

Early Music

REVIEW

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VESPERS 1610-2010

We are planning a special issue in December to anticipate the 400th anniversary of a work whose date has become part of its title. We hope as many scholars, conductors, singers, players and listeners will offer contributions with as great a variety as possible, ranging from the academic to the flippant (our cartoonist already has a new idea). An emphasis on performance is particularly welcome, as well as comments on how the music (or individual bits of it) affect you.

Another Beauchamp House Summer School (July 19-24) provided a programme of music that was almost entirely unfamiliar by Czech and Polish composers that most of us hadn't even heard of. One would expect a fair proportion of misses in such a repertoire, but nearly every piece (by Samuel Capricornus, Heinrich Finck, Marcin Leopolda, Franciszek Lilius, Ivan Lukacic, Stephanus Mahu, Adam Vaclav Michna, Marcin Mielczewski, Bartolomiej Pekiel, Thomas Stolzer, Mikolaj Zielenski) was a hit, even though they couldn't all reach No. 1. For many of us, that position was reached by *Beati immaculati* by Capricornus (1628-65), a Bohemian composer who worked at Stuttgart. It is scored for 2 violins, 3 *viole da braccia* (C1, C1, C3), 2 gambas (C4, C4), organ and SSATTB voices, and is based on a six-bar ground: a G major scale for two bars, a modulation to E minor in the fourth bar, and an abbreviated G scale permitting a dominant upbeat to lead to the next statement: the minor modulation gives a harmonic interest to the imaginative upper parts. No idea lasts long, but the variety is amazing. It's not particularly 'emotional' in impact, but has a unique limpidity and poise that we will long remember. Much of the other music succeeded because of the composers' ability to make a point with effect and concision, each with its own vocal and instrumental scoring, then move straight on to the next, with immense skill, with amazing effect. Lilius's *Jubilate Deo* arr was one of the best, for SSATB, 2 violins, viola, 2 trombones, bassoon & bc.

Contrasting with these was the sombre music of Thomas Stolzer (c.1480-1526 or 1545+), who is rather better known (there is an enthusiastic review of a CD of his music in the August 2006 *EMR*). The piece we worked at was *Deus misereatur nostri* a5 (SSATB), with a scoring so open and with every note so right! We also sang through his famous setting of Psalm 37 (in Luther's German) for SATTB with an additional S in Part 7. It is notorious for the composer's recommendation that it be played by crumhorns, but Philip Thorby assured us that crumhorn consorts normally played down a fourth and didn't use the shrill treble that more recently gave them a bad reputation. Sadly, we didn't have the music at that low pitch (the original clefs are standard, so transposed it should sound almost like a consort of rackets!) but it was certainly impressive with voices and crumhorns even at the notated pitch – not merely as sound but as an amazing composition. Some 'obscure' music may not be worth more than one hearing: we are not an uncritical lot at Beauchamp. But this is why early music is exciting: we continually discover new music!

REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

CHEAP CHOICE BRAVE AND NEW

The most interesting item in the latest batch from Vince Kelly (which has been waiting for a few months) is an edition of Gibbons' *Fantasies of Three Parts* (CCBN 17007; £10.00). What you get for this bargain price is a clearly-printed score and a CD, which contains pdf files of the partbooks of both the c.1621 edition and the 1648 Amsterdam reprint, a modern typeset keyboard version on two staves, score and parts in modern and in original clefs, and versions for recorder. The owner is permitted to print off any of this for his own use, including enough for ensembles, classes and courses, but not for commercial use. This will thus be extremely useful for scholars, teachers, players and enthusiasts. The printed score has a list of errors in the sources and a sensible post-duction. Just a warning. Don't be too impatient: on my computer at least the files took a while to open.

There are no computer aids to Byrd's *Ave verum corpus*, but the packet (17009; £7.50) contains a compact score on a single opening with commentary, and four 'parts', each comprising score in old clefs on one side and in modern clefs but no bar lines on the other, with facsimile and modern clef part without bars on opposite sides of a single sheet for each voice. The alto (*medius*) has an additional sheet for treble, octave-treble and alto clefs. The ideal package to experiment, first with singing from parts, then from facsimile! And scores without a page-turn have their advantage anyway. The main score includes a phonetic guide to authentic Latin pronunciation. I was surprised to see that *latus* has a short *a*: decades of Italian Latin made me assume that it was long. I've often wondered if *praegustatum* meant, not *foretaster*, but the person who sampled a great man's food to see that it wasn't poisoned: Christ shows that sampling death leads to life. Does anyone know? The edition of Weelkes *Hosanna to the Son of David* (CCBN 17010; £7.50) for SSATBB is more straightforward with score and parts at pitch or up a tone. It is taken from a 'secular' source (BL Add.17786-91), which perhaps justifies aiming the editions at players as much as singers, though here recorders rather than viols. From another time and place, there's an arrangement for ATTB recorders of Telemann's Concerto in B flat TWV 532: B1 (CCBN 18001; £9.00). (From ccbn@telus.net)

UT ORPHEUS

So far, I think that the only publications we have reviewed from Ut Orpheus have been the excellent new edition of Monteverdi's madrigals. We have recently received some issues from this enterprising Italian music publisher, all of whose output is of very high quality. I mention here a few smaller items; a sample of their Complete Boccherini is reviewed on p. 5, and other larger scores will be covered

in our next issue. There is a full catalogue and ordering information on their website, www.utorpheus.com.

Lonati, Lulier & Bani

Cantatas for soprano and Bc by Lonati, Lulier and Bani (one each) from a Roman MS of c.1685 now in Perugia (details in *Recercare* XVII (2006), pp. 161-210) have been issued recently (ODH 30; €25.00). Both music (Alessandro Iovino) and text (Biancamaria Brumana) editors are given equal billing: Italian scholars treat vocal texts more seriously than in most other nationalities. However, from the two pages of facsimiles given, the text editor makes a variety of small changes in orthography while the music editor makes some global ones (e.g. replacing the C1 clef by G2) and leaving the rest unchanged: even 'redundant' accidentals are retained. It is good that the poem is set out as verse; but since the edition is otherwise bilingual, it would be more help if the right column had an English translation rather than stating the obvious: whether a section is recit or aria and what key it is in. It is, however, refreshing to have a score with just treble and bass; a few bracketed bass figures are added, but are mostly obvious. It would have been nice to have had a separate copy of the score for the accompanist(s) instead of parts. Changes to the clef of the continuo part should be noted in the score in case it is intended to indicate *tacet* for the cello (if there is one). The selection of cantatas isn't made on musical grounds but because these are the only pieces not to have concordances with other sources yet to have composers' names. Lonati and Lulier are non entirely unfamiliar to violinists; Cosimo Bani was an abbot from Livorno.

Valentine Recorder Sonatas

Despite his name, Valentine is essentially an Italian composer. Born in Leicester in the early 1670s, he was in Rome by 1701 and died there in 1747. His work features prominently in a set of five MS volumes of recorder music copied for a Luccan enthusiast, Paolo Antonio Parenisi, which has been quarried by SEPS and Ut Orpheus. 12 Sonatas for Treble Recorder comprise two sets of six from a MS that also has his *Le Villeggiatura* for 2 recorders. The volume at hand has the first six (FL 7; €28.00), edited by Nicola Sansone. The music, from c.1730, was probably intended for the amateur player, but is nevertheless (or therefore?) appealing. For your money you get bilingual introductions and commentary, a two-stave score and two parts, though there are no mid-movement page-turns in the score, so a second copy of the music pages might have been enough.

Bingham Airs II

Nicola Sansone is also editor of George Bingham's 40 *Airs Anglois et 3 Sonates* for treble recorder and Bc, his second set published in partbooks between 1702 and 1706 (FL6; €28.00). Most of the book is devoted to short pieces

grouped by key by Bingham, Finger, Peasable and Robert King. The book closes with a Sonata in F for two recorders without bass by William Williams, a Chacone in F by Finger for the same combination and a Solo (i.e. Sonata) in G for recorder and bass by Parcham. Book I is also available (FL2; reduced price £14.00). Again this is music for amateurs, not facile, but not demanding very great skill, either from the recorder player or accompanist: in fact, it would be very good material for those feeling their way to reading figured bass. There's a facsimile published by Alamire.

HANDEL ARIAS

Händel Aria Album: Female Roles for High Voice from Handel's Operas compiled by Donald Burrows. Bärenreiter (BA 4295), 2009. xv + 85pp, £17.50

Händel Aria Album: Male Roles for High Voice from Handel's Operas compiled by Donald Burrows. Bärenreiter (BA 4296), 2009. xvii + 79pp, £17.50

Händel Duets, Trios and Ensemble Movements from Handel's Operas compiled by Donald Burrows. Bärenreiter (BA 4297), 2009. xix + 89pp, £17.50

Bärenreiter has issued three volumes of opera arias and ensembles, edited with the care one expects of Donald Burrows. The singer presumably learns the part by heart, so that the pianist can have the score for lessons or performances. It might have been worth including as a voice part the usual 18th-century style of a two stave score, with the top instrument and voice alternating on the upper stave.¹ The economics of the third volume, however, are more complicated, and four copies are needed, costing £70.00. Who pays for the accompanists' copy?

The introductions (English and German) set the arias in context very concisely. The Italian texts are properly set out in verse, with English and German translations line-by-line. Burrows retains capitals at the beginning of each line in that context, but not in the underlay. The selection is less random than most anthologies by the inclusion of several arias from some operas, often for the same character. Sometimes the name of the original singer is given, useful information for those who find that an aria matches their voice and want to try other music that might suit them.

Two devices familiar from earlier choral music would help the user see at a glance whether an aria might fit a particular voice: showing original clef and compas, especially in the latter two volumes. 'Male roles for high voice' is an ambiguous title anyway. One might assume that, if 'high female voice' means soprano, it means tenor; but in fact the volume contains music for castrati. So while a single soprano might be able to sing through the whole volume, the castrato-substitute volume contains music for both soprano and alto. The ensemble volume really does need to have the voices, not just the roles, identified.

¹ Or perhaps just voice and bass, as on the copy of *Messiah* that John Beard used at the Foundling Hospital, illustrated on the cover of the current *Early Music Performer*.

One other criticism (predictable to those who read my reviews regularly) is the absence of instrumental information. At least the piano parts show what is editorial realisation, but scorings are never given. And there is no indication that orchestral material is available. Why not follow the example of John Rutter's Opera Chorus anthology (Oxford UP) and have parts available cheaply for hire for each piece? Bärenreiter must have most of them in the complete operas anyway, so it only needs a computer and/or photocopier to originate sets. Failing that, most can be supplied by The Early Music Company.

The ensemble volume is particularly recommended. So often, a duet is among the most memorable and moving number in an opera. A recent order for orchestral parts for a forthcoming CD of Handel duets had a note against *Per le porte* from *Sosarme* 'the best duet ever' – probably deriving from Sarah Connolly; others like *Caro! Bella!* from *Giulio Cesare* are very moving (look out for the CD with Rosemary Joshua & Sarah). I hope these volumes will make the singing of Handel arias more varied: some of the standard non-specialist repertoire is here, but there are plenty more duets as good or even better to explore. (The few larger ensembles mostly do not work out of context.)

HENLE HAYDN

Oratorios

This must be a good year for Henle, publisher of the Collected Works of Haydn, who died in 1809; A box of four oratorios (HE 9845; €68.00) is particularly welcome, hard-bound study scores with print big enough not to strain my aging eyes. The scores are also available separately. Performance material comes from Bärenreiter.

Over the last few decades, various attempts have been made to deal with the problems of Haydn's last two oratorios, whereas the previous two have not featured enough in our musical life to provoke concern about details of performance practice or the accuracy of editions.

The problem most evident in Britain has been the text of *The Creation*. Second only to *Messiah* as the most performed work by Choral Societies and the like for two centuries (*Elijah* was for a while a strong rival), most singers of my generation grew up with its curious text running round our heads. This, however, cannot be solved merely by scholarship. The new edition restores van Swieten's translation back into English of his German translation of a text that was originally English (the preface is up-to-date enough to include Neil Jenkins' suggestion that it may have derived from Jennens, not the mysterious Lidley). It has found less favour with singers than I (as its publisher) hoped. Nor has the translation by one of Haydn's London lady friends, Anne Hunter (also King's Music/EMC). Conductors of two recent performances that I have spoken to, Paul McCreesh and Peter Holman, both preferred to take an existing version and make ad hoc improvements. The new score will not help those performing the work in England, though I suspect that we might hear van Swieten's version more

often by non-anglophone choirs trying to be authentic! There is one oddity in the editing of the English text that is worth noting. 'And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters' has one more syllable than the German. The editor corrects this by substituting an apostrophe for the *u* of *upon*. This is pointless, since there has to be a separation between the pair of consonants *moved* and *'pon*, which might as well be filled with a *u*.

Despite enthusiastic reviews of a series of fine recordings, *The Seasons* has never achieved the popularity of *The Creation*. It's half an hour longer but with less of a narrative to sustain it, however delightful the music itself is, and the sub-Thomsonian style of the translation isn't to all tastes. Unlike *The Creation*, which has both texts underlaid as in the original edition, *The Seasons* has only the German, ignoring both the England and French of the first edition (which was issued in two versions, German/French and German/English). A vocal score based on the edition is available from Bärenreiter (BA 4647a: £11.00). This underlays all three texts. It is good for libraries and useful for reference, but distracting for singers. The infelicities of the 1802 translation may discourage use for performances in English, just as singing the bottom text won't encourage the French. But I suspect that the low price couldn't be managed if two editions were produced, as in 1802.

I am most familiar with *The Seven Last Words* in its string quartet form, having bought a recording as a student; strings parts have been continuously in print since Haydn published it, and scores for most of that period as well, and it is surprisingly convincing. The original orchestral version was one of the earlier publications in the Henle series, though hasn't encouraged as many performances as one might have expected. This is the first time I've seen anything except a Novello vocal score of the version with choir, and I don't think I've heard it since the early 1960s. This will encourage me to look out for it.

The Return of Tobias is the longest in terms of number of pages of these four scores, and being more lightly scored, it must be disproportionately longer in performance. I've not encountered it before in print or sound, so I hope that the availability of performance material will remedy that.

All these scores derive from Joseph Haydn Werke, and it is excellent that they are made available for the bicentenary. All are dated 2009, though the original scores from which they are reproduced date back nearly half a century. *The Seven Words* is from 1961, *Tobias* from 1963. Neither of these have critical commentaries yet (!), but Annette Oppermann provides the introduction and details of the sources. The two late works are recent, and long awaited, publications of 2008 and 2007 and have critical commentaries as well. In both cases, the main source is not the first editions (of 1800 and 1802) but earlier MSS. In the case of the *Creation*, it is the score prepared after the first performance by Haydn's chief copyist Elssler under the supervision of the composer and van Swieten, thus avoiding the misprints of the 1800 edition. There is no such obvious basis for an edition of *The Seasons*, so the

edition is based on Elssler's score, performance material and occasionally hunches that differences in the 1802 edition derive from Haydn.

Variations in F minor

This is Haydn's most famous piano piece, an outstanding example of his alternating-key variations. In fact, the heading to the autograph is *Sonata*, and Haydn never changed it, even when it became clear that it was not to be part of a multi-movement work (if it ever was). It is so different from what the public of the time expected a set of piano variations to be, that Haydn's reluctance to use it isn't surprising, though he didn't object to his publisher's choice. Henle has issued a facsimile of the autograph. (HN 3218; €58.00. The first 145 bars (on two folded sheets) are a fair copy. A five-bar conclusion was later replaced by a further 83 bars on a single folded sheet. These are a composing score, with various corrections on view. The introduction (by Armin Raab) doesn't give any information on watermarks and whether it can be deduced when the additions were made. (The opening is dated 1793, and it seems to be assumed that it was completed before Haydn left for England the following year.)

There are no revelations in the facsimile, but there are not many complete works available thus and it is good that pianists have the chance to play it as Haydn wrote it – the first 145 bars at least: the later section is harder work. The individual buyer is likely to recognise the volume on his shelves, but libraries need a title on the spine.

For an edition to keep with the facsimile, there is a new offprint from the Collected Works volume of piano pieces (HN 912; €5.50). Fine for the normal player, but the curious may want to know which dynamics the composer added to the printed edition, and the *ossia* in bars 119–120 receives no explanation in the notes.

There is also an offprint of the variations on *Gott erhalte* (HN 949; €6.50), Haydn's keyboard version of the slow movement of op. 76/3. Haydn didn't change the version of the theme itself from the piano part of its original incarnation as a song, including it with the words; the edition leaves them out, but the page opposite has a facsimile of of the original.

String Quartets.

The Henle parcel also included four more of the study scores of the string quartets: op. 20 (HN 9208 €18.00, op. 33 HN 9209 €19.00, op. 42 & 50 HN 9210 €24.00 & op. 54 & 54 HN 9211 €21.00). I've written about several other issues of the series recently, so am merely listing them this time. The complete quartet scores are also available in a slip-case at €169.00 (HN 9216). The choice between Henle and Peters will probably be made, not on the soundness of the musical text or thoroughness of the critical commentaries but whether you only want study scores or large scores with parts and which edition seems to you easier to read, and also (at present at least) whether you want the early quartets. Both editions are commended.

BOCCHERINI COLLECTED WORKS

Boccherini 6 *Sonate Per Tastiera e Violino... Opus 5*, G 25-20 a cura di Rudolf Rasch (*Opera Omnia XXX*). Bologna: Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2009. cxlii + 207pp, €190.00.

Boccherini has long needed a good critical editions, and this bodes well for his first Collected Edition (in 90 volumes – I'd bet my pension that it won't be completed in my lifetime! The relationship of text and music implied by the pagination isn't quite as disproportionate as it seems. The sequence with roman numbers is consecutive before and after the arabic-numbered music, and contains everything in three languages (Italian, English and German), including all the editorial and critical material. It's a hefty volume, nicely bound in red with Boccherini's signature on the front. An elegant portrait of the composer is printed in colour. It was bought by its present owner in 1992 as a portrait of Mozart, but looks more like Boccherini, and the ascription to 'Liotard' may not relate it to the famous portraitist.

Opus 5 (coincidentally, the number Boccherini gave the work coincides with that under which it was published) is a set of accompanied sonatas, but with a violin part whose omission would diminish their value considerably. The publication was announced in December 1768. Its dedicatee, Mme Brillon de Jouy (1744-1824), was an amateur musician of some fame, the owner and player of a harpsichord, an English fortepiano (presented by J.C. Bach and heard by Burney when he visited her in 1770) and a glass harmonica (from her neighbour Benjamin Franklin, its inventor). Her music survives in Philadelphia and some has been published. Her library of printed music remained in France; it included other Boccherini, but not op. 5. There were many subsequent editions, and the work was available well into the 19th century, with a century gap between an edition of 1842 (retaining the older format of parts) and 1942 (in score).

The composer's revision, however, was not circulated at all. It was prepared thirty years after the original publication, perhaps for the fortepianist Pedro Anselmo Marchel, who joined the Madrid court in 1796, soon after the King had acquired two fortepianos. The revision is explicitly for *Forte-piano*, which was probably the preferred instrument of the original composition, though a harpsichord is acceptable. There is a problem for the editor: should he give editorial precedence to the first version, as it was known from its publication until 1996? Although the revisions are not fundamental, it would be very difficult to produce an amalgamated text with commentary. A Collected Edition allows the luxury of printing both, although their presence in the same volume makes comparison difficult. Since the volume is not intended for performance (there is no violin part and the page-turns are not as convenient as the originals), perhaps the versions could have been printed on opposite pages, like the recent Stainer & Bell *Venus & Adonis*.

The edition is a mine of information (quarried for the comments above). It is reassuring that the editor thanks a

violinist for her willingness to play the sonatas with him 'in order to get to know the works and to find errors in my scores'. Actually, the number of errors in the sources needing correction are (judging from the brevity of the critical commentary) remarkably few. It is interesting that the first edition received a few corrections (see entries in the commentary referring to Ve-1). These were presumably made early in the edition's life, perhaps between an advanced copy being run off for the dedicatee and the main run, though that argument depends on whether Rudolf Rasch has checked all the 25+ extant copies. A facsimile of the copy with the dedication has been available for about 25 years from Kings Music (and now from the Early Music Company) for £12.50 (strangely, not mentioned in the volume). It is in parts, so turns can (and do) work – there's no way that page-turns in a score could coincide with double-bars. A copy would also be useful for comparing the 1768 print with the revised MS version. But owners of the facsimile will benefit from consulting the new edition (and, indeed, persuade their libraries that it is worth buying); they should also correct the few misprints in the facsimile from the commentary.

If other volumes in the series are as good, the Collected Works are going to be a mine of information as well as offering a sound text. But to be really useful, parts are needed (which in many cases could be facsimiles of the major source).

A NEW ELIJAH

Mendelssohn *Elias/Elijah op. 70* edited by Christian Martin Schmidt Breitkopf & Härtel (PB 5311), 2009. xi + 447pp, €120.00.

Vocal score (PB 8649 with German & English texts, 8650 with German only), study score (PB 5314) and orchestral parts (OB 5311: strings €14.00) are or will soon be available.

The full score of the new *Elijah* from Breitkopf passed across my desk recently. We have reviewed editions of Mendelssohn before. They have, however, multiplied this anniversary year, and we haven't tried to cover them: Mendelssohn does, after all, come outside our chronological range. So no detailed comments here. But we welcome the appearance of newly-researched editions of all periods, particularly of works that are embedded in our musical culture. This offshoot of the new Collected Works might not be worth its weight in gold (1.860 kg is quite heavy for a paperback), but it is a desirable object for those intent on conducting the work: I hope the study score is, allowing for size, comparable with the Haydn ones from Henle (see above). I know what the ultimate recipient of the score will complain about: the absence of any information on sources and a critical commentary. Would a few extra pages affect the cost significantly? Spoiling a ship for a ha'porth of tar! There is, however, an excellent introduction on the history of the work's creation and early performances. This is recommended to conductors who want an edition based on thorough research but don't need to know what lies behind it. But I (with perhaps unusual tastes) would find it frustrating if I had to use it.

YORK VOICE CONFERENCE

Robin and Graham Bier

Since this is our first contribution to the Early Music Review, perhaps we should begin by introducing ourselves. We are a pair of postgraduate students at the University of York, pursuing MAs in vocal studies. And what a fortunate time to be studying here! In early July, our institution hosted the NEMA International Conference, Singing Music from 1500-1900. In a much needed complement to NEMA's 1999 gathering on historical instrumental performance practice, this wealth of over thirty papers and workshops addressed a wide range of issues relevant to developing performer-scholars like us. As student assistants, we were invited to attend many of the sessions and given the opportunity to perform live musical examples. To be involved in such a practical and tangible way revolutionized our understanding of the research presented, and when Clifford Bartlett invited us to share our perspective on this fascinating and enriching week, we were honoured to accept. Here follows Our Review.

Anthony Rooley opened the conference with a sweeping summary of the major issues that would be addressed and discussed over the next four days. He pointed out that today's lutenist, for example, has access to many authentic instruments, but singers are limited to the single instrument with which we were born. How can we as singers keep up with our highly accessorized, historically informed instrumentalist colleagues? If instrumentalists use a wide range of techniques and instruments to perform their diverse repertoire, surely it is inadequate for us to approach an even larger repertoire of music using a single vocal technique and style—yet this is what many singers do. Of course it is as impossible to discover exactly how singers of the past sounded, but the appropriate vocal response to the rich diversity of approach taken by instrumentalists seems obvious. Rooley was spot on when he challenged singers to engage with a wide range of styles, and the remainder of the conference provided a wealth of resources towards this end.

Not surprisingly, the nature and use of vibrato was the most popular topic. Ed Breen introduced the subject with a fascinating analysis of the vibrato used by singers in David Munrow's record collection. It was enlightening (and startling!) to observe the similarity between a recording of Emma Kirkby's "straight tone" slowed down 580% and the wide oscillations of the security alarm that sounded when someone mistakenly opened the wrong door a moment later. Jude Brereton, Helena Daffern and David Howard demonstrated the power of computer analysis in their introduction to vocal science and analytical tools, which Daffern then followed by employing these tools to compare the vibratos of opera singers and singers who specialize in early music. Greta

Haenen shared her research locating the development of ornamental vibrato alongside the rise of the solo singer and new vocal aesthetics in the 16th century, Martha Elliott worked to reconcile 19th century vocal style with the goals of modern opera singers today, and Sally Bradshaw related her perspective as a professional early music opera singer, reminding us of the relevance of the visceral experience of the performer in an academic discussion of performance practice.

Effective communication in singing was recognized as a core value amongst the conference delegates and modern audiences alike, and several papers considered the power of musical rhetoric and gesture. Elizabeth Belgrano took us through her journey toward interpreting two 17th century laments, including the description of her experience wearing a period corset. Rosemary Carlton-Willis competently demonstrated the practical application of gesture in lute song, alongside a fascinating paper in which she proposed that the modern use of gesture in Northern Indian vocal music might hold the key to translating and interpreting the nuances of Bulwer's 1644 guide to hand gestures. Alan Maddox synthesized principles of classical rhetoric and contemporary commentary on the imprecision of recitative notation to propose a dramatically viable approach to performing Italian recitative from the 17th and 18th centuries. Catherine Gordon-Seifert stepped back from performance practice to examine the influence of rhetorical principles upon compositional procedures in the 17th century French Air, while Christopher Allan explored the use of speech mode as a vehicle for accessing the full expressive potential of developing soprano voices, and overcoming the technical challenges of performing 18th century recitative.

While rhetoric and vibrato were common themes, many other topics contributed to the discussion. Martha Feldman compared a recording of the castrato Alessandro Moreschi with those of female sopranos from the same time, drawing our attention to similarity of style and referring to vocal physiology to continue the comparison. Bonnie Gordon discussed the construction of the castrato voice as not only the result of castration, but more importantly, of the intense discipline and training they undertook. Louise Stein gave a paper on the style and approach of onstage singing in early examples of Spanish theatrical music, supporting the argument that different singing styles are required for different genres within classical music. Leila Heil recommended the study of jazz vocal techniques as a relevant resource for the early music singer, and Robert Toft went a step further, suggesting that the *bel canto* tradition has not died away, but rather re-emerged in the popular music singers of today. While Toft's paper raised questions regarding the role of

amplification and recording technology in singing, it was a refreshing surprise to listen to Ani Difranco demonstrate *messa di voce* and consider the Backstreet Boys as a paradigm of rhetorical phrasing.

For us as student performers, the highlight of the conference was its emphasis on the practical application of research in workshops and live musical examples. Dominique Visse led an evening session on the performance of secular and sacred music from 16th century France, taking members of the University of York Chamber Choir through their paces in an open rehearsal designed to demonstrate the diversity of the chanson repertoire (if not our ability to blaze through French onomatopoeic syllables at quite the tempo he desired!) Visse concluded the session with the final two movements of Brumel's Earthquake Mass, in which attendees of the workshop joined the Chamber Choir members to sing from Visse's own edition.¹ Since Graham Coatman was ill, Philip Thorby took over the following night's session in York's Guildhall, a problematic space for hearing the conductor (especially with the singers placed in a wide rather than deep formation), but beautiful for singing. Participants explored the music of Thomas Ravenscroft, demonstrating that he composed more than just *Three Blind Mice* and psalm settings. Particularly striking was the SSATB motet *O Domine Jesu*, with the top part reconstructed by Ian Payne. In Thursday evening's workshop, an energetic Philip Thorby coaxed a sensual and momentum-filled performance of Benevoli's four-choir *Dixit Dominus* from the participants, addressing the challenge of communicating text in a genuine manner despite the complexities of a choral setting. On Friday afternoon, Sally Drage shared her research into the largely overlooked area of English psalmody, bringing the material alive by inviting participants to sing relevant pieces during her presentation.

Live performance played a part in many of the papers as well. Our classmate, soprano Peyee Chen, was in high demand as a model to demonstrate vocal exercises and perform relevant pieces. The three of us, together with soprano Rosamund Cole, bass violist Sam Stadlen and organist Andrew Passmore, enjoyed the opportunity to perform during Elizabeth Dyer's ground-breaking paper on the music in Jesuit college theatre. With her meticulous research into a vast and largely unstudied repertoire that has the potential to transform our understanding of the development of oratorio, Dyer is a musicologist and director well worth watching. John Potter treated the delegates to multiple performances of Schubert's *Ständchen* in a paper that challenged the authenticity of the early music movement. Sensitively accompanied by Liz Haddon, he began with a performance of the song that any mainstream early music singer might have delivered. Using early recordings to extrapolate backward to within a few decades of Schubert's time, he proposed several changes to early Lieder performance practice, and concluded with a second rendition of the song that employed

vibrato, portamento, and improvised ornamentation.

