Zelenka, taken from tracks on various Carus recordings. I don't know if it is just a sampler. Entering the number on the disc (99.016/99) on the www just produced the answer 1.00016162.*

CB

**Bach Goldberg Variations, Italian Concerto, French Overture, Chromatic Fantasy & Fugue, 6 Partitas, 4 Duetti**  
Christoph Rousset *hpscd* 296' 34" £  
Decca 475 7079 (4 CDs in box; rec. 1990-94)

Rousset has appeared over here on CD a number of times, but this comprehensive assembly shows the true stature of this artist properly at last. The newest recordings are those of the 'Goldberg' *Theme and Variations*, which are much the richer for their featuring all of the repeats, so that we may relish all of the details of all of those alternative first- and second-time bars which considerably strengthen at least many of the first 15 Variations. Rousset's interpretations are far from mechanical; there is just the right tendency to hesitate at cadences or to accelerate as the musical argument develops, which gives it all just the right expressive flexibility, to my taste.

The second disc opens with a rather routine account of the *Italian Concerto*, but this is followed with a really authoritative delivery of the companion *French Overture in B minor*, fully endowed with those uniquely Gallic qualities which it now seems that Bach really understood. Better still, to occupy the remainder of Disc 2, we are presented not only with fine French accounts of the Four Duos from *Clavier Übung* 3, but an outstandingly impressive *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* – for me probably the best yet recorded. The *Six Partitas* which occupy the other half of this wonderful anthology are as imaginative and original as discs 1 and 2. This is a collection that no serious Bach collector should miss hearing, or, better still, owning permanently, especially at the low price.

Stephen Daw

**Bach Concerts avec plusieurs instruments**  
III Café Zimmermann, Pablo Valetti *vin/dir*  
Alpha 071 70' 44"  
BWV 1049, 1053 arr ob, 1064, 1067

This third issue in a series from Alpha's excellent 'history of art' label. Readers accustomed to reading my CD reviews in these pages will probably have noticed

my enthusiasm for Valetti's solo account of Bach's accompanied violin sonatas at the beginning of the year (*EMR* 105, p. 30). Again his interpretations do little to shun excellent playing in rather fast tempos, but his ensemble is well able to keep up on period woodwinds and cembali, and although I'm writing on the evening I received this third disc, an order for volumes I and II will certainly be issued tomorrow morning. Really sound, up-to-date Bach playing again.

Stephen Daw

**Bach Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato – 1.** Hélène Schmitt *vl*  
Alpha 082 79' 21"

This is a mammoth achievement. With microphones so close that one can hear breathing and gentle moans, Hélène Schmitt tackles what is still one of the Everest of violin-playing with an amazing array of sounds, subtly adapting the way chords are spread to allow just an extra nano-second of that all important commodity, silence, to make sense of a melodic line without distorting the flow in the slightest. When she does play about with the inner tempo, there is always good reason (as in Track 3 where she has a duet above a bass line to contend with, or the beginning of Track 4, where she doesn't just go for the *moto perpetuo* feeling that many of her predecessors have done). The presentation is, however, a little arcane – you have to wait until page 15 before you reach the performer's commentary on the project and then a couple more before Peter Wollny's note on the music. I'll leave pages 1-14 (and the other versions in English and German!) as a little treat – don't miss the recording, though, and start saving now for volume 2!

BC

**Bach Brandenburg Concertos** Concerto Italiano, Rinaldo Alessandrini *roo'* (2 CDs)  
Naïve OP 30412 + DVD film

This is a very fine set, indeed. Why more Italians haven't ventured north of the Alps in their concert programming is something of a puzzle. (Perhaps they have, but we just don't get to hear about it? Or maybe they have so much fantastic music from their own culture that they don't feel the need?) These one-to-a-part (if you count cello and bass as one) Brandenburgs are among the best I've heard: there is not a weak note in them. The set comes with various bonuses, including the version with winds of Brandenburg 3/1 and a DVD that contains an interview in French with Rinaldo Alessandrini. Watching that made me a little uneasy: if 'Bach's music more or less plays itself' and there's no need to

interpret it, why do the performances reveal some real fussiness? The 'cadenza' in 1/3 for example – dramatic gap before the *Adagio* starts, a slow as slow can be *Adagio*, another pause, then Tempo Primo with a vengeance? In 2/2, why is the first of two up-beat crotchets staccato? If there's no need to elaborate on the two chords in the middle of Concerto 4, why does he do just that with some harpsichord flourish? Having read the booklet I was expecting the locomotive that powered the first movement just to keep going *a tempo*, but no... They're not radical, then, but they are outstanding readings that will seriously challenge everything that has gone before them when the pieces come up again in *Building a Library*.

BC

**Bodinus Divertissements** (part 5 & 6)  
Camerata Köln 59' 22"  
cpo 999 945-2

Very little is known about Sebastian Bodinus, hardly a name to conjure with, but on this showing one to take seriously. In the six *Quadri* here recorded – two sets of three – he shows himself to be a resourceful, highly talented composer. These are quite short sonatas in three movements, with considerable variety in the instrumentation and plenty of contrasts in mood and texture. I particularly enjoyed the first and last of the works, scored for violin, flute, horn and basso; one includes two flutes, another flute and recorder; viola is used in an attractive little one in E minor. The performances are absolutely first class: sparkling in the quick movements, with beautifully spun-out slower ones. The nine Camerata Köln members involved clearly believe in this music, and they are very well recorded. As so often with this company, however, the English notes leave much to be desired. Peter Branscombe

**Couperin Organ Masses** Jean-Baptiste Robin (1787-90) Clicquot organ of Poitiers Cathedral) 94' 04" (2 CDs)  
Naxos 8.557741-42 £

Although prices of single Naxos discs have gone up by a massive 20% recently, they are still only £6 each, so you can get this double CD of the complete Couperin organ works for £12, albeit without the plainchant that has become the norm in recordings in recent years. Although the playing is sound enough, and the music is, of course, superb, the biggest problem I have with this recording is the organ itself. The Poitiers Clicquot organ is one of the finest examples of the French Classical Organ at its constructional peak, but Couperin's music was written for

instruments that were some way short of that peak. It was based on the same basic ranks of pipes, but the voicing of the stops was different, and the additional reeds bring a fiery brashness that does not do Couperin's music justice – after all, Couperin did write these pieces 100 years before the Poitiers organ. Anyway, Jean-Baptiste Robin holds the enviable post of organist at Poitiers Cathedral, so can be forgiven for playing at home. And the organ does produce a magnificent sound. But do try out one of the recordings made on organs of Couperin's time before making your decision. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

**Desmarest *Grands Motets II*** Le Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet 56' 21"

Glossa GCD 921610

*Cum invocarem, De profundis, Veni creator*

This is a companion to the disc which I reviewed in *EMR* 98 (p16). It is disappointing that the shortcomings of the previous issue are still in evidence – no reference to track numbers on the translation pages; translations of the sung texts that translate the words but not the sense (and not always that); errors in the translation of Jean Duron's excellent essay. Given that such care has been taken over the physical appearance and design of the whole package it is a shame that Glossa do not support their artists with better attention to detail in the content. But the music is terrific. These three pieces are from the first generation of *grands motets* composed for the then new Versailles chapel (the current building's predecessor) and were secretly composed by the young Desmarest on behalf of the modestly talented Goupillet who then passed them off as his own (full story in the booklet). The scoring is for the usual *petit chœur*, *grand chœur* and orchestra in five parts; as so often, the inner orchestral voices are absent from the source so are editorially added. These rich sonorities are enhanced by the use of the low A392 pitch. Apart from the diffuse sound of the choral sopranos, the overall sound is very good, with a realistic relationship between the solo consort and the main choir. Desmarest (and Niquet) use the large forces with fluency and imagination, with lively counterpoint, dramatic contrasts and colourful orchestration all to be heard in abundance. Recommended, despite the need for editorial reconstruction in the booklet. *David Hansell*

