

# Early Music REVIEW

Number 152

February 2013

ISSN 1355-3437

Price £2.50

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Early Music Review is published in  
alternate months  
The International Diary is published every month  
except January  
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Annual subscription  
UK: £22.50 Europe £27.50  
Rest of World: £40.00 (air) £27.50 (surface)  
(foreign rates £5 cheaper without Concert Diary)

Sterling cheques payable to  
*The Early Music Company Ltd*

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In April, 700 singers are to perform Monteverdi Vespers in the Albert Hall. Do you throw your hands up in horror or cheer that so many people will be performing it in Britain's major choral arena? I am, of course, an advocate for following the available information. I work on the assumption that 17th-century music is for single voices or instruments unless there are reasons otherwise. This is not because there were no choirs -- cathedrals and rulers had them -- but because domestic music and concertato church pieces where solo voices and instruments need to be on equal terms limited opportunities for more than one voice to a part.

But I think that the major baroque works should be sung by as many pieces as possible, not just single voices. For some years, I guessed that the Vespers was probably a one-to-a-part piece; while it isn't absolute confirmation, it was comforting that Roger Bowers argued from the Mantuan chapel records that Monteverdi had a choir of ten, just the number, if not the precise voices the work needs. Moving on to Bach, those without prejudices or who need to give work to their choirs are happy to treat Bach's "choral" music as requiring anything between a dozen and 200 voices. The evidence of Bach's surviving performing parts is clear: can anyone believe that after Bach's death, someone went through the folders of parts and destroyed all duplicates, as Ton Koopman argued?

However, the Vespers, B-minor Mass and other major works should be sung by any singer capable of doing so. This isn't primarily for the benefit of the audience, though that does encourage the singers to have a target and to show their skill and also provide funds to hire a suitable orchestra -- NOT in the case of Bach one-to-a-part: there are often two copies of each violin part.<sup>1</sup>

Many of our readers attend early music fora workshops and summer schools, and sing with perhaps 50 voices music that is mostly for solo voices or smaller ensembles -- Handel's Foundling Hospital *Messiah* performances had just over 20 singers, including soloists and boys. But that does not stop conductors offering insights into the music and give singers who would otherwise have no chance in singing experiencing the thrill of such profound music.

<sup>1</sup> Most of the musicology on the subject relates to Monteverdi (Andrew Parrott) & Bach (Joshua Rifkin and Andrew Parrott).

## REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Hugh Keyte

## MAILLARD Vol. 3

Jean Maillard *Collected Sacred Works* edited by Raymond H. Rosenstock (Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance, 159) A-R Editions, 2012. xxii + 6 facs + 215pp, \$192.00.

This will be welcomed by those who already know Maillard's motets (in four to seven parts, from the two volumes issued by Le Roy and Ballard in 1565) as already edited by Rosenstock for A-R Editions. The new anthology supplies the Lamentations setting from Le Roy and Ballard's second book and items found in various mid-century printed collections of motets by various authors, together with a great mass of items from a single Barcelona manuscript (Biblioteca de Catalunya, MS 682, which also includes motets by Palestrina and Victoria), plus one problematic motet from another manuscript in the same library. Maillard's life remains obscure, but he may well have left France for Spain at some stage (perhaps because of Huguenot sympathies) and Rosenstock suggests that MS 682, which would seem to date from the 1560s or '70s, may have been copied for an Augustinian house near Barcelona.

Despite the biographical obscurity, Maillard was a composer to be reckoned with, and these spacious, always inventive settings deploy vigorous contrapuntal lines within a balanced classical idiom that can bear comparison with that of Palestrina. The thirty items are divided into Motets for Four Voices, Motets for Five Voices, Motets for Equal Voices, Marian Antiphons in Alternatim (*Ave Regina Caelorum*, *Regina Caeli laetare*, *Salve Regina* x 2), and Canticles in Alternatim (four Magnificats and a *Te Deum*). I was particularly struck by the Victorian simplicity and rhetorical fervour of the four-part *O vos omnes* (one of several motets for which the Barcelona scribe also provides one or more contrafacta, the new texts not always well-judged) and by some of the more extended five-parters.

There is a recurring problem with both avowedly 'scholarly' editions and those that seek to cater for both scholar and performer (like the admirable A-R series): that high-clef items – for good reasons – tend to be edited at notated pitch, which always gives a false impression to the innocent eye, not least since 'high-clef' items, when transposed down as intended, usually come out at a rather lower tessitura than those in what Andrew Parrott sensibly calls stet clefs. The chant sections of alternatim settings particularly benefit from proper transposition. How could the massed clerics who were often required by statute to sing such chant possibly have coped with its stratospheric pitch in the high-clef items in this volume?

The problem is compounded here by the nine four-part 'Motets for Equal Voices' from Barcelona MS 682. Set out with three transposing treble clefs and one bass clef, these

could give the impression that the writing is indeed for three literally equal voices plus bass, especially since Rosenstock nowhere explains what the *voci pari/ad equales* genre is. All nine have an over-all compass of between 13 and 16 notes and are in fact intended for *voci mutates* (adult male voices, excluding falsettists); and the lowest parts of six of them have clefs indicating downward transposition. In this genre that need not be the rule-of-thumb fourth or fifth – indeed, in some cases here notated pitch (with high tenors) would seem to be a valid 'authentic' option.

But performers need to decide on pitch level and voice allocation, and notated-pitch editing makes this difficult. Would it not be possible for publishers to make available digital versions of high-clef (and especially high-clef *voci pari*) settings that could be licensed to choir conductors for individual on-line transposition? The transposing process is a fairly simple one, even though not all computer systems deal automatically with (e.g.) editorial accidentals. With the transposed versions in front of him/her, the conductor is always in a much better position to make an effective historically-based assignation of voices to the various parts. And a huge amount of time-consuming recopying would be avoided.

On-line versions would also allow performers to adjust underlay, which in these motets is sometimes unconvincing. Unconvincing in every respect is the one motet taken from the other Barcelona manuscript, *Angustiae sunt mihi undique* (No. 1). This looks to me like a piece of highly incompetent scribal retexting, and Rosenstock's editing (surely a work-in-progress?) fails to resolve intractable problems of underlay – or, for that matter, such obvious musical miscopyings as the inside parts of bars 17–18. It was a miscalculation to place this dodgy item at the forefront of the volume.

Another quibble concerns the editor's purely musical commentary. The 'opulent melismas' in *Peccantem me quotidie* (No. 6) suggest to me not 'boastfulness' but the continuing sin to which the text confesses. And does the use of supposedly archaic ligatures in the Lamentations setting (No. 4) really represent the lengthy 'ways of Sion' rather than a continuing tradition of setting the Hebrew letters? As for 'high ranges may in themselves suggest text expression in our motets for five voices', this comes over as antediluvian, especially as the very possibility of the downward transposition of these high-clef items is never so much as mentioned. But the editing is in general well up to A-R Editions' usual high standard, and the settings (No. 1 excepted) are never less than workmanlike, often on a high level of inspiration. Choirs could usefully mine this volume for programmes of both French and Spanish mid-century repertoire.

## FERDINAND III

*Motets by Emperor Ferdinand III and Other Musicians from the Habsburg Court, 1637-1657*, Edited by Andrew H Weaver (Collegium Musicum Yale University Second Series Vol 18) A-R Editions 2012. xxxiv + 14 facs + 243pp. \$220.00.

Eat your heart out, Henry VIII: here's a real composer-monarch – though rather more worthy than exciting, perhaps. We are already in Andrew H Weaver's debt for his magisterial study *Sacred Music as Public Image for Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III* (see my review in EMR 147, p.8 and the badly-needed corrigenda in EMR 149, p.18), to which this volume forms a most welcome adjunct. Here we have 13 of Ferdinand's 15 surviving Latin settings (only the thirteen-part mass and a five-part Litany of Loreto are lacking) together with motets by his teacher and chief court composer Giovanni Valentini (two) and by other composers of the formidable imperial chapel at Vienna: Antonio Bertali (one), Giovanni Felice Sances (three), Wolfgang Ebner and Georg Pichelmair (one each).

The chapel contained ninety-odd musicians at the beginning of Ferdinand's reign (1637-57, the dates covered by this anthology), and even in the darkest days of the Thirty Years' War it seems never to have fallen below thirty souls. That hideously prolonged conflict sounded the death-knell of most large-scale Lutheran music-making, but for Ferdinand music was both a personal passion and a principal vehicle of Counter-Reformation propaganda. Following the mass expulsions of Lutherans of a previous reign, the Austro-Bohemian self-image had become closely tied up with a rigidly orthodox (and notably Marian) Tridentine Catholicism, the public manifestations of which routinely boasted an impressive musical component.