Graham O'Reilly offered his and Hugh Keyte's explorations of a secret manuscript of the famous Allegri *Miserere*. This unique document was penned by castrato Domenico Mustafa in an attempt to preserve a dying 19th century interpretation through meticulous notation of phrasing, tempo changes, dynamics, portamenti, chromatic embellishments and more. The two of us, Carlton-Willis, Chen, Daffern, and Potter were joined by local singers and students Anna Edgington, Edward McMullan, and Christopher O'Gorman to rehearse from this manuscript with O'Reilly, before performing excerpts of it during his workshops and concluding with a full performance of the piece. As young performers, it was incredibly exciting to be so directly involved in transforming research into actual music. [And also exciting for the listeners, though some felt that a less early-music sound, which I expect the singers could have given, might have been even more convincing. CB]

As a good conference should, this meeting of musicologists and performers raised a great number of questions and stimulated discourse in many areas of vocal performance practice. Nevertheless, Richard Bethell deserves mention not only as a coordinator of a wonderful conference, but also for initiating the most passionate discussion of the week in his concluding presentation. He offered a detailed and subjective system of categorizing singing style according to the degree of vibrato use, then played three recordings of Chen singing the same aria in each of these contrasting styles. Making the point that vocal performance practice should consider audience taste as well as academic authenticity and status quo, Bethell asked the delegates to vote for their favourite version. The results of the survey seemed to favour the middle road or a straighter tone over heavy and constant use of vibrato, but objections were raised regarding the nature of the survey. Some delegates declined to vote on the grounds that each recording was pleasing in its own right, or did not fully represent the style in question. Many agreed that although a one-size-fits-all approach to vocal music is, as Rooley stated, ill equipped to meet the demands of a thousand years of vocal repertoire, vibrato is not the only or even the primary issue. Nevertheless, the discussion of vibrato spilled over into the closing session, mediated by Bartlett, and was still going strong when it came time to break for tea. The intention to continue the discussion after the break was never realized, and the threads of conversation still dangling in the Department of Music here at York only go to show that there is still much more to be said on the singing of music between 1500 and 1900.

Postgraduate Loukia Drosopoulou and her crew of student helpers deserve recognition for keeping everything running smoothly, as do John Potter, Richard Bethell and all of the chairs who coordinated such a stimulating conference on a controversial yet vital subject. It was inspiring to attend and participate, and we eagerly await the development of the research and ideas aired this week in the years to come. The organising committee included John & Richard, the head of the Music Dept Jonathan Wainwright, NEMA's administrator Mark Windisch, and its outgoing chairman Clifford Bartlett: this and the Saul weekend in April marked his retirement from organising events.

1. The division into choirs made reading easier, though it didn't represent the music any more clearly, and it wasn't very sensible to present an unknown audience with a twelve-voice piece needing six tenors. CB

INTERNATIONALE HÄNDEL-FESTSPIELE GÖTTINGEN 2009

Brian Robins

While other music festivals will this year have made a special effort to involve Handel in their programming, it was business as usual at the oldest of all festivals devoted to Baroque music. Now in its 89th year, the Göttingen International Handel Festival pays yearly tribute to the most famous son of nearby Halle, this year under the rubric 'Handel – Fascination and Inspiration', an exploration of the impact made by Handel on such composers as Haydn and Mendelssohn, both not coincidentally also the subject of anniversaries in 2009.

Not the least of the pleasures of returning to the Saxon university town – this was my third visit – is the warmth of welcome guaranteed not only by the festival itself, but also by the locals. This year, at the invitation of the festival, I managed a densely eventful four days that not only took in the annual opera production at the Deutsches Theater, but two major Handel choral works, a special concert held on the date of Haydn's death and several smaller-scale events. In addition I was able to attend several of the English language introductory lectures – this year principally given by David Vickers and Graham Cummings – that form an important didactic feature of a festival that always has an enthusiastic British following.

Göttingen has a proud record of having been in the forefront of the revival of Handel's operas, being responsible for the first modern performances of a number of them, although perhaps surprisingly this year's choice, *Admeto*, has never previously been given there. First given at the King's Theatre on 31 January 1727, *Admeto* was not only Handel's most successful opera during his lifetime, but is also by general consent one of his finest. The production, which will also be seen at the Edinburgh Festival, was entrusted to Doris Dörrie, a prize-winning film director famous in her native Germany, but little known beyond its borders. For reasons questioning failed to answer, Dörrie decided to relocate *Admeto* from Thessaly to Japan – at least for most of the time; half way through the third act we inexplicably suddenly find ourselves in a Baroque palace. A notable feature of the production is the important place taken by Butoh dance performed by a troupe of mostly near-naked dancers, whose number also provided a flock of irritatingly silly sheep inspired by Antigona's disguise as a shepherdess. It is a mark of the vulgarity to which Dörrie at times descended that Antigona was played as an embarrassing vamp, and that 'Armati o core', Trasimede's furious act 3 outburst against his brother Admeto, was directed at a stray sheep that received petulant kicks during the aria's course. Regrettably, much of the audience appeared to find this and other sundry nonsense extremely funny, seemingly unaware that Dörrie's major achievement was to divest Handel of any hint of the nobility and dignity that lie at the heart of his operas.

Sadly, matters were not redeemed on the musical side. Unusually for Göttingen, the length of *Admeto* encouraged cuts not only within arias, but also of entire arias, especially damaging in the case of Antigona's virtuoso final act 1 aria, 'S'en vola lo sparvier'. Vocally, too, there were very real disappointments. In an opera written for the combined talents of Senesino (*Admeto*), Bordoni (*Alceste*) and Cuzzoni (*Antigona*) one would at least hope to hear a cast capable of projecting the tragic drama of the piece more strongly than was achieved here by, respectively, Tim Mead, Marie Arnet and Kirsten Blaise, while William Berger's good Ercole was rendered ludicrous by the role's transformation into a Sumo wrestler-looking like Michelin man. And it really is high time someone told Wolf Matthias Friedrich, who followed last year's send-up of Zoroastro in *Orlando* with an overplayed Meraspe, that Handel's bass parts are not buffo roles. Festival music director Nicholas McGegan drew some fine playing from the hand picked Festival Orchestra, although as is sometimes the case with his Handel, I could have done with a greater sense of weight and depth at times.

Much the same might be said of McGegan's genial direction of *Alexander's Feast*, given in the Stadthalle, which to my mind suffered also from some over-slow tempos. But in general this was an enjoyable performance of what is surely one of Handel's most appealing works, one considerably enhanced by some fine singing from a solo team of Göttingen stalwarts: soprano Dominique Labelle, tenor Thomas Cooley and bass Wolf Matthias Friedrich, who were joined by the well-focussed NDR Choir singing with well-nigh impeccable English diction. Not surprisingly, that could not be said of the Landesjugendchor Sachsen-Anhalt and Landesjugendchor Niedersachsen, who opened John Christopher Smith's rarely heard 1756 version of *Israel in Egypt* at the St. Johannes-Kirche with the exhortation 'Your harps and thimbles sound'. But what was lost in occasional musical and verbal finesse was greatly more than made up for by the thrilling commitment of these young singers, who particularly in the sequence of choruses in Part 2 were so exhilarating as to sweep all before them. Equally as inspiring was the splendid promise of the six young soloists, selected for the performance in a competition. All seem likely to achieve real success, none more so than the Korean Kihwan Sim, whose rich, rounded and totally secure bass, projected with great authority, already mark him out as being destined for great things. As was evident at last year's *L'Allegro*, Jörg Straube is no historically informed director, some of the legato playing he encouraged from the strings of Musica Alta Ripa being far from appropriate, but he is unquestionably a fine choral trainer.

Arguably the finest single performance of my visit was that given by McGegan and the Festival Orchestra of

Haydn's 'Drumroll' Symphony, No. 103 in E flat, at the Stadthalle on 31 May, the date of Haydn's death in 1809. A superbly lithe, vibrant performance that was magnificently played, it was not the first occasion to inspire the subversive thought that Haydn is more McGegan' man than Handel is. One need go no further than the deliciously lilting dance of the opening movement's second subject, or the beautifully paced and sprung Andante to find in McGegan one of today's finest Haydn exponents. A highly imaginative programme also included rarities in the form of Cherubini's *Chant sur la mort de Joseph Haydn*, composed in 1806 following a mistaken London report of the composer's death, and the English version of Haydn's *The Storm*, with the missing wind parts reconstructed by McGegan from the later German version. Still less familiar was Mendelssohn's arrangement of the *Dettingen Te Deum*, the richly conceived wind additions providing a familiar piece with fascinating new apparel that seemed to work better than the same composer's arrangement of *Acis and Galatea*, given last year [but cf CB's review of the CD].

I must deal more briefly with some smaller scale concerts, all given in the classically inspired Aula of the university, an ideal venue lavishly decorated with portraits of prominent Hanoverians. The countertenor Franco Fagioli and Roman ensemble Accademia per Musica gave an immensely satisfying programme of works mostly by Handel and Hasse, Fagioli revealing himself in the process

to be not only the possessor of an outstanding voice evenly produced across its range, but equally a highly musical singer. More controversial was the recital given by soprano Simone Kermes. Put simply, the flame-haired Kermes doesn't do understatement or restraint and here in a programme including arias by (among others) Riccardo Broschi, Porpora, Hasse, Handel and Leo she worked her audience in the manner of a pop singer, all writhing undulation in faster numbers and still, rapt concentration in slower pieces. Most of the audience (including your critic) loved every minute, including a staggering encore from *The Threepenny Opera*, although a degree of 'tut-tutting' was to be heard from a few quarters. Superlative singing of a very different kind was to be heard from that marvellous mezzo Sonia Prina in the Handel concert given by Il Complesso Barocco under the direction of Alan Curtis. So finished a singer is Prina that it seemed desperately hard on the inexperienced soprano Martina Rüping, a very late replacement, that she should have to exchange imitative passages that vividly underlined the Italian's huge superiority. I confess to lasting only half of the last Aula recital, caring neither for a trio of ladies who seem to think Handel's chamber duets can be bawled out as if they belong in the opera house, nor for a keyboard player who plays the harpsichord like a pianist and the piano like an academic. But that was a rare miss for a festival that never fails to provide an abundance of richly rewarding experiences.

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LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

RAM Haydn

The Royal Academy of Music's interest in bringing little-known Haydn operas to light continued with their production of *La fedeltà premiata*, conducted by Trevor Pinnock (2 March). Director Alessandro Talevi wrenched the work from its intended colourful pastorate setting and plonked it down into a Big Brother house, a world that was no doubt more familiar to the young singers than to the noticeably aged audience. I know some people hate such up-datings, but I found it effective, if rather hectic. The big winner was Haydn's music, given a bubbly reading by Trevor Pinnock with some fine singing by the promising young cast. The programme, apart from a synopsis, made no mention of the music or Haydn!

Garden of Vocal Delights

William Christie's and Les Arts Florissants's enterprising biennial academy for up-and-coming young singers, Le Jardin des Voix, bought its latest incarnation to The Barbican (4 March) with a wide-ranging programme including Purcell, Monteverdi, Carissimi and Rameau. With Paul Agnew now joint educational director with William Christie, this intense training and performing programme has six singers, whittled down from some 200 applicants. Their performances were always extremely well thought out and choreographed – frequently building a thread through several short works by a variety of composers. The singers that impressed me the most were the English soprano Katherine Watson and tenor Sean Clayton, along with the French soprano, Emmanuelle de Negri. The direction and playing was, as ever, exemplary with Christie very evidently loving every minute of it.

Carnival & Lent

I Fagiolini bought their latest slick theatrical take on early music to the Cadogan Hall (5 Mar) with *Satire to Sackcloth – The strange bedfellows of Carnival and Lent*. In the event, shared beds were not an issue, as the interval divided the two sharply contrasted musical genres. Giovanni Croce made several contributions to the Carnival section, notably with his *Il gioco dell'occa*, but it was Orazio Vecchi's scenes from *L'amfiparnaso* that was the highlight. The Lenten second half concluded with a fine performance of Gesualdo's *Responsaries for Good Friday*. It was noticeable that the singers were controlling their natural vibrato, allowing the rich harmonies of the music to be revealed. One issue in this and many concerts in recent years is the habit of concert halls (blessed with lots of new toys) to dim the auditorium lights to a point where the programme becomes unreadable, thereby preventing us from appreciating the subtlety (or not) of the words.

Haydn, Pleyel & Handel

Following a performance in Oxford's Sheldonian Theatre (where much of the music was performed in Haydn's

honour in 1791) the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment brought their 'Haydn in Oxford' programme to the Queen Elizabeth Hall (10 Mar). Omitting some of the more ephemeral elements of the original concert, their programme concentrated on contributions from Handel, Pleyel's delightful *Sinfonia Concertante in E flat for oboe, violin, viola and cello* and, of course, Haydn's *Oxford Symphony* given a whirligig reading by an even more than usually bouncy Laurence Cummings. The Handel included two overtures (*Samson* and *Acis & Galatea*) together with 'So much beauty' (*Esther*) and 'Fell Rage' (*Saul*) sung respectively by countertenor Bernhard Landauer and soprano Grace Davidson, the latter, in particular, impressing me with her beautiful sense of movement in the voice, giving colour and texture but falling well short of intrusive vibrato.

Youthful Fantazies

Robin Blaze has one of the best countertenor voices to display the wonders of the music of Purcell, Blow and Locke, as was demonstrated in his concert with Concordia (Wigmore Hall, 13 March). As the title suggested, though, it was seven of 'Mr Purcell's Youthful Fantazias' rather than his vocal works that were the focus of the evening, with the four viols of Concordia producing some exquisite sounds in their exploration of this often sensuous repertoire. John Hingston (Purcell's godfather) got a look in with his *Fantazia-Suite No 1 for 4 viols and organ*, as did Byrd, with the concluding 'Ye sacred muses' reflecting both the difference between the renaissance and baroque style and also, perhaps, the thought that music might not, as predicted by Byrd, have died with Tallis.

Haydn in C & E flat, Ariadne in Naxos

The Classical Opera Company's short Haydn residency at King's Place ended with a lunchtime concert with Gary Cooper, fortepiano, and Sigríður Ósk Kristjánsdóttir, mezzo soprano (15 March). The central work was the 1789 cantata *Arianna a Naxos*, sung with exquisite musical insight by the singer, her beautifully warm coloured voice incorporating the 'right sort of vibrato', adding texture without affecting intonation or pulse. The fortepiano accompaniment is a fascinating example of fully realised orchestral continuo. The concert opening and closed with solo Haydn on the fortepiano, with the sunny Sonata in C and the slightly more meditative Eb Sonata (35/52). The central Adagio of the latter, in the curious key of E major, was spellbinding. Gary Cooper is an outstanding interpreter of fortepiano music, and his musical and technical virtuosity shone through.

Four Weddings and a Funeral

Consortium, a recently formed professional chamber choir, gave a concert at St Peter's, Eaton Square (19 March) under the title of 'Four Weddings and a Funeral', reflected music from the court of Philip II of Spain with works by

Crecquillon, Sheppard, Guerrero, Lobo and others. The 12 singers produced a magnificently coherent sound with a clear and pure tone and perfect intonation – and it was so refreshing to hear four sopranos with beautifully honed voices without a trace of vibrato and with the ability to soar without screeching. Director Andrew-John Smith conducted in a refreshingly unobtrusive and unmannered style, allowing the music to unfold without the ‘ocean-swell’ dynamics that some choral directors delight in. The whole concert was a delight. Particular highlights were the powerful increase in dynamic intensity towards the end of Mundy’s *Vox Patris caelistis* and Guerrero’s magnificent *Regina Caeli*. A choir worth looking out for.

Mount Sinai

The spring exhibition of Byzantium Art at the Royal Academy of Arts led to a number of spin offs, one being a fascinating insight into the Byzantine musical world with the programme ‘Mt Sinai: Frontier of Byzantium’, an appropriate link with the last room of the exhibition which featured works from St Katherine’s Monastery. The Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St Sophia (in the unlikely surroundings of Bayswater) was a spectacular setting for the seven singers of Cappella Romana. Their programme started with extracts from Vespers at St Katherine before moving to music for Christmas. The seven singers produced an evocative sound, aided by the attractively rough edges produced by avoiding predominantly ‘professional’ singers.

Bach at Cöthen

A series of concerts in the Southbank’s Purcell Room (20–22 March) explored Bach’s short tenure at Cöthen. The opening concert featured Collegium Musicum 90 and Bach’s violin concertos. The big issue here was the very noticeable use of vibrato by their leader Simon Standage, giving a very unsettling effect to the tone, and a surprising amount of portamento and generally slightly wayward intonation. To my ears, the second violinist, Catherine Martin, played in what I would consider a far more sensitive period style, aided by a more obviously baroque bow. The contrast between the two was most marked in the double concerto, where the incessant vibrato dominated the purer sound of the second soloist – particularly unfortunate as it is the second violin that takes the lead in several key moments. Nicholas Parle gave an impressive performance of the Harpsichord Concerto No 5. A late evening concert had Catherine Manson playing the Partita in D minor, concluding with a fine performance of its monumental *Ciaccona*. Catherine Manson and Nicholas Parle also excelled in Bach Violin Sonatas, with the harpsichord having the prominent role in all but one of the pieces. It was nice to hear the *cembalo solo* movement in BWV 1019 played with an element of humour, rather than the usual plod. Parle (who had a busy weekend) also shone in the Flute Sonatas with his restrained and imaginative continuo playing, completely devoid of any attempts at the flashiness that some continuo harpsichord players seem to think is appropriate. Martin Feinstein was the flute soloist, alongside his role as curator of the weekend. Another highlight of the weekend was Alison McGillivray’s performance of two of the solo Cello Suites,

notably her beautiful depiction of the varying musical colours of the dance movements, where expression and musical insight took precedence over mere virtuosity.

Solomons' Solomon

The Solomon Choir and Orchestra are an ambitious new group of young musicians, several connected with London’s Guildhall School of Music and Drama. For their performance of Handel’s *Solomon* (St James, Piccadilly, 21 March), they mustered no fewer than 52 musicians (24 choir, 28 orchestra) plus five dancers – a major achievement for a young group with, presumably, limited financial backing. But their efforts were well rewarded by an excellent performance, with fine contributions from soloists Anna Devin, Michal Czerniawski, Derek Welton, Rebecca van den Berg and Juan Sancho. The conductor and the group’s founder, Jonathan Sells, contrasted the varying moods of the work with aplomb. The addition of dancing to music like this can be cringe-making, but in this case the choreography by Lizzie Sells worked extremely well. Developing a group of this size will not be easy, but they deserve success.

Dancing Buxtehude

Christ Church Spitalfields was the venue for an interesting take on Buxtehude’s *Membra Jesu Nostri* when The Musically Compass combined with the contemporary dance group, Lo Commotion (27 March). The seating was arranged in the form of a cross, with the players at the chancel end of the church in a semi-circle facing away from the audience before moving into the gallery for the final cantata. The dancers use the whole of the nave in Jo Meredith’s choreography reflecting (rather loosely, to my eyes) the feet, knees, hands, side, breast, heart and face of the seven cantatas that make up *Membra Jesu Nostri*. I have no problems with the inclusion of dance into musical performance, and was not unduly concerned that I couldn’t see much immediate link between the physical movements of the dancers and the text – that may have said more about my knowledge of contemporary dance than the choreography. Inevitably my concentration on the dancing took my attention off the music, although I did notice that they didn’t have the four viols so essential for the penultimate cantata. Congratulations to all involved in this enterprising approach to concert planning.

Barbican Resurrection

There is surely no more exciting opening to an operatic work (although in this case, not actually an opera) than the soprano entry (*Disserratevi, o porte d'Averno*) at the beginning of Handel’s oratorio *La Resurrezione* as the Angel musically tumbles down from heaven to do battle with Lucifer. This is one of the finest of Handel’s Italian works, performed in 1708 a sumptuous setting in a temporary theatre at the Palazzo Bonelli in Rome, with Corelli as the leader of the orchestra of 35 string players and a wide range of woodwind and brass – forces that Handel uses with remarkable inventiveness in the succession of dramatic arias. It is the sort of work that demands a conductor of the stature of Emmanuelle Haïm and her orchestra, Le Concert d’Astrée (at the Barbican, 31 March), to bring out both the excitement and the

emotional depth of the score. Camilla Tilling negotiated the exquisitely articulated opening flourish of the Angel's fall brilliantly, and even added ornaments to the Lucifer, with a wide range of gestures and ornaments on the *da capo*. Lorenzo Regazzo was a dramatic Lucifer, with a wide range of gestures and facial expressions that suggested a more than personal involvement in the role. Toby Spence excelled as John the Evangelist and Kate Royal and Sonia Prina were Mary Magdalene and Cleophas.

Purcell & MacMillan

The Sixteen's annual Choral Pilgrimages have become a stalwart of the musical calendar for many cathedral cities, not least Winchester, where I heard them on 3 April. This year they toured with two programmes, one based on Purcell and James MacMillan (a departure from their usual 'early' repertoire), the other built around Handel's Coronation Anthems. Of course, a venue like Winchester Cathedral gives the chance to appreciate the acoustic power of the first performances of the Coronation Anthems, helped the sizeable orchestra that supported the 18 singers of The Sixteen. One interesting addition to the programme was Handel's well-known Organ Concerto in F (Op 4/4) in its rarely performed original version as the conclusion to the London revival of *Athalia*, the final fugue leading directly into a choral Hallelujah.¹ The soloist was Alastair Ross, in magnificent form in one of the most virtuosic of all the concertos, retaining Handel's original improvisatory feel.

Seven Funerals and a Wedding

Johann Christoph Bach (1642-1703, a first cousin once removed of JSB) is one of the most important and impressive members of the wider Bach clan, and the English Baroque Soloists under John Eliot Gardiner helped to bring his music to a wider audience in a concert devoted entirely to his music (16 April, Cadogan Hall). Sadly for posterity, the concert featured practically all of his surviving music, possibly giving a biased impression of his compositional skills. JS Bach referred to him as a 'profound composer', and that was certainly very evident in all but one of the works. As the programme note warned, "there will be a lot about death", with seven funerary works. The gorgeous lament *Ach, dass ich Wassers gnug hätte* was the best known of the works, its gently lapping movement depicting the cry for more water to feed the springs of tears that sin had overwhelmed the protagonist with – in this case, the gently swaying mezzo, Clare Wilkinson in beautiful voice and supported by three gambas. The other outstanding solo singer was bass Matthew Brook in the other lament of the evening, *Wie bist du denn, O Gott*. The unremitting gloom was enlivened by the extraordinary dialogue *Meine Freudin, du bist schön*, a wedding piece for one of the Bach family, loosely based on the Song of Solomon, but

appearing to depict the rather rash consummation of the wedded couple in what might have been a quite corner of the wedding garden had not a raucous group of wedding guests come along to join in the fun. It is important to remember that JC Bach was more than a generation older than JS Bach, and worked in a very different musical and religious milieu. His music cannot be judged against his younger relative, but stands in its own right as an important insight into the wider musical world of the extended Bach family. The concert was recorded for future release as a CD, and will be well worth getting.

Rosemary Branch

"Small space, Big music" is the motto of the Rosemary Branch Festival, the bucolic-sounding title belying the setting of a tiny blacked-out room above a pub tucked away in bottom right-hand corner of Islington. It was the venue for a spectacular performance (23 April) by the young period instrument Chiaroscuro Quartet, formed in 2005 by students at the Royal College of Music. They played Boccherini's Quartet in G minor (Op 33/5), Mozart's Haydn-esque Quartet in G (KV 387) and Beethoven's extraordinary Quartet in F minor (Op 95). Beethoven is quoted as saying the his Opus 95 quartet was "written for a small circle of connoisseurs and is never to be performed in public", and the intimate space providing an telling environment in which to experience the intense aural and musical drama of this immensely powerful work. It was a work that matched the artistic derivation of the name of the Quartet, the almost unremitting gloom and turmoil being enlivened by a flash of musical light right at the end. The contrast between light and dark is also a good description of the players' inventive and imaginative approach to music making, notably through their use of string colour and a perceptive insight into the emotional ebb and flow of the music. Boccherini's jovial work gave a early chance for cellist Claire Thiron to shine, while Mozart's homage to Haydn exposed the musicianship (including an impressive use of articulation) from her companions, Alina Ibragimova, Kristin Deeken and Emilie Jörnlund. They are a group to watch out for. They will soon start recording a Haydn series.

Roi Arthur

With William Christie stating at a recent Barbican visit that Purcell outshines all French composers, and Hervé Niquet bringing his *Le Concert Spirituel* to perform King Arthur to the Barbican (6 May), it seems that the French are kick-starting the Purcell anniversary love-feast as our thoughts move away from Handel and towards the home-born composer. And jolly good they are at it too. Although his soloists were English (and a Swede), Niquet's own involvement, and that of his band, was all too evident – not least by them all wrapping up for the brief cold spell. Of course, Purcell is arguably one of England's most French composers, so the occasional Gallic twinge was entirely appropriate. The soloists, James Gilchrist and Andrew Foster-Williams used their opera experience to bring some delightful characterisations to their various roles and Anders J Dahlin provided a light and clear high tenor. Susan Gritton and Deborah York invited us to bathe naked with them with alluring delight – the former

1. I reckon that the usual assumption of the rarity of performances with the *Hallelujah* might be exaggerated. It was not published in the Novello vocal score of *Athalia*, but it is in their *Triumph of Time and Truth* and was reprinted from that in anthologies for specific concerts at the Crystal Palace: I have copies from 1903 and 1926(?) and performers must have taken up the idea elsewhere (as I did, having found one of the Crystal Palace anthologies). CB

also praised this Fairest Isle with erotic charm rather than jingoistic fervour, while the latter's refreshingly clear, agile and unforced voice made for a gorgeous innocence in her roles. As with *The Fairy Queen*, *King Arthur* works perfectly well without the spoken drama within which the music was originally placed, and Hervé Niquet's energetic direction ensures the sense of momentum that is essential to bring unity to the often short vignettes. An excellent evening, although I do wish the Barbican would occasionally bring the fully-staged versions of many of their 'Great Performers', rather than a pared down version.

Savall at the Wigmore

When the Wigmore Hall was built, very few people would have even have heard of a viola da gamba, let alone envisaged that one day this most eminent of concert venues would be packed out for a concert of solo gamba music (8 May). The fact that it was Jordi Savall playing no doubt helped, but the acoustic intimacy of the space was one of the keys to the success of this concert – and, of course, the extraordinarily expressive playing of Jordi Savall, who manages to produce the most stunning virtuosity without appearing to be doing anything more energetic than eating a bowl of muesli. After a tour round the continent, the second half concentrated on the British school, concluding with four fascinating pieces in "The Bag-Pipes Tuning" with such bucolic titles as *The Piggies of Rumsey*.

Henry George Joseph Felix

The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment wandered from their Kings Place offices into the adjoining concert hall for the next phase in their series of anniversary concerts, 'Henry George Joseph Felix'. I managed to catch Henry, in the form of Purcell's little known incidental music to *Bonduca* (15 May), a curious assemblage of pieces that cannot be said to be Purcell at his most inventive. That said, the OAE's own Roy Mowatt is to be congratulated on preparing a performing edition. The better individual pieces were the overture with David Blackadder's impressive trumpet contribution, a bawdy drunken catch and the rousing 'Britons strike home', sung by Nicholas Mulroy. Elements of the play were provided by three actors.

Arianna at the Barbican

One of the success stories of the Barbican's 'Great Performers' series over the past three years has been the Academy of Ancient Music's exploration of lesser-known Handel operas (directed by Christopher Hogwood), one from each decade (*Amadigi*, then *Flavio, re de' Langobardi*), and intended as a build-up to this anniversary. Lesser-known operas are generally lesser-known for a reason, and this was no exception. Although it is unlikely to make a Handel top-ten, it nonetheless has some spectacular vocal numbers, no doubt intended to show off Handel's singers. Miah Persson and Kristina Hammarström were outstanding in the roles of Arianna and Teseo, the latter having some particularly agile vocal writing to cope with. Inevitably, we had the Barbican curse of having a 'big-name' singer pull out (do they actually book these singers?), although, equally inevitably, I found myself impressed by the replacement, in this case Marina De Liso

(as Tauride), as I also was with Sonia Prina. Bass Antonio Abete spent most of the evening being naughty, which he did very well. As with the two previous AAM/Barbican operas, it was the direction of Christopher Hogwood that will be the lasting memory. The AAM is one of those orchestras which in recent times have adopted what for me is a rather forced and pushy style of playing, so it was refreshing to have direction from a conductor with gentle authority who devoted his energy to allowing the music to flow, without stooping to the antics of some of his younger colleagues. Although, in theory, their performance of *Arianna in Creta* (17 May) was the last of the series, I hope that the AAM and their Emeritus Director remain regular visitors to the Barbican. Unusually for my concert reviews, readers will be able to decide if I am talking nonsense as this concert will be broadcast as part of the BBC Radio 3 Handel opera series on 24 September at 2pm. I hope you find it as enthralling as I did.

International Baroque Players

The International Baroque Players are a self-governing group of musicians (they describe themselves as 'smart and stylish twenty-somethings') who made their debut in February who have recently been encouraged by the award of a Deutsche Bank Award to assist their future development. Judging by the concert at St Giles in the Fields (11 June), they deserve their future success. After instrumental works by Corelli, A. Scarlatti, Locatelli and Handel's Sonata a 5, they presented Handel's *Apollo e Dafne* with soloists Elizabeth Weisberg and Derek Welton giving excellent portrayals of Diana and the appalling Apollo. The direction was shared between the excellent concertmaster Johannes Pramsohler and harpsichordist Christopher Bucknall. This is an impressive enterprise by these 21 young musicians and I wish them success.