**Heinichen *Concertos & Sonatas*** Epoca Barocca 59' 42"

cpo 777 115-2

The recordings on this fabulous CD date from 2003. The seven pieces range from a

sonata for oboe and continuo to four-part works for various combinations of oboe, bassoon, violin, gamba, cello and continuo. The documentation is not up to cpo's usual very high standard (one quartet has only three instruments listed, and another clearly is not in B major!) One thing that is beyond doubt, though, is the quality of the performances: even when Heinichen's music takes an unexpected turn (which it is wont to do, but not in as extreme a fashion as Zelenka!) Epoca Barocca make it sound perfectly natural. I particularly enjoyed the opening sonata for oboe with bassoon and cello in accompanying roles above the continuo. There are sonatas by Telemann and Fasch for treble instruments and two *violette* which I have always heard played as treble parts but wondered what the effect would be to transpose them down an octave and play them on gambas – now I know, and I like it. Recommended. *BC*

**Leclair *Le Tombeau Les Folies Françaises***, Patrick Cohën-Akenine 67' 53"

Alpha 083

op. 5/4, 6, 7, op. 10/6, op. 13/3

Leclair's journey from 'who' to 'cool' among the youthful violinists in this household took about half a sonata. If anyone in *EMR*-land has yet to make the same transition they could do far worse than start with this excellent release. The presentation is admirable, with (as is usual for this company) an elegant essay on the cover picture preceding the note on the music, which is itself a real cracker, to coin a seasonal phrase. The programme is thoughtfully constructed and varied, showing to the best advantage Leclair's inventiveness and versatility, not to mention his understanding of the violin, and the playing does not let him down. All the artists are on top form with PC-A playing not only with style, authority and no little skill but also a lovely sound. Treat yourself. *David Hansell*

**Platée, Pigmalion, Dardanus: Ballet Suites** European Baroque Orchestra, Roy Goodman 75' 46"

Naxos 8.557490 £

There is more Rameau on Naxos than one might initially imagine and here three different incarnations of EUBO – a post-graduate student ensemble that is created anew each year – add to the list suites of the kind that always give as much audible pleasure to the players as to the listeners. If the most recent orchestra (2003) is the best, that is not to de-cry the efforts of their predecessors but simply a comment on the continual rise in period orchestra standards. Perhaps the greatest compliment one can pay to any orchestra in this

repertoire is that one simply forgets who they are in admiration for this composer's infinite imagination in the fields of melody and above all orchestral colour and I was well into this blissful state before the end of the first suite. If you don't already have this music you can't pass over this, especially at the price. You even get a decent booklet. *David Hansell*

**Rathgeber (*Augsburgisches*) *Tafel-Confect* – selection** canto tanto, Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre, Jürgen Sonnenthail 77' 42"  
cpo 999 995-2

Valentin Rathgeber (1682-1750) is remembered mainly for his 'Ear-pleasing and soul-delighting table confection', a quodlibet published in Augsburg in four courses (to use Rathgeber's food metaphor) between 1733 and 1746 (the final volume, by Johann Caspar Seyfert, is properly represented here). We are given a well-chosen selection of 15 songs, interspersed with a couple of his short but lively concertos. Rathgeber was a Franconian monk, briefly a runaway one, and clearly an engaging personality; a sense of unbuttoned fun comes through in the *Tafel-Confect* and in these nicely characterized performances. The tone is set by the first vocal number, *Rätzel* (riddle), in which five of the 16 (!) strophes are sung, with pleasingly varied responses from the four singers (SATB; there are nine players). A whole range of styles is represented, both vocal and instrumental, and the warmly resonant recording lacks nothing in clarity. A booklet with notes in tiny print calls for a handy magnifying-glass, but otherwise serves well. *Peter Branscombe*

**Scarlatti *Sonatas*** Vincent Boucher organ  
ATMA Classique SACD2 2341

K 1, 9, 12, 30, 31, 35, 56, 58, 61, 69, 84, 87, 99, 191, 287-8, 517, 525

Although the organ is only specified for a few of them, and is certainly not suitable for a lot of them, organists have often borrowed from Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas, and this CD demonstrates just how delightful they can sound on the right organ. This instrument is inspired by the sound of the baroque Italian organ, although the separation of flutes and principals onto separate manuals is a modern innovation. It sounds lovely, and has a generous acoustic to support it. One of the problems when playing Scarlatti on the organ is what to do with thick left hand chords and octaves; Boucher plays them as written (and often with a degree of nervous energy), with the result that the lively winding of the organ sometimes joins in. But once you are used to this, it adds an extra layer of

delight to the whole effect, and Boucher shows his exquisite sense of touch in some of the gentler pieces. He makes good use of the tonal palette of the organ, including the Tromboncini, Cornetto and Voce umana stops. The 18 pieces are well balanced, with sensible key relationships between them and just a hint of grouping into contrasting movements. The CD also comes in a rather neatly designed case than makes removal of the booklet less of a struggle than usual. Recommended.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Tartini Sonate a tre** La Magnifica Comunità, Enrico Casazza 58' 03"

Tactus TC 692003 (rec 2002)

C3, D1, 2, 10, 11, d2, G1, 3

This disc features sonatas from a little-known manuscript source, although some were later published in slightly re-worked versions. The music is never very demanding, and pleasant enough to listen to (there is almost nothing by way of virtuosity). The performers give a good account of themselves, with some nice interplay between the violinists and generous but never overbearing accompaniment from the continuo team. There's a dissertation lurking on Tracks 10 and 11: 'Tartini and his influence on Dvorak's harmony'!

BC

#### Telemann Overtüren & Concerti

Capriccio 49 426 298' 50" £

1. *Overtures* TWV 55: C3, C6, e5 Capella Coloniensis, Hans-Martin Linde (rec 1985-87)

2. *Overtures* TWV 55 D15 Capella Coloniensis, Hans-Martin Linde *Overture in D + tragicomical Suite* 3 tpts, Budapest str, Bela Banfalvi

3. *Overtures* TWV 55 : D7, D18, F ? Deutsche Bachsolisten; D6 Siegfried Pank vdg, Akademie für Alte Musik

4. *Concerti* Dresdner Barocksolisten (1988)

5. *Concerti & Chamber Music* various

There are five CDs in this set of varying vintage. They are apparently some sort of tribute to/compilation of recordings by the Dresdner Barocksolisten and Cappella Coloniensis, both pioneers in the Early Music movement. The flute concertos disc is misnamed – it should be 'Concertos for Two Flutes'. There are three discs of overtures – the first has orchestral suites, the second introduces soloists and the third includes two with names (the first has a tragicomical suite attached, the second is the *Alster Echo*). The final CD is of concerti and chamber music (in Telemann's day, weren't these the same thing?) and introduces two more ensembles (Berliner Barock Compagny and the Budapest Strings), the latter of which performs the composer's 'Concerto No. 3 in D' although what that means I have no idea – why couldn't the

packaging have included *all* the TWV numbers, not just some? The performances are, without exception, very good modern instrument readings. If these groups have never quite taken the final steps in embracing the HIP approach, that doesn't lessen their contributions to exploring the repertoire afresh.