Indeed, Ferdinand probably composed the first item here specifically for a public procession during Lent, 1640: a setting for voices and continuo of the *Miserere* (Psalm 50; Protestant 51). Unlike his father, who had packed his chapel with musicians from the Venetian orbit, Ferdinand recruited massively from Rome, and in particular from the Jesuits' German College. So it is interesting that this work (his earliest to survive, much admired at the time and for centuries to come) should mimic the kind of formulaic structure favoured by many Roman composers of the time. The twelve singers, SATB x 3, interlard the fairly terse four-part concerted sections with more loosely-buttoned passages for SSS, TTT, AAA and BBB soli with continuo.<sup>1</sup> (I refuse to believe Weaver's editorial 'warning' B flat in the soprano at bar 120, but he will no doubt be defending it in his forthcoming journal article about Ferdinand's musical language.)

Also included in this thoughtful anthology is a succession of ten settings of office hymns by Ferdinand, all

through-composed (no chant) and each apparently written shortly before the feast or occasion for which it was intended. In his extended introduction, Weaver is appealingly frank about Ferdinand's Achilles' Heel (shared, to an extent, by many of his court composers): 'His treatment of melody often seems overly schematic, pedantic, and predictable', though we read later that 'performers can easily dress up Ferdinand's staid melodies with the judicious addition of ornaments'. (Personally, I'm all for injudicious – but stylistic – excess.) This need not put off potential purchasers, for there is much else to enjoy. The setting of the Christmas hymn *Jesu Redemptor omnium*, for example, quotes two popular carols, and the four voices and continuo are supplemented by three recorders which give way to three trumpets at the doxology verse, all six combining for the Amen. It will be the instrumental components of some of the larger-scale items that will set conductors salivating, I suspect. The basic four voices and continuo are in *Crudelis Herodes* (Epiphany) and *Pange lingua* (Corpus Christi) supplemented by five obbligato viols, in *Humanae salutis sator* (Ascension) by two violins, two cornetts and four trombones. Given the additional cachet of imperial authorship, we may surely expect these settings to feature big-time in forthcoming early-music festivals.

As for the other composers, Roman-born Sances is the pick of the bunch. Two of his solo motets here were composed for the virtuoso imperial-chapel bass Carlo Benedetto Riccioni to sing at ceremonies connected with the erection of the Mariensäule, the triumphal column with statue of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception which was erected in thanksgiving for the Virgin's supposed protection of the city of Vienna in 1645, when the besieging Swedish troops withdrew without killing a single soul (as it happens, for entirely practical reasons: see Weaver's book). These Sances motets should appeal to our own more nimble basses (Jonathan Sells: please note): *O Domina gloria* ranges down two octaves from middle C, *O dulcis Virgo virginum* only one note less. With that latter range but with two ear-tickling virtuoso violins added is *Delectare in Domino* by the native-born Wolfgang Ebner.

Altogether this volume is a fascinating and immaculately-edited addition to the court repertoire of earlier-17th-century Austria, which has long been undeservedly neglected.

## STANFORD CELLO CONCERTO

*Stanford Cello Concerto in D minor* Edited by George Burrows (*Recent Researches in the music of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*, 57) A-R Editions, 2012. xvi + 133pp, \$160.00  
*Stanford Cello Concerto in D Minor, Rondo in F, Irish Rhapsody No 3 op 137, Ballata and Ballabile op. 160.* Gemma Rosefield vlc, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra Hyperion CDA67859

I was surprised to receive something so modern from A-R editions, but seeing that there was a recent recording, I thought it would be interesting to mention both edition and recording, and Anna Kenyon was kind enough to send a copy. I'm impressed by the Concerto, and will write about it when I can (see p. 32).

1. I long to hear a modern performance of a comparable work, the masterly four-choir Magnificat by Orazio Benevoli, presumably written for the Julian Choir of St. Peter's, in which sixteen-part tutti alternate with passages for SSSS, AAAA, TTTT and BBBB soli – and there's a brief, kaleidoscopic flash-past of these same four groups in the subsequently-added doxology. It was edited with his customary panache (though with C clefs) by Laurence Feininger.



## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Brian Robins

SUSAN BURNEY

*The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney* Edited by Philip Olleson Ashgate, 2012 xxi + 334 pp, £70. ISBN 9780754655923

Susan Burney was born in 1755, the third of four daughters of the music historian Charles Burney. Despite a tendency to what her father termed 'a consumptive habit', Susan appears to have been a bright, lively child who benefited from an education in Paris. Back in London she developed a particularly close relationship with her elder sister, the novelist Francis (Fanny), who would become the recipient of a large number of Susan's letters and journal letters, in effect letters assembled over a period of time. During her teens she became not only an accomplished keyboard player – the violinist and impresario Salomon later described her as having 'a beautiful natural ability' – and singer, but an avid lover of Italian opera. In 1780 Susan met and fell in love with Molesworth Phillips, a dashing if feckless young Irish marines officer, whom she married in 1782. The early years of the marriage, mostly spent at Mickleham in Surrey, were to be a blissfully happy episode in her life. Later, however, Phillips' neglect and even mental cruelty in respect of her beloved son Norbury caused Susan much unhappiness, particularly after he had his family removed to a rundown, gloomy estate in Ireland he had inherited. She found life in Ireland barely tolerable, a situation only exacerbated by the outbreak of the Irish Rebellion and a French invasion of Ireland that was too close for comfort. In poor health, at the end of 1799 Susan was finally allowed by her husband to return to England, but within two weeks of landing she had died on 6 January 1800.

Susan Burney's extensive writings, which cover the period from the summer of 1779 until her death, have to date been largely ignored by historians. Philip Olleson has worked on them for some years and in this volume he has drawn on a selection that will be warmly welcomed both by music and social historians. They reveal Susan as an uncommonly attractive personality, a warmly sensitive member of a close family, but also a writer who could exercise a sharply perceptive critical mind capable not only of extravagant but always reasoned praise, but also harsh criticism. For music historians its core will be the vividly alive series of journal letters covering 1779 and 1780, when she was able fully to indulge her passion for Italian opera, a period that also takes in Susan's graphically terrifying account of the Gordon Riots that ebbed and flowed around the Burney residence in St Martin's Street. Her father's status meant that she was able to gain entry not only to performances at the King's Theatre but also to rehearsals, where she came into contact with some of the greatest artists of the day. Of these none had a greater effect on Susan than Gasparo

Pacchierotti, the last of the great 18th-century castratos who sang at the King's Theatre between 1778 and 1780 and again from 1781 to 1784. Extravagantly praised by her father in his *History*, Susan herself entertained a passion for Pacchierotti that amounted to near idolatry, ravished by both the sensitivity and beauty of his singing as well as the courtly attention paid to her. Later she became almost equally enchanted by the exquisitely refined playing of the Swiss violinist Scheener, a performer of whom we know little since he was largely restricted by a 'complaint in his wrist' (John Marsh) to playing at private concerts.

Regrettably, we have no idea whether or not Susan attended any of Haydn's London concerts in either of his visits, since there are no surviving letters from the first period he was in London and no record that she encountered him during the second. More surprisingly, there is no record of her having any form of contact with the great Handel Commemoration of 1784 or its subsequent re-incarnations, a topic not mentioned by Olleson. One suspects that to a greater degree even than her father, Susan had little time for Handel's music or its practitioners. With the notable exception of Elizabeth Linley, she was scathingly critical of singers who had been trained in the English rather than Italian style, noting that Sarah Harrop had great capabilities as a pupil of Sacchini, but that her voice was vulgarised after she became a pupil (and later the wife) of Joah Bates, the director of the 1784 Handel Commemoration. 'Bates', wrote Susan in 1780, 'had ruined her [Harrop] for any but these Handelians'. In 1788 her dislike of English music and its performers would again surface in her distaste for Sheridan's *The Duenna*: 'the music [by the Thomas Linleys, father and son] in general so vulgar', while the noted English singer Elizabeth Billington was described as 'too English for me'.

Notwithstanding Susan's strong bias against English music and musicians, her perceptive and informed views are always valuable and unfailingly entertaining. Philip Olleson has put together this collection of her writings with unfailing skill and understanding, prefacing it with a helpful biographical portrait. He has retained the original layout, which in the journal writing especially has at times the feel of a stream of consciousness, with short bursts separated by hyphens. My only query is his decision to retain Susan's superscripts, which usually occur with contractions. I find it fussy on the page and at times was confused into looking for a footnote. But it's a small point of personal preference. The footnotes themselves are admirably concise and to the point; just occasionally I would have liked a little more detail.

Overall, this an excellent production in every way and essential reading for anyone interested in music and society in the late eighteenth century England.



## REGIETHEATER: THE DEATH OF OPERA

Brian Robins

Opera is sick. Very sick. Once handsome and noble, its formerly elegant features have over recent years become ever more contorted and distorted beneath a toxic, suppurating excrescence commonly known as Regietheater. That some dispute the validity of the use of the word is in the context neither here nor there; it is universally recognised among those with involvement in opera as the term used for the bastardised so-called productions of the egomaniacs that currently rule the opera houses of Europe and beyond. Let me first make clear that it is not my intention here to recite, Leporello-like, a list of crimes committed against opera by the practitioners of Regietheater. It is already possible to do this in a number of places, not least several excellent articles by the American academic and critic Heather Mac Donald, most notably 'The abduction of Opera' (*City Journal*, Summer 2007, available on-line), which takes its impetus from a hideously brutal Berlin Komische Oper production of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, but which serves generally as being representative of Mac Donald's trenchant criticism of the genre. Neither will it be my purpose to name the major activists; such is the vanity and solipsistic view of life of most practitioners of Regietheater that they would probably take perverse pleasure in being identified as the destroyers of a once elevated and dignified art form. Indeed, I sense I can already hear from some quarters the foaming-mouthed howls of derision that greet the words 'elevated' and 'dignified'.