City of London Festival

One of the most memorable events of this year's City of London Festival was the performance (on 24 June) of the complete Bach solo violin works by Alina Ibragimova – already a favourite of Festival audiences. The first three were performed in the rather dour Georgian Great Hall of Barts Hospital, with the rest in the more intimate and evocative surroundings of the nearby church of St Bartholomew-the-Great. Alina Ibragimova has an endearingly diffident stage presence that reflects her total absorption and has the effect of drawing the listener into her musical world – and what a world that is. She has an extraordinary ability to delve beneath the surface of Bach's music with her thoughtful and searching playing. She explores extremes of texture, colour, mood and speed, but never gives the impression of pulling at the heart-strings or just showing off. She has an absolute technical assurance, but her virtuosity is always in the service of the music. She also has a very clear idea of the shape of musical lines and the overall architecture of pieces. Although I have many doubts about the razzmatazz of Classical Brits, Alina thoroughly deserves her success in becoming their 2009 Young Performer of the Year. She is a remarkable musical talent: this was the finest performance of the solo Bach violin works that I have heard.

London Handel Festival – conclusion

One of the fringe events of the London Handel Festival was a day-long exploration of 'The English Organ Concerto in the 18th Century' held at Trinity College of Music (12 Mar). This finished with a talk by Donald Burrows and a concert with students who had taken part in the earlier masterclass. This repertoire is generally overlooked – even in this Handel year there have been very few performances of his organ concertos, let alone those of his less-distinguished 18th century colleagues. It is particularly overlooked in conservatories, and the organ playing did not always demonstrate a sound sense of period style in such matters as ornamentation, improvisation and articulation. But I really felt for the young Trinity College instrumentalists, who had very obviously been thrown together with very little rehearsal, and then had to cope with rather wayward direction (from the harpsichord) leading to several uncomfortable moments

30 March saw two London Handel Festival events, starting with a delightful lunchtime concert in St George's Hanover Square by The Four Temperaments, who appeared in a slightly different format from their normal line up of four players by trading in their flute player for a soprano, who I assume was of the appropriate temperament. The vocal works were Handel's *Parti l'idolo mio* and *Meine Seele hört im Sehen*, sung beautifully by Nina Lejderman, a talented Swedish soprano who has recently completed a postgraduate course at the Royal Academy of Music. Nina is to be congratulated on managing to survive the English conservatoire system with just about the right degree of vibrato to bring the vocal line to life, but I fear that this could change if she moves into the operatic world for which most young singers seemed to be trained nowadays. It is so sad to hear such lovely young voices reduced to the wobbles, so I hope she retains her current vocal timbre. Pawel Siwczak drew the short straw when it came to farming out the Handel Chaconnes amongst the lunchtime harpsichord players, but managed to make a surprising degree of musical sense to the seemingly endless sequence of variations in HMV 442/2, largely through an effective use of rhetoric in the lyrical sections and the development of the changing moods. In the Trio Sonata in D, I was surprised at the amount of vibrato used by the violinist Eleanor Harrison, another recent graduate. Practically every note longer than a quaver had a persistent vibrato applied, to the detriment of the musical line and string tone. I hope this isn't going to be a trend amongst younger violinists. Kinga Gáborjáni was an impressive continuo cellist throughout.

The flagship opera for this year's London Handel Festival was *Alessandro*, given in the ideal surroundings of the Britten Theatre (30 March) with singers from the Benjamin Britten International Opera School and the London Handel Orchestra conducted by Laurence Cummings. The director was William Relton who seemed to draw on several recent productions by other directors, not least in the almost obligatory flower-throwing scene. Relton is one of those opera directors who thinks that standing and singing is an entirely inappropriate activity in opera, so the musical action was encompassed by often frenetic

activity. The work was set in a pretty repulsive 1930s Oxbridge, with Rugby contrasted with camp replacing the libretto's original military setting. Fortunately the standard of singing and playing made up for the distractions of the background goings on. Susanna Hurrell was very impressive as Rosanne, with very strong support from Christopher Lowrey, Sarah-Jane Brandon, James Oldfield and John McMunn. The indefatigable Laurence Cummings conducted with his usual energy and musical insight.

Tilford Bach Festival

The Tilford Bach Festival could be seen as the country cousin of the London Handel Festival – they share a founder and musical directors and have a similar dedication to supporting young musicians, although Tilford is the only one to have a cricket field on the village green. In their concert in All Saints' Church Tilford (5 June), they featured a pared-down version of the London Handel Players in a concert under the name of 'Pastoral Symfonye' with music by Purcell, Rebel and Vivaldi. Rachel Brown was the exquisite soloist in Vivaldi's Flute Concerto in D, *Il Gardellino*, but it was the versatile Clare Salaman who stole the show for her performance of Vivaldi's 'Spring' in Chédeville's arrangement for hurdy-gurdy and strings. Despite the slightly medieval tinge to the concert title, with its possible link to the early form of hurdy-gurdy, it was the rather curious 18th century French resurgence that was behind such transcriptions, as the former folk instrument was taken up by the soon-to-be-slaughtered aristocracy. Judging by the crowd that surrounded Clare after her performance, it is not an instrument that the gentlefolk of Tilford have come across that often. The pastoral element of the concert title was further reflected by bucolic extracts from *The Fairy Queen* and the concluding performance of Rebel's *Les Eléments*. An entertaining evening.

Lufthansa Festival

It was probably just as well that Sir Nicholas Kenyon was invited to give his reflections on 25 years of Baroque music-making in London before the opening concert (Handel's *Athalia*) as the first words of the festival would otherwise have been "Blooming virgins". The libretto didn't improve that much over the course of a work that reflected its position as Handel's first oratorio. Ivor Bolton directed Concerto Köln and the Balthasar-Neumann-Chor (are there any other choirs named after an architect?) Both choir and orchestra gave rather heavy-handed performances, despite musical encouragement from Ivor Bolton (who, unusually for conductors nowadays, conducted most of the recitatives). Of the six solo singers, Iestyn Davies, Sarah Fox, James Gilchrist and Neal Davies impressed.

The English Dancing Master was the title of the afternoon concert of dance tunes and ballads from the theatres, homes and taverns of Baroque London given by The Harp Consort (St John's, Smith Square, 16 May). It was rather difficult to concentrate on the music going on behind the antics of Steve Player's energetic (and, at times, slightly threatening) dancing and Blackadder impersonations, but Andrew Lawrence-King (who also set the scenes with literary extracts), Clare Salaman, Ian Harrison and

Rocardo Padilla entered into the spirit of this lively concert, notably in a portrayal of the Fiddler's Wife.

The evening concert featured The Early Opera Company and their performances of the Eccles *Judgement of Paris* and Purcell's *Masque from 'Dioclesian'*. EOC have made the first recording of the Eccles work, and continue to persuade me of its quality in this performance. The fine cast of singers for the two works included special performances from Lucy Crowe, Claire Booth, Roderick Williams and Andrew Foster-Williams. As ever, Christian Curnyn's direction was crisp and insightful. Players who impressed included Oliver Webber, Sarah Mahon, Reiko Ichise, Katy Bircher and David Hendry.

Westminster Abbey was an obvious venue for music by Purcell and Handel, all composed for Royal events within the Abbey and presented by their own choir and director of music with the Lufthansa house-band, St James's Baroque. One of the most evocative moments came with Purcell's Music for Queen Mary's Burial, the March played twice, from the far end of the chancel and the screen facing down the nave.

Back in St John's, Smith Square, viols and lutes were the focus on 22 May, with Phantasm first introducing us to 'Fancy-Musick' – a journey through the English viol consort with music by the usual suspects, finishing with four of Purcell's late essays in the viol fantasia style. They were followed by Lynda Sayce's recently formed group of four lutes, Chordophony, including an impressive-looking bass lute amongst the matched set. The repertoire was based on her own researches, including many works that she has reconstructed from a variety of surviving sources and pieces for other formats. This was a fascinating concert, on a sound basis. But I was irritated by one player's curious attempts to upstage the group's leader – an embarrassing breach of stage etiquette.

The festival ended with a lively concert by the Zefiro Baroque Orchestra, directed by oboist Alfredo Bernardini, sandwiching Purcell's Trumpet Sonata and incidental music from *The Virtuous Wife* and *The Gordian Knot Unty'd* between Handel's Water Music (23 May). Not only was the playing and direction excellent, but this was a good example of how humour can be used successfully in concert performances, for example, with the oboe's imitation of a bagpipe in a Jigg, complete with the dying fall and the stamping feet in one of the encores. It was a nice touch to see the director shaking hands with all 22 members of the orchestra at the end.

Spitalfields Festival

Although, like most such events, the Spitalfields Festival has clearly been affected by the current financial situation, the organisation continues with its impressive year-round educational and community work and the two annual festivals. The main Summer Festival this year included a number of early music concerts amongst its enterprising focus on modern music. The eclectic approach to programming was evident in the concert on 15 June at their base at Christ Church, when music from 17th century Germany

was interspersed with improvisations on the Northern Triplepipes based on Celtic chants from the 13th century *Inchcolm Antiphoner*. The Caius Consort (five singers, two violins and continuo, directed by Geoffrey Webber) presented a concert of music for the Lutheran Vespers, with works by Buxtehude, Bernhard, Schütz and Tunder, Buxtehude's predecessor at Lübeck's Marienkirche. This is a fascinating repertoire, and worked well in the Christ Church acoustic, notably in reproducing the unique sound of the baroque violin and organ as played into the vast spaces of north German churches. The young singers and players were excellent, as was Webber's stylish organ continuo playing.

The Royal Academy of Music Baroque Orchestra and Chorus gave a fine performance of Bach's St John Passion under Edward Higginbottom (18 June), with notable performances from Peter Davoren, David Shipley and Oliver Dunn as the Evangelist, Christus and Pilatus. The other solo spots were shared out amongst no fewer than 12 singers drawn from the 21-strong choir. Higginbottom arranged the orchestra in a curious position, with the continuo organ where the conductor would normally have stood (with the player's back to the audience) and the rest of the orchestra facing away from the audience in a circle towards the choir, with Higginbottom standing in the middle. I have seen him adopt a similar arrangement in the Sheldonian. The problem is that many players are not able to see his beat, which led to a number of irregular entries.

The Festival ended with the Early Opera Company's medley of early Italian opera scenes (19 June), a well-chosen and well-presented series of extracts, some from lesser-known composers. The singers that impressed me most were Anna Stéphany and Benjamin Hulett, not only for their excellent singing, but also for their ability to allow the music to flow uninterrupted by imposition of their own personalities. I am afraid that I found Mhairi Lawson's rather overbearing stage presence was not only in too sharp a contrast to her two fellow singers (who she frequently tried to upstage), but was also to the ultimate detriment to the music – she seemed to want the focus to be on herself as the performer, rather than one of the team of singers and the transmitter of the composer's music. I also prefer to hear the emotion of a piece expressed through vocal timbre rather than exaggerated facial contortions. Director Christian Curnyn was on characteristically good form, with an excellent group of players – violinists Bojan Cicic and Miki Takahashi were excellent in the concluding Merula Ciacconna.

This doesn't fit our image of Mhairi at all. Since we are given no idea of what roles she was singing, we can't guess whether she was acting in character and retaining it for the bows. We would be interested in comments (not necessarily for publication) from any readers who were present, and also from any who attended Lynda Sayce's Chordophony concert: Andrew wrote more outspokenly on the behaviour of one player than is printed in the column opposite, while saying nothing about the unfamiliar sound and repertoire of a lute quartet. Judging performances is subjective enough: judging performer's ancillary behaviour is even more personal. Seeing comments on someone we have known for many years makes us wonder whether there can be some explanation or misunderstanding.

CB/BC

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Clifford Bartlett & Barbara Sachs

MUSIC IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

This is a series of reprints of significant articles by the leading medieval scholars in seven substantial volumes, running to over 500 pages each.

Poets and singers (ed. Elizabeth Aubrey) *
Chant and its origins (Thomas Forrest Kelly)
Oral and written transmission in chant (ditto)
Instruments and their music (Timothy J. McGee) *
Ars Nova (John L. Nádas & Michael Scott Cuthbert)
Embellishing the liturgy (Alejandro Enrique Planchert) *
Ars Antiqua (Edward Roesner)

The volumes are not numbered, which is an inconvenience for quick reference and an encouragement for libraries following precise classifications for shelving to separate the volumes, whereas if together, seven thick red volumes would catch the eye immediately. The publisher is Ashgate, the price £130 per volume, which puts them out of range for students to buy, alas. I didn't push my luck with Ashgate and request all seven volumes, but have sampled the three of them marked * above.

Most of the articles are familiar. I can't say that I remembered many in detail: my brain tends to absorb general conclusions, which get modified in the light of later comments on the topics, but also it also remembers isolated specific remarks, anecdotes and curiosities. It is interesting to follow the arguments again, even when subsequent research has moved on. I confess that I have only read the first volume right through, and have passed over articles in the other two that I had read when they were new. I jotted down a variety of comments on individual matters, but haven't gone back to them: by definition, volumes like these have to be read critically, since there are a variety of contradictions between the contents that the reader (or future musicologists) will have to address.

Much of the early literature about medieval song was centred on its rhythm. This is mostly ignored until the final section. I must confess that I found a lecture and chat with Hendrik van der Werf opened my mind to the rigidity of the early-20th-century orthodoxy, and his approach created a shift of focus, not just by argument but by focusing on performance. Research broadened into a wider range of topics, and the attempt to impose the rhythmic modes on monophony faded. However, the strongest (though still not necessarily valid) claim for their relevance is in Latin song, and the volume ignores that, apart from a demolition of the popular image of the goliard by Bryan Gillingham under the intriguing title 'Turtles, Helmets, Parasites and Goliards'. Latin song crosses the secular-sacred borders, and was in the international language of culture, so more widely known than the other repertoires mostly studied here: the volume's

title is a bit misleading. I hope the vast repertoires of hymns, sequences and rhymed offices are dealt with elsewhere.

The title *Embellishing the liturgy: Tropes and Polyphony* manages to include two words which have completely different meaning in other areas of musicology. This is surely something that those with a broader view could at least try to avoid. *Trope* has long had a (rather vague) meaning in medieval studies, and should be avoided by scholars on other matters, whereas *embellishment* is well established to describe ornamentation (generally baroque, to use the outdated term I still find useful) that goes beyond trills and mordents. The introduction begins by laying out clearly the various different meanings of the word, though without recommending a solution to its ambiguity, which of course permeates the volume. In fact, the introductions to each volume are excellent: well worth reading if you come across them, even if you have no stomach for the musicological content elsewhere. There isn't much mention of polyphony, apart from its earliest stages. This is probably the most impenetrable volume of the three; those involved in the attempt to present programmes of medieval chant in some sort of context, though, will find many leads here.

The problem with the topic *Instruments and their Music* is the lack of relationship between the two. There is a considerable amount of information on what instruments existed (though without the detail that would enable them to be copied and the techniques for playing them) and their social function. There is also a little music that is likely to be instrumental (it could all be printed in a volume much thinner than this). How much instruments played music that is texted in the sources and how they improvised can only be guessed. In that sense, it is a frustrating book, taking us so far but not far enough. All performance of early music requires imagination, vision, knowledge and hunch; players have so much less to help them than singers (who at least have notes and words). This volume, while not being a systematic text-book survey, gives some idea of the sort of knowledge available, and should stimulate any interested player, though also scare him about the responsibility left to him.

All the items in these volumes (apart from the excellent introductions) are available in academic libraries. Their presentation here is useful, though shouldn't be allowed to give them a spurious authority over those omitted. I fear, though, that few non-academic libraries will buy the set, which doesn't help those enthusiasts who no longer inhabit the academic world.

A warning: I read the first volume while following our son wandering round a cruise ship making sure that he wasn't a nuisance. By the end of the week, I had an aching shoulder, which took some days to recover back home. These are heavy books (two @ 1.310 kg, *Embellishing the Liturgy* 1.410 kg) and need a desk.

TENOR

John Potter *Tenor: The History of a Voice* Yale UP, 2009.
xi + 305pp, £20.00. ISBN 978 0 300 11873 5

Despite the academic imprint, this is a readable book that until recently a commercial publisher would have snapped up. I was expecting it to be more analytical, investigative or intellectually-fashionable, and was pleasantly surprised to find that, once the early period was out of the way, it was chiefly a survey of individual singers. John has the benefit of his long vocal experience, but one detached from the world of opera which most of his subjects inhabit. In fact, one question I have is the extent to which that world might be over-emphasised. Britain, for instance, has had many distinguished tenors, but until recently, few were opera specialists. The excuse given (p. 121) is 'Britain had a thriving doomestic musical scene, but was seemingly incapable of producing singers either vocally or temperamentally suited to international tenor stardom'. The situation is rather that, until the last few decades, opera was largely an 'exotic and irrational entertainment', and the cultivation (in itself commendable) of opera in English by Sadlers Wells/English National Opera made it difficult for English singers to achieve international status as a tenor (or any other voice). Oratorio was the chief way to fame and fortune, leading to solo concert tours that included opera arias but not many staged operas at the top level. The chapter on English singers concludes with a paragraph on how their instinctive musicianship and creative intelligence led to 'new developments in tenorality'.

We reach Handel as soon on p. 23, and I find the previous chapter a bit disappointing: I'm reminded of Newman's books on the Sonata, where he defines a sonata as something that is called a sonata. There's no connection between the singers of medieval tenor parts and Caruso. More interesting would have been discussion on what parts singers with tenor voices would have sung in renaissance polyphony, and whether Rasi, Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, had a voice that anyone during the last three centuries would have called tenor. (I doubt if he was a bass or lowish baritone, though: such parts tended to be anchored to the continuo bass.) Does the 'a' of the title of the book meant to warn the reader that this is a book about tenors singing solo, not in ensemble? The ensemble or choral tenor is absent.

There is a 60-page biographical list of tenors, including bibliographies and references to key recordings. British semi-operatic tenors featured prominently. Wilfrid Brown appears, for instance, listing the classic *Dies natalis*: I remember him from accompanying a lesson on *Dichterliebe*. The sentence on him in the main text doesn't link him to the Dellar Consort, whose recordings have been reissued. I was delighted to see that one of my favourite tenor performances, Richard Lewis as Mark in *A Midsummer Marriage*, is available on CD (Gala 524).¹

1. This is the Covent Garden original, not the BBC 1964 performance (also with Richard Lewis but without Joan Sutherland) which I taped but overwrote. I was delighted to meet Mrs Lewis recently at the launch of MPLive. A new series of historic performances edited from recordings

Unfortunately, the list of specific points that I intended to mention has slipped out of the book. No matter. It is a book that I can recommend: easy to read, intelligent in approach and with some witty phrases.

AFTER CORELLI

Enrico Careri. *Dopo l'opera quinta. Studi sulla musica italiana del XVIII secolo* xviii + 299pp LIM 2008 ISBN 978 88 7096 537 7 €25

This volume assembles 13 previously published studies, mostly on Italian music after Corelli, which Careri offers for several purposes – for easier access, and as an assortment of research models for graduate students in musicology. I began reading it with a certain curiosity to see if a "profile" of the author as musicologist would also emerge. Collections of studies by different authors often aren't books at all. This can almost be considered one, with many conclusions filtering from one study to another.

The first study is an investigation on the stylistic evolution (from 1700 to 1750) of the post-Corellian violin and continuo sonata. The raw data, gathered from a structural analysis of 914 different sonata movements, is presented in tables and graphs which are comprehensible to those not reading Italian. The bar graphs, in particular, show ratios and evolutionary trends (or lack thereof), in the use of two-part forms respect to one-part, A|B versus A|BA movements, and various other formal traits such as similar openings or closes of the two parts, the position and type of the return of A. These are very useful for further considerations on the function of form in the development of the sonata, and specifically for comparing the styles of composers whose collections were compared (Corelli, Valentini, Bonporti, Vivaldi, Albinoni, Piani, Geminiani, Boni, Castrucci, Veracini, Somis, Mancini, Barsanti, Tassarini, Tartini, Ferrandini, Sammartini).

Two studies focus on Giuseppe Valentini, who combined originality with imitation of Corelli (indeed, he dubbed his works *Bizzarrie* or *Allettamenti* or *Idee per camera*). One includes a catalogue of his works, making note of Walsh's mistaken destination of the Op. 8 sonatas for the violin or [instead of *and*] cello, which subsequently deceived Grancino, Schott, and Chester, all of whom published transcriptions for cello.

Five studies concern Geminiani, two from Careri's *Francesco Geminiani* (Clarendon Press 1993 and LIM 1999): "The Enchanted Forrest" and "I sei trattati". Another is in English, "The correspondence between Burney and Twining about Corelli and Geminiani": Rev. Thomas Twining, son of the tea merchant, violinist and scholar, wrote 122 letters to Burney (now in the BL) mostly about music and musicians. Careri quotes from those comparing Corelli and Geminiani, containing ideas which became common-

in private hands. Lord Harewood, Mrs Lewis and an anonymous donor have contributed a large quantity of off-air tapes which are being meticulously transferred to digital format and made available for download, with full documentation. Among other issues is the premiere of *Gloriana*. (www.musicpreserved.org.uk).

places for later criticism of the latter. We may still have more admiration for Corelli, but we wouldn't call Geminiani's "complicated Strains, a mere Hodge Podge: an unintelligible Mass of Learning". In "Händel e Geminiani: 'the Rubens and Titian of Music'" (quoting Hayes), other writings (by Burney, Twining, Hayes, Mainwaring, Hawkins) are presented in English, though the study itself is in Italian, describing the rivalry and jealousy, as well as the mutual respect and common interests of the two composers, and the possible superiority of Geminiani at least in concerti. A very recent article in *Studi Musicali* (VII/2 2008) provides the exciting first analysis of an autograph manuscript dated 1750 (but possibly earlier than that) of *The Art of Playing on the Violin* brought to Careri for authentication. Now in the Centro Studi Luigi Boccherini in Lucca, it is a shorter version of the treatise, without corrections to his English, and useful for comparison to the 1750 print.

A study on the tendency towards redundancy in Bonporti's trio sonatas is reprinted from the *Acts of the 6th Corelli conference* (Fusignano, 2003), published by Olschki (2007) and reviewed in *EMR* 128, (Dec. 2008).

On Vivaldi, Careri includes a case study illustrating the paradoxical problems of attempting an "authentic" performance of *La verità in cimento*, which he has done a critical edition of; and one on Vivaldi's use – in operas and instrumental compositions – of dynamic indications. Both address the challenge facing intelligent interpreters by a supposedly original text (i.e. use the first version, even if never executed? the last one, which indulged many compromises? a composite of musical alternatives conserving some vestige of dramatic coherence?). In the case of this opera (and in early 18th century melodramma in general), also considering Marcello's specific satirical remarks on it in his *Teatro alla moda*, Careri describes how extensive revisions were made after the fair copies were ready for rehearsal, on the assumption that it was unfinished until the performers exerted their prerogatives. Ironically we may be nearer an authentic interpretation by indulging in a similar hands-on approach.

I might not have discussed Careri's comparison of four Classical rondos characterized by unexpected pauses [Haydn Op. 33 n.2/IV, Mozart K. 457/III, Beethoven Op. 31 n.1/III and Schubert D. 959/IV], beyond commending this type of analysis which attributes meaning to what the listener experiences. However I really have to quibble with some assertions, perhaps from an "Early" music perspective (bass-line guided, contrapuntal, considering metrical proportions, and rhetorical figures – in this case pauses – to determine the reactions of the listener). These movements are worth comparing, regardless of whether the composers really were quoting each other. Careri calls the effect "fragmentation" which doesn't actually apply to any of these cases. The music halts, the dramatic silence is unexpected, the listener has an increased need to hear what will come next, which colours how he takes it. Whether he registers compassion (for Schubert or Mozart expressing loss or anguish) or amusement (at the musical jokes of Haydn and Beethoven), the listener, to

the degree that he is also a musician, can try to work out what is going on.

Careri says that Beethoven merely delays the continuation of the material, whereas Schubert expresses the emotional difficulty of going on. Neither is quite true, especially as his harmonic analysis of Schubert (identical in both this and the last study) is incorrect, as is, therefore, his impression that the music is incoherent and "brusque". It's in A major, the first pause is after the I6/4-V (E); the answering phrase, in A minor, modulates to F major, pausing after its I6/4-V, to resume with a I6 chord (F, not "A minor"), pausing for the third time, still on F, and then starting (*pianissimo*) to echo the same chord an octave higher (bar 342). This is not cut off "unexpectedly on a [dominant] 7th", because F-D#-A-C is absolutely not heard as F-Eb-A-C, especially as it's preceded melodically by a G# (in the turn) and a B natural! The F-D# augmented 6th wants to resolve to an E chord, a Phrygian cadence which Schubert gives us the bar of silence to imagine. He barely hinted at this V-before the first break; now, going gradually from *diminuendo* to *pp* to silence, it is elided, but the music resumes as if we had heard it, in A major. I admit that the procedure is unusual, but it hardly sounds "lost", and therefore the Coda, *Presto*, is not as "inappropriate" as Careri thinks is the case, and certainly not contrived merely to provoke applause!

In the case of Haydn's musical joke, Careri may be right that the listener "inevitably" thinks this 6/8 movement ends in bar 148, although, really, this pause is brief, and the adagio chords that follow do alert us that something is up. I think that we are meant to become increasingly nervous after three further unexpected interruptions lasting 13 quavers each. The astonishing joke is that we are disconcerted enough not to applaud at all: not after the outrageous G.P. lasting 27 quavers, perhaps because the previous cadence started on a IV7, so the bass line is slightly unfamiliar, nor in the silence following the final cadence, which according to Careri, "gives the strange and frustrating sensation that something is missing"! Could this be because Haydn ends with the first two bars of the movement, thus setting us up, at the end, to expect the whole Rondo again?

The analysis of the Mozart example (bars 229-245) missed noting that Mozart, instead of continuing with crotchets, in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, expanded every second bar to 3 bars by changing a crotchet to a dotted minim and inserting 4 crotchet rests. Thus each 2-bar phrase starts as before, but suddenly becomes a 4-bar phrase, as in cinematic slow-motion, the resulting proportion of the slow bars being a *tripla* augmentation. Quoting G. C. Ballola, Careri describes this as expressing "inescapable hopelessness", a feeling which I think is avoided if one perceives the augmentation. In both this study and the last, on the interpretation of silence, he points out that most performers, sadly, do not consistently bother to respect the lengths of all these pauses – though he credits the "early music movement" with encouraging respect for the notation and the "sound" (i.e. silence) intended.

Barbara Sachs

Ferruccio Civra *Musica poetica. Retorica e musica nel periodo della Riforma. (Musica ragionata, 1)* [Reproduction of UTET edition of 1991]. LIM Editrice, 2009. 215pp €26.00 ISBN 978 88 7096 535 3

This thorough history of the long debate on whether musical language has its own rhetoric, or shares that of poetry, and, relevantly, what is form, what is content, what is expression, is a very welcome anastatic reprint.

It covers the period 1465-1600 as regards *Rhetorica* and 1503-1695 as regards *Musica*, the precise dates (determined by historical treatises) and includes a long compendium, *De Figuris*, defining and explaining, by means of quotations, 96 figures, divided into two alphabetized lists: musical-rhetorical, and just musical, each the better part of a page long.

The first half of the book is a profound discussion of the subject, not easy reading in Italian, but all the rest may be quite useful to anyone motivated enough to read at least a paragraph in Italian about a particular figure. In addition to the figure lists and the chronologies of annals and treatises of the Reform period, there is a bibliography which goes far beyond that of the New Grove.

It would take me years to know the subject matter well enough to actually "review" this volume, but I have already started to consult it and to make my own personal index to the index, as I come across figures which I want to be able to find without necessarily remembering their names! Latin quotations are not only translated into Italian, but given in the original, which may help the English reader both ways.

Emanuele Tesauro
Vocabulario italiano ed.
by Marco Maggi
(Biblioteca di «Lettere Italiane», 69) Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2008.
liv + 84 pp. €16,00.
ISBN 978 88 222 5827 4]

This book, written between 1612 and 1654, has no connection to music, but like the wonderful 1611 dual language dictionary of Florio* it may be useful to those who have 17th century vocal libretti to tangle with. It contains a transcription, made for the first time, of the British Library Sloane Ms. 2553.