BC

**Telemann Sinfonia Melodica** Berliner Barock Solisten, Rainer Kussmaul vln, dir, Albrecht Mayer ob, Rüdiger Liebermann vln 54' 32"  
Deutsche Grammophon 00289 477 5923  
TWV 43:Es1, 50:2, 51:d2, 51:E3, 52:A2, 55:c4

This is certainly among the best modern-instrument baroque playing one is likely to hear. Even more extraordinary is the fact that the contents of the disc are all new, including two pieces reconstructed from fragmentary manuscripts. In the first, a solitary French overture, there is much to enjoy in the rhythmic pushings and pullings in Telemann's counterpoint. The second is one of the composer's better violin concertos: even as a fiddler, I find some of the others (dare I say it?) boring. This recording will once again dispel lingering doubts that Telemann is a German Vivaldi, recycling the same few concerto movements – nothing could be further from the truth!

BC

**Telemann Göttlichs Kind: Music for Advent & Christmas** Susanne Rydén, Britta Schwarz, Andreas Karasiak, Sebastian Noack SATB, Solisten ensemble stimmkunst, Ensemble 94, Jay Johannsen 64' ££  
Carus 88.180

While I've been enthusiastic about Telemann's music elsewhere, I'm afraid this is the disc where it all went wrong for me. The standard of performance is just not good enough and, although some of the solo work is OK, I'm surprised that Carus (whom I associate with very high quality products indeed) have released it. There are two solo cantatas (one from each of the two volumes of *Harmonischer Gottesdienst*), a German Magnificat and two cantatas with choir. The three non-solo cantatas are heralded as world premieres, and I reckon they are likely to remain the only recordings for a while to come!

BC

**Telemann Pastorelle en Musique** Soloists, Capella Leopoldina, Kirill Karabits 105' 25"  
Capriccio 71 054/55 (2 SACDs in box)

I thoroughly enjoyed this recording. When he's on form, there is no-one to rival Telemann the melody writer and he constantly hits the mark in this little 'shepherds' play': all the booklet notes' ruminating on whether it's an opera or a

serenata is really a waste of time and paper, especially when it is in tiny print over a half-tone reproduction of the cover illustration, which only makes the headache all the more pointless. The music and the performance the Austrian group Capella Leopoldina give of it is wonderful. Telemann produces several quite unexpected masterstrokes, the most arresting of being a long build-up to the singer's entry in one aria, only to discover that the soloist is a recorder. After a recitative, a singer takes up the melody again for a shorter aria. After another recitative, it becomes a chorus. No matter what event it was written for, it must have kept the guests entertained! I thought the Germans were greener than us, so why is there a cardboard box as well as the plastic one?

BC

**Veracini XII Sonate a violino solo e basso, op. 1** Enrico Casazza vln, Francesco Ferrarini vlc, Roberto Loreggian hpscd 67' 36"  
Tactus TC 692201

I had rather put this disc aside, suspicious of both the music and the performances which awaited me, but I need have feared nothing: the quality of Veracini's violin writing and that of the three performers are excellent. It's especially nice to hear a continuo player who is content to accompany sympathetically and a cellist who relishes the melodic interest in his part. The 'baroque violin' is described in the notes as being a copy of a Strad dating from 1915! Whatever its vintage, Casazza draws a variety of lovely sounds from it. A very welcome recording.

BC

**Vivaldi Concerti e cantata da camera III** Laura Polverelli mS, L'Astrée, Giorgio Tabacco 60' 24"  
Naïve Opus III OP 3038r

Yet another triumph for naïve/opus III. The tracks come from two recording sessions three years apart (one for the concerti and another for the cantatas) but there's little discernible difference between them, and the singing is glorious. Laura Polverelli possesses a remarkably powerful and at the same time agile voice that she puts to the very best uses in her three cantatas – I hope we'll get to hear a version of the fourth from her, too! Regular readers will know that I find the the Red Priest's continuo cantatas less interesting than drying paint on my new neighbours' fence, but those with instruments are in a totally different class – I can't recommend this disc enough.

BC

£ = bargain price (up to £6.00)

££ = mid-price

All other discs full price, as far as we know.

**Vivaldi *String Concertos, Flute Concertos, Piccolo Concerto*** Arco Baleno 50' 10"  
 Etcetera KTC 1278

RV 117, 134, 151, 157, 428, 439, 443

This is another one-to-a-part modern instruments recording (again you have to count cello and double bass as one, though). The Flemish players have clearly been exposed to HIP concepts and are very stylish – it's hardly surprising that they have won awards. The set is very impressive for live recordings, and my only concern is not about the performances at all, but rather the all-too-resonant acoustic. In the first place, the balance favours the flute; and although Peter Verhoyen makes a nice sound, it's miles away from the different timbres a baroque instrument would bring to the various keys – and the over-indulgent echo just makes things a little murkier than they might be. The icy string tone in the third movement of *La notte* is, however, very effective. BC

**Vivaldi *Concerti per fagotto, archi e continuo*** Roberto Giaccaglia bsn, Ensemble Respighi 69' 29"

Tactus TC 672242

RV 474, 481, 483, 488-9, 501-2,

There's really only so much one reviewer can write about Vivaldi's bassoon concertos. Although they are, of course, not the same piece regurgitated in different guises, a whole disc of them can sometimes become just a little too much, especially when the tone of the soloist and the overall sound of the band remains so samey all the way through. The soloist is very much an expert (in his modern way), so there are some nice moments during the course of the disc, and all bassoonists should have it on their shelves, but those of us with more peripheral interest may prefer a more mixed programme. BC

*Perhaps it's as well that we didn't get a contract to edit all of Vivaldi's bassoon concertos a few years ago: Brian would have been bored typesetting them.*

**Vivaldi *The Complete Sacred Music*** Soloists, Choir of The King's Consort, The King's Consort, Robert King 773' (11 CDs)  
 Hyperion CDS44171/81 ££

We have reviewed (I hope) all the 11 separate issues of this series, and it is likely that serious Vivaldians will have acquired most, if not all of them. But if you haven't, or if you are looking for presents, this is a good choice (unless your taste runs to the Complete Schubert Songs, also recently assembled as a set). There is far more variety here than sceptics might expect. There is also some variety in the performances, especially with regard to the extent of vibrato in the

soloists. We get the impression that there was more chance of a duff note being retaken in the solo motets than when the full forces were present. To hear the soloists at their best, try disc 10. Overall, the performances work well: Robert King chooses sensible speeds, and the band and choir are excellent. If you anticipate having 773 minutes spare over the holiday period (lucky you!), having these discs at hand is an excellent way to fill them.