It is perhaps worth a reminder that for more than two thirds of the time it has been in existence, the producer or director was an unknown beast in the operatic jungle. Until near the close of the 19th century an opera production was invariably in the hands of the stage designer, the librettist and the conductor (not infrequently also the composer). It was not unusual for all three to provide input, but what is particularly salient is that staging was generally undertaken by those intimately involved with the creation of the opera concerned. During the course of the 19th century, such functions in Germany tended to become focused in the hands of the composer in the case of Weber and, particularly, of course, Wagner, while in Italy and France the highly formalized *disposizione* and the codification work of *régisseurs* respectively. It is thus hardly surprising that the malignant seeds that would ultimately grow triffid-like into Regietheater were first sown in Germany in the work of such as Adolphe Appia and Max Reinhardt, although it is worth casting a sideways glance at the English designer and director Edward Gordon Craig, who in the first decade of the 20th century was one the first to espouse anti-realist staging and, interestingly, an innovator of the idea of replacing actors with puppets, today a cobweb-infested cliché employed in both the most recent DVD opera recordings sent to me for review.

While there appears to be no consensus of opinion accounting for the alarming rise of Regietheater, most commentators agree that it has its poisonous roots in the strong left-wing reaction to Nazism that arose after World War II, and was furthered by the violent student movement of the 1960s, 'a manifestation of the triumph of adolescent culture', as Mac Donald puts it. It is therefore no surprise to find that in the late 1960s one of the leading protagonists of Regietheater was responsible for leading a gang of student provocateurs in vulgar protests against opera productions they considered too traditional. Like most revolutions, this one had nothing valid to put in the place of what it had overthrown, only the wish for anarchy and the desire to replace beauty with nihilism and ugly, gross modernism. 'To hell with beauty, it's a kitsch notion', in the words of one senior British director who is by no means one of the worst exponents of Regietheater.

Today we are left with an all-enveloping plague of Regie trash that has seriously been resisted to an extent only in the United States, since there it is well-heeled sponsors who call the tune, not state-funded administrators. This highly contagious disease is a phenomenon that exists in many forms, running the gamut from relatively innocent childishness – the equivalent of painting a moustache on the face of the Mona Lisa – to the depiction of the gratuitous obscenity, sex, blasphemy and violence so beloved of some producers, pornography that, to use the metaphor again, might be compared to defecating on the face of the Mona Lisa. All this is avowedly done under the pretext of producing cutting-edge productions that arrogantly assume that audiences need to be put in touch with the modern world when they enter the opera house. In fact there is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that is precisely what they do not want, even in the case of younger opera-goers. *The Sunday Times* recently conducted an interesting experiment in which five young people who had never attended an opera before were taken to the ENO's *Don Giovanni*, a production of a work described by its producer in typical fashion as being 'not just about the eighteenth century – it's just as much about now'. Two of the most telling reactions to the performance came from young women, one of whom declared herself 'disappointed by the modern production', while another said she 'was expecting something more traditional, more opulent and beautiful'.

The opportunities for these young women to see a more opulent and beautiful *Don Giovanni*, or indeed any other opera, will be few and far between, for today a whole generation has grown up with precious little opportunity to experience opera in a form faithful to the intentions of its composer and librettist. And thereby lies the unforgivable crime of Regietheater, which had it remained a

niche experimental form of staging opera might have had a valid place in contemporary society. Instead it has become an insidious paradigm.

How have we allowed this to come about? How has one of mankind's most glorious achievements fallen into the hands of this freakish band of directors that seeks only to demean the form in its own narcissistic, solo image? How have we come to be beholden to such as one of the most outré of this ill-begotten breed who can trenchantly assert that he is 'faithful to Mozart', a claim that carries as much validity as would Richard Dawkins declaring he is faithful to God? It is my firm conviction that no part of the operatic world, from administrators, to conductors, to singers, critics and audiences can escape censure.

For many years the administrators and intendants of major European opera houses have naively courted the celebrities and enfants terrible of theatre and cinema, many of whom have no knowledge of and no interest in opera, in the belief that their names on the production sheet will provide cachet, or better still a succès de scandale that will fill the opera house. Sadly and reprehensibly, they have far too often been proved correct, especially in Germany. Many such administrators are all too ready to defend their infatuation with Regietheater. Typical is the article 'In defence of Regietheater' (published in the on-line arts magazine *Limelight*), an attack on Mac Donald by the director of an Australian opera company, in which he says he will take the worst Regietheater production over a bland production. This is also a common theme among certain critics, but in no case known to me has anyone troubled to explain what constitutes a 'bland' or 'boring' production. Doubtless one set in period that respects the aims of the composer and librettist. Little better than such administrators are conductors, once the top dogs of the opera house, who have either cravenly abdicated their important role in contributing input to the staging or, like many critics, simply become 'fellow travellers'. Particularly open to derision are conductors in the field of early music who insist on the correct use of period instruments, while at the same time conducting Handel operas set in the sewers of Berlin or suchlike. One conductor/harpsichordist who has directed more than his fair share of such productions – his most recent effort at the time of writing has an Amy Winehouse look-a-like playing Cherubini's *Medea* – makes no secret for his preference for playing original keyboard instruments rather than the modern copies. It seems he is unable to see the paradox. The role of singers calls for more sympathy, since it is well established that many are opposed to and embarrassed by the excesses of Regietheater. Yet the days of a Jon Vickers are long gone and such is the dictatorial hegemony of directors that many singers are too fearful for their future to oppose what they often know to be a banal traducement of the work in which they have been hired to appear.

If the position of singers warrants a degree of understanding, there can be no excuses made for some of my fellow critics, whose role in this story is particularly

shameful. In general terms, such critics can be divided into two categories: those whose love and understanding of opera is as superficial as the practitioners of Regietheater; and the glib and trendy followers of cult fashion who spend their lives being fearful of being left behind and looking outmoded and whose preposterous endorsement of the worst excesses of Regietheater leave them open to ridicule. Such critics, frequently young writers learning on the job, see only the emperor's new cloths when they enter the opera house. So today's opera-goer, who should be able to rely on the views of well-informed critics, is instead too frequently left at the mercy of the camp followers of Regietrash, people who have the temerity to write about opera while being largely ignorant of its rich history and background. One greets with derision such reviews as that of a recent DVD of *La Bohème* that was described as a "period" production, the clear implication being that in today's operatic world that it is an oddity.

With the connivance of an unruly mob of administrators, conductors and critics, the staging of opera has thus arrived at the lowest point in its long history, an art form without integrity, without beauty, without grace, without dignity, without significance. The message of Hector Berlioz, who himself suffered from gross philistinism, demands to be heeded: "You musicians, you poets, prose-writers, actors, pianists, conductors, whether of third or second or even first rank, you do not have the right to meddle with a Shakespeare or a Beethoven, in order to bestow on them the blessings of your knowledge and taste."

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## FESTIVAL OF ITALIAN MUSIC

### 28-30 SEPTEMBER 2012

Robert Johnson

Cambridge Early Music promoted a Festival of Italian Music in partnership with La Dante in Cambridge (a language and culture organisation). The aim was to showcase the music of Italy from the 15th to the 18th centuries with music by many composers, and to bring together some of Europe's foremost musicians performing in beautiful and historic venues. All this was fitted into one weekend.

The sackbut and cornett ensemble QuintEssential (director: Richard Thomas) had the honour of starting things off, and was joined by celebrated tenor Nicholas Mulroy in Trinity College Chapel on the Friday for a concert entitled 'In Venetia – The Glories of the Most Serene Republic'. Their programme included sonatas and canzonas for varying combinations of instruments, with the natural inclusion of works of Giovanni Gabrieli in his 400th anniversary year, interspersed with solos for harpsichord (Kathryn Cok) or theorbo (David Miller). The sackbuts were dignified and solemn as required, and there were lovely lines from the cornetts, as well as some tricky solos. The light, agile voice of Nicholas Mulroy was heard throughout, and for many it was the highlight of the evening. Particularly appealing was his magical performance of 'Nigra sum' from Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers, which came floating from the back of the chapel. His interpretation of Grandi's contemplative 'O intemerata' reached a touching climax, high in the voice. A mass by Priuli received its first performance (Kyrie and Gloria) since the 17th century, but in this the voice's lower notes were occasionally overwhelmed by the brass. Giovanni Gabrieli's 'Lieto godea' brought the concert to a poetical end. An experienced cornett player friend suggested in the interval that the acoustic of the large chapel had too much echo for this small-scale concert. The programme notes supplied were very generous in length.