By coincidence the *Vocabulary* is actually

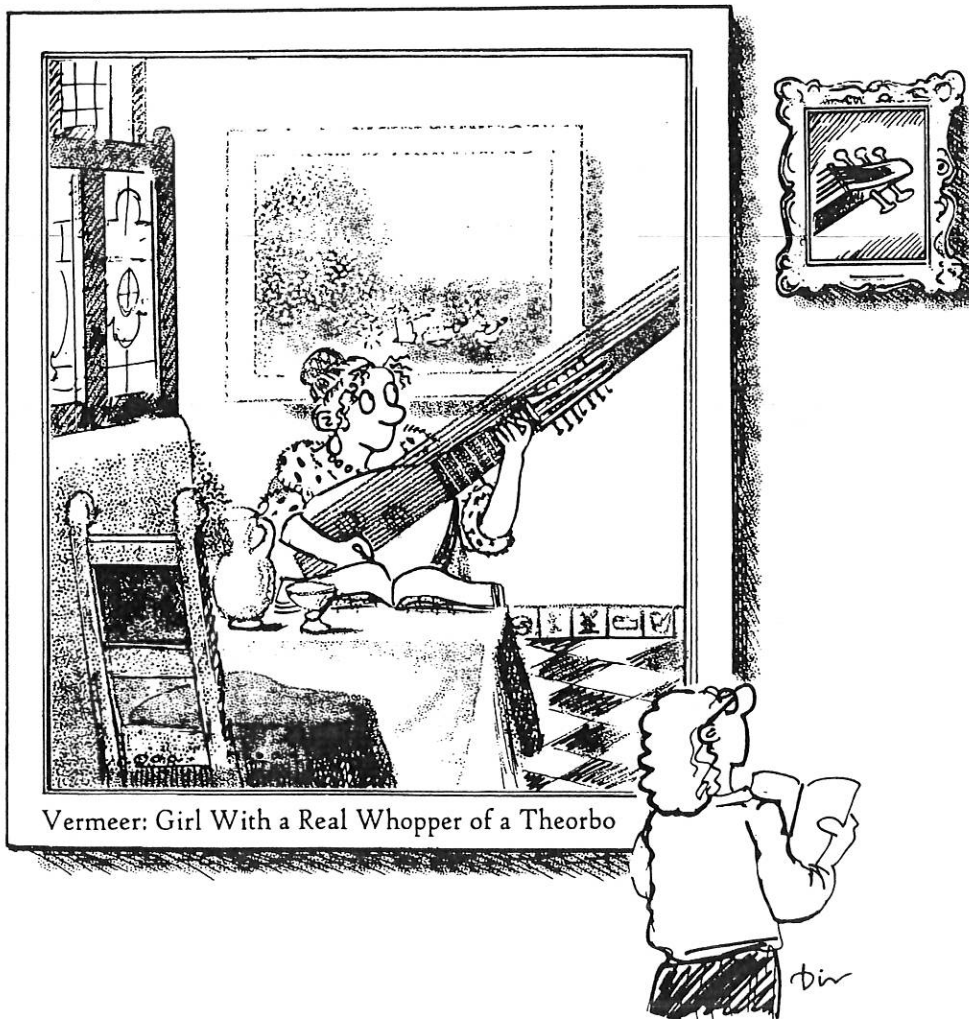
what Roget, two centuries later, was to call a Thesaurus, *tesauro* in Italian for "treasury". It was unknown until recently, though referred to in his main work *Cannocchiale aristotelico*. Italians consider the 1600s a decadent period in their literature, and it was Tesauro's (decadent?) purpose to analyse the basic concept of poetry – metaphor – in order to suggest metaphors to writers and help them enrich their style. He does so in the form of long paragraphs, under eight major categories (*predicamenti*): substance, quantity, quality, relation, action and passion, site and place, time, instruments and customs, each divided into dozens of sub-categories.

I am tempted to give an example, but stumped by the vast choice. A second problem would be that of translating what is essentially a group of nearly synonymous terms! Under "Quality" one finds "Silence", one of the shortest articles – only three paragraphs. It begins with three verbs which mean to become silent, then expressions of how to be in the state of being quiet, including musical pauses and breaths, and then related ways of mumbling and singing to one's self, then two words for whispering, and lastly examples regarding animals, winds, seas, fountains and immaterial things like pains and passions!

This book, at the very least a guide to the literary mentality of the period, is rather fun to read. It shows how obscure associations were sought in poetry destined to be set to music, an understanding useful to singers and translators.

Barbara Sachs

* Florio's 1611 Italian/English Dictionary www.pbm.com/~lindahl/florio



ARTA & OTHER CZECH CDs

Brian Clark

Although we are sent lots of CDs for review, I spend some time each week searching the Internet for recordings that fall off our radar – mostly because the company that produces them does not have a distributor in the UK, or the product is home-produced. A few weeks ago, I was doing some research on music in Prague in the early decades of the 18th century, since both Fasch and Stölzel (composers in whom I am particularly interested) were active there at that time. I found quite a few companies producing recordings of the music (only one piece of Fasch and no Stölzel among them, sadly), and links led to quite a number of other discoveries. What follows are the results of this journey.

The first two discs fitted my search criteria perfectly: *Hudba barokní Prahy – Music of Baroque Prague* Collegium Marianum, Jana Semerádová (64' 50"); Collegium Marianum CM03001) with music by Brentner, Caldara, Fux, Lotti, Rovenský, Vivaldi & Zelenka and *Hudba barokní Prahy Music of Baroque Prague II* Collegium Marianum, Jana Semerádová (68' 28"); Collegium Marianum CM 06001) featuring Brentner, Bixi, Conti, Fasch, Reichenauer & Tůma. Collegium Marianum are directed by a flautist, which gives a particular slant to their repertoire. They play beautifully – there are several videos on Czech television websites – and they seem to get thoroughly involved with the music they're performing. They are joined by soprano Hana Blazíková for the second recital, and she matches the instrumentalists in skill and agility. Soprano Constanze Backes and baritone Marián Krejčík sing on the first disc. Although I am not normally a fan of "bleeding chunks", Backes's rendition of the *Domine Deus* from Lotti's *Missa Sapiientiae* is wonderfully moving. Fasch's Concerto for two flutes is another highlight. Among the most impressive of the Czech composers is Jan Josef Ignác Brentner, whose *Horae pomeridianae* of 1720 includes many an instrumental gem.

Brentner's vocal music features on a recent CD by two other Prague groups, Ensemble Inégal and Prague Baroque Soloists, directed by Adam Viktora. Their recital includes his *Vesperae cum ordinaries psalmis* and *Hymnodia Divina Op. 3* (53' 44", NIBIRU 0148-2211), the former scored from a set found in Wrocław (the precise history is not clear from the booklet notes), the second a printed collection. The music is well constructed – mostly homophonic choral declamation with busy string parts (and trumpets when added sparkle is required!) – and the performances are meticulous; the texts ring clear as crystal, and the playing is beautifully phrased. Viktora also directs Ensemble Inégal in Zelenka's *Missa Purificationis Beatae Virginis Mariae* (61' 27", NIBIRU 0147-2211), which is a world premiere recording. Once again, it is clear that precision is key to Viktora's success – the ensemble is wonderful throughout, and Zelenka's wonderful palette of colours is captured as I have rarely heard it before. I await their new recording of Vivaldi's church music with

much excitement – if these two discs are portents of things to come, it will be wonderful!

The next stop on my little Czech excursion brought me to ARTA CDs (which are available in the UK via <http://cmd.czecheverything.co.uk/> or telephone 0208 346 0088. I went through their back catalogue (since I had never seen any of their titles before) and they very kindly agreed.

Dowland *In darkness let me dwell* (Jana Lewitová, Vladimír Merta, Zdenka Kopečná, Hana Fleková, 69' 48", ARTA F1 0169) alternates and contrasts works by the two first-named artistes. It may perhaps seem a little odd, and the folksy-nature of the voices may also appear a little incongruous, but if it was good enough for Sting, why should we object here? Indeed, there is an integrity in performance – and a very evident love of Dowland's music – that argues very strongly in favour of such renditions. The programme favours the darker side of what is a predominantly melancholy repertoire, so don't expect to find your spirits lifted as a consequence, but there is much to enjoy.

A-birding we will go! (*Hunting Songs from Baroque Bohemia* Ritornello, dir. Michal Pospíšil, 62' 34", ARTA F1 0108) pretty much does what it says on the tin – these are rowdy hunting songs (and I mean rowdy!), interspersed with horn duets. This is one of a sequence of discs directed by Michal Pospíšil (including such titles as *The carnival has arrived*), exploring what is halfway between folk and art music, and as such serve a function. I'm sure I would find such a programme much more enjoyable live – visual antics would help create an ambience that is lacking when it's just you and the CD player. The hornists are more than worthy of the reputation of their forefathers!

I've listened to more than my usual quota of early 17th-century material this time around. *Amor Tiranno Italian 17th-century love songs* Ivana Bilej Brouková S, Markéta Cukrová mS, Jan Krejča *theorbo/guitar*, Miloslav Študent *archlute*, Petr Wagner *gamba*, Tomáš Reindl *perc*, 59' 36", ARTA F1 0159) includes music by Bettini, Settimia Caccini, Agniolo Conti, dell'Arpa, Galilei, Ghivizzani, Kapsberger, Niccolino, di Parma, Peri, Piccinini, Luigi Rossi, Lo Sconcertato and (predictably enough) anon. It all comes from a manuscript in Roudnice in Bohemia that almost matches another in Bologna. Little is known of its history, and whether its presence in Bohemia points to performances there, but one thing is sure: the present group of two female singers, two pluckers, gamba and – occasional and subtle – percussion would have graced any castle establishment, including an Italian palazzo of the time. There are some gems, such as Settimia Caccini's *Due luci ridenti*, but the whole recital is neat and stylish.

Every now and then a totally unknown name comes along and you think, "How come I have never heard of this man?" This is just what happened in the case of the next disc: *Vojta Musica salutaris* (La Gambetta 65' 54",

ARTA F1 0141). The seven works on this captivating disc are all that survives of his output – three sonatas for scordatura violin (two in B minor, one in C minor), three vocal works (including *Anima mea dilecta* for soprano, two violins and continuo, which I recommend to all singers), and a suite for scordatura violin and viola. The continuo line-up includes (and often consists of) gamba, violone, galizona, guitar, archlute, organ, virginals, and harp – they sounds wonderful.

Back on familiar territory next, with J. S. Bach *The Well-Tempered Clavichord* Jaroslav Tůma (301' 29", 4CDs in a case, ARTA F1 0165). There were two years between the recordings of the two books (and a change of instrument), not that there is any clearly discernible difference in sound quality. As I wrote elsewhere in this issue, I've never been one to play much Bach, but my much tormented parents will testify to my having tried "the 48" – now that I hear them in Tůma's hands, I'm sorry I did not persevere: he just makes what I know to be very difficult sound easy, though! The clavichord / harpsichord debate will no doubt go on, but this slightly twangy (presumably intentionally so!) pair of instruments did not put me off the idea of the clavichord.

The next few CDs are devoted to Czech composers. On the evidence of Černohorský *Laudetus Jesus Christus* (Hipocondria Ensemble, Societas Incognitorum, 49' 12", ARTA F1 0139), this is another very underesteemed composer. The disc mixes thirteen choral / vocal works (which highlight the outstanding singing of the Societas Incognitorum, a Brno-based group whose members are equally at home singing solo and as a "choir") with three organ pieces. I was surprised to learn that he had spent so much time in Padua, and was highly regarded there – so highly, in fact, that money was sent to pay for his return after the composer got into trouble with Prague clerics. Recommendation indeed.

The next disc consists of arrangements from Václav Karel Holan *Rovenský's Capella Regia Musicalis* (Ritornello, dir. Michal Pospíšil, 64' 27", ARTA F1 0124). This is a huge hymnal – the booklet has a one-page facsimile – for the church year, and Pospíšil's selection draws on the happier seasons, and the performances (which are slightly less earthy than the recital of hunting songs reviewed above) feature a whole range of instrumental accompaniments – think the old way of performing Terpsichore and you'll get the idea. Don't despair that it's all in Czech – translations are provided.

It's interesting that the same company has two recordings of works by the same composer with different performers, but that's exactly what the two following discs are: Jiří Antonín Benda *Cembalo concerti* Václav Luks, Collegium 1704, 69' 49", ARTA F1 0133) and Jiří Antonín Benda *Cembalo concerti* (Edita Kelerová, Hipocondria Ensemble, 60' 33", ARTA F1 0153). That's not completely true, as one of the violinists and the viola player is common to both ensembles, but there are four different works on each disc, and Ensemble Hipocondria add a bass to the accompanying string quartet. I would not like to recommend one over the other – both are very impressive, in terms of the music as well as the performances; the soloists enjoy Benda's highly inflected lines and sometimes dark colours (especially in Luks's

three minor key works), and the appropriately small bands provide a velvety background sound. Georg Benda (as we may better know him) was the only "German" composer Mozart thought highly of, and here are perhaps some reasons why. Both discs come with very high recommendations.

Which leads us neatly into the next issue: Václav Pichl, W. A. Mozart *Clarinet music* (Jiří Krejčí, Pro arte antiqua Praha, 65' 37", ARTA F1 0079). This consists of Pichl's three quartets, Op. 16, a set of variations in B flat 'del Signore L.' and an Allegro in B flat for clarinet quintet K. 516c (KV 91). I simply love period clarinets – the woodle-oodle runs and the slightly edgy tone give the music real character. While I was intrigued to hear the Pichl, in the end the only persuaded how superior Mozart really was to the vast majority of his contemporaries. That has nothing to do with Krejčí and co. – these are wonderful performances that I have enjoyed listening to several times. Anyone interested in the repertoire or the early clarinet should definitely have this on their shelves.

Eine kleine Nachtmusik (Pro arte antiqua Praha, 65' 32", ARTA F1 0074) is a compilation of classical chamber works – the eponymous Mozart piece, quartets by Haydn? (or Hoffstetter), and Mysliveček, as well as the Boccherini quintet – although I suppose it might be the first time we've heard the entire work on period instruments (with its unusual shape of slowish movement first...) As in the previous CD, Pro arte antique Praha are outstanding, not eschewing vibrato at all, just knowing when to apply it – and, perhaps more importantly, when not to!

The Břevnov Abbey Organ (Robert Hugo & Capella Regia Praha, 77' 55", ARTA F1 0162) is actually subtitled "18th-century Figural music by Benedictines of the Břevnov-Broumov Archabbey". The composers represented include the nowadays obscure Jacob, Mentschel, and Mentzel, with Rathgeber, Wagenseil and anon. As well as organ, the CD features three very fine singers, flute and oboe (both in a glorious anonymous setting of *Alma Redemptoris*), and single strings (though never altogether). Full details of the 2007 Kánský & Brachtl organ (after Tobias Meissner, 1725) are given in the booklet note. I fear this may do better in the cathedral gift shop than in the open market, but it is an interesting disc nonetheless.

Music in Prague Cathedral (Ivana Bilej Brouková S, Markéta Cukrová m, Hipocondria Ensemble, 50' 08", ARTA F1 0149) is another compilation of lovely music – even if concertos by Vivaldi are sneaked in by the back door of his music being "known in Prague". Vocal music by Hasse, Leo, Lotti, Pergolesi & Vinci was certainly known at St Vitus during the Baroque. Both of the singers have been heard elsewhere in this sequence, and they are as at home in this slightly more modern repertoire – Leo, Vinci and Hasse are not modest in their demands, and it is a measure of the impeccable standards of music making in the Czech Republic that there are so many wonderful interpreters of all sorts of repertoire.

ARTA has brought me hours of entertainment over the past weeks, and I will revisit many of these discs over the coming months. I can recommend them all unreservedly to our readers.

42. *Duetto* Carol' - Bella! (Cleopatra, Cesare) [HWV 17/43]

Alligro ma non troppo

[Viol. I]
[Viol. II]
[Basso]

4

6

7

Adagio

pp

pp

Cleopatra

Cesare

Ca - ro!

Bel - la!

11

Alligro
[Viol. I]
[Viol. II]

p Cleopatra

-ma - bi - le bel - là mai non si tro - ve - rà, del

14

p

two bel vol - to,
Cesare

più a - nna - bi - le bel - là mai non si tro - ve - rà del

31 *ro!*
più a-ma - bi - le bel - tà mai non si tro - ve -
Bel - - - la! più a-ma - bi - le bel - tà mai non si tro - ve -

34 *ra.*
ra.

37 *mai non si tro - ve - rà del tuo*
mai non si tro - ve - rà del

40 *bel vol - to, del tuo bel vol - to,*
del tu - o bel vol - to,
tuo bel vol - to, del tuo bel vol - to,
del tu - o bel vol - to,

44

47 *In me non splen - de - rà*
nè a-mor nè fe - del - tà,
In te non splen - de - rà,
in te non splen - de - rà
nè a-
Fine [p]

50 *-tà da te di - sciol - - - - to, da*
-mor nè fe - del - tà da me di - sciol - - - - to, da

53 *te di - sciol - to,*
In me non splen - de - rà nè a-mor nè fe - del - tà
me di - sciol - to, in te non splen - de - rà nè a-mor nè fe - del - tà

57 *da te di - sciol - to,*
da me di - sciol - to,

Dal Segno [bar 9]

DAS ALTE WERK - 50 YEARS

Brian Robins

A doyen of early music series, *Das Alte Werk* today lives largely on memories of past glories; it is therefore hardly surprising to find the label celebrating its 50th birthday (actually in 2008) in some style. A recent clutch of ten mid-price re-issues (all with the prefix 2564) concentrates on recordings by DAW's mainstay over much of that half century, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, here with Concentus musicus Wien. Rightly regarded as one of the pioneers of HIP, Harnoncourt nevertheless remains for some of us an enigma, a musician whose pronouncements and writings have not always seemed to be in accord with what he does in performance. What, for instance, is one to make of a director of Harnoncourt's credentials who performs *Theodora* (69056-4; 2 CDs), one of Handel's most elevated oratorios, with savage cuts not only of whole arias, but also excisions of B sections and *da capos*? What makes this particularly frustrating is that this live Vienna performance from 1990 is in many ways highly commendable, the gravitas and tragic nobility of the Christians as well conveyed as heathen revels. Vocally, too, there is much here to enjoy, with a sympathetic *Theodora* from Roberta Alexander, who is faced with a commanding adversary in Anton Scharinger's Valens.

Handel's *Alexander's Feast* (69056-2; 2 CDs) is also a live recording, but from a much earlier vintage, Bremen in 1977, and with poor sound. This comes from a period when Harnoncourt was prone to indulge in mannerisms such as trenchantly articulated, even brutal chords in allegros, though these are balanced to some extent by the elegant grace of such as the overture's final andante. While Felicity Palmer would not today be everyone's choice as soprano soloist, Anthony Rolfe Johnson and Stephen Roberts remind us that we have not necessarily moved on when it comes to singers. Constricted sound quality also mars the 2 CD set of the *Organ Concertos*, opp. 4 and 7 (69051-6), recorded in 1975. Although praiseworthy for escaping the sententious religiosity that frequently marred performances of these works thirty years ago, they are informed by a seriousness and inflexibility that seems some way from the pleasure Handel and his audiences surely derived from them at his oratorio performances, while some of Herbert Tachezi's improvisations belong in the category of weird and wonderful.

Harnoncourt's dubious stance on singers – he has claimed to be unconcerned if his singers employ vibrato – can be encountered to disastrous effect in Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (69052-5; 1980/84), with other works from the 8th Book of Madrigals. Here the histrionic, hectoring Testo of Werner Hollweg (a fine Mozart tenor in his time) is so ludicrously over-wrought as to provide as unpleasant a listening experience as I've had in some while. That this effect is what Harnoncourt wanted is confirmed by the trio in *Ogni amante è guerrier*, which is also clothed in lavish instrumental dress. A disc entitled J. S. Bach *Missa* (1733) (69057-1) may confuse the innocent (although not *EMR* readers). It is of course the

Kyrie and Gloria from what would ultimately become the Mass in B minor. Incongruously first issued in 1972, the performances of those two movements are identical to those on Harnoncourt's trail-blazing first HIP performance of the complete B-minor Mass released four years earlier. What was daft in 1972 is even dafter in 2009 and no further comment need be made other than to say how much I enjoyed hearing the wonderfully serene Helen Watts again in 'Qui sedes'.

Harnoncourt has recorded little Vivaldi, but in the vernal era of the early music revival it went without saying every self-respecting director had to have his 'Four Seasons' in the catalogue. The Austrian went one better than many of his colleagues, recording a complete *Il Cimento dell' Armonia e dell'Invenzione*, op. 8 (69054-8; 2 CDs) in 1976 and 1977. The six-month gap between the two recording sessions presumably in part accounts for the distinctly curates-eggish feel to the set, for whereas the *Seasons*, *La tempesta di mare* and several other concertos are disfigured by aggressive sound and little dynamic swells and nudges, those in D and G minor are quite outstandingly done, with truly sensitive playing from Alice Harnoncourt. Most of the contents of the 2 CD set of *Telemann Darmstadt Overtures* (69052-3) dates from 1978, but there are also two concertos with Frans Brüggen that go back to 1966. These not only serve as a reminder of Brüggen's supreme qualities as a recorder player, but are interesting for showing how Harnoncourt was at that point of his career prepared to play music without incorporating eccentricity.

Finally, the pick of the bunch. Three Haydn re-issues of more recent recordings are notable not only for some splendid performances, but also for repertoire not easy to find elsewhere. *Symphonies 31, 59 & 73* (69055-0; 1992/3) involves exhilarating performances of 'name' symphonies (Hornsignal, Fire & La Chasse), superlatively played (the four horns in No. 31 are unashamedly brazen) and directed by Harnoncourt with a zestful abandon that has not always been apparent. Of similar vintage is the recording of Haydn's earliest large-scale choral work, the *Stabat Mater* (69055-5; 1994) of 1767. Typical of Viennese choral music of the period, it juxtaposes the old-fashioned contrapuntal style of Fux and Caldara in choral music with solo writing in the newer Neapolitan mode. The performance, while at times suffering from poor diction from both the Arnold Schoenberg Choir and the soloists, is a fine one, with some excellent singing of the coloratura solos, especially from soprano Barbara Bonney. The performances of the *Harmoniemesse & Te Deum* Hob. XXIIIc:1 (69055-2; 1998) also have much to commend them, not least the outstanding contribution by the all-important wind group that gives the magnificent late Mass its name. Also memorable is the exquisite tranquility of 'Agnus Dei'; less pleasing is the persistent vibrato of soprano Eva Mei, but she contributes a fine performance of the rarely heard occasional cantata *Qual dubbio ormai*.

CD REVIEWS

MEDIEVAL

Carmina Burana: Codex Buranus Original Version Clemencic Consort 71' 58"
Oehms Classics OC 635

'Original version' presumably means 'not Carl Orff' rather than any special revelation of how these songs were first sung. Not that we have much idea. I assumed when this arrived that it was a reissue of much older recordings: Clemencic has been at this repertoire for decades. But the recordings were made in June 2008 are new, and my feeling is that he is just going round in circles, doing things differently, but with the same basic ideas. What the MS gives us are poems. Some have musical signs above the notes, but these give only a rough idea of the movement up and down of the notes. Other sources add precision, but not the rhythm. (Arguments about rhythmic notation of some later sources need not imply that the songs were first sung thus.) Information about adding instruments to voices is vague. Here we have three singers but six players, which seems the wrong proportion of each. The Latin poems themselves often have a strong inbuilt rhythm. In these performances, the adding of instruments often deadens this. I think that these songs need different, word-based approaches. Here the rhythms feel imposed rather than deriving from the poetic form and stress. The translations in the booklet would be easier to relate to the Latin if that had had been printed nearer the right of the page, and the German and English versions might have aimed to match the Latin line by line. This is a very personal review: ultimately, the reviewer can only say if he was convinced or not. The image of the songs offered here has some appeal, but I found it distracting. CB

14th CENTURY

Stylems: Italian Music from the Trecento Ensemble Syntagma, Alezandre Anilevski Challenge Classics CC72195 58' 13"
Bartolino da Padova, Egidius da Francia, Don Paolo da Firenze & Anon

I can't help feeling that Ensemble Syntagma are caught in a bit of a time warp (and not a good one) as they drift through this programme of instrumental and vocal music of the Italian 14th century. The performances are not unpleasant to listen to, but interpretations which would have been fine ten years ago sound somewhat insipid against the sparkling CDs which have been appearing recently

of this repertoire. It is a mark of how quickly things have moved on that Ensemble Syntagma find themselves in a stylistic backwater. Those looking for languid and generally accurate performances may well be happy with this, but in fact nowadays you can easily find readings which are simply so much better. D. James Ross

15th CENTURY

Dufay Chansons Tetraktys (Jill Feldman sop, Kees Boeke vielle & flutes, Maria Christina Cleary harps, Jane Achtman vielle) 58' 54"
Etcetera KTC1903

This CD of Dufay's ballades, rondeaux, and virelais features some beautifully sympathetic accompanying on viols, recorder and harp such as one would expect from an ensemble led by the veteran Kees Boeke. But a disc of this sort shines a very unforgiving spotlight on the vocal soloist, in this case the experienced early music soprano Jill Feldman. I have sometimes had reservations about the quality of her voice in recordings she has made of Baroque repertoire, and in the rarefied atmosphere of Dufay's chansons these shortcomings are even more mercilessly exposed. Inappropriate vibrato, varying tone quality, occasionally poor intonation and a general lack of ornamentation make this CD disappointing in my opinion. D. James Ross

Meyster ob allen — meystern: Conrad Paumann and the 15th-cent German keyboard school Tasto solo 57' 05"
Passacaille musica vera 950

As consort players and singers are increasingly approaching the music of the 15th century with the ornamentation of the Lochamer and Buxheimer MSS in the back of their minds, these have taken on a new importance. Tasto solo have taken their investigation of this repertoire to a new and highly convincing level by combining several keyboard instruments with harp to produce a truly beguiling sound which makes this sometimes slightly arid music veritably jump off the page. While Conrad Paumann cannot actually be connected to any of the music recorded here, documentary evidence of his pre-eminence in the field of organ playing in Germany in the 15th century more than justifies his prominence. In the booklet notes the group's director, Guillermo Peres, mentions the ensemble Mala

Punica among their inspirations, and indeed this is one of the groups which has successfully applied Buxheimer-type ornamentation to other instrumental and vocal music of the period with spectacular results. The exciting work by new young ensembles on the music of the 15th century, and I include this highly creative CD, is currently one of the most impressive developments in the field of early music. D. James Ross

16th CENTURY

Alonso Mudarra Tres Libros de Musica Sevilla 1546, Raquel Andueza S, Private Musicke, Pierre Pitzl dir 59' 10"
Accent ACC 24210

Music by Anon, Daça, de Milán, de Narváez & Ortiz

Alonso Mudarra was born c.1520, and died in 1580. He worked as a canon at Seville cathedral from 1547 to his death. His *Tres Libros* is a fine collection of music of considerable variety, consisting of solos for the vihuela (some modestly described as "facil", others quite tricky), polyphonic pieces for the 4-course guitar, and songs both sacred and secular to be accompanied by the vihuela.

The CD opens with a solitary note, the start of Mudarra's *Fantasia 2*, which soon develops into a virtuosic piece of free polyphony interspersed with incredibly fast roudades on Pierre Pitzl's small vihuela in a'.

Mudarra's songs are all printed with an accompaniment in tablature for a single vihuela, but Private Musicke finds alternative methods of performance. The villancico *Si me llaman a mi* is accompanied first by a 4-course guitar strummed lustily, and gradually other instruments join in. Viols are used to accompany *La vita fugge*. I like what they do. Extra instruments are added discreetly, adding variety of texture, and enhancing what Mudarra left us in print. Exciting home-made divisions fill out the prosaic chords of the accompaniment to *Si viesse e me levasse*.

The title of the CD is somewhat misleading, because there are also pieces by Antonio de Cabezón, Diego Ortiz, Luis de Narváez, Luis de Milán, and Esteban Daça. In Ortiz's *Recercada* Pierre Pitzl's bass viol is accompanied by a plucked bass viol and a little guitar strummed with occasional taps and rasgueados. The speed is pleasantly jaunty. The shortest piece is a *Tiento* in mode 8 which lasts a mere 33 seconds. It is played delicately, and ends with an improvised flourish. Pitzl's playing is fluid and imaginative, with well-arched phrases.