CB/EB

**Vivaldi *Arie d'Opera*** Sandrine Piau, Ann Hallenberg, Guillemette Laurens, Paul Agnew SSmST, Modo Antiquo, Federico Maria Sardelli dir 64' 41"

Naïve Opus III OP 30411

from RV 704, 734, 737, 738A, 739, 749?13 & 21

I eyed this recording with some suspicion when the bundle of CDs arrived from CB early last month, expecting it was some sort of round-up of the best of naïve/opus III's Vivaldi Edition. On closer inspection – and actually reading the notes – I realised that it is, in fact, a wholly independent entity, the first of several discs that will feature music from one of the Turin volumes containing different versions of arias from operas already recorded in the series, or from incomplete works. And there is many a gem in the package. The singers are without exception outstanding: Paul Agnew singing lower than I've ever heard him before and making light of Vivaldi's coloratura, and three women (Sandrine Piau, Ann Hallenberg and Guillemette Laurens) who one may not instantly identify with Vivaldi but who are truly in their element. Modo Antiquo play very well under the direction of Federico Maria Sardelli – a real pre-Christmas treat! BC

**Vivaldi *Le Cantate II*** Elena Cecchi Fedi S, Modo Antiquo, Federico Maria Sardelli dir 61' 49"

Tactus TC 672208 (rec 1997)

RV 655, 657-660, 669

When we first reviewed this in October 1999 (*EMR* 54), BC wrote 'some of the coloratura has to be heard to be believed', though he found the recits a bit heavy. He praised the continuo, but wondered why four musicians needed a non-playing director. It has reappeared because Tactus discs are now distributed by Codaex. CB

**Baroque Duets** Sara Macliver, Sally-Anne Russell SS, Orchestra of the Antipodes, Antony Walker 63' 17"

ABC 476 7737

**Handel** Duets 15 & 16; **Monteverdi** Chiome d'oro, *Pur ti miro*; **Pergolesi** *Stabat mater*; **Vivaldi** *Laudamus* (Gloria RV 589), *Virgam virtutis* (Dixit RV 594)

My heart sank when opening the packet to see yet another recording of the Pergolesi *Stabat Mater*, as there must be at least twenty-five existing recordings of the work. On hearing the first few bars, however, it was clear that this was something different in that the 'orchestra' billed on the booklet cover was none other than a string quartet with bass, supported by archlute and chamber organ continuo, in a performance with period instruments. In many ways the recording gains from single strings, but it is not always successful in the movements where Pergolesi has the two violins in unison – surely meant for more than one to a part? As 'baroque' as the playing is, with its stylish lack of vibrato, the contrast between the timbre of the single strings and the almost continuous vibrato of the singers is all the more evident. If you want a period performance recording and prefer a contralto to a counter-tenor, this might be worth considering. The rest of this disc is made up of 'fillers': 'Laudamus te' from Vivaldi's *Gloria*, a duet from Handel's *Dixit Dominus* – the only track that uses multiple strings on the whole disc; two Handel duets (HWV 192 and 189) more well-known in their guise as 'His yoke is easy' and 'For unto us' from *Messiah*, though performed here rather as a two-horse race. A Monteverdi madrigal with 'Beatus Vir' material and 'Pur ti miro' from *The Coronation of Poppea*, are perhaps the most satisfying items on the CD. Ian Graham-Jones

*Pergolesi's Stabat Mater was written to be sung every Friday in March at the services of the brotherhood of Our Lady of Sorrows in Naples, replacing that of Alessandro Scarlatti, a recording of which is reviewed on p. 31.* CB

**Doux Rossignols: 18th Century French Baroque Music** Ensemble la Dauphine (Sabine d'Hont rec, Johannes Boer gamba, Pieter-Jan Belder kbd, rec, Erik Beijer gamba) 70' 27"

Titanic Ti-266

Music by Blavet, Boismortier, F. Couperin, Dollé, Leclair, A.D. & P.D. Philidor

Almost every available combination of the instruments is used on this recording, including trio sonatas on voice flute and gamba by Boismortier, Leclair and Dollé, Couperin's 18<sup>ème</sup> Ordre for harpsichord solo, and recorder duets by Philidor and Blavet, whose 'Pourquoi doux Rossignols' provides the title of the CD. The search for variety has led Sabine d'Hont to switch from voice flute to soprano recorder for the fast movements of Philidor's Suite II in D major, a practice which I personally am not enthusiastic about, but otherwise there is an agreeable variety of textures. I am more used to

hearing this repertoire played on the transverse flute, but the voice flute, a recorder with a similar range whose lowest note is d', makes a good attempt at its expressive qualities. It is occasionally a little too prominent in relation to the other instruments, particularly in the trio sonata with pardessus de viole and organ by the Parisian viol player Charles Dollé, but in general this is a well-balanced recording with some attractive playing. I particularly like Leclair's Sonata in A minor for gamba and continuo, which comes from a volume of transcriptions of violin music in the Royal Library in Berlin.

Victoria Helby

**Opera proibita: Arias by Handel, A. Scarlatti, Caldara** Cecilia Bartoli, Les Musiciens du Louvre – Grenoble, Marc Minkowsky  
Decca 475 6924 72' 02"

By 'Opera proibita', Bartoli means oratorio: with stage productions banned in Rome during Lent, composers turned their talents to writing glorious arias for the self-same singers for performance in church (or cardinals' palazzi). She has selected works by Handel, Alessandro Scarlatti and Caldara. The booklet follows where previous Bartoli releases have led: the pretentious notes draw a parallel between the arrival of Handel in Rome and Fellini's *La dolce vita*, that showed (apparently) that the church would tolerate entertainment in serious times. I am not a great fan of the diva – she has a remarkable voice and can pull off some incredible tricks with it, but I'm afraid the machine gun staccato (which does get an occasional airing here) and the ornamentation of already-virtuoso lines (including more than one note of indeterminate octave!) just over the top. Track 2 (*Mentre io godo in dolce oblio* from a Scarlatti oratorio) and Track 4 (Caldara's *Vanne pentita a piangere*) show an altogether more palatable side to the singer (who spends most of the booklet recreating scenes from the above-mentioned Fellini film): there's real feeling in the voice, and one begins to get into the character of the parts being portrayed in this forbidden opera. The biggest winner for me is Caldara; although only four of the 15 tracks are by him, they are without exception beautiful arias, well worthy of revival. BC

#### CLASSICAL

**C. P. E. Bach *Für Kenner und Liebhaber***  
Lilianna Stawarz *hpsc* 61' 46"  
Accord ACD 134-2  
Wq 49/1 & 3, 55/1, 4 & 6, 58/5, 59/6

This Polish disc, featuring well-characterised playing on a (barely appropriate)

modern Neupert instrument gives a welcome first recital to a really distinguished virtuoso soloist. Lilianna Stawarz, a pupil among others of Huguette Dreyfus, gives really positive accounts of these middle-period works which seem to me to remind us of the allegedly strong influence exerted by Emanuel on both Haydn and Beethoven. She plays with drama, with sensitivity, and best of all, with an infectious humour.

Stephen Daw

**J. C. Bach *Chamber Music*** Berliner Barock-Compagnie 73' 15"  
Capriccio 67 105  
Qtet in G (vln, vla, vlc, hpsc); Quintets in G op. 11/2, D op. 22/1, in F op. 22/2; Sextet in C

Five of Bach's finest chamber works, beautifully and sensitively played by a first-rate ensemble including the excellent Christine Schornsheim, who alternates between harpsichord and fortepiano. It's a pity, perhaps, that they didn't opt for the original scoring of the Piano Quartet with violin and two cellos, but the viola version works very well and dates back at least to J. C. Luther's edition of 1785. Unfortunately the programme booklet doesn't identify the instruments, so it's hard to guess the nationality of the fortepiano although its unEnglish-sounding 'moderator' shows that it wasn't made in London. The booklet is best left unread anyway, for the attempt to represent Bach as a survivor of the late Baroque is misguided, and a statement about the slow movement of the Sextet, which allegedly 'develops remarkable initial tension by bringing in the six instruments one after the other', suggests that the author hasn't actually listened to the music: this movement is scored for only four instruments, who all play together at the start! Strongly recommended for the music and the performances, all the same.