The very name of the performer VivaBiancaLuna Biffi might have been enough to tempt more people to attend the Saturday lunchtime concert entitled 'Fermate il Passo' ('halt your steps') at St Bene't's Church. They would have been impressed and affected by what was to come. Sitting calmly in the middle of the space, eyes closed, distinctively dressed, accompanying herself on her viola d'arco, Viva delivered her virtuosic programme of frottole and the like from around 1500 entirely from memory. In her clear and pure voice she sang a series of plaintive monophonic melodies, interspersed with instrumental pieces. The themes ranged from 'Tempus fugit' through the hours of night from sunset to dawn, and ending with 'Carpe diem'. The hour-long concert was a rare experience, like an intimate entry to the emotional world of a personal lament for human mortality and transience, and deserved a larger audience.

There was plenty of interest in Julian Perkins' hour-long clavichord recital 'Continental Interplays' on Sunday at St. Mary's School. Julian demonstrated the instrument's versatility in a programme ranging from Frescobaldi and Froberger via Handel and Domenico Scarlatti to Paradisi. The clavichord is very sensitive to the touch as there is no mechanical resistance to overcome as on the harpsichord, but Julian's technique was idiomatic and it was very satisfying to listen to the tiny but clear sound. Perhaps the Scarlatti was a marginal choice of repertoire as the two sonatas seemed to need the bite of the harpsichord's attack. Julian avoided the clavichord's famous *Bebung* or tremolo effect, except in Pasquini's variations on La Follia where the symbolism was clear.

St. Bene't's Church was full later that afternoon for 'A Century of Virtuoso Violin Music' by Pavlo Beznosiuk (violin) and Paula Chateauneuf (theorbo). Virtuoso violin music was exactly what we heard, and it is difficult to say who was more exhausted at the end, soloist or listeners. The first half consisted of relatively unknown 17th century music, when, as Pavlo explained, the violin was still developing. The pieces resembled mini-operas, with short, contrasting, virtuosic sections. There were played on a treasured small violin, highly decorated on the back. A later violin, an Amati with much of its original varnish, was used for further early pieces of great difficulty. In the second half, the Corelli sonata with the famous gavotte was followed by an atypical Vivaldi sonata with dotted *alla francese* rhythms, and what better to finish with than Tartini's 'Devil's Trill' sonata? Paula Chateauneuf accompanied with her usual poise and elegance, but as she was feeling unwell she was excused her theorbo solo.

Circumstances prevented me from attending other festival events such as the concert by La Serenissima in Great St. Mary's Church. One hears that the building provided a suitable space for La Serenissima's lively performance style. There was also a meal afterwards at Don Pasquale's Italian restaurant, and VivaBiancaLuna Biffi gave an afternoon workshop on the *frottola* for families. To summarise, anyone who attended the whole series of events should now have a strong sense of the beauties of Italian early music and of the skills and stamina required to perform it.



## PRIMA LA MUSICA – NEW ISSUES

J. F. Fasch (1688-1758) *Ouverture in D* FWV D: D3

editor: Hans-Heinrich Kriegel FAS140.1 (2012)

2 tpts, 3 oboes, strings, bc

[French Overture], Air, Gavotte 1 & 2 (Gavotte 2 without strings), Air, Bourrée, Menuet

Christian Geist (c.1650-1711) *Jesu nostræ spes salutis*

editor: Brian Clark GE1016 (2012)

Alto, Tenor & bc

This is part of a Complete Edition (consisting of 62 vocal works and 3 organ preludes); subscription rates available

J. G. Goldberg (1727-1756) *Sonata in C minor*

editor: Brian Clark GOL005.1 (2006)

2 vlms, vla, bc

Largo – Allegro Grave – Giga

Christoph Graupner (1683-1760) *Wie wunderbar ist Gottes Güt* GWV 1103/17

editor: Brian Clark GRA701.1 (2011)

Bass solo, oboe d'amore, bassoon, vln unis, vla, bc

Aria, recit, aria, recit, [aria – chorale]

For the 3rd Sunday in Advent, 1717.

Graupner *Concerto in D*, GWV317

editor: Niels Danielsen GRA251 (Spring 2013)

Viola d'amore, viola, strings, bc

Graupner *Overture in C*, GWV404

editor: Kim Patrick Clow GRA137 (2012)

Flute, oboe, strings, bc

G. Grönwald *Partita in A minor*

editor: Brian Clark GRÜ005 (2012)

Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Air en Bourée, Menuets I & II, Gigue

Liebhold (early 18<sup>th</sup> cent) *Missa Brevis in D*

editor: Brian Clark LIE101 (2012)

2 basses, 2 vlms & bc.

A concise setting of Kyrie & Gloria.

J. M. Molter (1696-1765) *Sinfonia in F*, BWV 7:164

editor: Jonathan Jager MOL030 (2012)

2 horns, strings, [bc?]

Molter *Sinfonia in G*, BWV 7:82

editor: Yotam Haram MOL042 (2012)

2 horns, strings, [bc?]

Johann Heinrich Schmelzer (c.1620-1680) *Sonata as Per Camera 'Al giorno delle Correggie'*

editor: Brian Clark SCH201 (2012)

2 vlms, 2 vlns, bassoon, bc

G. H. Stölzel (1690-1749) *Sonata in F minor*

editor: Brian Clark STÖ039 (2012)

2 trebles [vlms, fls, obs] & bc

[Andante] – Allegro Adagio – Vivace

G. P. Telemann (1681-1767) *So du mit deinem Munde...* TWV 1:1350

editor: Cosimo Stawiariski TEL072 (2012)

SATB, 3 tpts, timps, (2 obs ad lib), Glock (ad lib), 2 vlms, vla, bc.

*Sinfonia, duetto* (SA) & coro, aria (T), recit accomp A, aria B, chorale.

This is part of the series of *Geistliche Cantaten*. They are extremely well produced, and are musicologically rather more formal than other items listed here. It's an impressive piece. The glockenspiel appears in both arias.

*Geistliche Cantaten* will have five sub-series devoted to:

A. Composers without their own series

B. Telemann

C. Graupner i. 1712-13 cycle ii. 1741-42 cycle.

D. Stölzel i. 1720-21 cycle ii. "Bach" cycle iii...

E. Erlebach: Complete church music

Telemann *Burlesque de Quixotte* TWV55: G10

editor: Brian Clark TEL082 (2012)

2 vlms, vla, basso (no figures)

*Ouverture, Le Reveil de Quixotte, Son Attaque des Moulins à Vent. Ses Soupirs amoureux a près la Princesse Dulcinée, Sanche Panze bernè, La Galope de Rosinante & Celui d'Ane de Sanche. Le Couché de Quixote.*

Anonymous (early 18<sup>th</sup> cent) *Missa brevis in G*

editor: Brian Clark ANON101 (2012)

2 tenors, bass ad lib, 2 vlms, bc

## In preparation

Giovanni Carisio (c1627-1687) *Concerti sacri* (complete)

editor: Brian Clark (Summer 2013)

The only printed collection of motets by the blind Turin-based organist includes one amazing work for SSSST & Bc

Giovanni Legrenzi (1626-1690) *Laudate, pueri, Dominum*

editor: Brian Clark (Spring 2013)

SSATB, tpt, 2vlms, 2vlns, bassoon, bc

Johann Rosenmüller (c.1620-1684) *Beatus vir*

editor: Brian Clark (Spring 2013)

SATB, tpt, 2vlms, 2vlns, bassoon, bc

These two pieces were commissioned by Simon Carrington for a Yale Schola Cantorum Venetian Vespers project.

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## LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

### Death

During Bach's brief visit to Lübeck (1705), he witnessed a spectacular event put on by Buxtehude to mark the death of the Emperor Leopold I. Of course, by then, Buxtehude himself was only two years away from his own death. I wonder how Bach's music would have been different if he had arrived after Buxtehude's death? Death, Buxtehude and Bach were the focus of the Wigmore Hall concert (1 Nov) by the English Concert and Mark Padmore with part of the funerary music that Buxtehude wrote for the death of his own father (the intensely moving *Klag-Lied* and the two instrumental *Contrapunctus* pairs from *Fried und Freudenreiche hinfahrth*), interspersed with works by Bach on a similar theme. The performers dressed in black for the occasion. The Bach works were the cantatas *Ich armer Mensch* (BWV55 – not an easy sing to open a programme) and *Ich habe genug* (BWV82) together with *Bist du bei mir* from the Anna Magdalena Book and the recitative and aria *Welt, deine Lust ist Last/Mein Verlangen* from Cantata 161. The two other instrumental works were Sinfonias from Bach cantatas associated with pain and suffering, Cantatas 12 and 21, both with prominent oboe lines, played with her usual excellence by Katharina Spreckelsen. Cellist Piroska Baranyay also deserved special mention. Mark Padmore's gentle, unforced and natural voice was the ideal vehicle for these reflective works, his frequently tested high register being particularly mellifluous. Just in case there was a dry eye left, his encore was Jephtha's 'Waft her Angels, through the skies'!