Raquel Andueza's voice is strong, with some vibrato, and exploits a high tessitura. Pleasing is her interpretation of the lively *Isabel, perdiste la tu faxa*, again with a little more in the accompaniment than just Mudarra's solitary vihuela. Although the songs are in staff notation for the singer, there is no absolute pitch. Instead there is a rubric at the start of each song linking the pitch of the singer's first note to a note on the accompanying vihuela. The size of the vihuela will determine the pitch, but the singer adjusts her pitch to the vihuela, not vice versa. For the songs, my preference would have been to have had a larger vihuela, bringing the pitch lower. Stewart McCoy

Sweelinck *The Secular Vocal Works*
Gesualdo Consort Amsterdam, Harry van der Kamp 202' 40" (3 CDs)
Glossa GCD 922401

Sweelinck's madrigals and chansons are rarely heard (at least outside the Netherlands, and probably not very often there). They are available to those who can read old clefs in the old *Collected Works* edited by Seiffert in the 1890s (my thanks to a subscriber for passing a set on to me). It would be good if the new editions prepared for this recording were made available: any singer who hears these three discs will want to try some of the music. The most recognisable piece is the first on disc I, not because it is known for itself but for its *Susanna* fair tune and words. 70 short ensemble pieces may be a lot to take in a sitting: I found these discs good listening for short car journeys. The performances are excellent, though there could have been more difference between the sound of French and Italian – but perhaps singers of the time didn't bother. I particularly enjoyed the *bicinia*: on many discs, they seem to be included just to vary the texture, but here they really have musical substance. The choice of when and how to use instruments is effective. All in all, this is a set to enjoy, not merely a monument to worthy but neglected music. CB

Jehan Titelouze *Les Hymns* Yves-G. Préfontaine (1699 Julian Tribut organ, Saint-Martin de Seurre, Côte d'Or, France) *Les Chantres du Roy* 115' 48"
ATMA ACD2 2558 (2 CDs)

Jehan Titelouze (c. 1563-1633) is the main French contribution to that extraordinary flowing of organ music in the early years of the 17th century, alongside Sweelinck, Scheidt, Gibbons, Byrd, Bull, Frescobaldi, Arauxo, Coelho and others. He is also one of the least recognised composers, both of the French and wider European school. His two massive publications, the

1623 *Hymnes de l'Eglise pour toucher l'orgue, avec les fugues et recherches sur leur plain-chant* and the 1626 *Magnificats*, are masterly examples of the combination of rather severe late Renaissance counterpoint with the early flowering of the Baroque fantasy style. All are intended for alternatim performance, though here some chant verses omitted and some hymns start with the chant rather than the usual organ verse. The chanted verses are performed (not without some intonation problems) on this recording by the three singers of *Les Chantres du Roy*. The 1699 organ (recently restored by Aubertin) is much later in date and is in the French High Baroque style rather than the less colourful late Renaissance French organ. Although Titelouze's own organ at Rouen had many of the colour stops that were to become a feature of the later French Baroque organ, they were not as extreme as the later examples. Yves-G. Préfontaine uses a commendably restrained palette of colours in keeping with the music's style. The organ is tuned in a 5th comma temperament (rather than the purer quarter-comma that the composer would probably have known), giving a slight but acceptable unsteadiness to cadences. The playing by the Montréal organist is stylistically appropriate and thoughtful. This recording was financially supported by the Canadian Government. Good for them! Andrew Benson-Wilson

Valente *Intavolatura de Cimbalo* Rebecca Maurer *hpscd* 67' 28"
Christophorus CHR77307.

Valente's *Intavolatura* of 1576 is both a collection of twenty-one pieces, covering a wide variety of genres, and a teaching manual for his new system of Spanish tablature which, by including sharps and splitting the notes between the hands, was a distinct improvement on what went before. It is also one of the first Neapolitan keyboard collections and repays listening for the inspiration of its music which gets a wonderfully sympathetic performance here. I was particularly taken with the *ricercars* and dance music which Maurer plays with fine understanding and flair. She plays a harpsichord throughout, rather than the organ used by Francesco Cera for the *ricercars* on the other main available recording, but her copy by Bernhard von Tucher of a 17th-century Italian-style harpsichord is so admirably suited to all of this music, and recorded with such excellent clarity, that I am glad she does. The rather formulaic variation sets and diminutions are more difficult to bring off but Maurer manages to keep the flow going throughout. She sensibly varies the original publication order so as to mix up the genres and the end result is a very

successful programme with stirring *gagliards* breaking up the more cerebral music. Noel O'Regan

Chirk Castle *part-books* The Brabant Ensemble, Stephen Rose 71' 04"
Hyperion CDA67695
Byrd, Causton, Deane, Hooper, Robert and ?
William Parsons, Sheppard, Tallis & Tye

Chirk Castle in the Welsh borders, whose construction was begun by Edward I in 1294, was in the ownership of the Myddleton family from 1595 to 1969, when the four extant part-books of sacred music were sold. Since then the lost quintus part has been reconstructed, with the help of the organ book, also extant. The MSS contain treasures by Byrd, Parsons, Sheppard, Parsons, Tye and Tallis, including a short piece by the last which is unique to this source; there are also several pieces by the organist of Chirk Castle, William Deane, who is revealed as a fine and imaginative composer of the early 17th century. The CD opens with morning canticles – *Te Deum* and *Benedictus* – by William Mundy, also unique to this MS. The predominant feature of these two settings is the very high and bright treble line, sung with rather too overwhelmingly pin-bright accuracy by the sopranos of the Brabant Ensemble. In other respects this group is well balanced and gives a pleasing account of this splendid music. This recording gives the listener a privileged insight into the quality of unaccompanied church music in a provincial castle in the 1630s; one hopes that the verse anthems and services for solo voices, chorus and organ also contained in the MSS will be given equally favourable exposure. Selene Mills

***Song of Songs* stile antico** 77' 42"
harmonia mundi USA HMU 807489
Music by Ceballos, Clemens non Papa, Gombert, Guerrero, Lassus, Lhéritier, Palestrina, Vivanco & Victoria

However much continental Renaissance choral music you listen to, you are unlikely to hear anything quite so sublime as *Stile Antico*'s rendering of Clemens non Papa's *Ego flos campi*. This superbly harmonious piece is lifted by their voices into a heavenly sphere, where the pace is just right, suspensions are held just long enough, individual lines overlap like peony petals, and an enchanting feeling of bliss gently envelopes the listener. The rest of the CD is almost superfluous, but many more delights are in store, the choir producing a sumptuous sound in which the words are cherished and projected within long arching phrases. There is plenty of contrast, from the rhythmic urgency of Guerrero's *Ego flos campi* to the pensive tenderness of Victoria's *Vadam*

et circuib; from the elaborate imitation and harmonic adventures of Lassus's *Veni, dilecte mi* to the haunting ecstasy of Lheritier's *Nigra sum*. Between the polyphonic pieces the women sing short plainchant antiphons, most affectingly – though I would have liked to hear more of the male voices; their stroking of *ubera* in Gombert's *Quam pulchra es* is the gentlest of caresses. These singers, both men and women, sound so connected with the music and texts that they will dispel any desire you might ever have held of hearing such music sung by a cathedral choir. A heartbreakingly beautiful recording.

Selene Mills

La Magdalene Graindelavoix, Björn Schmelzer 76' 27"
Glossa GCD P32104

This latest release from the innovative Belgian ensemble Graindelavoix is devoted to music associated with Mary Magdalene and is another thought-provoking blockbuster of a CD. Some familiar but largely unfamiliar sacred and secular material from the early 16th century undergoes the Graindelavoix treatment with frequently stunning results. Unbelievably virtuosic singing and playing surges along on an irresistible wave of improvisation and harmonisation all captured in vivid 3D. Strongly influenced by the work of the Ensemble Organum, Graindelavoix have taken their rethinking of performance practice to a new level with their combinations of voices and instruments and their free approach to tempi, harmonisation and doubling at the octave. I really only have one enduring reservation, which I know is an aspect the group introduces intentionally into their performances, namely the simultaneous use of different types of voice production and therefore non-blending vocal timbres within the same texture. That aside, I challenge you to listen to the raw energy of these performances and not be inevitably swept along with them.

D. James Ross

Stadtpfeifer, Waits, Ministriles, Piffari: Instrumental Music of the 16th and 17th century William Dongois, Capella de la Torre, Katherina Bäuml dir 68' 26"
Coviello Classics COV 20804 (SACD)

The multilingual title indicates that we visit the four countries on this tour of city musicians. We start with an extraordinarily expansive rendition of the *Passamezzo* from the Hessen manuscript and end with a similar treatment of a *Schein* suite. These bracket a variety of styles, including transcriptions of vocal pieces, fantasias, divisions and dances. The mix of reeds and brass is used to advantage in sustaining the slow-paced

grandeur of many of the pieces – to be contrasted with light and agile renditions such as the cornettino and recorder duet in Dalza's *Calata a la Spangnola* and the transcription of a *Tiento* by Arauco, which uses the different voices of brass and reed to create a real dialogue. Another highlight is the small scale but majestic *Tantum ergo* by Urreda. The playing is perfection throughout, with each of the very diverse styles given its full space. The city burghers would have been well pleased.

Stephen Cassidy

see also under Praetorius below

Vox Neerlandica I Netherlands Chamber Choir, Paul van Nevel
Et cetera KTC 1368
Ciconia, Clemens, Dufay, Josquin, de Kerle, Lassus, Obrecht, de Rore, de la Rue, Schuyt, Sweelinck, Waelrant & Willaert

Your enjoyment of this CD is going to depend on whether you like your early Flemish choral repertoire sung by a largish non-specialist choir. With Paul van Nevel at the helm, you have no grounds to doubt the scholarly integrity of what you are hearing, and the sound the group produces is pleasant enough, but to my ear they never sound entirely at home in the sound world and the size of the ensemble leads to a little sponginess in the articulation. On the positive side this first of two CDs provides a fine cross-section of Renaissance Flemish repertoire, drawn as it is from the *Vox Neerlandica* anthology published in 1995 by Harmonia. So perhaps these CDs are a good general introduction to the field rather than recordings for the serious specialist.

D. James Ross

Ye sacred Muses Music from the House of Tudor Flautando Köln + Franz Vitzthum cT, Andrea Cordula Baur lute, Katrin Krauß rec 64' 02"
Carus 83.433

These recordings of largely familiar music from the courts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I are played with flair and panache by the recorders of Flautando Köln with two singers and a lute. They use many devices such as articulation notes (as on the bagpipes) and intentional rhythmical 'throbbing' on sustained notes, which may annoy some listeners, but which I found added to the character of the repertoire. There are some lovely full consort sounds here and some fine and idiomatic ornamentation. I am slightly puzzled by the instrumentarium at the end of the CD booklet, which details two complete recorder consorts by Adriana Breukink and Adrian Brown respectively used in the recording. Both only go down to Bass in F, while I am sure that several

tracks employ deeper instruments and the photos clearly show the group playing great bass and contrabass instruments. In all other respects – this is attractively performed and presented product.

D. James Ross

17th CENTURY

G. F. Anerio Requiem; F. Anerio 6 Motets The Choir of Westminster Cathedral, James O'Donnell 72' 23"
Hyperion Helios CDH55213 (rec 1990)

Giovanni Francesco Anerio's Requiem has been more widely circulated than most Roman post-Palestrina music thanks to an edition (whose black cover drew the eyes to it in the shop) by Tony Petti, the first person I knew who published editions of old music other than John Stevens (both, incidentally, teachers in English literature faculties). The performance here has the strength and beauty one expects from the Cathedral choir, though personally my experience and taste is now slightly different. The chant is, of course, always there when it should be. There are also six pieces by G. F.'s elder brother, Felice, some for double choir (*Ad te levavi, Christe redemptor omnium, Christus factus est, Magnificat V toni, Salve regina III, Vidi speciosa*). Well worth reissuing. CB

John Blow and his Pupils Julia Gooding, Clara Sanabras, Richard Savage SSB, Timothy Roberts (1704 *Renatus Harris* organ at St Botolph's, Aldgate) 75' 09"
sfz SFZMO207

This is primarily a disc of Blow, presenting his organ music on a recently restored (by Goetze & Gwynn) organ, information on which is available at their website (www.goetzegwynn.co.uk). An unusual feature is the inclusion of hymns, preludes and interludes (by John Reading) surrounding the audience (as 'congregation') singing the Old Hundredth and Jeremiah Clarke's best-known hymn-tune. The organ playing is a delight, even if it seems to me at times to be slightly over-detached – but that might have sounded right in the church. The two sopranos are among my favourites, joined by the ever-reliable bass, who seems to have been around as long as I can remember. Other composers who appear briefly are Daniel Purcell (*O let my mouth be filled with praise*) and William Richardson (a *Funeral Anthem for the Use of Charity Children*). An excellent CD, of interest beyond the world of organ buffs (who will require it anyway). CB

Charpentier Missa Assumpta est Maria & other works Le Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet 60' 34"
Glossa GCD 921617

Given its general musical splendour it is surprising that this mass has received relatively little attention from performers. The sources are complex but the Versailles think-tank has done its stuff and there is an excellent edition available at reasonable cost. For this recording, Niquet has created a sense of context by interspersing other works by Charpentier among the mass movements. These are the extraordinary motet for unaccompanied bass *Sancti Dei* (H361), an *Offertoire* (H508) and the elevation motet *O salutaris hostia* (H262). To conclude there is a *Domine salvum* (H291), a slightly strange choice as there is already a setting of this prayer for the King within the mass after the *Agnus Dei*. This mass and these performers are made for each other. The strong integration of solo, choral and orchestral forces is a regular Niquet strength, and even though Charpentier gives him a generous hand in this work, a sense of collective unity of purpose is again strongly evident. I am not convinced by all the tempi, especially in the *Sanctus*, but this is a loving performance of a marvellous work. The rather lumpily translated note is strange, referring to fully-notated instrumental sections as 'improvisations' in all four languages.

David Hansell

Dowland *The Queen's Galliard – Lute Music 4* Nigel North, lute 60' 16"
Naxos 8.570284

No pavans and no fantasies, yet this interesting selection of pieces is nevertheless a fair reflection of Dowland's genius. The variations on *Walsingham* are noteworthy in showing how Dowland creates a mood of intense melancholy with a variety of expressive devices. The desecration of the shrine at Walsingham by Henry VIII's thugs epitomised the schism between Catholics and Protestants, and one can imagine the mix of anger, frustration, despair, sadness and resignation of the affronted Catholics. William Byrd, Francis Cutting and Anthony Holborne all wrote fine variations on the plaintive *Walsingham* theme, but Dowland's are particularly poignant. Other folk tune arrangements included on the CD are *Aloe*, *Go from my window*, *What if a day*, *Robin*, *Fortune my foe*, and a lengthy, very beautiful set of variations on *Loth to depart*.

Nearly half the tracks (11 out of 25) are galliards, five of which are associated with particular people. There are two for Queen Elizabeth, who is said to have danced half a dozen galliards each day before breakfast, a pompous one (a setting of the *Battle Galliard*) for the King of Denmark, noted more for his drunkenness than his skill at warfare, an angry one for the spurned Earl of Essex (*Can she excuse*),

and a sad one for Queen Elizabeth's *Frog*, alias the Duc d'Alençon, shedding crocodile tears as he happily tripped off back to France after failing to win Elizabeth's hand in marriage.

Two songs by Dowland, *Come again* and *Awake sweet love*, survive in arrangements for solo lute (Poulton nos 60 and 24). Nigel North has extended these pieces by adding his own intabulations. Like Dowland, he eschews obvious formulaic sequences, and for ever seeks new ideas. He begins *Awake sweet love* with the extant intabulation in Dd.2.11, and then plays his own version, which is closer to the song setting, followed by another, tastefully decorated with his own imaginative divisions. His playing throughout the CD is most expressive, with a surprising palette of tone colours conjuring up a wide range of emotions. Stewart McCoy

Eccles *The Judgment of Paris/Three mad songs* Lucy Crowe, Claire Booth, Susan Bickley, Benjamin Hulett, Roderick Williams *SSmSTBar*, Early Opera Company, Christian Curnyn 62' 14"
Chandos Chaconne CHAN0759

This is the first full recording of this fine work. Eccles was beaten in the original contest (which was suppose to launch a new project, promoting opera in English) but his 1989 Proms victory is more than justified by Curnyn's exemplary reading. Key to its success is the casting of such strongly distinctive singers as the three goddesses from whom poor Paris must choose. In fact, he takes his lead from Eccles, who writes easily identifiable music for each of the leads. There is much to enjoy – the music itself is never less than attractive (though a seasoned hand would have made more of the final chorus), and singers and players alike are a testimony to the professionalism and commitment of the Early Opera Company. The disc is attractively enhanced with three of Eccles' mad songs, again giving each of the three prime donne a chance to shine – my, how they love their madness! Full marks to Chandos, too, for supporting such a brave venture. BC

Nicolaus Hasse *Complete Organ Works* See: Tunder

Monteverdi *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* Carlo Bergonza *Nerone*, Maria Vitaler *Poppea*, Rolando Panerai *Ottone*, Oralia Dominguez *Ottavia*, Mario Petri *Seneca*, Anna Maria Canali *Arnalta*, Orchestra e Coro di Milano della RAI, Nino Sanzogno 150' 28" (Live perf. 1954)
Gala GL 100 797 (2 CDs in box)

This was recorded on 12 Feb 1954. It is the orchestra, of course, which is likely to put

our readers off. The anonymous arranger has a few moments of imagination, but it generally either forms a redundant cushion or is an intrusion. Many listeners may reject the CD before the end of the opening sinfonia. But it's worth persevering. I've never heard a performance where the words were so clear. The vocal style is Verdi rather than Monteverdi (the booklet stresses the Verdian credentials of the cast), but the performance (allowing for lack of embellishment, which is perhaps a relief) is as convincing as many that one might likely to hear in a major opera house even now. Allowing for the style and accompaniment, tempi are fine, and the drama is powerfully conveyed by the singing rather than extraneous noises. Ottone is, of course, sung by a baritone, which doesn't work, but I have less objection to a tenor Nerone, especially when sung by Carlo Berganza. The reason for the reissue is not for his participation but for a singer I don't know, the soprano Maria Vitale, who does pretty well if you can adjust to the vibrato. The balance favours the voices, so one can turn the volume down and be less aware of the orchestra, though to the detriment of the harmony, which is always important in Monteverdi. I wouldn't recommend this heavily-cut version to those who don't know the opera well, but I certainly found it interesting.

The pair of discs contains only 92'42" of *Poppea*; Disc 2 is filled by selections from 1951 recordings of Mercadante's *Il Giuramento* and Spontini's *La Vestale*, also featuring Maria Vitale. The booklet note is entirely about the singers, with nothing about the historical interest of so early a performance of the Monteverdi. CB

Monteverdi *Scherzi Musicale* (1632) Emanuela Galli S, La Venexiana, Claudio Cavina 54' 60"
Glossa GCD 920915

This is rather more than the 1632 *Scherzi*, the pieces of which (with a few others) are framed by *Con che soavità* and the *Lamento d'Arianna*. The treatment is imaginative, but is often too relaxed: the drawing of attention to every possible expressive device means that tension is replaced by loss of momentum, as, for instance, in the repeated notes of *Ohimè ch'io cado* and, even more, *Si dolc'è il tormento*. The latter, in particular, seems to me to miss the tone of Monteverdi's archly simple setting. There is much to enjoy here, and I'm probably biased by knowing some of the pieces too well and having my own ideas of how to perform them. My main problem is that these are too obviously public performances of pieces designed for more intimate occasions where more subtle nuance is

required. The *Lamento* links back to the *Poppea* reviewed above, in that there is a continuous editorial string accompaniment. The idea has evidence to support it, but we have no idea how Monteverdi might have used strings: for specific effects, as in *Il combattimento*, or through-out, as here. If the latter, we've no idea how he would have set a lengthy passage of recitative. But irrespective of the backing, I felt that its inclusion (unlike *Con che soavità*) was alien to the tone of the rest of the disc. Neither is a joke! CB

Monteverdi *Lamento d'Arianna* Roberta Marneli S, Mutsui Hatano mS, Takashi Tsunoda lute/gtr 59'36"
Dowland & Company TR6234
from dowland@air.linkclub.or.jp

Unlike the anthology reviewed above, this programme extends beyond Monteverdi. It begins with the model *nuovo musicale* song, *Amarilli mia bella*, which sets the tone with its beautiful but intimate performance. La Venexiana (see review above) take songs which are notated on two or three lines and expands them with multi-continuo – a practice I commend and enjoy. But it isn't always necessary, and the music is as effective, perhaps more so in the less dramatic pieces, with the intimacy and interaction of a singer and single lute. The rhythmic flexibility is much subtler here; I kept feeling that La Venexiana should keep to the *tactus*, whereas I was completely happy with the freedom of the Japanese duo and trio. It also helps that Marneli has a less prominent vibrato than Galli. Apart from the *Lamento*, there's one other item in common. *Si dolce è'l tormento*; Hatano is the singer here, and simplicity wins hands down. The two singers produce a marvellous *Zefiro torna*, with the rhythm strong but not forced by aggressive harpsichords. (Yes – that is a temptation: two of our readers may remember me leading them on in such a performance a couple of decades ago.) There are also songs by Sances (*Usurpator tiranno* relates to the *Lamento della ninfa* beyond just the ground), Ferrari, D'India, Strozzi and, a bit out of place, the later Steffani. This is a Japan-oriented issue. The texts are in Italian and Japanese, but the introduction only in Japanese. Yet even if you don't know the words, you can still enjoy this marvellous disc. CB

Monteverdi *Sweet Torment* I Fagiolini, Barokksolisten, Robert Hollingworth
Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0760 79' 02"

I'm writing about these Monteverdi discs in the order in which I played them. Had I time, I'd write a separate article on the three versions of *Si dolce è'l tormento*: they

are utterly different. Here, it sounds just a bit too matter-of-fact. The pieces requiring a larger ensemble come over best. (*H)or che 'l ciel* covers the gamut (and beyond – I'm using the word literally as well as metaphorically) with great emotional fire, though is spoilt by a tenor intruding below the final soaring soprano – though those consecutive fourths never fail to move. The most substantial work is the *Ballo delle Ingrate*, convincingly done. After La Venexiana, the disc felt a bit English, but I enjoyed and recommend it. CB

On the redundancy of the H, see p. 44

Pachelbel *Clavier Music* Vol. 1 Franz Raml org, hpscd 66' 40"
Scene DG MDG 614 1552-2

It is a great pleasure to hear the Silbermann Organ in Freiberg's Petrikirche, shown off here in a selection of toccatas, chorale preludes and other pieces by Pachelbel. The recording has both depth and clarity and Raml chooses his registrations carefully, even producing a shmoozy tremolo for the chromatic variation in the set on *Alle Menschen müssen sterben*, the most extensive piece here. He also plays a suite, a *ciaccona* and a *fantasie* on a harpsichord by Bernhard von Tucher after Giusti; instrument and recording quality again suit the music very well. Raml is a reliable player, letting the music speak for itself rather than interposing his own personality, and this disc presents a very good introduction to the variety and scope of Pachelbel's output.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

M. Praetorius *The Guard on the Battlement* Dominique Visse, Capella de la Torre, Katherina Bauml
Coviello Classics CDV 20907

In a busy month for them, Capella de la Torre (see p. 29) is joined this time by the inimitable haute-contre Dominique Visse, of Ensemble Clement Janequin fame, for a programme of Praetorius vocal works. Praetorius is perhaps most famous for his documentation of musical matters – theory (in Latin), instruments and performance practice – and next for the set of dances, which he collected and arranged rather than composed. At a blind tasting it would be interesting to test who would recognise the composer of this set of really well crafted pieces. Sitting at the renaissance/ baroque interface, they have a curious gentle formality mixed with touches of experiment and flourish. The centre piece is a whole sequence of pieces of mixed instrumental and vocal versions of *Nun bitten wir Heiligen Geist* scored in one to six parts and covering every level from intimate vignette to grand fugue.

The highly overtone voice of Dominique Visse works very well with the reed and brass instrumentation, and does not need the extra microphone presence that I think I hear. These pieces sound best with a fully natural balance; a voice as an instrument and an instrument as a voice. The quality of the instrumental playing is excellent in every way, including the ability to balance and blend naturally. This very fine recording is a very welcome addition to the Praetorius discography and does much to bring his real compositional strength to the fore. Stephen Cassidy

Purcell *Bright Orb of Harmony* The Sixteen, Harry Christopher (66' 10")
CORO COR16069

Beati omnes, Funeral sentences, Jehova quam multi sunt, Let mine eyes, Miserere mei, O dives custos, Remember not Lord

+ MacMillan *A child's prayer, Mitte manum tuam, O bone Jesu & Sedebit Dominus Rex*

"The voices of Classic fm" deliver a fine recital of some wonderful music. Purcell, of course, was a supreme master of choral writing – the works here show how he could wring every drop of grief from a text with chains of unresolved chords, and strangely dissonant melodic lines intertwining with spine-tingling effect. The Sixteen's crisp declamations of the words only serve to heighten the tension and enrich the experience. I was convinced I would only need a short sample to make an assessment of the CD but found a couple of hours later that I was still listening to it going around and around in my player. The decision to juxtapose Purcell and MacMillan was masterful. He, too, knows how to write effectively for choir and how to stir the emotions of the listener. BC

Franz Tunder – Nicolas Hasse *Complete organ works* Friedhelm Flamme (1724 Christian Vater organ, St Petri-Kirche, Melle, Germany) 133' 51" (2CDs)
cpo 777 370-2

Friedhelm Flamme's commendable series of recordings of the North German reaches its 6th volume with Buxtehude's predecessor and posthumous father-in-law) at Lübeck's Marienkirche, the important organist/composer Franz Tunder. Tunder was preceded by the father of the composer whose four surviving organ pieces share this disc, Nicholas Hasse. The programme note includes three quotes from my *EMR* reviews of earlier volumes, so my enthusiasm for this series has not gone unnoticed. Tunder is a fascinating composer, not least because, although he seems to have bypassed the Sweelinck influenced school of Hamburg organists, his chorale fantasias are the culmination of a musical journey that

started with those composers, notably Jacob Praetorius and Scheidemann. Along with Weckmann, he was also one of the routes by which Italian music became so influential amongst North German organ composers. He is believed to have been taught by Frescobaldi, although there is no direct evidence. For those outside Germany who want to understand the musical complexities of the North German chorale fantasia, Tunder's *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* has the advantage of being based on a tune that you will probably recognise. It is interesting to compare Hasse's monumental and virtuosic chorale fantasia on *Komm, heiliger Geist, Herr Gott* with that of Tunder, at half the length.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Robert de Visée *Musique pour la Chambre du Roy* Ornamente 99, Karsten Erik Ose rec 68' 10"
Christophorus CHR 77306.

Robert de Visée (before 1660-1732) was a guitarist and theorist at the court of Louis XIV. He was taught the guitar by Francesco Corbetta, and based the style of his compositions on Jean-Baptiste Lully, whose work he greatly admired. It is quintessentially French, with its highly ornamented melodies, notes inégales, interesting harmonies, and a drive and grace betraying its strong links with dance.

The seven suites, ably performed by Ornamente 99 on this CD, are taken from De Visée's *Pièces de théorbe et de luth, mises en partition dessus et basse* (Paris, 1716). This collection contains music composed initially for the guitar, lute or theorbo, but recycled in arrangements of a solo instrument with continuo. Some of the movements (such as the Sarabande based on *La Folia*) I recognise as guitar pieces published by De Visée back in the 1680s. Ornamente 99 provide a variety of sounds in the accompaniment: Diez Eichler (harpsichord), André Henrich (lute, guitar, theorbo), Roswitha Bruggaier (viola da gamba), and Stefan Temmingh (bass recorder). The harpsichord adds gravitas to the Rondeau *Mascarade*, and the strummed guitar makes the Gigue *Gaye* go with a foot-tapping swing. The stringed instruments blend well together, but not so well with Karsten Erik Ose's strident recorders, which are so much louder. One can begin to understand why the softer tone quality of the baroque flute gained in popularity as the 18th century progressed.

Most of the 44 movements are extremely short. Fourteen of them last less than a minute, and only five exceed three minutes. It is music to 'flatter l'oreille', to distract a tired Sun King as he headed off for bed. Louis played the guitar himself, and had lessons from De

Visée. In Ose's booklet notes we read, 'In the evening His Majesty went out into the park. About eight o'clock he lay down again and dined at ten in his bed. Usually he had Visée summoned at nine to play the guitar.' Ose goes on to argue (unconvincingly) that the two-part arrangements make it possible for De Visée's music to be played more expressively. Worthy though his performance may be, a recorder is more likely to keep you awake than the gentle, soporific plucking of a 5-course guitar.

Stewart McCoy

Weckmann *Kammermusik Klaviermusik* La Fenice, Siebe Henstra 132' 48" (2 CDs)
Ricercar RIC282

This is a re-packaging of two formerly independent recordings, the first of ten instrumental sonatas and nine songs (sung by Greta De Reyghere), while the second consists of keyboard music, played (by Siebe Henstra) on two harpsichords and a clavichord. I confess that I listened to the former a lot more than the latter – and was particularly impressed by the diversity of sonorities and harmonies Weckmann found in his eight sonatas. The playing is exemplary, and anyone unfamiliar with Weckmann's music should not be shy of trying it – La Fenice and Henstra's keen advocacy of it should be enough to convince anyone!

BC

Guerra amorosa Georg Nigl bar, Luca Pianca lute & baroque guitar, Vittorio Ghielmi gamba 62' 09"

passacaille / musica vera 946

Caccini, Doni, Ferrari, Handel, Legrenzi, Monteverdi, Norcombe, Paolo, Purcell, Luigi Rossi

Georg Nigl was a member of the Vienna Boys Choir. This recital of airs with some instrumental interludes reveals a voice of enormous range – of colour as much as anything else. Every song is imbued with a character of its own. He is not afraid to throw himself into Purcell (at one point even imitating a regional accent!), and none of Caccini or Monteverdi's virtuosic writing is beyond him – far from it! I admit that I was slightly dubious at the outset, fearing the "gimmicks" might become tedious, but his style is nothing so trite – these are masterful pieces of characterisation. There are a couple of oddities, though, not the least of them the decision to programme *Lascia ch'io pianga*. How could two continuo players ever have imagined they could carry the orchestral material? And slightly bizarrely the texts are given only in their original languages except one which is translated into German. These aside, this is an enjoyable and commendable disc.