Richard Maunday

**Boccherini *Quintetti per flauto G*, 438, 440, 442** Nicola Giudetti *fl*, Nuovo Quartetto Italiano 68' 34"  
Tactus TC 740205

These quintets, preserved in MS in the library of the Capilla Real in Madrid, are issued in the year of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Boccherini's death. The MSS are not autographs and the works do not appear in Boccherini's own thematic catalogue. Their attribution to Boccherini is classed as 'doubtful' in New Grove II, but the flautist Nicola Giudetti, writing in the booklet, is in no doubt that they are by Boccherini. They are almost miniature concertos, with *solo* and *tutti* sections, but with attractive melodies and opportunities for display by all the instruments. I

would have preferred much less vibrato from the strings. But this is a well-balanced and elegant performance which I would recommend to anyone who does not object to listening to modern instruments.

Victoria Helby

**Haydn *Symphonies Nos 1-5* (Vol. 29)**  
Sinfonia Finlandia, Patrick Gallois 71' 38"  
Naxos 8.557571 £

The latest volume in the Naxos series takes us back to the very beginnings of the classical symphony with Haydn's earliest essays in the medium, where each new attempt was in the nature of an experiment – a sense certainly brought out in these discerning, affectionate readings. The accompanying folder (English and German) has brief notes on the works and their performers; the recording has plenty of presence. Stylish playing, with poise and vigour – and a lively, occasionally over-busy realization of the harpsichord continuo from Irina Zahharenkova. Patrick Gallois secures alert and sensitive playing from the Sinfonia Finlandia, though the strings are stretched in the scurrying figuration of no. 4 in D. This is a worthy addition to a valuable series.

Peter Branscombe

**Haydn *Bartolozzi Trios*** Trio Galatea (Elizabeth Blumenstock, Elisabeth LeGuin, Tom Beghin) 71' 35"  
Klara Etcetera KTC 4010  
Hob XV:27-29; Clementi op. 27/2

'Bartolozzi' refers to the dedicatee of these three Haydn trios, Mrs Therese Bartolozzi (née Jansen), to whom the composer had already dedicated his piano sonatas Hob. XVI/50 and 52. She was evidently a fine performer on the English grand (very different from the pianos Haydn had known before his visits to London), and both player and instrument inspired some of his most original keyboard music.

I must confess to an initial unease at reading that the Trio Galatea had opted for a recent copy by Chris Maene of a Longman & Clementi grand, rather than the original of 1798, because 'it matched our string instruments [also modern copies] wonderfully well'. Shouldn't HIP performers prefer original instruments if they are available and have been restored to full playing order? (A large can of worms, I know!) However, I'm delighted to report that the Maene has a very convincing sound and is extremely well played by Tom Beghin. (Look out for his forthcoming recordings of Haydn's complete keyboard music, which I'm told will include a copy of a Viennese harpsichord

of 1755.) In any case, this English-style grand piano is far more suitable for these trios than the usual 'homogenized' Viennese fortepiano. The bass is impressively sonorous; there are some magical *una corda* effects, sometimes combined with the damper-raising pedal; and rapid right-hand octave passages work well because the dampers are not quite so crisp as those on Viennese instruments. The string playing is equally impressive, and the ensemble and balance are excellent. All three players have an impeccable sense of period style and, best of all, communicate a real feeling of excitement at the novelty and originality of this splendid music. Very highly recommended

Richard Maunder

**J. M. Haydn *Requiem for Archbishop Sigismundo*; Mozart *Dauid penitente***  
Iride Martinez, Anna Bonitatibus, Christoph Strehl, Luca Pisaroni SSTB, Salzburger Bachchor, Mozarteum Orchester, Ivor Bolton 79' 44"  
Oehms Classics OC 536

This recording was made by Austrian Radio during a morning concert at the 2004 Salzburg Festival. It contains the Requiem that Michael Haydn completed for the obsequies of Prince-Archbishop Sigismund von Schrattenbach in January 1772 (a work of which there have been several notable recordings in recent years) and, more warmly to be welcomed by reason of its neglect and musical interest, the cantata *Dauid penitente*, K469, that Mozart prepared (mainly re-using movements from the C-minor Mass) for a concert of the Musicians' Benevolent Society in Vienna in Lent 1785. Ivor Bolton directs worthy but by no means outstanding accounts of these works, not helped by at times strained singing, with uneven vibrato, from the top three solo voices – the best of whom, the bass, is employed only in the Requiem. Both chorus (set far back) and orchestra are undistinguished. Still, *Dauid* is interesting, especially for the new numbers that Mozart wrote for the occasion. The insert leaflet contains little of interest, and no texts.

Peter Branscombe

**Mozart *Great Mass in C minor* Haydn *Berenice* Beethoven *Ah perfido*** Camilla Tilling, Sarah Connolly, Timothy Robinson, Neal Davies SSTB, Gabrieli Consort & Players, Paul McCreesh 74' 10"  
Archiv 00289 477 5744

This is a superb performance and recording. Not only do we have the Mass in C minor, often the sole offering on a disc, there are also assured, brilliant accounts of Haydn's late *Scena and aria* and

Beethoven's *Ah! perfido!* Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort and Players are in wonderfully assured form, rising confidently to all the challenges of these exacting works. Accuracy, perfection of style, sensitive enunciation of the Latin and Italian texts, all are just right. Richard Maunder's tactful and effective additions to the instrumentation of the Credo that Mozart left bare, incomplete, is part and parcel of this noble venture; notes, texts and sound quality are all fully worthy of the works and the performances. The two sopranos are especially outstanding in the solo scene. There can hardly be a better way to use that Christmas record token!

Peter Branscombe

**Mozart *Violin Concertos Nos 3-4* (K216, 218), *Adagio* K. 261. *Rondo* K 269** Julia Fischer, Netherlands Chamber Orchestra, Yakov Kreizberg cond 60' 45"  
PentaTone Classics 5186 064 (SACD)

I enjoyed this recording. I found Julia Fischer's unaccompanied Bach illuminating if slightly mannered, but I had no such impression here. Rather, I heard a young violinist enjoying young violinists' music. That's not to belittle these sparkling performances of the two most popular concertos and the two shorter concert pieces, and certainly not to ignore her own impressive cadenzas. Not afraid to use open strings when it is sensible to do so, she still finds ways of emphasising notes within phrases that a period player might choose not to (or might consciously find away of avoiding stress on the note at all), but never in a way than seems anything less than carefully considered within the overall reading, and certainly never anything short of impressive and tasteful. Another feather in her cap, I'd say. BC

**Henri-Joseph Rigel *Quatuors dialogués*, *oeuvre X*** Quatuor Franz Joseph 76' 50"  
ATMA classique ACD2 2348

Two complete unknowns for me – the composer and the quartet. I'm glad to have made the acquaintance of both. Rigel's Opus 10 set of *Quatuors dialogués* dates from 1773 and would sit perfectly happily alongside quartets by Haydn and even Beethoven. The Quatuor Franz Joseph was formed in 2002 by four Canadian early music specialists, and in three short years they have clearly come a long way. The balance is excellent – Rigel's ultra-democratic distribution of the melodic interest among the instruments is the ideal vehicle for demonstrating this – and the sound they produce is warm and rounded, with judicious use of vibrato. A real treat for chamber-music lovers.