### Hearing Bach's Voice – Organ, Chorale and Passion

St George's, Hanover Square (Handel's church) is the proud owner of a new west end organ, built by Richards, Fowkes & Co – the first organ in London to be built by an American company. Richards, Fowkes & Co specialises in building organs in the Dutch/North German 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century tradition, which is very different from the typical English parish church organ. Many highly respected foreign organ builders have come a cropper by compromising their own house style too much in order to fit in with the one-size-fits-all eclectic approach that most English organists prefer. Indeed, it has always seemed curious to me (never having been a church organist) that organ committees and advisors commission excellent foreign organ builders who are expert at producing a particular type of organ, only to insist that they produce a completely different type of instrument to suit their own (usually Anglican) taste. The new St George's, Hanover Square is still open to interpretation, but on initial hearings it seems that the compromises from the Richards, Fowkes & Co house style are relatively small, the most notable being the partial transformation of what should have been a Dutch/German Positive division into

an English enclosed Choir organ. The inaugural recital (on 18 Oct) seemed to go out of its way to ignore the historic precedents for the organ, with registrations, performing style and a choice of programme that seemed designed to test its abilities as an all-purpose English parish church organ – which, of course, it isn't.

A far more interesting, and more relevant, exploration came with the day-long Royal College of Organists London Organ Forum event (in conjunction with the RCO Academy and the London Bach Society) with the music of Bach as the focus (3 Nov). The morning started with 'Who's in charge', a typically ebullient, erudite and entertaining presentation by John Butt (who has since been awarded the OBE) on the multiple roles of the organist and Kantor in Bach's time. Robert Quinney (Sub-organist at Westminster Abbey) followed with what he described as a 'Butt-Lite' (but was actually rather intense and complex) talk on the structure and meaning in Bach's organ fugues, or 'How do Bach's fugues make us feel?' The organ itself featured during the afternoon masterclass, with John Butt's positive and encouraging remarks to the young players helping them to "make the organ sound like a musical instrument" – one of the hardest tasks for any organist. The day was rounded off with the evening concert by the Steinitz Bach Players, directed by Alison Bury, with Leo Tomita, countertenor, and Robert Quinney playing the new organ. The concert was designed to reflect the services and recitals of Bach's time, and was topped and tailed with an organ prelude and fugue, in this case by the B minor pair, the Prelude given a rather jovial reading considering that it may well have been written for performance to commemorate the death of the Electress of Saxony. The audience joined in three chorales, each preceded by a Bach chorale prelude, and Leo Tomita sang two of Bach's most luscious cantatas, *Vernügte Ruh* (BWV 170, with its obbligato organ part) and *Widerstehe doch der Sünde* (BWV 54).

St. George's Church, Hanover Square  
Tuesday 5 March  
1.00 pm.

Recital on the new organ by  
Richard Fowkes & Co  
played by  
Andrew Benson-Wilson

Heinrich Scheidemann (c. 1595 – 1663)  
Samuel Scheidt (1587-1654)

### Furioso indeed

The whys and wherefores of Arcadian love life (as portrayed by Vivaldi) were given a thorough shaking down by contralto Sonia Prina and the newly-formed Italian instrumental group, Il Pomo d'Oro, (Wigmore Hall, 6 Nov). The opening cry of *Perfidissimo cor!* set the mood for most of the works. Sonia Prina, equally adept in both the female and male roles, didn't hold back in projecting the varying moods (mostly vengeful and angry) of the Arcadian protagonists, the only relief coming in the languid *Così potessi anch'io* from *Orlando furioso* and in the final few bars of the concluding *Amor, hai vinto* as "the spirit became as tranquil as the ocean in a calm" – just in time to prevent scenes of mass suicide in Wigmore Street. The instrumentalists were impressive, notably their leader, the bouncy Riccardo Minasi who featured in two of Vivaldi's Violin Concertos (RV181 and 277), the latter, *Il Favorito*, contrasting the wistfully dreamy Andante with the barely controlled frenzy of the final Allegro. They also played a work new to me, Brescianello's Sinfonia in F (Op.1/5), one of the earliest examples of a work under that title.<sup>1</sup> The influence of Vivaldi was clear, not least in the pastoral central movement.

### The Underworld Upstairs at the Gatehouse

The upper room of a pub in Highgate might not be the most obvious venue for a production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* but it turned out to be eminently suitable in many ways, not least the fact that the original production was in a room of the Ducal Palace at Mantua that was probably not much bigger. This production was given by Hampstead Garden Opera with the instrumental group Musica Poetica London in the 'Upstairs at the Gatehouse' theatre in Highgate (I went on 14 Nov). Director Matthew Eberhardt set the work (using very effective simple block staging) within what seemed to be some sort of contemporary cult, with the narrow-tied and besuited men and clone women of the chorus (from which emerged the various subsidiary roles) all dressed identically – incidentally, making identification of those roles a bit tricky for those who didn't know the work well. In complete contrast, the underworld was a sordid (or fun, depending on your point of view) graffitied den of seductive torn-tighted Goth sirens surrounding Pluto who, despite the enticing offerings available to him, had his head buried in what I think was 'Fifty Shades of Grey'. What was particularly attractive was the intimate setting, with the audience sitting within a few feet of the action on the wide stage. Of all Monteverdi's operas, *L'Orfeo* is perhaps the one that benefits most from such audience involvement. The orchestra were to one side, and unfortunately out of sight of many of the audience, although this did not affect the integration of players and singers. The four main roles

had dual casts, so it is perhaps invidious to pick out individuals, although on the evening that I attended, I was impressed by the singers in the key roles; Bélan Barnaus (Music and Euridice), Réne Bloice-Sanders (Orfeo) and Ian Helm (Charon and Pluto). The chorus and supporting singers were also good, although perhaps not always quite in tune with period singing styles. The musical direction was by Oliver-John Ruthven, conducting the 11-strong band, making very effective use of the continuo instruments, although there were some intonation and excessive volume issues from the violins. This was an excellent and adventurous production by an enterprising company.

### "A lot of very strange music from the 17<sup>th</sup> century"

Had Richard Egarr's description of the Academy of Ancient Music's concert (St George's Hanover Square, 16 Nov) been used in the publicity, there might not have been an audience at all. As it was, the music was from a period that I am particularly drawn to – Christopher Gibbons, Locke, Blow and Purcell with Handel tagged on to the end. I have a feeling that Egarr saw the concluding Handel Trio Sonata as an example of very un-strange music from the 18<sup>th</sup> century (he introduced it as a "reward after the weird stuff"), although that thought would have distracted from the real, if generally misunderstood, English repertoire of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Although the theme was "Handel and heroes", there was no real evidence presented that Handel saw the likes of Gibbons and Locke as heroes, although Purcell was clearly a different matter. As it was, it was the music of Christopher Gibbons that really shone through, notably in wonderfully Baroque twists and turns of two of his (very different) Fantasias and the Suite No 5 in E minor. Given his hero status to Handel, Purcell was given rather short shrift, represented only by his Ground in D, played on the harpsichord by Richard Egarr. Four organ works by Gibbons were played on the new organ in St George's by Stephen Farr, with very subdued (and, I suggest, not entirely authentic) registrations. The two works for double organ, in particular, could have done with a bit more oomph. The main instrumental contributions came from violinists Pavlo Beznosiuk and Cecilia Bernardini, the contrasting sounds of their respective instruments being particularly telling in the intertwining threads of the Gibbons' works. More English music from this period deserves to be heard, without being tagged to Handel and without the excuses.

### La vera costanza

Following Royal Academy Opera's 2009 production of Haydn's *La fedeltà premiata*, conducted by Trevor Pinnock (Principal Guest Conductor of the RAM's Chamber Orchestra), Pinnock suggested that they put on *La vera costanza*, which they have now done (I went on 19 Nov, Sir Jack Lyons Theatre, RAM). This is just the sort of show that the Academy and the like should be putting on, with its exploration of attractive but little known repertoire. Like Vivaldi operas, Haydn's operas are well worth a revival of interest – both composers produced relatively short and approachable works. The story line of *La vera costanza* is the usual drivel of the shipwreck variety, so I

<sup>1</sup> Is that an over-simplified comment from the programme note? There are lots of 17th-century short single-movement sinfonias, and more substantial pieces were used as overtures – Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, for instance. He wrote a Symphony to open *Messiah*, even though it had a French introduction (admittedly after 1735, the date of Brescianello's op. 1). If the comment means anything, it is referring to the three-movement form, but even that is doubtful. CB



will not trouble you with a description. But Haydn's opening evocation of the shipwreck makes for a very dramatic overture, and his music continues in this dramatic vein, using the whole gamut of Italian opera genres including, notably, some fine act finales. The 2009 *La fedeltà premiata* was set in some sort of Big Brother house, so it was a relief to have a period costume production on a simple and very effective modern stage set, centred on a large sloping moveable platform. Pinnock made some judicious "abbreviating and adjusting" to the recitatives, all sounding perfectly sensible to me. But it was still a testing vocal exercise for the young singers, all of whom were obviously talented, with far more apparent understanding of the voice type needed for this repertoire than most student productions I have experienced. There was a dual cast over the four nights, but the singers who particularly impressed me when I went were Helen Bailey (Rosina), Sóinia Grané (Lisetta) and Samuel Pantcheff (Masino); with Rosalind Coad (La Baronessa Irene), Stuart Jackson (Il Conte Errico) and Thomas Elwin (Il Marchese Ernesto) not far behind in my esteem. Trevor Pinnock directed the (modern instrument) orchestra with enthusiasm and panache, keeping up a lively pace but always allowing the singers time.