BC

Pianger di dolcezza Jill Feldman, Karl-Ernst Schröder chit, Mara Galassi harp
Et'cetera KTC1901 69' 19"

It is unclear from the packaging whether this is a re-release or a tribute to the lutenist, known to his friends and many fans, as it seems from the web tributes, as "Charlie", who died in 2003. Vocal works by Giulio Caccini and Sigismondo d'India are introduced by instrumental pieces by Castaldi, Kapsberger, Quagliati, Trabaci and anon in a very powerful and moving recital. I had been worried, I confess, by the idea of writing a review, since Jill Feldman had always somehow seemed to have been overshadowed by Agnes Mellon in the early recordings by Les arts florissants – possibly more dramatic, but less "beautiful" and occasionally with an edgy tone. Such concerns were soon swept away as I was drawn into a world of high emotions and ravishing music. I think my favourite sequence on the disc begins with a *Capriccio* by Castaldi, then Caccini's *Belle rose porporine* (a sprightly dancelike setting, with high harp accompaniment) followed by d'India's heart-breaking *Ma che? Squallido e oscuro*. Elsewhere I felt the embellishments in the prints were a little overpowering (if remarkably neatly navigated by Feldman), here was raw emotion – and here an especially poignant experience. If you don't know the repertoire, buy this – there could be no finer introduction!

BC

"Venice 1625" Maurice Steger & Ensemble (67' 30")

harmonia mundi HMC 902024

Works by Castello, Fontana, Merula, Piccinini, S. Rossi, B. Storace & Uccellini

The music on this CD, subtitled *Sonate concertate in stile moderno*, is by composers who were active in Venice or whose music was published there during the first thirty years of the 17th century. Most of it was originally designated as being for violin but transfers well here to the recorder. Three *symphonie* by Uccellini make good use of the supporting group of violins, recorders, bass instruments, organ and a variety of plucked continuo, while a smaller ensemble is used for the solo sonatas. Maurice Steger has produced a varied and colourful programme which demonstrates the expressive capabilities of the recorder, full of virtuosity, rhetoric and drama. Just occasionally the virtuosity strays over the boundary into the too fast, with his remarkable articulation fired at the listener like machine-gun bullets, but otherwise Steger and his ensemble play with style and passion and really exploit the opportunities which this music provides.

Victoria Helby

LATE BAROQUE

The first five items will be reviewed in the next issue: I'm not the only person who has been very busy! CB

Bach *Aus der Tieffen* Katherine Fuge, Carlos Mena, Hans Jörg Mammel, Stephan MacLeod, Ricercar Consort, Philippe Pierlot 68'
Mirare MIR057
BWV 4, 131, 182

Bach *Cantatas*, Vol. 42 Rachel Nicholls, Robin Blaze, Gerd Türk, Peter Kooij SATB, Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki 75' 24"
BIS BIS-SACD-1711
BWV 13, 16, 32, 72

Bach *Town Council Election Cantatas* Soloists, Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra & Choir 62' 37"
Challenge Classics CC72287
BWV 69, 119, 120

Bach *h-Moll-Messe* BWV 232 La Petite Bande, Sigiswald Kuijken 102' 02"
Challenge Classics CC72316

Bach *Musikalische Opfer* BWV 1079 Ton Koopman and members of the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra 57' 03"
Challenge Classics CC72309

Bach *Triosonatas for organ* BWV 525-530 Reine-Marie Verhagen rec, Tini Mathot org & hpscd 67' 36"
Challenge Classics CC72314

There have been many arrangements for other instruments of Bach's organ Trio Sonatas, but this one replaces just one of the organ's melodic lines with recorders, retaining the organ (or, less successfully, the harpsichord) for two of the three voices, plus some harmonic infilling. The organ used is a chamber organ with a relatively well-behaved reed stop which seemed a little out of place in the aural tapestry. The most effective movements are those where the trio structure is respected, letting the listener appreciate the difference between the way in which the recorder (and a voice flute) and organ use articulation. Andrew Benson-Wilson

21st Century Bach *Complete organ works* Vol 1. John Scott Whiteley (1774 Stumm organ, Amorbach, Bavaria and 1722 Trost organ, Waltershausen)
Signum Vision SIGDVD003

Readers may have watched some of the late night BBC television broadcasts of the 21st century Bach organ series – normally either single pieces or a small group lasting about 15/20 minutes. A sequence of these (from series 3 of the

broadcasts) has now been collected together for what is billed as Vol 1 of a complete Bach series on DVD, although I have a feeling that two DVDs have already been issued under a different label of series one and two of the TV broadcasts. The format is the same as the TV versions, with each piece prefaced by Damien Hirst's opening image of wasps flying around Bach's head and the rather sinister walk down the church by the organist, dressed in a long black cloak and dark glasses portraying an image of organists that would send most people cowering behind the sofa. At the end of each piece, the reverse happens – the organist is filmed walking out of the church (occasionally by a different route to the one he took to get in) and all the credits roll. It is such a shame that this wasn't edited into a continuous recital, without the distraction of the opening and closing credits and antics. I am afraid that this leads me to seek out further oddities – the organist always arrives, for instance, with a greatcoat on, but we never see him taking it off before he plays and although his brief case is visible next to the organ bench, he arrives and leaves the church without it. Distractions!

The camera work is extraordinary, with swooping shots giving close-ups of every aspect of the organist's face and hands, his playing, and the instrument itself. A further distraction was trying to work out just how they did it – only three cameramen are credited. As for the playing, there is much of interest in John Scott Whiteley's performances but there are times when his seems to display a lack of knowledge of Bach performance scholarship and historic instruments. Some of the questions during his rather awkward interview with the distinguished Bach scholar, Christoph Wolff, rather reinforce this impression. His interpretations, ornaments and registrations are at times rather individualistic with ornaments in particular sometimes getting in the way of, rather than enhancing, Bach's musical line. Registrations for individual pieces are given but, curiously, no overall specifications of the two organs, the first of which, with its 1868 Steinmeyer and 1982 Klais restorations, would probably not be considered by most *EMR* readers as an authentic 'historic' instrument. With these reservations, I would however commend this series for the insight it gives to the technical and mechanical implications of making music on the organ. If it brings a wider audience to this rather isolated and introspective world, all to the good. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach *Organ Works* Vol 6 Helga Schauerte (2007 Thomas organ, L'église réformée, Strasbourg)
Syrius SYR141421

The biggest interest of this CD is that it includes the recently re-discovered Bach Chorale Fantasia on *Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns hält*, found last year amongst some recent acquisitions of manuscripts from the Rust collection by the University Museum of Halle. Formerly the fragment BWV Anh. II 71, it is now BWV 1128.* It is very reminiscent of Buxtehude's chorale fantasias, with its line-by-line treatment of the theme, echo sections, word painting, snatches of learned counterpoint and the occasional flourish. Also included is the rarely recorded (or played) setting of the *Te Deum*, *Herr Gott, dich loben wir* (BWV 725), a 10 minute sequence of short verses that could test the patience of the most devoted Bach fan. Although both works make for a fascinating CD, and are well played, I have some doubts about the pacing of the faster works, which occasionally have a slightly unsettling sense of acceleration. Although little information about the organ is given, it appears to be a new instrument by a Strasbourg firm and suggest the influence of the Thuringian organ builder, Trost, whose organs Bach was familiar with. Andrew Benson-Wilson

*You can find a score by googling Bach BWV 1128

Bach *Leipzig Chorales*. Lorenzo Ghielmi (1991 Ahrend organ, San Simpliciano Basilica Milan) 110' 33" (2 CDs)
Passacaille 954

Although some *EMR* readers would prefer the use of an historic organ, this is a fine recording of the Ahrend organ in Milan huge San Simpliciano basilica, played with musical conviction by Lorenzo Ghielmi, the basilica's organist. Although given the most recently acceptable title of the 'Leipzig' chorales, Ghielmi includes all of the originally entitled 'Eighteen' chorales (the last one, at least, now reckoned to be additional to the original collection), together with the powerful Italianate *Toccata Adagio & Fuga* in C. Ghielmi's interpretations are sensitive and musical, with a gentle sense of rhetoric applied within a steady pulse. The modified Werkmeister III temperament brings a degree of key colour to some of the works and the acoustic adds considerably to the colour of the organ, although the mixtures can sound a little brittle. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach *Goldberg Variations* Kenneth Weiss, hpscd 77' 54"
Satirino 091

It is hard to believe that this is a live performance (recorded 2008 in Pau): there are no obvious blips or audience noise and the performance is always completely assured. In fact, I prefer the harpsichord sound and recording quality

here to that on Weiss's 2006 Harmonia Mundi recording. He plays here a 2006 'ravalement' of a late 17th-century French-style harpsichord made in 1977 by Philippe Humeau, which sounds just right for this music, helping Weiss to bring out its many French features. The interpretation is pretty much as on the earlier disc, with Weiss very successfully navigating his way through the variety of styles and technical complexities. It is always rhythmically tight but never boring and there is a great sense of unity and drive provided by the live performance. There may be more virtuoso or idiosyncratic versions available but this one strikes the right balance for me and I would highly recommend it. The booklet notes have to be downloaded from, or consulted on, Satirino's website. *Noel O'Regan*

Bach, *Inventions and Sinfonies* Cristiano Holtz, clavichord 68' 11"
Hortus 052

Holtz plays on a copy of a Silbermann 1755 clavichord in Strasbourg which mostly works very well for these pieces; he also adds five other short teaching pieces. The playing is always highly intelligent and Holtz characterises individual pieces very well, bringing out the contrapuntal lines with lots of subtlety. The more galant of the sinfonias don't work quite so well, especially nos. 5, 9 and 15. Sinfonia 9 in particular is overthumped and loses much of its drifting chromatic character; ornaments, too, can sound a bit forced and over-emphasised. Recording a clavichord is not easy and this is maybe miked a bit too closely, emphasising the percussive at the expense of the resonant; but in the flowing linear counterpoint of many of these pieces, especially in the two-part inventions, it comes off very well indeed. *Noel O'Regan*

J. S. Bach *Inventionen und Sinfonien, Französische Suite V* Till Fellner piano ECM 2043 (68' 13")

This was like a (slightly scary) trip down Memory Lane, since French Suite No. 5 was a set work at school and I spent two years at university tearing my hair out, trying to emulate the two- and three-part inventions. Actually, being quite a sad individual, I do still occasionally sit down with a random theme and compose that sort of thing for pure enjoyment: JSB would be proud of me – for trying, at least! Being played on a modern piano means this CD is not really our sort of thing, but Fellner at least eschews the piano's ability to colour notes in a more Romantic way, and any such nod to HIP should be applauded. *BC*

J. S. Bach *The Cello Suites BWV 1007-1012* Sigiswald Kuijken violoncello da spalla Accent ACC24196 135' 59" (2 CDs)

I rather cruelly played this to a couple of cello-playing friends and asked their opinions, without telling them anything about the instrument being used. I was very impressed that they both said that it sounded like a quarter-sized cello ("There is just a hint of a lack of depth to the sound, and a lot of resonance"), and one of them very perceptively added, "Whoever is playing must have started off as a violinist – this is *not* a cellist playing". This just goes to show what an amazing organ the human ear is! That said, their comments hardly discredit the theory that the suites were written to be played on such an instrument (which Kuijken goes to some lengths to justify in his booklet note), nor his performances. The Cello Suites will never rival Bach's solo violin works (in my mind, at least) for their eloquence and lyricism, but these interpretations have forced me to re-think many previous versions that I have heard – which can only be a good thing. *BC*

Bodinus *Musicalisches Divertissement IV* Toutes Suites, Marianne R. Pfau dir 58' 50"
Genuin Musikproduktion GEN 89528

Another composer to add to your list of lesser-knowns with an anniversary in 2009: Sebastian Bodinus (c.1700-1758). He was initially a promising singer and oboist, but breathing problems drove him to learn the violin, which he mastered well enough to publish several books of solo sonatas. He seems not to have led a particularly happy life (despite the boundless energy and charm of the six trio sonatas for oboes on this disc) and died in an asylum. Toutes Suites are a German group of three (yes three!) oboists, bassoon, violone and harpsichord. The oboists swap roles and take turns about so that the music is equally shared – it's no disrespect to them that I say I could not really tell the difference between one line-up and another; I suspect that's actually the supreme compliment. The real winner here is Bodinus – the only previous CD worthy of mention is the cpo set of the third part of the same publication (six delightful quartets), so this is a genuinely welcome addition to the catalogue. *BC*

Couperin *Ténèbres du Premier Jour* Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr, Emanuel Mandrin 65' 29"
Ambronay AMY018
Music by Couperin, Charpentier & Lambert

This quasi-liturgical sequence introduces Couperin's Tenebrae lessons with plain-

chant and faux-bourbons, separates them with Charpentier's Tenebrae responsories for the same day (though strangely excludes the third, though there's plenty of room on the disc), and concludes with Michel Lambert's simple *Miserere*. A notable feature is the use of a 'real' organ, which allows for much more colour in the continuo than is generally heard. As the note rather laconically remarks, 'it was thought unnecessary to include any other instruments'. In some ways it is a shame that the programme does not have a more arresting beginning, both in content and performance – the chant is less than perfectly blended – but the general concept is strong. It is particularly refreshing to hear the Couperin pieces in some kind of context rather than as a three movement suite. I do not much care for the sound of one of the solo sopranos but this is a programme that makes its effect as a whole and by means of its internal musical contrasts rather than by its details. As with the Charpentier mass I have reviewed above, there is much love in these performances. *David Hansell*

Feo Missa / Confitebor Anja Zigner, Dorothea Wagner, Dominika Hirschler, Tobias Hunger, Tobias Berndt SSATB, Sächsisches Vocalensemble, Batzdorfer Hofkapelle, Matthias Jung 58' 04"
cpo 777 333-2

This is one of my favourite recordings in this issue. The name of Francesco Feo (1667-1740) pops up time and again in the textbooks, but one rarely gets the chance to hear any of his music. Thanks to Herr Jung and his outstanding performers, we now know that his reputation is well-deserved, and we are left to wonder why it has taken so long for someone to explore his music. The disc is a little under an hour, so not much better value than the Hasse CD I write about below, but the contrast in style (and sound quality) is amazing; both works in the recital survive in Dresden, so were surely performed in the same space – perhaps these groups would like to turn their attentions to his music next? That would be wonderful! *BC*

Fiorenza *Concerto & Sonate Dolce & Tempesta*, Stefano Demicheli 66' 37"
Fuga Libera FUG549

Five of the six works on this disc are here recorded for the first time. The A minor Sinfonia for recorder, two violins and continuo is the exception, possibly because Neapolitan works for that line-up have long been popular. Fiorenza was, it seems, something of a livewire – the CD cover shows two servants almost coming to blows while their employers gesticulate

at one another, while a cleric looks on in a vain attempt to calm the situation. This seems to be an allegory for Fiorenza's violent nature and his disputes with a fellow teacher – ultimately, his pupils paid for a notary to convince the authorities to dismiss him, as they were afraid to attend lessons. Not even my worst violin teacher ever drew his sword on me! Set against this background, it is astonishing that the man wrote such attractive music, which is very well rendered by Dolce & Tempesta. There are four concertos (including one for three violins and continuo) and one violin sonata on the programme, each quite individual, despite all being in the four-movement *da chiesa* format. I hope the group will produce more fine recordings of his music. *BC*

Handel *Acis & Galatea* orch.
Mendelssohn Julia Kleiter, Christoph Prégardien, Michael Slattery, Wolf Matthias Friedrich STTB, NDR Choir, FestspielOrchester Göttingen, Nicholas McGegan 72' 48"
Carus 82.420

I expected to be suspicious of this, but the first solo for the trumpets (yes!) in the Sinfonia immediately convinced me. Mendelssohn's additions fit Handel's score so well that they feel an integral part of it. Only one link between movements seems a bit out-of-style on repetition (but I won't spoil it's first effect by saying where it is). The singing is excellent, as is the playing. My academic doubt is that Nic McGegan makes it sound more Handelian than Mendelssohn might have – though I'm not complaining. The edition is published (as is the recording) by Carus-Verlag: it is well worth investigating. Had the requested review copy of the score arrived, I would have commented on the score as well as the CD in detail. A pity Covent Garden didn't try it to cover three of the anniversaries in one evening: it would have enlivened the entertainment rather more effectively than the inelegant dance! *CB*

Handel *Alexander's Feast, Ode for St Cecilia's Day* Simone Kermes, Virgil Hartinger, Konstantin Wolff STB, Kölner Kammerchor, Collegium Carthusianum, Peter Neumann 135' 34" (2 CDs)
Carus 83.434

These are two very enjoyable discs: Peter Neumann's direction is well-paced, and the Collegium Carthusianum is a sensitive band. The choir's English is good; the soloists are excellent, particularly Konstantin Wolff. There are some magic moments, for example 'What passion cannot music' in the *Ode*, where Neumann gives both soprano and cello

plenty of room to indulge. It's nice to have both odes to the power of music on one set, and this is a recommendable recording. *Katie Hawks*

Handel *Messiah* Carolyn Sampson, Daniel Taylor, Benjamin Hulett, Peter Harvey SATB, Kammerchor Stuttgart, Barockorchester Stuttgart, Frieder Bernius Carus 83.219 140' 11" (2 CDs)

This is a more spirited performance than either Cleobury's or Christophers', to quote recent examples; but it's still just another *Messiah*. The soloists are good, as are the choir and orchestra, but ultimately it is the standard version, standardly played. It's not even the new Carus edition made audible, which, with all the alternative settings, would be an interesting CD. *Katie Hawks*

I tried to interest Riched Hickox in such a proposal a couple of decades ago, with no success. Now, with OUP and Carus available, there is no problem in availability of material. *CB*

Handel *Chandos Anthems*, Emma Kirkby, Iestyn Davies, James Gilchrist, Neal Davies SATB, Trinity College Choir, Academy of Ancient Music, Stephen Layton 66' 09"
Hyperion CDA67737

This is an elegant disc, with three lovely Chandos Anthems (O praise the Lord with one consent, Let God arise, My song shall be always). The choir and AAM are on good form, and there is a fine line up of soloists. An enjoyable disc; perhaps more Chandos Anthems will follow? *Katie Hawks*

Handel *Alcina Arias and Suites* Christina Schäfer, Berliner Barock Solisten, Rainer Kussmaul 73' 54"
Avi 8553143

Alcina is, without doubt, one of Handel's best operas, so a disc of its arias has a certain quality-guarantee. This one, however, was rather a disappointment. Christina Schäfer is a fine soprano, but her *Alcina* is lacking in depth. The disc ends with one of Morgana's arias (the beautiful 'Credete al mio dolore'): it should have ended with *Alcina*'s 'Mi restano', final and devastating. But just as, on this disc, 'Mi restano' was not final, neither was it devastating. In all, although the Berliner Barocker is a great band, it's not a disc worth getting, not least since you'd be better off with the complete opera. *Katie Hawks*

Handel *La Diva: Arias for Cuzzoni* Simone Kermes, Lautten Compagny Berlin, Wolfgang Katschner 69' 48"
Berlin Classics 0016422BC

The Handel festivities have brought out a steady stream of recital discs, some of which are more successful than others. This is one of the more successful. The slightly fawning booklet note by David Vickers explains that these arias are a selection of Kermes' favourites, which all happen to have been written for Cuzzoni, thus happily providing a unifying theme. Happily also the arias are not only the famous ones from *Giulio Cesare* and *Rodelinda* but are also from less well-known operas such as *Siroe* or *Admeto*. In fact, the two arias from *Rodelinda* are Handel's original version, which he revised (in the case of 'Ombre piante') or replaced (in the case of 'Ahi perché, giusto ciel', which became 'Se'l mio duol'), and it is rather nice to have these on record, although one can, despite their gorgeousness, see why Handel made his changes. It took a couple of arias to warm to her voice, but she really is good, and does have an impressive tessitura; she is also ably accompanied by the Lautten Compagny. As recital discs go, this is worth having, but it would be even nicer if they actually recorded one of the operas from which the arias were taken. *Katie Hawks*

Handel *Un Opera Immaginaria* Various artists 77'
Virgin 50999 2672802 5

Marc Minkowski's charming compilation of the best of Rameau for *Une Symphonie Imaginaire* is one of my favourite discs, so I approached this with interest. Having listened to it, however, I think it'll just gather dust on my shelves. The rather incomprehensible booklet note tries to make a case for this compilation, which is in three 'acts' and spaced on the CD so as to make it seem a continuous drama. Except that it doesn't work. First of all, there's no libretto, so one can't see how things fit together and why one aria has been juxtaposed with another. Secondly, although the compiler seems to have taken account of moods, etc (so the notes claim), he hasn't thought about juxtaposition of keys. Thirdly, there are 13 different singers and 9 orchestras/directors, making for hugely different interpretations and thus a very bumpy ride. This disc is mutton dressed as lamb, merely a method for Virgin of cheap recycling. *Katie Hawks*

Handel *Fireworks Music, Water Music* The King's Consort, Robert King 67' 30"
Hyperion Helios CDH55375

A welcome re-issue by Hyperion onto its budget label of these two favourites. The *Fireworks*, notwithstanding being the proudly-boasted premier on period wind instruments (the standard wind-and-strings version was Handel's revision, as

George II, obsessed with all things martial, insisted on what was essentially a military band), is not as imposing as it might be, but is a listenable-to performance anyway. The *Water Music* is a pleasant performance, and for a fiver, you can't really go wrong. *Katie Hawks*

Handel *Concerti grossi, Overtures* B'Rock Et'cetera KTC 1383 55' 36"

Op. 3 No. 4, Op. 6 No. 1, Overtures to *Il pastor fido*, *Flavio & Lotario*

B'Rock is a Belgian ensemble whose previous CDs I have thoroughly enjoyed, and this recital of Handel orchestral music is no exception. Rather than record a complete set of concerti they have opted to select one from each of the two printed sets and the overtures to three of his dramatic works, and they play them with flair and drama. I suppose it is difficult for ensembles to come up with original programmes when putting together a disc that might sell well during an anniversary year such as this, but you can rely on B'Rock to transform whatever they record into something special – if you only plan on buying one Handel this year, you could do a lot worse than buy this! *BC*

Handel *12 Solo Sonatas, op. 1* Academy of Ancient Music (Richard Egarr *hpscd*, Pavlo Beznoziuk *vln*, Rachel Brown *fl*, *rec*, Frank de Bruine *ob*) 146' 20" (2 CDs) Harmonia Mundi HMU 907465.66

This double CD set contains not just the twelve Opus 1 sonatas published by Walsh in the early 1730s but also two violin sonatas, op. 1 nos. 10 and 12 from the earlier unofficial so-called Roger edition, which are completely different from the equivalent numbers in the Walsh edition. (All four are probably spurious.) There is also an oboe version of sonata 5 found in a manuscript where it is entitled "Hautb: Solo del Sr. Hendel". More information about the various editions is given in the notes by Richard Egarr. On the grounds that the Walsh edition is "with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord or Bass Violin" and that many of Handel's manuscripts state that the accompaniment is for Cembalo, the performers have chosen to use harpsichord continuo alone for this recording. This takes a little getting used to, and inevitably emphasises the role of the solo instruments. These are stylishly played by the members of the Academy of Ancient Music, Pavlo Beznoziuk, Rachel Brown and Frank de Bruine. I particularly enjoyed Rachel Brown's recorder playing, but it was Frank de Bruine's wonderful oboe sound and commanding performance that really caught my attention. Apparently this is the first recording to keep to the

instrumental designations contained in the Walsh edition. *Victoria Helby*

Handel *Harpsichord Suites (1720)* Jory Vinikour 127' 47" (2 CDs) Delos DE 3394.

Jory Vinikour's playing is both authoritative and exhilarating on this double-CD set which adds the Chaconne in G major and the Sarabande and variations in D minor to the eight suites. He plays on a harpsichord by John Philips based on one by Johann Heinrich Gräbner of 1739. Going down to DD in the bass it has a great richness of tone and organ-like colours which add gravitas and variety to Handel's music. Vinikour plays with the right mixture of rigour and improvisatory flair to make it always utterly convincing and often breathtaking. There is some very nice notes *inégales* playing in the French-style movements and it is equally compelling in the Italianate and German ones. This sets a new standard in Handel playing on the harpsichord and is most highly recommended. *Noel O'Regan*

Handel *Overtures* John Kitchen (1755 Kirckman harpsichord from the Raymond Russell Collection) 79' 50" Delphian DCD34053

Overtures to *Athalia*, *Il Pastor Fido*, *Occasional Oratorio*, *Radamisto*, *Rinaldo*, *Samson*, *Saul & Teseo*, and suites HWV 450 in G & 454 in A

This CD was mentioned in glowing terms during a recent Radio 3 CD review programme. My experience of Handel is more computer keyboard than harpsichord and I'm ashamed to admit that I don't think I've played any of these works in their original form as a violinist either. Handel's music, as the performer's booklet note says, is resilient enough to withstand transcription, and whether or not these are the composer's own arrangements, they fit very nicely on harpsichord. John Kitchen uses all the available sounds of the double-manual Kirckman instrument in the overtures. For the two keyboard suites, he plays on a "modest" Thomas Barton instrument of 1709, which despite appearances produces a luscious tone. As a champion of the instruments in the Raymond Russell Collection in Edinburgh, John Kitchen's previous recordings have drawn universal praise. This latest addition to his discography is destined, I am sure, to enhance his formidable reputation. *BC*

Handel *Organ Concertos Op 7* Academy of Ancient Music, Richard Egarr 127' 35" (2 SACDs)

harmonia mundi USA HMU 807447.48

Richard Egarr follows up his earlier Opus 4 organ concerto set with the Academy of

Ancient Music with a look at the lesser known Opus 7. I referred to his very individual style of performance in my Opus 4 review – this is even more to the fore in this set. I rather hope that most *EMR* will find his antics way over the top for a serious CD. He might just get away with the cheeky-chappy approach with a friendly concert audience, but I fear that the thought of repeated listening to some of his more bizarre interpretations will frankly make this a recording that I am unlikely to return to all that often. I am really not convinced that this playing is in a style that Handel himself would have commended, or that his contemporary audiences would have appreciated. That is a shame, because these works are not heard enough, and the playing of the Academy is excellent. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Hasse *Te Deum, Gloria, Regina coeli* Dresdner Kapellknaben, Dresdner Staatskapelle, Konrad Wagner 47' 46" (rec 1998) Christophorus Entrée CHE 0139-2

This is an interesting recital, although slightly short on music at under 50 minutes. Hasse's D minor mass (from which the Gloria is taken) was written – along with the Te Deum – for the consecration of the Catholic Court Chapel in 1751. These are modern instrument performances, with a finely balanced choir who sing well and are accompanied quite stylishly. As usual with such things, though, the soloists (as was expected of them at the time, and in such circumstances) are a little overpowering, and the accompaniments that little bit more self-indulgent. Useful to have the music available, but with some reservations. *BC*

Janitsch *Podróż do źródeł (Return to sources)* Concerto Polacco, Marek Toporowski 68' 54"

For further information and sample, google "Janitsch Toporowski"

Janitsch *Sonate da camera Volume 1* Notturmo, Christopher Palameta 67' 55" ATMA Classique ACD2 2593

What are the chances of that happening? Two CDs of music by the same neglected composer being issued at the same time! I'm not complaining, you understand – I am a BIG fan of Janitsch's *galant* output, mostly because of the rich sonorities he extracts in his quartets. The problem with the surviving output is keeping track of it – let's just say that there are at least four sonatas called "op. 5", for example.

Dealing with the issues in the order in which they arrived (and in which they are listed above), I must say that I enjoyed both very much. The Polish CD opts to use viola da gamba in four of the works

recorded (as well as violincello piccolo as a viola pomposa substitute in one of them), which gives the ensemble a distinctive sound. The first piece in their programme is scored for all strings (choice of instrumentation seems vague across Janitsch's oeuvre) and although it is pleasant enough, I longed for a woodwind instrument.