BC

**Ernst Wilhelm Wolf *Four Symphonies***  
Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Weimar, Nicolás Pasquet 64' 56"  
Naxos 8.557132 £  
in C, D, E flat & F

Ernst Wilhelm Wolf (1735-1792) is yet another comparatively unknown symphonist brought to attention by Naxos in their important progress through the backwoods of the early Classical period. The four symphonies chosen here (from a sizeable output) are certainly ear-catching, if more seldom mind-swaying. The E-flat piece, which comes first, produces fascinating sonorities from a sizeable wind group; the one in F is marked by haunting slow passages within a basic Allegro; alone among the four, the Symphony in C major contains a minuet movement. These are keenly shaped performances under Nicolás Pasquet, with well-balanced and expressive playing from the Weimar musicians (Wolf was Kapellmeister there from 1772, and obviously had talented players to work with). The English version of the German note is clumsy and contains repeated sentences – but these cleanly recorded, atmospheric readings of unfamiliar works are very welcome.

Peter Branscombe

***Revolution: music from the Period of the French Revolution*** Douglas Hollick kbd 64'  
RiverRun RVRCD71  
Music by Balbastre, Boëly, Lasceux, Séjan

The 18th century saw a steady decline in the *bon gout* that had defined the earlier French musical style, culminating in the period of the Revolution when churches were deconsecrated, turned into Temples of Reason, and quasi-pagan rituals were enacted to the accompaniment of revolutionary songs – providing employment for organists whose church posts had been disbanded. Whatever you might call the musical *gout* that this period produced, it is certainly entertaining, and this CD offers a selection of works dating from around 1770 to the 1820s and played on the 1990 Collins organ at Edinburgh's Greyfriars Kirk, a harpsichord made by the player after Taskin, and a delightfully tinkly Clementi square piano of c.1811 restored by him. Arguments could be made against using a modern eclectic organ, with only a nod towards the French tonal palette, (see the Couperin review on p. xx for an example of more suitable period instrument) and an English piano, but tonal subtlety is not exactly a hallmark of this repertoire, so I won't quibble. The aural transfer between instruments is not as obtrusive as might be expected and the programme is well balanced. It is nice to hear Balbastre's

Marseillois played on the piano (and with a nice sense of intimacy), but it would also have been good to have included an organ version as well – we know that Balbastre played variations on this anthem within a few months of its first composition. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

## 19th CENTURY

**Hummel *Mass in D minor, Salve Regina***  
Susan Gritton, Pamela Helen Stephen, Mark Padmore, Stephen Varcoe *SmSTB*, Collegium Musicum 90, Richard Hickox  
Chandos Chaconne **CHAN 0724** 57' 09"

This Collegium Music 90 / Richard Hickox series continues apace and will surely pick up some award or other in due course. The music continues to impress, both in terms of Hummel's compositional ability and in the sounds and moods he conjures up. The soloists, choir and orchestra are in fine fettle and, as usual, give their all very successfully: I've found myself listening to the disc repeatedly, not to reconsider my initial impression but simply to enjoy the warm sound and the fantastic music. I wonder how they feel about doing this *after* Beethoven's C major mass? Although the Hummel is good and can easily stand comparison with the late Haydn masses, the Beethoven still springs a few surprises. *BC*

**Franz Xaver Mozart 'The other Mozart' *The Songs*** Barbara Bonney S, Malcolm Martineau pf 61' 40"  
Decca 475 6936

Mozart's younger son was born only five months before his father's death; he spent his life (he died at 53) in his father's shadow, eking out a career as pianist and minor composer. On the evidence of these 27 mainly brief songs, he had an agreeable though not distinctive voice; there are echoes of his father, and some of the (mainly old-fashioned) poets he set include names familiar from Wolfgang Amadè's lieder. Barbara Bonney, with sensitive and well-balanced accompaniments from Malcolm Martineau, sings them with insight and spirit, but without the ease or smoothness of line we have come to expect from her; happiest results, I found, came with a lower-than-normal volume setting. The song-texts and English translation are helpful but, like the notes, inaccurate. *Peter Branscombe*

## VARIOUS

**Discover Early Music, written and compiled by Lucien Jenkins** 136' 59"  
Naxos 8.558170-1 (2 CDs) £

Lucien Jenkins treads a deft path between the Scylla of over-simplification and the Charbdis of blinding with science – and he also has to avoid putting off his readers/listeners – hence, perhaps, the minimal cover of the music that was probable performed more than all the other types put together – plainsong. Most of the examples are short, and it is a bit odd that the longest one is *Spem in alium*, which is a bit of an eccentricity (though an outstanding one) in the history of early music. The music examples are, of course, drawn from the Naxos catalogue, and are a bit variable: the naive listener should perhaps be warned that the legitimate differences between performances of the same piece in much of the music here are much more extensive than in a Brahms symphony. I hope this opens the ears of many uninitiated listeners. *CB*

**Sir Charles Mackerras conducts *Delius, Dvorak, Elgar, Suk, Vorisek*** (rec 1969-97)  
Decca 475 7061 (3 CDs in box) £

I asked for this as a peg to mention the 80th birthday of Sir Charles. The only item that might be relevant is the Vorisek, which actually isn't the best performance here. Seen from the early-music perspective, Mackerras has been a pioneering figure. I have enjoyed and admired his performances for over 40 years. The earliest recording I know is his wind-band *Fireworks* Music dates which uses the right number of instruments, though any attempt to have period ones in 1959 would have produced an enormous cacophany! The composers with whom I particularly associate him are Handel, Mozart and Janacek. His Sadlers Wells *Figaro* in the mid-1960s was an early attempt to bring scholarly evidence to bear upon post-baroque repertoire, though it was chiefly the *appoggiature* that attracted publicity. I'm not sure if I would enjoy the Handel performances that he did for the BBC in collaboration with Basil Lam, but they were influential for their time, and I particularly remember *Saul*.

Charles's concern with 'authenticity' showed itself especially in Janacek – it isn't only early music that needs practical scholarship. I performed with him only once (in the choir for Handel's *Funeral Anthem* at Dartington), and we 'collaborated' on a Handel opera edition for the Coliseum – I did the Urtext version and he added the performance indications. Unlike most conductors who were successful in the modern-instrument baroque field in the 1960s, he kept in touch with developments and became one of the leaders in producing historically informed performances with main-stream orchestras.