#### "A Saint, a Priest and a Great Bear"

So ran the latest offering from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's Clever Concert Titles Department for their St Cecilia's Day concert (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 22 Nov), an event marked by the opening Ode *Hail Bright Cecilia* – a doubly appropriate choice as Purcell died on the same date in 1695. In the first performance, Purcell himself sang "'Tis Nature's Voice", a role taken on by Jeremy Budd. This was followed by *Zadok the Priest*, the programme note writer clearly being a bit out of date with current (and director, John Butt's) practice by describing the opening as a "steady inexorable crescendo".<sup>2</sup> As it was, John Butt only offered a crescendo on the last bar before the choral entry – and even that was, perhaps, a bar too early. Handel's *Dixit Dominus* completed the programme, the most outstanding contribution coming from Grace Davidson in *Tecum principium*, one of several soloists who stepped out from the Choir of the Enlightenment's 25-strong forces. I am not sure if John Butt has directed the OAE before, but he certainly inspired them with his vigorous and involved conducting. He also did very well in the OAE's enterprising and very well supported late night 'Night Shift' event (aimed at 'Yoof'), his bubbling enthusiasm hitting just the right mood, in sharp contrast to the daytime-TV presenter whose patronising and ill-informed babbling would irritate me even more intensely than it already does if I were in the target age bracket.

#### Hybrid Bach

I could only make one of this year's Spitalfields Winter Festival events, and I chose a good one, with Lawrence Cummings directing the English Concert and Choir in

Corelli and Bach (Christ Church Spitalfields, 17 Dec). The Corelli was, inevitably, the *Christmas Concerto*, Cummings reinforcing the contrasts between the various sections before the famous bit. Bach's reworking of a secular into an Advent cantata followed with Cantata 36, *Schwingt Freudig euch empor*, another example of contrast, notably between the exuberant opening chorus and the following inserted duet on *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, its intensity heightened by the two oboes d'amore. Highlights of the cantata came from Simon Boden's *Die Liebe zieht*, the chorale *Der du bist* with its bubbly accompaniment, and Natalie Clifton Griffith's *Auch mit gedämpften schwachen Stimmen*, the latter reflecting the mood of Corelli's *Pastorale*. But the real meat of the evening came with a hybrid version of Bach's *Magnificat* that, in essence, transposed the original 1723 E flat version, with its four Christmas Lauds, down to the D major key of the later version. In his pre-concert talk, Lawrence Cummings explained the rationale for this, including the advantages to the instrumentalists of playing in a more user-friendly key. Again Cummings dwelt on the contrasts, the opening pair of pieces being just one example, from the dramatic fanfare of the chorus to the delicately performed soprano aria *Et exsultavit*, sung by Rebecca Outram. The Christmas insertions to the *Magnificat* text are not heard that often – the second, *Freut euch und jubiliert* was a fascinating quartet for SSAT and continuo. Nicholas Pritchard excelled in the tricky tenor aria *Deposuit potentes*, as did Timothy Travers Brown in the following *Esurientes*, the good things that the hungry were filled with including some rather jovial organ continuo elaborations before the final plonk that sends the rich empty away. The soloists were all drawn from the chorus, with every one of the 12 singers having their solo opportunities.

#### O Magnum Mysterium

A late-running concert meant that I only managed to hear a tiny bit of Oxford Baroque's contribution to the Brighton Early Music Festival's Young Artists scheme "Autumn Lates" event (reviewed in the last EMR). But I had another chance to hear them in a much larger format (together with The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble and directed by Jeremy Summerly) at their concert at St John's, Smith Square (18 Dec) – *O Magnum Mysterium: Music for Christmas from Venice to Dresden*. After an opening organ toccata, Willaert's *Lauda Jerusalem* was given a surprisingly restrained reading, the closing bars so quiet as to sound hesitant and uncertain. Monteverdi's *Dixit Dominus* (one of the two *Selva morale* settings) was far more confident, notably in the contrasting moods of the final section, despite the presence of a vibrato-laden soprano (not the only time in this concert). *Beatus vir* was taken at an unusually steady pace compared with many interpretations, as was Schütz's *Hodie Christus natus est* towards the end of the programme. The music chosen went beyond the geographic limits of the concert's title, although the influence of Venice was apparent throughout. The Hamburg composer/organist Hieronymus Praetorius was one of the best examples of this wider

2. Evidence is given in the critical commentary to my Oxford UP edition of the Coronation Anthems. CB

influence, his *Magnificat Quinti Toni* being one of the finest examples of the North German polychoral style. It was an appropriate choice for the season as, like Bach's original version of his own *Magnificat*, it includes interpolated Christmas songs, in this case, *Joseph, lieber Joseph mein* and *In dulci jubilo*. It closed the first half, and was compared with the Schütz three-choir *Magnificat* that ended the concert. An unusual piece was Rore's madrigal *Anchor che co'l partire* to the text of *Angelus ad pastores*, with cornettist Gawain Glenton playing the elaborations suggested by Giovanni Bovicelli in his 1594 *Regole, passaggi di musica*. The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble was excellent, as were Oxford Baroque's own 7-strong group of players.

### Stadtpeiffer

Two days later The English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble had a show to themselves, together with countertenor Mark Chambers (Kings Place, 20 Dec). Their principal focus was on the world of the 17<sup>th</sup> century *Stadtpeiffer*, the famed and multi-talented German town musicians, and the music that they might have performed at Christmas, both 'art' music and popular melodies. *Stadtpeiffer* were expected to be able to play a vast range of instruments, from many different families. The closest we got to that was William Lyons and his collection of bass instruments, ranging from the bass and quint-bass dulcians to a gorgeously buzzy little racket. The well-constructed programme included pieces by Michael Praetorius, Scheidt, Vierdanck, Schütz, Schein and Schop, the one nod to the more usual sort of Christmas concert (that I generally avoid) coming with an audience participation version of *Gaudete*. Mark Chambers has a beautifully clear and almost boyish countertenor voice that blended perfectly with the accompanying instruments. This was most noticeable in Schein's *O Jesulein, mein Jesulein*, with its litany-like repeating motifs, where he sang alongside a mute cornet, dulcian and organ. The peep into Germanic musical life of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was completed by a harpsichord pieces by Schildt (the tricky *Paduana Lachrymae*) and Weckmann (*Toccata in E minor*), played by Robert Howarth. A lovely concert.

### Trinity's Bach

The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge, with its College's Director of Music, Stephen Layton, were joined by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment for their annual Christmas concert at St John's, Smith Square (22 Dec), performing Parts 1 to 3 and 6 of the Christmas Oratorio. The 38 student singers (who stood throughout and sang without music) produced a most impressive and coherent sound, with excellent balance, clear diction, and an ability to catch the varying musical textures. It is always encouraging hearing young singers in university choirs like this, as well as the increasingly girl-friendly cathedral choirs. Several will go on to professional careers in music, but all will surely retain a love of music whatever their professional involvement. It is worth noting that three of the evening's soloists revealed that their university training was not in music, but in subjects such as Anglo-Saxon History and Literature, Archaeology

and Anthropology, and Medicine<sup>3</sup>. Over the years, Stephen Layton's conducting has become increasingly flamboyant, and his musical interpretations more emotionally intense and romantically inclined, the latter particularly noticeably in his habit of prominent rallentandos. His occasional habit of conducting every beat in a bar, rather than beating the bar, caused an overly insistent rhythmic pulse in several of the movements. The four soloists (Katherine Watson, Iestyn Davies, James Gilchrist and Matthew Brook SATB) were all on excellent form, with no sign of Christmas season fatigue.