Notturmo opt for violas *da braccio* in their recital, and they favour woodwinds, producing some really luxurious sounds – their version of the E minor sonata called op. 5B is richest of all with oboe d'amore, two violas and continuo. The playing is superlative, and the recorded sound/ambience matches. This is a very fine recording indeed and I look forward to joining Notturmo on a journey that promises to reveal even more gems among Janitsch's output. BC

Locatelli *Opus 4* The Raglan Baroque Players, Elizabeth Wallfisch 98' 28"
Hyperion Dyad CDD22064 (2 CDs)

I loved this first time around, and I've really enjoyed revisiting the set. Locatelli's music is never less than exciting and with such wonderful playing, who would not be impressed. There's little of the breathtaking virtuosity of his *Arte del Violino*, but Elizabeth Wallfisch and her colleagues are in top form. The concerti are far more substantial works than the *Introduzioni*, and include one "in imitation of hunting horns" and the rightly celebrated concerto for four violins. Highly recommended – again! BC

Mudge *Six Concertos in Seven Parts* capriccio barockorchester 75' 41"
Tudor 7173

This is a delight! Perhaps it is because Mudge left a relatively small amount of music that we do not hear it more often in concerts (we Brits are terrible when it comes to championing our own composers!) Each of the six concertos (one with obbligato trumpet, another for organ, and four in the Corellian mould) is neatly constructed with nicely contrasted thematic material. The performers are a Basel-based orchestra so democratic that the violinists are listed alphabetically and no fewer than nine of them take turns playing the concertino parts. There is some beautiful ornamentation from all concerned, and together they produce a radiant and full sound which will be the envy of a lot of groups. The CD also includes Mudge's *Non nobis Domine*, which had me almost jump out of my seat when the singing started – it's a very neat arrangement and a fitting climax to a fine recital. BC

If you want to try them, facsimile parts are available from the Early Music Company

Gottlieb Muffat *Componimenti Musicali per il Cembalo* Mitzi Meyerson
Glossa GCD 921804 (150' 7", 2 CDs)

These two generous disks contain the seven suites from Muffat's undated *Componimenti*, played on a copy by Keith Hill of the Russell Collection's c. 1769 Taskin. The younger Muffat had his own quirky style, synthesised from various sources and, as the CD booklet points out, his music was the source of much borrowing by Handel. All the quirkiness is splendidly brought out by Myerson's spirited and intelligent playing. She differentiates the character of the various dance movements extremely well and gets the most out of the harpsichord at all times, especially in the wonderfully flamboyant *Ciaccona* of over eight minutes which makes up the whole of Suite no. VII – rather like Frescobaldi's *Cento Partite* in its scope. She is a persuasive advocate and this disc can certainly be recommended.

Noel O'Regan

A. Scarlatti *Euridice dall'Inferno / La concettione della Beata Vergine* Ars Lyrica Houston 57' 41"

Naxos 8.570950

Also includes: Cello Sonata No. 2 and Toccata in A for harpsichord

I'm surprised by the programming and labelling of this disc. Although it includes an interesting selection of Scarlatti's music, the Eurydician cantata is dramatic (and sung in a dramatic fashion), the larger Latin piece is a far more substantial work. From a musical point of view, and performance-wise, I think I preferred the oratorio as well; and while I'm sure others will much to enjoy here, I'm afraid I found the voices less stylish than the players. The two instrumental works are very interesting – the cello sonata is an impressively virtuosic four-movement work, and the Toccata in A is worthy of his son's better-known output. BC

A. Scarlatti *La Giuditta* Sophie Landy
Giuditta, Raphaël Pichon *Nutrice*, Carl Ghazarossian *Oloferne*, Ensemble Baroque de Nice, Gilbert Bezzina 73' 58"
Dynamic CDS 596

I was slightly disappointed by this CD until I realized that it was a live recording. Where the occasional lack of ensemble in the band was disconcerting (the singers somehow managed to negotiate their way through what we shall call "flexi-timing") I'm afraid the work is not that strong that I can imagine myself coming back to hear it again by choice. Casting the "nurse" as a countertenor, though a fairly common practice, was not – for me – a successful choice and, to be honest, the other vocalists were a little too theatrical; I concede

that even oratorios have messages to get over, and I wonder if I would have reacted differently had I been present at the performances; but on CD it was just a little overdone for my liking. BC

Terradellas *Artaserse* Anna Maria Panzarella *Artaserse*, Céline Ricci *Arbace*, Marina Comparato *Mandane*, Sunhae Im *Semira*, Agustín Prunell-Friend *Artabano*, Mariví Blasco *Megabise*, RCOC-Orquesta, Juan Bautista Otero, 174' 35" (3 CDs)
RCOC Records RCOC 0800.3

'Terradellas's *Artaserse*, Jommelli's *Didone*, Traetta's *Ifigenia*... contain scenes unsurpassed in the history of music drama'. Ever since reading Paul Henry Lang's startling words many years ago, it's been a long-standing ambition to put them to the test, but only now is it possible in the case of Domènec Terradellas, Barcelona-born, but in every musical respect a fully-fledged Neapolitan. His opera seria *Artaserse*, however, was composed not for Naples, but Venice's S Giovanni Grisostomo theatre, where it was first staged in 1744. Structurally, it reveals Terradellas as a traditionalist, with arias in developed *da capo* form, only one *accompagnato*, and a single duet. Where he does look forward is in boldly assertive and colourful orchestral writing that thrives on contrasts of dynamics, creating those touches of dramatic veracity praised by Lang.

Artaserse is indeed a fine work that deserves rather more than it gets here. Conductor Otero comes with a reputation for being less than faithful to the scores of the operas he revives, although I'm not in a position to say what he might have done here. But I do know that his anachronistic use of harp continuo, often in conjunction with plucked bass strings to produce a soggy Victorian sentimentality, is stylistically horribly jarring, as also is some outrageously inappropriate vocal ornamentation. With the exception of the excellent Panzarella and Sunhae Im, the cast is just serviceable for an opera whose virtuosic arias call for rather more; the dry recording imparts a hard edge to some of the voices. Anyone who, like me, has been waiting to assess a major Terradellas opera will find this worth investigating. But it could have been so much better in the hands of a Florio. Brian Robins

Telemann *Matthäus-Passion* 1746 Maria Zedelius, Alison Browner, Hans Peter Blochwitz, Anton Scharinger, Wolfgang Schmidt, Konzertchor Darmstadt, Kammerorchester Darmstadt, Wolfgang Seeliger 74' 49" (rec 1984)
Christophorus entrée series CHE 0141-2

As modern performances of this repertoire go, this is not without its

merits. The soloists are mostly restrained (Christus does occasionally err into Wotan), the choir sing neatly – although they could project with a little more confidence, I think – and the modern band play precisely. As with the Hasse recording, it's the slow movements that tend to be weakest. BC

Telemann *Ich will den Kreuzweg gerne gehen* – Passion Cantatas Klaus Mertens, Accademia Daniel, Shalev Ad-El 69' 53" cpo 777 299-2

This is the latest in cpo's wonderful tributes to Telemann's music. Unlike most recording companies, who have turned more to the cult of the virtuoso performer (and, of course, you can be beautiful and not *that* talented and still have a career), cpo has continued to explore the highways and by-ways of baroque repertoire, often in conjunction with enterprising radio stations, looking for interesting work for their resident ensembles. Here we have a five cantatas for Passiontide, which were possibly written for Telemann to sing himself, and what a rich variety of arias he writes! A seasoned interpreter of such music, Klaus Mertens is in his element, characterising his readings much in the same way the composer illustrates the phraseology and imagery of the texts. Accademia Daniel continue to impress, here single strings with woodwinds as required. The real star of the show, though, is Telemann – anyone still in any doubt that he can write anything other than trite recorder sonatas should listen to the first aria of the first cantata, "Ich bin betrübt bis in den Tod": I defy them not be moved! BC

Telemann *III Trietti metodichi e III Scherzi* Parnassi musici 63' 21" cpo 777 301-2

Telemann's "Little methodical trios" are didactic, in the sense that the composer tried to demonstrate how musicians could add ornaments to two melodic lines without getting in one another's way. Like the Scherzi, they all follow the fast-slow-fast pattern, and both violinists have an equally share of the interest. Parnassi musici continue their utterly persuasive advocacy of Telemann's chamber music with very fine playing, lyrical and punchy by turns. The CD is filled out with two quartets, one for flute, violin, bassoon and continuo in D minor and the other taken from the *Six Quatuors* of 1733, played here on pairs of violins, and bassoons with continuo. I'm afraid I was slightly disappointed by the last work, as I'd expected to hear more of the reedy sonority. No matter, though – this is a disc every Telemanniac should own. BC

Telemann *Quatuors Parisiens Vol. 1* John Holloway *vl*, Linde Brunmayr *fl*, Lorenz Duftschmid *gamba*, Ulrike Becker *cello*, Lars-Ulrik Mortensen *hpscd* (58' 35") cpo 777 375-2

Working through a published sequence, you would perhaps imagine that this CD consisted of works from a single set, but you'd be mistaken – it has two works from two separate prints, nos. 2 and 3 from the 1730 Hamburg *Quadri* and nos. 2 and 6 of the *Nouveaux Quatuors* of eight years later. Personally I don't have any problem with that approach, and it would certainly be churlish when reviewing such splendid, revelatory performances to complain. I'm not too familiar with the names of the flautist or the cellist, but they are certainly not out of place alongside the three other luminaries – this is HIP at its very highest level. To be fair, Mr T does give them plenty of beautiful material to work with – I still can't understand why he's not more highly thought of! Let's see if this makes Radio 3's Record Review of a Saturday morning. Mind you, we had baroque music at the beginning of July, so we'll maybe have to wait until Christmas. BC

Vivaldi *The Four Seasons* Christina Day Martinson *vl*, Boston Baroque, Martin Pearlman 59' 26" Telarc DC-80698 + Geminiani *Concerti 4 & 12* after Corelli

I'm sure readers will not be surprised to read that my heart sank when I saw this: "Not *another* Four Seasons..." was my instinctive response. The truth be told, though, this is *not* just another Four Seasons – Christina Day Martinson is a wonderfully agile and expressive violinist, and she is stylishly supported by Boston Baroque. They complete their programme with two of Geminiani's very clever adaptations of Corelli's solo violin sonatas, including the always popular *La Follia*. Although the Academy of Ancient Music have recorded the Geminiani, they are still rarely heard, so it is a real bonus to have them on this fine CD too. BC

Dolce mio ben: Italian cantatas and opera arias circa 1700 Maite Beaumont *mS*, Lautten Compagnie Berlin, Wolfgang Katschner 66' 51" Berlin Classics GOLD 0115231 Music by F. B. Conti, Fedeli, Gasparini, Magini, Mancini, Matteis jnr., Sarri

This re-release of a 2004 recital contains some of the most beautiful Italian opera and cantata extracts NOT by Handel that you are likely to hear this year. The Spanish mezzo, Maite Beaumont, is partnered by Lautten Compagnie of Berlin, a most versatile group that range

from early baroque music to collaborative projects with contemporary dance – their website www.lauttencompagnie.de is fascinating. Here a small group of single strings with two lutenists (one the director) accompany Beaumont through a loosely-spun tale of love and the results of its rejection. The music all survives in a library at Sondershausen, and deserves to be better known. If you missed this charming and beautiful disc last time, don't repeat your mistake! BC

Echoes from Poltava – music of war and peace Laude Novella & Insula Magica ELN Records ELNCD 0304 68' 32"

This CD is the result of a collaboration between a Swedish group and another from Siberia. The material dates from the first half of the 18th century when Russia and Sweden were frequently at war. The crushing defeat of the Swedes at Poltava in 1709 meant internment for those hundreds of soldiers fortunate enough to escape death. Where they were camped, they seemed to have enjoyed making music, judging by the materials that have survived. Interestingly an article on the very same subject appeared in a recent *Tidig Musik*. The music-making is appropriately diverse in style – the Siberian sopranos ring clean as bells, reminding me of a cross-over disc I reviewed here years ago called *Putnik*, while the men have that wonderfully deep resonance that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up; the contributions from the Swedish pair have a more domestic feel, with an intimacy that is entirely fitting to the CD's concept. There is music in both languages (as well as German) and texts are translated from Russian into Swedish and from both into English. Some of the texts are a bit bloodthirsty, but I suppose it was a war. A very interesting CD. BC

Fire Beneath My Fingers Musica Pacifica baroque ensemble 65' 50" Dorian DSL-90704 Sammartini *Concerto in F*, Tartini *Concerto in A D.91*, Vivaldi RV86, 98/570, 106 & 503

It has been a few years since I heard Musica Pacifica. The ensemble for this recording is slightly larger than I remember, having expanded to allow for a string band for the solo concerti. As well as three small-scale works by Vivaldi, the programme includes a violin concerto by Tartini with the always impressive Elizabeth Blumenstock as soloist, Michael McCraw is wonderful in Vivaldi's B flat bassoon concerto RV503, and Judith Linsenberg is typically impressive in Sammartini's well-known concerto for soprano recorder. The CD's title "Fire Beneath My Fingers" is entirely appropriate – there are lots and lots and

lots of notes! If you're looking for something slightly out of the ordinary, this extremely well-played set of virtuosic material is well worth exploring. BC

The Musicians' Table Ensemble Battistin
ABC 476 6996 49' 49"
Philidor, Boismortier, Rebel

This is the fifth and final instalment in the Australian-funded/researched/performed series *The Perfection of Music*, which has explored a wide variety of French chamber music 1690-1750. Though none of the pieces could be described as well-known they are by composers of repute and are all enjoyable, even if the Rebel sonata is tame by comparison with his greatest modern hit, *Les élémens*. The programme is attractively varied, including two works in which the keyboard is silent (a duo for violins and a cello sonata played with just cello continuo) and very crisply played. Tempos are sensible, ensemble is good and there is much evidence of the essential *bon goût*. The booklet notes (English only) are thorough and engagingly written – a worthy complement to the music – but one does wonder about the commercial sense of a full price CD that only plays for 50 minutes. However, a hunt for a discount will be well worthwhile. David Hansell

Il pianto di Maria – The Virgin's Lament
Bernarda Fink, Il Giardino Armonico,
Giovanni Antonini 60' 54"
Decca L'oiseau lyre 478 1466
Conti, Ferrandini, Marini, Monteverdi,
Pisendel & Vivaldi

It's not every day you find a CD with music by Biagio Marini and Georg Pisendel, not to mention Ferrandini and Conti. The centrepieces of this loosely-bound programme of works with Marian connections (Marini and Pisendel make it into the list by very tenuous links) are Bernarda Fink's powerful and captivating accounts of Monteverdi's *Pianto della Madonna* (some rather unnecessary cadential flourishes from the gambist notwithstanding) and the work that gives the CD its title. The translator of the booklet note surely did not intend the following sentence about the work's authorship to read the way it does: "In any case, a possible attribution to Handel can be discounted on stylistic grounds as well: it is a remarkably original piece of work..." So Handel was never original? He slips up elsewhere, too, saying Pisendel's two-movement sonata was used in a paraliturgical service, rather than "served a paraliturgical function", though I would argue that the sonatas that abound in the Dresden archives were part of the liturgy. As one would expect with Il Giardino Armonico, the notes on

the printed page really come to life; whether or not you like the other-worldly sounds with which Vivaldi's *Concerto Madrigalesco* emerges from the final chord of the Monteverdi is a matter of personal taste. I enjoyed a lot of the disc (and indeed listened to it several times) and any doubts about overdone interpretation were assuaged, mostly by the beauty of the singing and playing. BC

Iyái Jesucristo Música Temprana, Adrián Rodríguez Van der Spoel 71' 32"
Et cetera KTC 1384
Araujo, Icho, Nosa, Semo, Zipoli & anon

This is a strange mixture of a recital, although I wonder if that isn't a fair reaction, since the variety of music (and the performing styles) must have been typical of worship in Bolivia at the time. The programme opens with a very impressive setting of *Beatus vir* by Dominico Zipoli, which contrasts a solo soprano with a choir of sopranos, altos and tenors only. It is impressive that local composers seem to have been encouraged to set translations and parodies of liturgical texts in their own language – a sort of Lutheran enlightened approach that one would not normally expect of the Catholic church. I'm not entirely sure why the Chiquitan *Stabat mater* is divided by another work (maybe it survives thus, but the booklet does not tell us). One thing is certain, though – the cultural exchange between the natives and their overlords bore real fruit, and this stylishly performed disc will enhance our understanding and appreciation of it. BC

Jan Wellem: Sacred music from the era of Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz-Neuburg (1658-1716) Norddeutscher Figuralchor, Neue Düsseldorf Hofmusik, Jörg Straube
Coviello Classics COD 20903 58' 38"
Music by Grua, & von Wilderer

Without any doubt this has been one of my favourite discs this time around. I'd heard of Carlo Pietro Grua – had even looked at MSS of some of his church music – but not of Johann Hugo von Wilderer. I also knew of the Nord-deutscher Figuralchor, having met some of its former members in the 1980s and even given concerts with them. Only the conductor now remains, but it's clear from the outset that he has maintained the high standard he'd set at the time I knew them (they had just won a series of choral competitions in Germany – which is no mean feat!) For this project they are fewer in number but certainly not lacking in power or projection or, to be honest, beauty of sound – what a choir! And what wonderful music! I absolutely love delving around in archives finding material just like this – written for single perfor-

mance and then cast aside and forgotten – yesterday's news, if you like. And so much of it is of such high quality. We have a wide range of pieces here, from a motet for soprano, alto, strings and continuo to a wonderful *Te Deum* with four trumpet parts – clearly Jan Wellem liked to celebrate! Simply a wonderful recording. BC

CLASSICAL

Haydn *Missa Cellensis* Lydia Teuscher, Marianne Beate Kielland, Markus Schäfer, Harry van der Kamp SATB, Anima Eterna, Jos van Immerseel 67' 51"
Carus Verlag Carus 83.247

Long better known as the *Missa Sanctae Caeciliae*, Haydn's *Missa Cellensis* is a *missa solemnis* composed in 1766 for the pilgrimage church of Mariazell. Scored for large forces including trumpets and drums, it's arguably the most imposing work Haydn had written up to this point, though the claim in the booklet that it is 'one of the best-known church music works of the 18th century' is rather stretching a point.

The present recording emanates from a live performance given in the Frauenkirche, Dresden before an uncannily silent audience. Van Immerseel employs relatively small forces, but given the generous acoustic of the Frauenkirche there is no want of impact from either chorus (four to a part) or orchestra, one of the major plusses being the very good balance obtained by the engineers. There are other positives, too. The performance is bright and lively, with incisive articulation from both strings and chorus in the quicker music, although ensemble among the sopranos is not always as good as it could be. The soloists, apart from the fine soprano, are not ideal, both men suffering from lapses of intonation at times.

Those who prefer boy choristers in this music will be happier with the Christ Church Oxford recording (Florilegium); despite the lack of discipline in places I would certainly still prefer it, not least for the quicker tempo in the 'Gratias' fugue, which van Immerseel drags lugubriously.

Brian Robins

J. Haydn *Acide* Bernard Richter *Acide*, Raffaella Milanese *Galatea*, Jennifer O'Loughlin *Glauce*, Iván Paley *Polifemo & Nettuno*, Adrineh Simonian *Tetide*, Haydn Sinfonietta Wien, Manfred Huss (69' 38")
BIS BIS-SACD-1812

At first sight the tragic story of *Acis* and *Galatea* might not seem the most obvious subject for a wedding. Yet such was the original purpose of Haydn's first Italian opera, composed as part of the lavish ceremonies that attended the nuptials in 1763 of the eldest son of Haydn's

employer, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy I. Needless to say, this festa teatrale was provided with a lieta fine and a final quartet extolling the merits of eternal fidelity. Four arias and most of the recitatives are lost, but a planned though ultimately unperformed revival from ten years later provides further material. It is a conflation of these two versions that is given here. Even though there is still insufficient left to provide a genuinely dramatic work, it seems fairly safe to say that although of considerable interest *Acide* is no masterpiece, while few are likely to concur with Manfred Huss' bizarre claim that Haydn's music is 'less superficially pleasant' than that which Gluck provided for his contemporaneous *Orfeo*. The performance is, in general terms satisfying, although the huge and cruelly demanding *da capo* for *Acide* understandably tests Richter, and Paley's Polifemo lacks authority. But Milanesi is affecting in the splendid *accompagnato* (from 1773) that follows the death of *Acide*, mezzo Simonian impresses in her single aria, and Huss draws admirably taut and spirited playing from his excellent band. Indispensable for Haydn specialists and well worth more general investigation.

Brian Robins

J. Haydn *Music for Prince Esterházy and The King of Naples* Haydn Sinfonietta Wien, Manfred Huss 341' 06" (6CDs for the price of 3)

BIS BIS-CD-1976/98

Scherzandi Hob. II:33-38; Baryton Octets Hob. X:1-6, 12; Concerti a Due Lire Hob. VIIh:1-5; Notturmi Hob. II:29-32

Dig within the stylish packaging and there is true treasure trove to be found here. Haydn's employer Prince Nikolaus Esterházy and King Ferdinand IV of Naples shared at least one thing in common: a taste for playing an exotic, if not downright eccentric instrument. Both also had the good fortune to be able to order or commission works from Haydn in which they could perform on their chosen instrument, in the case of Esterházy the baryton, in that of the king, the 'lyra organizzata', a rather more sophisticated and today defunct version of the hurdy-gurdy. It is these works that occupy five of the six CDs here, the odd-man out being that devoted to the set of six Scherzandi, in effect highly concentrated miniature symphonies of c.1761. The extraordinary baryton octets, Haydn's last works for his prince's instrument, date from his so-called 'Sturm und Drang' period and are notable for their dark, melancholic intensity and stunning virtuoso writing for the two horns.

Both sets of lyra works are today known from arrangements made by the resourceful Haydn in London. In these he

replaced the lyra parts by more practical oboe and flute (or two flutes) parts, equally proving the value he placed on them by re-using some of the music from the concertos in his symphonies. Haydn's belief was well founded, for these pieces, boisterous and beguiling by turn, while at the same time beautifully crafted, have the hallmarks of the composer's maturity everywhere stamped on them.

These performances are not new, having been previously issued on Koch/Schwann. BIS deserve the unreserved thanks of every Haydn lover for re-mastering them so expertly, for the performances of these wonderful but rarely-heard works come as close to ideal as we're likely to get in an imperfect world. This is a set destined to make us fall in love with Haydn all over again.

Brian Robins

J. Haydn *La Passione Arion*, Gary Cooper early-music.com EMCCD-7769 70' 24" Symphonies 41, 44 & 49

Here is some stunning playing from the Canadian Arion period baroque orchestra in three middle period symphonies. No. 41 in C is performed in its original version without trumpets and timpani, which gives an extraordinary clarity to the high C horns. The band, at the size that Haydn would have used at Esterházy, is just 3.3.3.1.1 strings, so that the wind are properly balanced in this recording. Some exciting tempi – spirito's, brio's and di molto's (to use the 18th-century apostrophe) are truly so, but with immaculate phrasing and well contrasted dynamics. The booklet notes suggest that the trio of No. 41 has 'some of the highest horn writing in the entire repertoire', but earlier examples spring to mind such as some of the Capriccios of Zelenka and even the *Sinfonia* to Bach cantata 174 (the first movement of Brandenburg 3 with added horns and oboes) that takes the horns a note higher to concert top A. *La Passione* (No. 49) is suitably restrained and subtly phrased. The *Trauersinfonie* No. 44, one of Haydn's greatest works of the period, can sound unbelievably dull in some recordings. Here it comes to life, the *Menuetto*, with its canonic writing, taken at a proper 1-in-a-bar, and the finale leaving the listener breathless.

Ian Graham-Jones

Haydn *Cello concertos in C and D; Zumsteeg Cello Concerto in A* Sebastian Comberti, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment 69' 05" Cello Classics CC1023

Having been brought up on the heavily doctored versions of the D Major concerto in the 1960s, it is good to hear the work in its unexpurgated version on

appropriate classical instruments. This is Haydn writing for one of his virtuoso cellists at Esterházy, and Sebastian Comberti executes this difficult work with taste and aplomb. The C Major concerto (I remember its discovery in 1961 well) has now become the more popular and accessible work. The orchestra is just 3.3.2.1.1 plus oboes, horns and bassoon, a size Haydn would have used; I did, however, feel that the wind could perhaps have been more to the fore. Cadenzas are tasteful, with the possible exception of a flight of Paganini-like harmonics in a couple of places, though Haydn's cellists Wiegl and Kraft would no doubt have been well up to it. The Zumsteeg is an interesting work. Known to me only as an operatic and song composer, it was revealing to find that has 10 cello concertos to his credit. The lyrical quality of the music comes through in both the work and the performance.

Ian Graham-Jones

Haydn *String Quartets op. 17* The London Haydn Quartet (Manson, Faultless, Boyd, Cohen) 148' 07" (2 CDs) Hyperion CDA67722

This 2 CD set of op. 17 quartets of 1771, follows the Quartet's op. 9 recording. It is truly a 'period' performance, as the ensemble uses the London edition published in 1774 rather than a modern edition for this recording, thus freeing themselves from the trappings of any established editorial interventions. In this set Haydn's string quartet writing is a world apart from the early, often five-movement divertimento-like quartets. Op. 17 taxes Haydn's players to their limits, and the Quartet rises to the challenge with faultless (no pun intended) precision and ease. With the current development in virtuosity on period instruments as well as modern recording techniques, the playing can almost sound too relaxed and easy. But Haydn's performers were not in the recording studio! I'd love to have been able to eavesdrop on the Esterházy court and experience the reactions of performers and audience to this 'new' music. It's an excellent recording – clean and precise, and with some really 'gutsy' sound quality in Haydn's witty finales!

Ian Graham-Jones

Haydn *Intégrale de l'oeuvre pour instruments à vent* Les Philharmonistes de Châteauroux, Janos Komives 110' 20" (2 CDs) Arion ARN268790 (rec 1982)

This isn't an early-instrument recording, as the presence of tuba in the list of performers implies – it replaces the serpent in the military band marches Haydn composed in England. But I've

really enjoyed having it in the car CD player, following on from the Sweelinck reviewed above. The music is really delightful, and well played. The whole tone differs in one piece, which feels out of place but is by far the most impressive music here: the *Introduzione* to the Seven Last Words. That's not background music!

CB

Knecht Die Aeolsharfe Christina Landshamer *Melilla*, Mark Adler *Selim*, Andrea Lauren Brown *Bulline*, Patrick Pobeschin *Bull*, Andreas Macco *Phrynis*, Thomas E. Bauer *Hierokles*, Johannes Kaleschke *Lysis*, Markus Brutscher *Ephron*, Sarah Wegener *Mellita*, Maria van Eldik *Susa*, Adolph Seidel *Herold & Achmet*, Kammerchor Stuttgart, Hofkapelle Stuttgart, Frieder Bernius Carus 83.220 148' 58" (3CDs)

I think I can confidently say that I have never previously heard any music by Justin Heinrich Knecht; yet, on the evidence of this highly enjoyable issue from Carus, I cannot understand why. His *Aeolian Harp* may have a rather naïve plot (the beautiful sounds of that instrument – which Knecht “recreates” as it were by scoring for large numbers of woodwind and brasses – is the means of bringing about the reconciliation of sworn enemies and the marriage of two forlorn couples), but the music is well written and the excellent cast in these live recordings clearly relish their parts. All of the soloists are first rate, the choir needs no recommendation from me (they are among the world's best, after all), and the playing of the Hofkapelle Stuttgart on period instruments is exemplary. The booklet contains the full text of the opera (with necessary cuts from Knecht's original three hours and 45 minutes shown in grey), though without any translation. There is, however, a summary of the plot, which is probably sufficient. I shall listen to this time and time again, I'm sure.

BC

Joseph Martin Kraus Amphitryon *Incidental Music arr. wind octet by Fredrik Grenser* Amphion Wind Octet 53' 39" Accent ACC 24195

Here is some interesting and unusual *Harmoniemusik* on a period instrument ensemble who use instruments or copies which marry almost exactly with the period. Kraus's music for Molière's comedy was written in 1787. Such was its popularity that Grenser – one of a family of wind players and makers – made his arrangement of twenty-two numbers in 1792. It consists of four *Intermèdes* of three or four movements and a *Divertissement* of ten short pieces, which concludes with a *chaconne* – in effect a sonata form

movement rather than a rondo. There are descriptive items representing the calm of the night, dawn, etc., aria, chorus and march transcriptions, as well as many dance interludes, all played with spirit by the Amphion ensemble. Ian Graham-Jones

Krommer Partitas for Winds Amphion Wind Octet 71' 22"

Accent ACC 24207

Opp. 73, 78, 83 & 'Parthia ex Dis' (ie in E flat)

There is some virtuoso playing by the period ensemble in this collection of *Harmoniemusik*, written around the turn of the century. Although designed as music for sophisticated court entertainment, there is much spirit and skill in the writing for the instruments where, although the ear gets attuned to the oboes and clarinets at the top of the ensemble, horns and bassoons get their turn at showing their solo prowess on occasions. The eight parts are supported by a double bass rather than a double bassoon, and op. 83 has the addition of a trumpet, which itself has some solo work. Perhaps the only disappointing comment is that there is no movement in a minor key to add a touch of relief for the listener, where the movements all sound in the same tonal area (F-Bb-Eb). There is some lively, entertaining music on this record, well worth investigating for its novelty.

Ian Graham-Jones

Martín y Soler Il burbero di buon cuore Elena de la Merced *Angelica*, Carlos Chausson *Ferramondo*, Véronique Gens *Madame Lucilla*, Saimir Pirgu *Giocondo*, Cecilia Díaz Marina, Juan Francisco Gatell *Valerio*, Luca Pisaroni *Dorval*, Josep Miquel Ramón *Castagna*, Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Christophe Rousset 140' (2DVDs) Dynamic DVD 33580

Il burbero di buon cuore, a *dramma giocoso* based on a French play by Goldoni, was the first opera on which Lorenzo da Ponte worked with the Spanish composer, Vicente Martín y Soler. First given at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 4 January 1786, *Il burbero* marked the start of a collaboration that achieved both court and popular success. The libretto fashioned by Da Ponte included elements of both *buffo* and *seria* style, the latter in the present performance paradoxically – and damagingly for Martín – most notably supplied by Mozart in the shape of two insertion arias, K. 582 and K. 583, composed for a revival of *Il burbero* in 1789.