The most important thing about him,

though, is that he is an outstanding conductor. I once watched him working with a student orchestra. The rehearsal was detailed but low-key. The performance, however, was full of energy, life and tension: technically it had faults, but the spirit was there to the full, despite there being no extravagant gestures from the rostrum. I hope there are many more such performances to come. For a conspectus of his skills, this set is a good place to start. *CB*

**St John the Baptist** The Choir of St John's College, Oxford, Ryan Wigglesworth, Duncan Whitmore, Peter Buisseret *conds*, David Baskfield *org* 69' 38"  
Cantoris **CRCD6080**

Music by Byrd, East, Gibbons, Isaac, Tarik O'Regan *Palestrina*, Part, Purcell, Wigglesworth, Wilby & chant

We quite often receive mixed church-choir anthologies, most of which don't get reviewed, either because the amount of early-music is small or because the style is too holy for my taste. But I played this several times with great enjoyment. There are a few weak spots (*This is the record of John*, for instance), but I found the clear lines and the way they moved towards the cadence rather than dithered on the way was most refreshing. The chant was good too, the one in common with the Italian 'specialist' choir on the disc that begins our review section had just what the Italians missed. There are four first recordings, including Pärt's lyrical *Anthem of St John the Baptist*, a commission by the choir. Another first is Michael East's fine *As they departed*. It is a mixed choir, not a traditional choral foundation, and it makes a very good impression – apart from the picture: the photographer really should't have said 'cheese' but might have made the girls stand straighter. *CB*

**Sweet Seraphic Fire: New England Singing-School Music** Norumbega Harmony, Stephen Marini *singing master*  
New World Records 80640-2 73' 25"

The booklet is scholarly and informative. But it gives the impression that what is offered is something new, whereas there are more impressive recordings of the New England repertoire around. We particularly enjoyed Doug Fullington's Tudor Choir's *The Shapenote Album* (PR-TSNA) and *An American Christmas* (Loft LRCD 1060), reviewed in *EMR* 49 p. 24 & 96 p. 27, and a fair number of readers will have attended one of Larry Gordon's courses and enjoyed the harsher sound he favours. There seems to be a consensus that the music should be sung in strict rhythm and

without dynamic variation. Norumbega Harmony (which is the name of a choir as well as the 2003 anthology published by Mississippi UP in 2003) hasn't quite got the absolutely tight rhythm that the style demands. Other performances of Billings' *Maryland* ('And must this body die'), for instance, are more moving, and I think that is because the tuning here isn't stark enough. The singers need to think of Machaut's Mass rather than Brahms; but they must negotiate not just Pythagorean fifths but triads as well, so need to juggle two different temperaments. And in a good performance of that piece, the longer third line of short meter must always make a point. The disc ends with seven tunes from the 1990s, all pastiches that don't quite get it, except for the last and the least ambitious, a simple but memorable tune. For a modern piece that recreates the style, Larry Gordon's 'Do not go gentle into that goodnight' takes some beating, the shapenote sound-quality (demanded by the notation itself) echoing Dylan Thomas's 'rage against the dying of the light': a different take on death from Isaac Watts. This disc is just a bit too gentle. CB

**Treasury of Harpsichord Music; Dances of Ancient Poland** Wanda Landowska *hpsc* 77' 39" (rec 1946 & 1951)

Naxos 8.111055 £

Bach, Mozart, Scarlatti; Chopin, Landowska, Rameau, F. Couperin etc

This comprises a group of pieces recorded in New York in 1946 and a Polish group taped in Landowska's home in Connecticut in 1951 and first issued under the title *Landowska Plays for Paderewski*, since she had often played them to the Polish pianist and politician. For some listeners, it will be their first Chopin on the harpsichord; it doesn't sound much less suitable than the 16th-century pieces. Landowska certainly has flair and personality, but the use of a harpsichord makes her style seem more remote than it would had she been playing a piano. What will our harpsichordists sound like in fifty years time? CB

## HISTORICAL DHM

This is the first batch (more have just arrived for our next issue) of Deutsche Harmonia Mundi reissues that mostly go back to the prehistoric days of historically informed performance practice (and also to the days of LP – and some would have been short even then). The booklets are better than many cheap reissues, with a brief essay, some texts, and recording details. All numbers begin with 82867 and end with 2. All are at bargain price.

The oldest music music comes from the 15th century – Ockeghem's *Missa Ecce ancilla Domini* and motet *Intemerata Dei mater* (69991 41' 45" rec 1972) nicely sung by Pro Cantione Antiqua with Bruno Turner, though spoilt by the doubling instruments and an ungracious recorded sound. Bruno used to talk about recording sessions at which he turned up expecting to perform a cappella and found a wind group present: here he has a recorder, a cornett, three pommers and a sackbut, all superfluous. It is, however, more in touch with current taste than Victoria's *Officium defunctorum* a6 recorded six years later by the Escolania & Capella of Montserrat under Ireneu Segarra (69995; 44' 00") which sounds as if from another age – though in fact some of its slow speeds are faster than the recent recording from the Armonico Consort.

A Monteverdi *Vespers* (69997 2 discs 87' 39" rec 1976) brings together several groups that appear elsewhere in the series: the Montserrat choir, Pro Cantione Antiqua and Collegium Aureum under Segarra's direction. The cornett playing (name not given) in the opening response is enough to show that this is hardly competitive with later versions; the soloists (unnamed boys, James Griffett, Stephen Roberts, David Thomas & Michael George) are sometimes fine, but tend to force the sound. So much was learnt in the seven years between this and the Andrew Parrott recording of 1983 that anything before then is a curiosity (and I am referring to far more than transposition or liturgical setting). We also know more about renaissance dances, so an unusually-constituted Collegium Aureum sounds terribly fussy with its frequent changes of scorings in *Tanzmusik der Renaissance* (70037 35' 48" 1961).

But some discs deserve revival. *Gustav Leonhardt plays Historical Harpsichords* (70031 46' 26" 1969) has Picchi, de Macque, Merula and Kerll on a 1697 Grimaldi, Sweelinck Scheidemann & anon on a 1637 Andreas Ruckers, and JS & CPE Bach on a 1782 Gräbner. Not all pieces quite match the instruments (from the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg) but the player makes the most of the music and the instrument. Even better is a selection from Froberger (69999 49' 01" 1962) on a 1640 Ruckers. It includes Toccata 3, 10 & 12, Suites 1, 15 & 20 (with the meditation on his future death), Fantasia 2 and the Lamentation on Ferdinand III. Playing, instrument and music are one. We (I sampled many of these discs with Mark Caudle, and found we agreed on our judgments) were slightly less convinced by a Couperin selection (70000 44' 40" 1971): some pieces were just right, but at times the *inégalité* seemed a bit studied.

I wrote enthusiastically about the first recording of Montserrat Figueras that I heard some 25 years ago but have subsequently been disappointed, so it is nice to hear the voice I remembered on a disc with songs by Caccini (70038 50' 45" 1983). Caccini comes over as a far better song writer than usual, the singing is utterly convincing, and the accompaniment provides a responsive backing without taking over.

Music in Sanssouci (69998 43' 34" 1961) has accompanied flute sonatas by CPE Bach and Benda and sonatas for flute and Bc by Frederick the Great and Quantz, played by Hans-Martin Linde, Johannes Koch *gamba* and Hugo Ruf *harpsichord*. We were struck by what seemed to be unmusical phrasing, and assumed that the flute was, if not modern, at least somewhat later than the music. The accompanied sonatas have a superfluous string doubling of the harpsichord's left hand and the balance between the right hand and the flute was unconvincing – but perhaps the thin harpsichord treble sounded even worse if balanced more favourably. The *Brandenburgs* (70043 2 CDs 101' 17" 1965-7) have similar problems in phrasing, and the Collegium Aureum (who sound less baroque than some current modern-instrument bands) is mostly too heavy. More enjoyable (especially for the singing) is a pairing of the Coffee and Peasant cantatas, the Wedding Cantata 202 and *Non sa che sia dolore* (BWV 209) with Elly Ameling, Gerald English and Siegmund Nimsgern (70046 106' 31" 2 CDs 1964-68). Collegium Aureum is hardly ideal, but this is a set worth hearing.