### Corelli at Christmas

The Avison Ensemble's mini-series at Kings Place 'Corelli at Christmas' included a programme that contrasted three of Corelli's Opus 6 Concerti Grossi with works by Handel, Vivaldi and Scarlatti, soprano Rebecca Bottone joining the group for the Vivaldi and Scarlatti pieces (29 Dec). The Corelli concertos were given vivid and enthralling performances, exposing their roots in the multi-sectional *Stylus Phantasticus* style of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Handel's own Opus 6, a clear homage to Corelli, was represented by No 11 in A, with its slightly scary feeling opening *Andante larghetto, e staccato*. Handel's curious *Sonata a 5* (HWV288) may have been written for Corelli, and owes more than a nod to Vivaldi's music, notably in the unison figuration. It is more of a violin concerto than a sonata, and allowed Pavlo Beznosiuk plenty of opportunity to add elaborations. Rebecca Bottone has received many very positive reviews from me over the past ten years, although on this occasion I felt that her vibrato (which, as so often seems to be the case, has grown over the years) interfered far too much with her delineation of melodic line and obscured her ornaments rather too often. It is all a matter of control, as she could hold a steady note when she wanted to – I just wish she had wanted to rather more. Vivaldi's *Salve Regina* (RV617, the earliest of four settings) is not his finest work, but Scarlatti's *Cantata Pastorale 'Per la Nascita di Nostro Signore'* was a different matter, and was very well portrayed by Rebecca Bottone. One of the most attractive moments came just after the recitative line '*l'appassionato amore*' with the gentle aria *L'autor d'ogni mio bene*, with its wide-spaced vocal line and accompanying instruments of violin and viola (giving me a very rare chance to praise a viola player, in this case Rachel Byrt). The final aria *Toccò la prima* was more of a bucolic dance than a pastorale as the protagonist encourages the shepherds to abandon their flocks. As well as Rachel Byrt, other notable contributions came from violinists Pavlo Beznosiuk and Caroline Balding, Richard Tunnickliffe, cello, and Paula Chateauneuf, archlute (but not mentioned in the programme).

3. Many choral scholars study subjects other than music. To take a specific example, the "pointless" Alexander Armstrong studied English at Trinity on the strength of a musical scholarship. CB

## CD REVIEWS

## CHANT

**Epitaph** *Medieval Iceland* Sverrir Guðjónsson cT + singer, percussion, gamba, recorder, lute 50' 25"  
Smekkleysa ACoor (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, © 2000)

This is a collection of 30 tracks of Icelandic song. I didn't expect a counter-tenor: I expected a medieval Icander to sound a bit rougher, but Sverrir Guðjónsson sings well. I'm puzzled by "medieval Iceland": the instruments are very much post-medieval in most usages of the word. Sadly, the booklet gives no historical information. The only sources mentioned are a collection of traditional Icelandic songs published by Bjarni Thorsteinsson in 1906-9 and good advice from a folk singer Engel Lund (1900-1996). I did in my youth spend a little time on Icelandic sagas, but came across no music. But it is definitely worth listening to this CD with an open mind, enjoying a variety of song without worrying about their degree of antiquity. A coherent programme is provided by seven headings. The variety of tempi and styles helps the innocent listener to get something from the programme without reading the translations. I wondered if there were more stanzas to the poems: they were all very short, with an average length per track of only a hundred seconds, which somehow felt a lot shorter than the Glogauer programme reviewed on the right-hand column. The prices I noted on the web seem to be a bit high for a reissue of a 1998 recording, but it's well worth hearing. Perhaps a reader familiar with Icelandic can review this with a greater knowledge than I have. CB

**Zu S Thomas** *Two Gregorian Masses from the Thomas Gradual... c. 1300* Amarcord 70' 11"  
Raumklang RK ap 10112

These performances of two plainchant masses of around 1300 from St Thomas's Church, Leipzig, are beautifully sung and beautifully recorded. It may sound perverse to continue that I feel that therein lies one of my reservations. Performances which ignore completely the ground-breaking work that has been done over the last thirty years on the performance of plainchant and produce a free-floating, gently plummy, unornamented account throughout invite a few questions. Sadly the q & a style notes do not address the issue at all, and we are left to guess

whether the group is unaware of the work of the Ensemble Organum and many others or whether they are so seduced by the now largely discredited approach of the Abbey of Solesmes that they have followed it unquestioningly. However, if you like your chant sublime and other-worldly you will have no problem with this, and the singing and recording are consistently lovely. A couple of slightly more informative scholarly segments serve to bolster the rather rambling main notes which begin by obfuscating the terminology – is it a Gradual? is it an Antiphony? – and end with Mr Joppich, who prepared the chant, bigging up the recording in advance – 'Given the high level of quality I attribute to the group I am already convinced today that I will not be disappointed with the recording.' Let's hope he wasn't. D. James Ross

15<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**Josquin Desprez** *Psalm settings* Weser-Renaissance Bremen, Manfred Cordes cpo 777 588-2 70' 26"  
*De profundis, Domine ne in furore, In exitu Israel, Memoer esto verbis tui, Miserere, Misericordias Domini & Qui habitat in adjutorio*

This selection of Psalm settings from throughout Josquin's life incorporates several of the penitential psalms beside other psalms all couched in the first person and intended for personal devotions. As such they build up a considerable atmosphere of piety, although any risk of monotony is alleviated by the variety of approaches Josquin takes to the text throughout his long career. Originally making their name as performers of 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire for instruments and voices, Weser Renaissance's last few recordings have marked a very successful regression in period and scoring to early choral repertoire, and these accounts of core repertoire by Josquin help to establish them as authoritative performers of this demanding material. The eight-piece choral ensemble produces a full, rich sound, with clear articulation and an interesting feature in the person of Terry Wey, billed as a 'tenor altus'. This would appear to be a description of a voice covering the alto range but in full tenor voice, providing a helpful link between the two falsetto 'diskant' singers and the lower voices of the group. D. James Ross

**Das Glogauer Liederbuch** *Songs, Comic Tales and Tails* Sabine Lutzenberger S, Martin Hummel Bar, Marc Lewon lute, Ensemble Dulce Melos 78' 17"  
Naxos 8.575276

The Glogau Songbook is a set of three partbooks containing 292 pieces. Some are international favourites, others are possibly by local composers. The music is stly attractive, appealing, enjoyable to play and to listen to – both in expectation and in the reality on this recording. 41 tracks (averaging just under two minutes each) are fractionally longer than the Icelandic programme that is the first review here, but more satisfying. I had put aside the facsimile in anticipation of this CD, then when it came it had vanished – it's not music that needs that sort of study, but it is fun to play. I won't repeat information on the MS that is in my review of Clemencic's take on it (see *EMR* 149 p. 20). Buy either. The Naxos disc seems preferable for its domestic feel and it is cheaper, but both are enjoyable. CB

**Ockeghem** *Missa prolationum* Ensemble Musica Nova, Lucien Kandel 57' 13"  
*Alma redemptoris mater, Salve regina*

There are two ways of approaching this technical and musical masterpiece. One is to relax and enjoy the beautiful sound generated by the music and the singers; the other is to follow the logic of the notation. I hoped to do the latter, but can hardly read the notes, let alone the small-print explanation, thanks to the effect of 11 sets of eye-drops a day, so I'll recommend this strongly on the strength of the former. I did glance through the booklet a few weeks earlier, and the information therein is well worth reading as the basis of understanding what the music is doing, and a score is useful – annoyingly, the only printed one at hand had glossy paper and over-reduced note-values and the download from IMSLP is Plamenac's in old note-values. A feature of the music is the use of a wide range of note values, and I wonder if tempos need be quite so leisurely. The Agnus on *Hilliard Live 2* has just a little more movement and shape. That apart, Musica Nova produce a fine performance, with the Mass topped and tailed by two Marian motets. CB



16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**Arcadelt Sacred Works** Josquin Capella, Meinolf Brüser 64' 12"

cpo 777 763-2

*Domine non secundum peccata nostra, Estote fortes in bello, Istorum est enim regnum caelorum, Lamentationes Jeremiae (Res. Sordes eius.), Missa "Ave regina caelorum", O pulcherrima mulierum, Pater noster*

Celebrated nowadays mainly for his contribution to secular music and in particular to one madrigal, it comes as no surprise that Arcadelt is also the composer of a fine body of church music. Spending much of his creative life in Italy, he served in the prestigious Cappellas Giulia and Sistina and it is in the choirbooks of the latter that much of his sacred music is preserved. Dating from the 1540s and 50s his polyphony is conservative in style compared to his colleague Constanza Festa, but serves as a link between his Flemish predecessors and the likes of Palestrina to whom he would hand on the compositional baton. Among the interesting selection of motets and mass movements recorded here, the powerfully anguished Lamentations and flamboyantly martial St Michael motet *Estote fortes in bello*, a real masterpiece, stand out as particularly effective. The Josquin Capella suffer one or two moments of intonational uncertainty here and there, but generally provide convincing and sonorous accounts of this unaccountably neglected repertoire.