This first recording stems from a 2007 co-production between Madrid and Barcelona. It is largely enjoyable, if not without its weaknesses. Christophe Rousset has already shown a particular

empathy for Martín and if his own *Les Talens Lyriques* would have been preferable to the modern instrument orchestra, the Madrid band plays with spirit and a reasonable sense of style, if not always the greatest degree of finesse. Vocally, the personable cast is dominated by the Angelica and her adversary Lucilla (both of whom provide some particularly stylish ornamentation), but the young baritone Luca Pisaroni also takes the ear. Individual reaction to the staging will depend to a large extent on how bothered the viewer is by a modern setting that throws up all kinds of nonsensical solecisms. After all, how many highly attractive teenage girls do you know under threat of being placed in a convent by their brother? What makes this silliness all the more irritating is a relatively straightforward production that could easily be dropped into a period setting. *Il burbero* is certainly no masterpiece, but it is an agreeable and ingratiatingly entertaining piece.

Brian Robins

Stephen Paxton 4 Sonatas and a Concerto Sebastian Comberti, Ruth Alford *vlc*, Maggie Cole *hpscd*, The Pantheon Band 70' 46"

Cello Classics CC1021

Cello Sonatas op.1 nos 1(A) and 4(C), op. 4 nos 5(C) and 6(D), Cello Concerto in G

The six op. 1 sonatas have been available in Grancino editions for some time, but the op.4 remain unpublished. These four sonatas display the high level of technique of cellists in England in the 1770s, and Sebastian Comberti, with his excellent and stylish continuo team, give them a polished interpretation. Although perhaps typical of the style of many English sonatas of this period, these have the edge on – those of – many – his contemporaries, being both technically demanding and musically assured. Paxton unusually writes his own *cadenza* passages in the op. 1 sonatas of 1772. The concerto is a real find, and is now published by Fountayne Editions. Scored unusually for flutes and horns with strings, the accompanying Pantheon Band is essentially the Fitzwilliam String Quartet with added wind. The booklet notes are most informative on his life and the music.

I would add that the diarist and composer John Marsh had several meetings with Paxton during his time in London and, for anyone interested, these are worth following up, as they shed additional light on his life and career. A couple of quotes:

(On a visit to the Catch Club) In the course of the evening the singers ... perform'd his celebrated glee 'How sweet, how fresh', but the upper part being sung by Mrs Goodban

instead of a counter tenor, & having some long holding notes very high, she *scream'd* them out so that I pitied poor Mr Paxton who sat looking on the floor all the time ... & probably wish'd himself a mile off. (20 Sept 1786)

I meant to have called on Mr Paxton the violoncello player, according to my promise at Canterbury last year, but happening to step into Smart's music shop to enquire the number of his house in Titchfield Street I there heard to my great surprise of his being dead, having caught cold at the late performances at the Abbey, from which he never recover'd. (22 Aug 1787)

Ian Graham-Jones

Begone Dull Care Songs and instrumental music from Jane Austen's House in Chawton Sophie Bevan S, Rogers Covey-Crump T, The Windsor Box & Fir Co 73' 08"

Danubia Discs DD006

Music by Dibdin, Dussek, Harington, Haydn, Jackson, Koczwara, Rouget de Lisle, Paisiello/Linley, Shield, Webbe & anon.

Anyone who has read a Jane Austen novel will know that music plays an important part in her keenly observed world, the issue of the musical prowess of female protagonists in domestic music-making frequently being used to advance the plot or deepen our understanding of character. What is not so well known is that Austen was a keen amateur musician herself, and compiled and often copied the material in eight bound volumes of music now at the Jane Austen House Museum at Chawton in Hampshire. Ian Gammie and Derek McCulloch published a catalogue of the collection in 1996, and are two of the prime movers behind this recording of pieces from it. Besides its interest to Janeites (it will doubtless sell well in the museum shop at Chawton), it serves as a valuable anthology of domestic music in England around 1800, and the performances have an unpretentious charm that brings Austen's musical world vividly to life. The drawbacks are that the square piano (William Southwell c.1800) sounds a bit rickety at times, the tuning of it and the other instruments is often dubious, and the words could sometimes do with greater clarity. Also (and this is a hobby-horse of mine), Ian Gammie plays bass parts on a viola da gamba, despite the fact that the gamba was essentially a solo instrument in the late 18th century: the violoncello supplanted it as a continuo instrument in England around 1720. But Rogers Covey-Crump is in fine voice, and it is a pleasure to hear him singing music of a rather later period than normal. The performance of Koczwara's *Battle of Prague* serves mainly to demonstrate what an abysmal piece it is, despite its popularity at the time, though Derek McCulloch's spoken commentary (with repeated cries of 'cannon! cannon!') will stay long in the memory. Peter Holman

Destination London: Music for the Earl of Abingdon Wilbert Hazelzet, Marion Moonen, Bernadette Verhagen, Barbara Kernig 68' 20"

Berlin Classics GOLD 01 15222

Music by Abel, J C Bach, J Haydn, C P Stamitz, The Earl of Abingdon, & country dances

It was a good idea to bring together chamber music dedicated to Willoughby Bertie, Earl of Abingdon (1740-1799). His main instrument was the flute – he was taught by the Swiss virtuoso Carl Weiss – and he was heavily involved in London's concert life: he rescued the Bach-Abel concerts from failure after J.C. Bach's death in 1782, and was a friend and patron Haydn in the 1790s. The quality of the music on this enjoyable CD demonstrates his patronage of, and connections with, some of the major composers of the day. It brings together trios for two flutes and violoncello by Carl Stamitz, Charles Frederick Abel (op. 16, no. 4), and Haydn (Hob. IV:1 and 2), with quartets for two flutes, viola and violoncello by J.C. Bach (op. 19, nos. 1 and 2). There are also two brief country dances by Abingdon himself. All the music is elegant and urbane, and the fine late quartets by Bach are rather more than that. One of the Haydn trios has a special interest in this context because it is a set of variations on Abingdon's song 'Trust not too much'. The performances are splendid, with virtually faultless ensemble and tuning. Perfect for a summer's evening with a glass of wine in hand. Peter Holman

La Tirana contra Mambrú The tonadilla and popular musical comedies in Spain c. 1800 Raguél Andueza, Marta Infante, Juan Sancho, Jordi Ricart SmsTBar, El Concierto Español, Emilio Moreno Glossa GCD 920309 – 62' 33"

Blas de Laserna, Esteve, Valledor

This is a difficult CD to review, as one assumes that much of the music's value depends on stage action (if not merely antics) for its full effect. Moreno and his ensemble maintain the level of excellence of all their previous recordings, with wonderful singing and lively, attentive playing. There is some spoken dialogue – and even I laughed at some of the French (yes, French!) accents – so I'm sure someone with better Spanish than mine will be more entertained. The booklet is a typical Glossa delight: as well as a general introduction to the styles and forms to be heard, there are summaries of the three main works in four languages, followed by the texts with translations, with the full texts of the two shortened works in Spanish only. Loathers of invasive percussion may rest assured that the castanets make very infrequent appearances! Very enjoyable. BC

19th CENTURY

Beethoven Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 3 Ronald Brautigam, Norrköping Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Parrott 67' 16"

BIS-SACD-1692

Beethoven Piano Concertos WoO4 & No. 2 Ronald Brautigam, Norrköping Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Parrott BIS-SACD-1792 58' 04"

+Rondo in B flat, WoO6

Clifford requested these recordings, thinking that any such project involving such HIPsters as Ronald Brautigam and Andrew Parrott was bound to offer some sort of revelation. Actually, even though the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra experiment with non-vibrato and different bowing techniques (and make a delightful sound doing so!), the importance of this set possibly has more to do with Brautigam's conviction that this is essentially chamber music – certainly not a battle between the soloist and the orchestra. The recordings were made with him placed among the orchestra, without a lid on his piano, playing – as much as is possible – as if it were a fortepiano. The second disc is important, too, for including Brautigam's new version of the early (but by absolutely no means less impressive than the five numbered concertos) WoO4, and the Rondo WoO6 which was the original finally of Concerto No. 2. I can recommend these two discs without any reservation at all. BC

Beethoven Complete Violin Sonatas Vol. 1 Hiro Kurosaki, Linda Nicholson 60' 15"

Accent ACC 24211

Sonatas in A op. 47, & G op. 96

This is the first volume of what promises to be a journey of discovery. I don't really recall hearing many Beethoven sonatas on period instruments. I remember playing two early-ish examples when a newly restored square piano was inaugurated at St Andrews University a few years ago, and it was interesting (and I think a compliment, though one can never be sure) when someone in the audience commented afterwards that "Beethoven was clearly pushing the violin to new limits". Anyone interested in Baroque music will recognise Hiro Kurosaki's name – he frequently leads many of Europe's top orchestras. Here he is in the wonderful company of Linda Nicholson in two sonatas with clear violinist associations – op. 47 (the *Kreutzer*, although the autograph bears a playful dedication to the mulatto violinist of the premiere, the Barbadian-Polish George Bridgetower) and op. 96, dedicated to Pierre Rode. Having, as one would expect of such eminent performers, returned to

autograph scores and early prints, there will be quite a few surprises in store even for those who think they know the music. For those who are unfamiliar with it, there could be no better introduction: this dream team is one I look forward to hearing often. Individually outstanding, truly wonderful in combination, this is a recording I would expect to see among the next Gramophone Awards. BC

Felix & Fanny Mendelssohn String Quartets Asasello Quartett 69' 10"
 Avi-Music 8553140
 Fanny: in E flat (1834); Felix: op. 12 & 13

The Asasello Quartett play on modern instruments and so would normally not fall within our remit, but I asked for review copies because among the big anniversary composers Mendelssohn seems to be getting least attention and also because I was curious about Fanny's abilities. Of course, I should have had no worries on that score. Even if she did continually press her brother for his opinions of her material, I get the feeling that she wrote those letters more out of some sense of the norms of society – that a woman (in whatever role outside her perceived expectations) must always have guidance and approval from a man. For her E flat quartet certainly lacks nothing in the way of compositional skill and technique – the performers themselves admit to having been sceptical, but now finding themselves playing it more and more regularly in recital. The Asasellos are a well-balanced quartet, four voices singing as one (as you'd expect from players at this level), and their accounts of the two quartets by Felix are enjoyable and well paced. I'd still listen to the *Mosaïques* by choice – a pity they didn't record the Fanny Mendelssohn quartet too. BC

Mendelssohn Violin Sonatas Antje Weithaas & Silke Avenhaus 67' 27"
 Avi-Music 8553138
 Sonatas in F (1820, 1838), F minor (Op. 4, 1825) & Fragment in D minor

This again was requested as it is not repertoire that is over-represented in the catalogue, and indeed boasts two premieres! The first is of a new edition of the F major sonata (an Urtext set from Bärenreiter), while the second is a single-movement (*Adagio-Allegro molto*) intended for a Sonata in D minor. Although it is played on modern violin and piano, the balance is nicely managed, the violin tone natural and the piano eloquently phrased and articulated. One gets the impression, however beautifully these performers present the music, that Mendelssohn's heart was not really in writing violin sonatas – he was somehow more at home

writing quartets or orchestral music, or simply for the piano. Nevertheless, these fine performances should endear this CD to fans of Mendelssohn's music everywhere. BC

Ferdinand Ries Flute Quartet op.145/1, Flute Quintet op. 107; Johann Nisle Septet in E flat Ensemble Schönbrunn
 Globe GLO 5230 74' 38"

'Out of the Shadow of the Masters' is the aptly named disc title. As a pupil of Beethoven, Ries was almost as prolific, with 26 string quartets and 8 symphonies to his name. The two chamber works for flute are fine pieces, well worth recording, and the period ensemble does them justice. They are imaginative works, the C Major quartet having a Spanish-style finale, while the B Minor quintet is the more dramatic of the two. Nisle's septet is for a similar scoring to the Beethoven work: clarinet, bassoon, horn and string quartet, but with an added 16' bass doubling the cello. From this record, Nisle is the slighter of the two composers, but the septet is an interesting work in the divertimento style, though lacking the originality of Ries. Ian Graham-Jones

VARIOUS

Ambrose Field Being Dufay John Potter
 ECM 2071 49' 32"

Many years ago I bought a CD in which the music of Hildegard of Bingen was put through the musical looking-glass of electronic music, and it strikes me the present CD is trying to do the same with Dufay. While I grew to like the Hildegard CD, which was a genuine reworking of the original music, the present CD is a bizarre affair which too often has John Potter soldiering manfully and slightly madly on with fragments of Dufay over an ocean of apparently unrelated electronic effects. After I had had the mental image of Potter disappearing down the iconic Dr Who plughole I was unable to take the rest of the CD seriously. In saying that this offering from the normally excellent ECM isn't for me, I should mention that I have enjoyed several of their previous boundary-challenging releases such as *Officium* and *Mnemosyne* – but not this. D. James Ross

L'écrit du cri Renaissance & 19th to 21st - Century Songs Ensemble Clément Janequin, Dominique Visse 73' 50"
 harmonia mundi HMC 902028
 Janequin, Servin & Anon +19th-21st century composers

This is a great recital – think Kings Singers without the Anglican veneer. Whether or not a review belongs in *EMR*

is a totally different matter. Visse's ensemble here strays far beyond their trademark chansons (though there are two of these just to remind us what they really do) into the realms of cabaret and contemporary vocal technique in a carefully and cunningly planned recital which entertains and challenges in more or less equal measure. It's a shame that the booklet gives the sung texts in French only, but if you're looking for something completely different, this might well be it. David Hansell

Purcell, Handel, Haydn Santa Cecilia
 Virgin Classics 50999 266356 2 o
Purcell Hail! Bright Cecilia. Andrew Parrott (rec. 1986)
Handel Alexander's Feast King's College, Philip Ledger (rec 1979)
Haydn Missa 'Sanctae Ceciliae' ie Missa Cellensis Michel Corboz (rec 1984)

The Parrott/Taverner Choir recording is a classic, but the other two items are not of that status, the Handel sounding particularly old-fashioned for its date. The Haydn has no Cecilian connections, the name being of 19th-century origin (at least the booklet has the honesty to tell us!). Some bargain packages work: this one lacks historical logic and compatible performances. CB

The Artistry of Emma Kirkby Highlights from the original BIS recordings 292' 32"
 BIS-CD-1734/35 (4 CDs for the price of 2)

Music by Amodeo, Ariosti, J.S.Bach, Blow, Boddecker, Boeset, F. Couperin, Danyel, D'India, Dowland, Ferrabosco, Graupner*, Greene, Handel, Johnson, Lalande, H. Lawes, Moulinie, Scarlatti, Schimmelpfennig, Schütz, Weldon, Wilson.

*a previously unreleased recording of *Ach Gott und Herr*

Complete track listing at www.bis.se

It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that every article, liner or programme note for Emma Kirkby must begin with the phrase: "Originally, Emma Kirkby had no expectations of becoming a professional singer", so this brief review must maintain the tradition. Well, we are all very glad that she did become one, of course, and this wonderful set featuring highlights from most of her 10 BIS CDs between 1999 and 2008 offers us the chance to hear the mature Dame Commander Kirkby voice at its very best. Like many, I realised, from the day I ran (yes, I really did) home from the record shop, clutching my LPs of Dowland's *First Book of Songs* back in 1976, that here was the voice we had all been waiting for for so long.*

I don't need to praise this compilation any more, because it would just be embarrassing for all concerned – if you're

a devotee of Emma, and, more importantly (as she herself would probably prefer to say), the music she chooses to perform, then you've probably already got many of the discs that are so generously sampled here already – and if you haven't, then why not? The choice of tracks seems to have been largely Emma's own – an opportunity so rarely afforded any artist, that it is surely a measure of the regard in which she is held by BIS, and covers almost every genre in which she works, from songs to the lute to complete cantatas and motets with London Baroque and others. The 83 page booklet notes include the texts and English translations of all the items, as well as the full text of the Latin presentation made at her award of Doctor of Music at Oxford. Happy (belated) birthday to the 'English Nightingale', the most influential singer of the whole Early Music revival. David Hill

Although I can't remember the year, I too can remember the occasion when I first heard Emma. I was sitting with David Munrow auditioning the applicants for the early music course at Dartington Summer School in the early 1970s and we were amazed by her voice: indeed, it was what I had been waiting for and despaired of finding. CB

VIRGIN VERITAS X2

Reissues reviewed by Brian Clark

J S Bach Mass in B minor Barbara Schlick, Catherine Patriasz, Charles Brett, Howard Crook, Peter Kooy SSATB, Collegium Vocale, Ghent, Philippe Herreweghe
Virgin Veritas 50999 6 93192 2 3 106' 39"

I must admit that this is not the first version of the B minor mass that I would pull off the shelves, though it is perfectly adequate. Occasionally it is more than that, with a stirring account from Peter Kooy of *Quoniam tu solus Sanctus*. Not vintage Herreweghe, I'm afraid.

J S Bach Goldberg Variations, Toccatas Bob van Asperen 146' 22"
Virgin Veritas 50999 6 93198 2 2 BWV 988 + 910-916

I put this into my player immediately after the B minor mass and was nearly blown away by the volume! It just goes to show how widely recording levels range. I loved this recital – I was not too familiar with most of the toccatas (not being a very able keyboard player, I tended to avoid Bach), so others might not be so impressed. As for the Goldbergs, the opening seemed a little slow, while some of the variations were doomed never to lull even the deepest of sleepers into slumber.

Campra – Couperin *Motets* Les arts

florissants, William Christie
CD1 Grands motets by Campra 67' 04"
CD2 Petits motets by Campra & François Couperin 72' 52"
Virgin Veritas 50999 6 93206 2 0

I recognized some of Campra's *grands motets* from Hervé Niquet performances and it was interesting to hear Christie occasionally take slightly more upbeat tempos with a slight loss of pathos. The singing, as you would expect from such a taskmaster, is excellent throughout both discs. Campra is one of those many French composers who tends to pale into Couperin's shadows, but the second of this pair of discs is evidence – if any were required – that he can more than hold his own: I defy anyone to listen to it and identify who wrote each motet.

Marais Pièces de viole Jérôme Hantaï, Pierre Hantaï, Alix Verzier 135' 24"
Virgin Veritas 50999 6 93213 2 0

This pair of discs would normally have been sent to Robert Oliver, but I'm glad to have had the chance to listen to so much music by Marais. Not having had the opportunity to take viol lessons, I've often felt deprived of the opportunity to explore the repertoire myself – despite being first and foremost a violinist, I've always had this love of deep sonorities (I even took a bassoon home from school for a few months and taught myself the basics), and viol music is something that talks to me with a particularly resonant voice. Although there may be other players who might give his output more of a personal flavour, I doubt if M. Marais would find anything to fault in these wonderful performances.

Mozart Violin Sonatas Jaap Schröder, Lambert Orkis 146' 35"
Virgin Veritas 50999 6 93218 2 5

The first of these two discs includes the five two-movement sonatas from the 1770s (K. 301-5), while the second has three later (and arguably greater) sonatas – K. 454 & K. 481 written for the same "sweet-toned" French violinist, and K. 526, his last violin sonata. While these are landmark recordings – and still very enjoyable and technically excellent – the violin tone is just a little too "pure", and the fortepiano a little "wooden" for today's tastes; there are moments (for example, in the *Andante* of K. 454) when vibrato is applied a little more frequently to good effect. Unfortunately, we've been spoiled by Rachel Podger's interpretations with Gary Cooper, and Petra Mülleijans has just started another with Kristian Bezuidenhout. Its bargain price may be this set's redeeming factor.

Prima la musica!

NEW TITLES - July 2009

- Edited by Dennis Collins -
Buxtehude
Cantate Domino
BUX003 SSB, BC £12 (£8)
Charpentier
Gaudia Virginis Mariae
CHA024 SSS, BC £8 (£6)
Transfige dulcissime Jesu
CHA025 SSATB, BC £32 (£10)
Miserere mei Deus
CHA026 SSA, BC £24 (£10)
Lully
Dixit Dominus
LUL003 SSS, BC £15 (£8)

- Edited by Max-Sobel -
Joseph Meck
Among the first German composers to compose in the Vivaldian style, he was so successful that one of his concerti transcribed for keyboard by Walther was long thought the work of the Red Priest

Concerto in F, Op. 1 No. 1
MEC001 Vn, strings, BC £15 (£10)
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MEC002 Vn, strings, BC £15 (£10)
Concerto in E flat, Op. 1 No. 3
MEC003 Vn, strings, BC £15 (£8)
Concerto in C, Op. 1 No. 4
MEC004 Vn, strings, BC £15 (£10)
Concerto in B flat, Op. 1 No. 5
MEC004 Vn, strings, BC £15 (£10)

- Edited by Kim Patrick Clow -
Fasch
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3 x 3 obs, bn, 3 tps, timp £60 (£20)
Graupner
Ouverture in C, GWV403
GRA136 Strings, BC £12 (£8)
Telemann
Ouverture in D, TWV 55: D18
TEL046 2tps, timp, str, BC £40 (£20)

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We haven't given price information this issue. If we receive any prices from the Record Companies, it is usually the wholesale price. What the sellers (whether shops or on-line) charge is up to them. Now that Peter Berg no longer checks prices for us, it is safer not to do so.

LETTERS

I was saddened to read Katie Hawk's dismissal of The Sixteen's Handel Coronation Anthems disc in *EMR* 130. She describes it as a 'pointless disc, certainly for serious Handel listeners'. I've not heard the disc, but were I to want a copy of the Coronation Anthems, I would certainly consider a recording by such forces to be worthy of consideration, whatever the coupling. It is also sad to dismiss Alastair Ross's performance of the organ concerto without even a mention of the soloist or performance. Many of us look to *EMR* to see what our major groups/soloists/performers are up to and also to ask the quick question: 'what's the new record like?'

This is a new recording, not a re-release, and as such at least deserves a comment on the performances, whether or not the reviewer approves of the programming.

Steven Devine

I'm second to none in my admiration of Alastair's playing, but share Katie's feeling that EMR readers are unlikely to be interested in a fairly unfocused anthology, however good. It is indicative that Steven feels the need to point out that this is a new recording: it's the sort of programme that one expects to be a compilation from previous issues. But let's hope that it sells well and provides income for more enterprising discs. I should add that, like Steven, I haven't heard the disc! CB

Thank you for reviewing the last set of VdGS music editions – your comments are always interesting and help to keep us up to the mark.

In your review of the Nicholson you criticised the transposition Virginia had made. You make a good point, though I think the ideal range for singers today is debateable, given the shortage of tenors. As a bass and as a viol player I personally prefer the original pitch. What I would like to point out is that parts are by default supplied at both pitches and that the score is available at the original pitch if that is what people want.

This might also be a good time to point out that many of our publications are suitable for wind as well as strings and I am happy to sell parts in other clefs and would even consider transposing some pieces if there was demand.

Stephen Pegler

EDITING ITALIAN TEXTS

I was thinking recently about the way Italian text editors seem to be so out of touch with the practice of scholars elsewhere in preserving original orthography. For a century, any scholarly English literary text (except Shakespeare) has used early spelling, and sometimes punctuation, for editions of 16th and 17th century poetry (and for earlier texts modernising isn't an option: that would be translation.) I bought fairly recently a cheap paperback of German 16th-century poetry with the original spelling. Why must Italians be different? I was going to write some comments, but mentioned it to Barbara Sachs, who offers below a reply to my unwritten remarks. She began: Yes - I absolutely agree. But I'm not sure that is so!

First of all, orthography was crazy, and Italians have a super keen awareness of how Latin never actually died, but is spoken by them today. It merely clutters the page to put in H's. If an author, however chooses between *Zefiro* and *Zeffiro*, that should be maintained, or if he uses sometimes *fuoco* and sometimes *foco*, that, too, because in both cases there is an arguably intentional difference in pronunciation. More tricky would be *Labra* for *Labbra* which looks simply wrong, and has reasons for being wrong, but maybe a Venetian would pronounce with only one B, so it could be it left that way.

I remove the capitals because it is hard enough anyway to follow the sentence structure without giving the singers the added problem of remembering where they are real.

An interesting problem comes up with *vag'erbetta*. It stands for *vaga erbetta*, but once you use an apostrophe instead of the a, it would be mispronounced, becoming *va gjer bet ta*. So (it was Prof. Danilo Romei of U. of Firenze who told me) it is not only correct but necessary today to rewrite this as *vagh'erbetta* or *vaga_er-betta*. Same thing with *dolc'aura*. Written thus, as it was, you would have to read *dolkaura*, so it must be rewritten either *dolce aura*.

When they rigorously count syllables, there is no difference because it is mandatory to count two adjacent vowels as one syllable, EVEN (this is surprising) if there is a comma between them. But not if there is a line change.

Danilo thinks that composers made a mess of the metrics. He doesn't seem to realize that the first musical problem is the length each syllable is to be sung, and in music one can always choose to use a different note for an adjacent vowel. There is no obligation to elide. So there is no automatic consequent that two similar 11 syllable lines of poetry will be set to the same number of notes or the same length phrase. Of course, not!

So I totally agree that it is a false (naive?) attempt to be correct to reproduce the original orthography. I think that when I reviewed the Olschki book on Cesti, which included transcriptions of all the Cesti + Apolloni texts, the introduction to the manner of transcription made this very clear. Believe me, nothing is lost.

Not only would Germans tend to aspirate the Hs, but even Italians themselves, accustomed only to finding a silent H in *Hotel*, *ha*, and *hanno*, would be tempted to say a K if they were Tuscan. The reason for keeping it in *ha* and *hanno* is purely to distinguish those words from *a* and *anno*, as we have *dà* (verb) instead of *da* (preposition) and *li* or *là* (instead of the definite articles). It is sometimes a bit hard in a text to distinguish *o* (*oh!* or simply vocative) from *o* (or, either...or). But the common use of accent *ò* doesn't distinguish them at all, and is generally dropped.

If one could count the number of mistakes, like *è* for *e'* (*è il ciel*; *e'l ciel*) where the editor MUST decide and put what

it means, not what appears, maybe with a footnote where the original (print) was wrong.

Not easy... so everyone agrees not to make it impossible.

Barbara Sachs

These all seem very simple non-problems compared with the inconsistencies of English. At a basic level, how does someone unfamiliar with the problems of Italian orthography know where to look up *Hor ch'el ciel* in an index? Do Italian indexes list it in a completely different place from those in other countries? More seriously, if there is a difference in meaning between *che'l* and *ch'el* or *ch 'el*, surely that's a matter for the translation. Are Monteverdi's spellings representative of how he spoke? If pronunciations differ now, are clues to that of Venice in 1638 to be taken seriously? Doesn't that matter more than how Petrarch may have pronounced it and how educated, dialect-free Italians pronounce it now? In England, awareness of the sound of language is becoming a matter of interest and can take advantage of the conservatism of editors in not having modernised texts. There's even some feeling that avoiding the Oxbridge choral-scholar accent and using any dialect helps to remind us that the past is different! Italian pronunciation has surely changed over four or five centuries.

My thoughts were set off by an article which isn't now at hand by an Italian literary editor which suggested that the musical

editor should underlay the poem that the poet wrote, not the version that the composer set. It's common in all sorts of settings for the poets to set corrupt texts: so what? As an editor I might note the 'correct' version, but wouldn't suppress what the composer set. My normal practice when editing operas is to follow the orthography of the libretto, but substitute any differences of substance made by the composer. Despite claims of baroque librettists, the composer has the last word: first the words, but the composer has the last word!

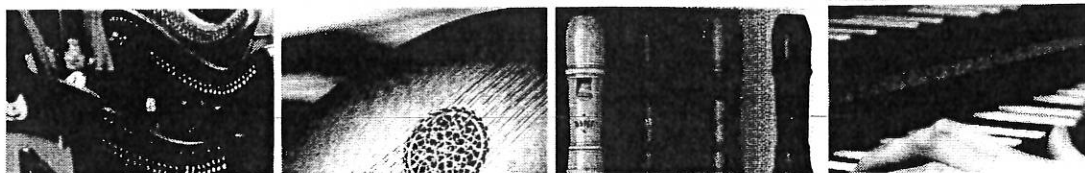
There is a more important article in the latest Music and Letters arguing that we should take the specific uses of Renaissance Latin more seriously. Agreed. I had assumed that any differences from the classical language were errors, since the whole humanistic concept involved a purification of medieval usage by returning to the classical form of the language. But that seems not to be so. Checking 'Renaissance Latin' on Google produced as first item a course at the Warburg Institute for a fortnight from 7 September: 3 hours a day for a total of £150. CB

Several people wrote to comment on the Trecento review in the last issue. We had mistakenly put it into the packet for Diana Maynard, who made interesting comments on a disc that wasn't quite her area of expertise. We spotted the name of the late maker Fred Morgan among the players, but didn't correct the mistake. Our apologies.

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