As those who have read through this review will have gathered, there are a few discs that are worth hearing but most are only interesting as samples of the taste of their time. Even at budget price, if one allows for the short running time, they are not such bargains and only the Leonhardt and Figueras discs can be recommended. CB

## DVDs

Owing to the various distractions this month described in the editorial, DVD reviews are deferred until the next issue

**Bach Mass in B minor** Ruth Ziesak, Anna Larsson, Christoph Genz, Dietrich Henschel SATB, Gewandhaus Kammerchor & Orchester, Herbert Blomstedt 117' + 21' introduction by Blomstedt Euroarts 2054518

St Thomas, Leipzig, May 2005

**Bach Weihnachts Oratorium** Claron McFadden, Bernardina Fink, Christoph Genz, Dietrich Henschel SATB, Monteverdi

Choir, English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner 198' (rec 2000)  
Arthaus 101 237  
+ features on JEG's Bach Cantata pilgrimage

**Charpentier *Te Deum et Psalms des Ténèbres*** Le Parlement de Musique, La Maîtrise de Bretagne, Chapel royale du château de Versailles, Martin Gester 85'  
Armide ARM004  
H 126, 146, 128-9, 206, 228, 230,

**Charpentier *Le Tombeau de Marc-Antoine Charpentier*** Il seminario musicale, Chapel royale du château de Versailles, Gérard Lesne 75'  
Armida ARM005  
H. 183, 237, 252, 266, 270, 332, 403, 423, 474

**Handel *Agrippina*** Günter vpon Kannen *Claudia*, Barbara Daniels *Agrippina*, David Kuebler *Nerone*, Janica Hall *Poppea*, Claudio Nicolai *Ottone*, Ulrich Hielscher *Pallante*, Eberhard Katz *Narciso*, Carlos Filler *Lesbos*, London Baroque Players, Arnold Östman *dir*, Michael; Hampe *stage dir* 154'  
Euroarts 2054538  
Rokokotheater, Schwetzingen, May 1985

**Handel *Water Music: Recreating a Royal Spectacular*** English Concert, Andrew Manze 78'

BBC Opus Arte OA 0930 D  
July/August 2003

**Monteverdi *L'Orfeo*** John Mark Ainsley *Orfeo*, Juanita Lascarro *Euridice*, Brigitte Balleys *La Messagiera*, Russell Smythe *Apollo*, David Cordier *La Musica*, Michael Chance *La Speranza*, Mario Luperi *Caronte*, Dean Robinson *Plutone* Tragicomedia Concerto Palatino, Stephen Stubbs *dir*, Pierre Audi *Stage dir* 140' (2 DVDs)  
Opus Arte OA 0928 D  
Het Muziektheater Amsterdam, July 1997

**Monteverdi *L'incoronazione di Poppea*** Cynthia Haymon *Poppea*, Brigitte Balleys *Nerone*, Ning Liang *Ottavia*, Michael Chance *Ottone*, Harry van der Kamp *Seneca*, Heide Grant Murphy *Drusilla*, Jean-Paul Fouchécourt *Arnalta*, Dominique Visse *Nutrice*, Claron McFadden *Valletto*, Les Talens Lyriques, Christophe Rousset *dir*, Pierre Audi *Stage dir* 219' (2 DVDs)  
Opus Arte OA 0924 D  
Het Muziektheater Amsterdam, July 1994

**The King's Singers *From Byrd to The Beatles*** 93'  
Arthaus 101 248  
including Tallis *Spem in alium* and an account of how the multitracking was devised.

## LINDUM RECORDS

Observant readers will notice that there is no advert for Lindum Records. Even more observant ones will have spotted the advert on p. 10 with Lindum Records included with Jacks, Pipes & Hammers and the address of Scout Bottom Farm, the home of Jeremy Burbidge and his apian and musical enterprises.

When Peter retired from his practice as a GP, he resolved to devote ten years to selling early-music CDs. Amazing! It can't be ten years since I last went to one of the musical weekends at his house in Broxbourne, ideally designed for such a purpose. Peter moved to Lincoln and as well as continuing to organise courses, set to with the CD-selling. We collaborated. He had a copy of our CD review pages to proof read; that made sure that I got the titles and price codes right, while he could see before publication which CDs looked interesting, which were praised and which were tactfully cast aside so he could have the best in stock before the rush (or perhaps trickle might be more accurate) of orders began. He compiled a monthly list of new issues, which first appeared in *Early Music News* and is now in our monthly Concert Diary: this will continue. But by the time you read this, his stock will be at Mytholmroyd. CB



Can you keep it down a bit?  
We've just managed to get him off...



## CHICKEN IN AGRESTO

Jennie Cassidy

Verjuice, vergeous, verious or agresto is simply the juice of tart fruit. It was usually made from unripe grapes and would keep for up to a year if stored well. Crab apples, Seville oranges, gooseberries, sour plums or sorrel were popular alternatives when grapes were unavailable. (Please let me know how you get on if you try these!)

It was invented by the Romans and remained an essential part of many recipes especially in France until the 17th century. Early recipes using verjuice insist that it should dominate all other flavours, including the spices, but it is much milder than lemon juice or vinegar so later recipes used it just to enhance the flavour of the food.

I made verjuice myself for the first time this year. We have a vine which is quite fruitful but the grapes are small and don't ripen fully so I decided to have a go at verjuice. I was thrilled with the result, but sadly we have just moved house so will not have access to that vine again. I simply put the bunches in a pan with a tiny bit of water and heated them for 5 minutes to soften. Then I crushed them in the pan with the end of a rolling pin, put them into a jelly bag and squeezed – hey presto – an absolutely delicious sharp, pinkish verjuice.

You can fry any meat or fish in butter and deglaze the pan with verjuice to produce a sauce that is out of this world.

The Florentine humanist Poggio Bracciolini was Papal secretary, gourmet, womanizer and author of a rather smutty Latin joke book. When reporting on a visit to England he commented "Weather, food and girls all dreary". He served the following dish to a visitor Bartolomeo Platina, who subsequently published it in his 15thC cookery book *De Honesta Voluptate et Valetudine* (on Honest Pleasure and Good Health).

### Chicken in Agresto

6 chicken pieces  
2oz chopped pancetta or diced fatty bacon  
1 cup (half a pint) verjuice (or fruity dry white wine)  
Pinch saffron  
Salt and pepper  
1 tbsp each of fresh chopped herbs – parsley, marjoram, mint and basil

Fry the chicken and bacon gently for about 10 minutes in a little olive oil. Deglaze the pan by adding the verjuice and stir to lift and incorporate all the crispy bits from the pan. Add the saffron and seasoning. Simmer for about 40 minutes until the chicken is done. Just before serving, sprinkle over the herbs.



Unripe grapes pounded in a mortar to make verjuice  
16th-century miniature for the Cerruti family in Verona

### LETTER

Dear Clifford,  
Alexandra Buckle can't have read her programme, or looked too carefully (*EMR* 109, p. 21); Roger Hamilton wasn't conducting New Chamber Opera in *La Finta Semplice* by Mozart - I was! Nice review though... Steven (Devine)

### ERRATA

I failed to complete my review of Christopher Hogwood's edition of keyboard versions of Dowland (*EMR* 109, p. 2). I had intended to compliment the editor on the inclusion of a thorough list of keyboard settings outnumbering the 30 included in the edition, but failed to go back to it and add it. I also omitted the price. I imagine that a slip with details fell out as I was playing through the volume.

I also omitted the ISBN from the review of the York Conference papers (p. 31): 0 7546 0403 9. Members of NEMA, the organisers of the Conference, are entitled to a discount, and it is also cheaper if ordered via [www.ashgate.com](http://www.ashgate.com)

We wish our readers a happy Christmas  
and a harmonious new year.