D. James Ross

**A & G Gabrieli, Flemish & Paduan Maestri Organ and Two Organs [sic] Compositions** Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini, Liuwe Tamminga 142' 20" (2 CDs)  
Tactus *Serie Bianca* TB 460090

This is a welcome reissue of two originally separate 1991 recordings featuring the two stunning historic organs in Bologna's San Petronia Basilica, played by the then and current titular organists, Luigi Ferdinando Tagliavini and Liuwe Tamminga. Of particular interest are the works for two organs on both CDs, not least in demonstrating the perfect match between the two organs – positioned on either side of the choir in this enormous Basilica. The breathing and vocal quality of the individual registers and the glittering sparkle of the full organ sound are both something quite unique to Italian organs and this, presumably budget, offering is a very good introduction.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Andrea Gabrieli** see Monteverdi (p. 16) for a programme of sacred contrafacta of madrigals

**Le Jeune Autant en emporte le vent** Ensemble Clément Janequin, Dominique Visse 67' 18" (rec 2005)

Musique d'abord HMA 1951863

This is one of several reissues of not-too-ancient Harmonia Mundi recordings in this issue, the distinguishing feature being the black tops of the disc looking as if they were grooves for needles. This contains 16 chansons, ending with *La Guerre*, which takes about a quarter of the total duration. The flexible singing springing from the words makes a fine introduction to the later generation of French ensemble chansons. Le Jeune takes much more advantage of contrapuntal skills than did the generation of Sermisy. Were Italian or English madrigals performed so freely, I'd probably object, but I have no doubts on composer or performers. CB

**Richafort Requiem [in memoriam Josquin Desprez]** Huelgas Ensemble, Paul Van Nevel 60' 53" rec 2002

Musique d'abord HMA 1951730

*Laetamini a4, Salve Regina a5, Sufficiebat nobis a4; Il n'est si douce vie a4, Ne vous chaille a4, Tru try trui avant a3*

Richafort was born c.1480 and died c.1550. The Requiem was published by Attaignant in 1532, and is generally assumed to be in honour of Josquin, as is hinted by the main and subordinate *cantus firmi*, which relate to his music. I reviewed an impressive recording by Cinquecento in *EMR* 149 p. 30 (Hyperion CDA67959) in which the Requiem was supplemented by related Josquin pieces. This reissued CD includes three motets and three chansons, though the first chanson is given the solemnity of a motet. It's a powerful work, sombre and distinctive. I'm not sure that either is preferable, but this is anyway worth buying for the additional Richafort pieces. The first time I played it through, it seemed a bit slow, the second time it was fine, but then following it through with the score (*Das Chorwerk* 124, available online) it again felt a bit slow. I'm suspicious of editorial false relations like that in bar 40 of the Introit: the first B of a BCB cadence clashes with an already-sounding B flat: one expects the second half of the bar to be a typical C B natural, and the CW editor adds an editorial natural there, but a singer with a part book sees more readily than if using a barred score that the phrase does not end

with the expected C, since it is followed by a G. Harmonically, sharpening the second B flat is OK, but perhaps the extra note to the phrase is a way of dropping a broad hint that neither B should be flattened; the singer might also guess that the B flat in the middle part is sustained into the next bar, and may be looking for a clue whether the second B is sharpened. (You probably need a score to understand the above!) More seriously, I'm worried by the surges of sound which may give variety of shape and volume but seem imposed. Whichever version, it's definitely worth hearing, and if money is a problem, this is cheaper. CB

**Willaert Chansons, Madrigali, Villanelle** Romanesque, Philippe Malfeyt 65' 30"  
Ricercar RIC 331 (© 1994)

This re-release of a 1994 recording to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Adrian Willaert's death usefully reminds us of a seldom seen side of Willaert's character. The composer of rich, sonorous and occasionally rather worthy church music also had it in him to devise witty, snappy and even saucy consort music, songs and madrigals, and this perky recording, sporting the fresh voice of Kathelijne van Laethem and lively consort of wind and string instruments, presents a charming collation of secular pieces by the master, deftly ornamented and engagingly scored. Particularly charming are a couple of duets for lute and harp as well as the delicate contribution by the consort's recorder player, Bart Coen.

D. James Ross

**Codex Tarasconi diminuito** Ensemble I Fedeli 56' 10"  
passacaille 983

Music by di Lasso, Merulo, de Monte, Nanino, Palestrina, de Rore, Striggio, Willaert & anon

The relatively recently unearthed Codex Tarasconi is a substantial collection of 16<sup>th</sup> century madrigals, apparently intended for instrumental performance. The mixed wind ensemble of brass and reeds used here, and typical of so many contemporary illustrations, provides just the right mix of smooth homogeneity and fibrous-edged definition needed to translate the madrigalian feel. Woven in and around several pieces are divisions, provided from other sources: the normal suspects as well as the performers themselves. And probably quite authentically, they often seem little to do with the musical import of the pieces they embroider. Though virtuosically rendered, on occasion these pieces of appliqué hang by a thread, and it is with a

sense of relaxation that one reaches the unadorned middle sections. The avant-garde works by Nanino and De Rore are quite daring enough already: their extraordinary harmonic excursions provide the drama in themselves and it is sufficient to render them with precision so as not to draw attention away from the many surprises. I Fedeli do this with great skill indeed.

The more conventional pieces rely for their drama on imposing an interpretation, and although extremely well played and subject to the same level of care and attention, they seem beautiful but sometimes rather passive. Distributing the drama throughout the fabric would perhaps give the divisions more to attach to. The through-composed divisions where the organ more strongly colours the ensemble do work well, as the composers seem to have somehow developed a technique to make this dramatic contradiction work. The mixed reed ensemble seems under-represented on disc compared with its historic prevalence, and so I look forward to hearing more from this excellent ensemble.

Stephen Cassidy

#### 17<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**Johann Christoph Bach, *Arie variate & Lamenti*** Ingrid Alexandre *alto*, Salvo Vitale *bass*, Anaïs Chen *vlm*, Il Concerto delle Viole, Mario Martinoli *hpscd*, *dir*  
Et'cetera KTC 1907 74'44"

Uncle of Maria Barbara Bach and cousin of Johann Sebastian, Johann Christoph (1642-1703) held a high reputation in the family. Unfortunately, little of his music survives. This recording contains three sets of extended variations and a couple of vocal laments, which give us a sense of a solid, if somewhat stolid, craftsman. The extended variation sets are rather formulaic and the playing here doesn't bring them to life. They are recorded on a copy of a 1765 harpsichord by Johannes Bull of Antwerp made by Keith Hill. The two laments fare better, especially the fifteen-minute long *Wie bist du denn, o Gott, in Zorn auf mich entbrannt* which Bass Salvo Vitale sings with authority and virtuosity. Alto Ingrid Alexandre brings a strong sense of commitment to *Ach, das ich Wassers g'nug hätte*, and both are very well accompanied by sombre viols and violin. It would have been good to have heard some of Johann Christoph's vocal concerti and motets, on which his reputation was built. There are some excellent booklet notes by Peter Wollny who makes a strong case for the composer.

Noel O'Regan

**Buonamente *L'e' tanto tempo hormai Sonatas, canzonas and sinfonias*** Helianthus Ensemble, Laura Pontecorvo 67'57"  
Brilliant Classics 94478

We are lured into this disc by a relaxed and seductive theorbo opening, leading us towards the next voice. This, a luscious flute, makes it obvious that we are listening to instruments of unusually low pitch, lending the whole disc a distinctive aura. The concept arises from the set of instruments (including flute and cornetts) in the Sacro Convento in Assisi, some of which were acquired possibly from an endowment early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This, coupled with the fact that Buonamente worked there as chapel master from 1633 until his death a decade later, having already achieved musical fame in previous employments, is the central idea of the disc. It is possible that these instruments were employed in performances of Buonamente's music. Certainly, the result is very convincing and coherent. The normal soprano instrument scorings for these pieces – cornetts/violins – has the flute added to manifest this coupling of ideas. The low cornett (essentially an alto instrument), normally quite a dark sound, is in the hands of Josue Melendez Pelaes very fluid and flute-coloured, whilst still accessing a richness of tone. The dialogue with the flute (both within a single piece and between pieces) is remarkably close. The upper instruments are supported variously by cello, dulciana, organ and baroque guitar, with performances rich in musical ideas and excellently played. It is very good to hear a group with such integrity presenting an interesting new angle, and so convincingly catching the ear.

Stephen Cassidy

**Buxtehude *The Complete Organ Works, vol. 5*** Christopher Herrick (organ of Mariager Klosterkirke, Denmark) 77'46"  
Hyperion CDA67694

BuxWV137, 141, 143, 144, 147, 152, 171, 175, 177, 183, 187, 188, 192, 194, 198, 201, 202, 204, 209, 215, 219 & 220

Christopher Herrick retains his preference for modern organs, travelling to Denmark (Buxtehude's own homeland) to play a new eclectically French-inspired instrument that, although fine in itself, is some way from the sound world that Buxtehude and his ilk might have known. Regular readers will know that I have never really enthused about this series, not only because of the choice of organs, but also because the playing doesn't really do it for

me. The rhythms and pulse can be rather too methodical and insistent, the registrations lacking in variety and, in the case of this CD, I found the unremittingly bombastic power of some of the Praeludia rather tiring.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Corelli *Sonate à tre da chiesa e da camera*** Ensemble Aurora, Enrico Gatti 119'22"  
Tactus TB650390 (2 CDs) (rec 1986)

op. 1/5, 9, 11, 12; op. 2/1,7,10,12;  
op.3/4,9,11,12; op. 4/1,3,4,10.

There is much to say for this as a selection of 16 out of the 48 trio sonatas – probably as many as anyone can take in one sitting, marvellous though they are. They were my introduction to the trio sonata going back to school days, long before there was much attempt at playing in a historical manner (though I think we did try to start trills on the upper notes!) Ensemble Aurora are, in many ways in accord with the HIP performance style, but I have some niggles. The most noticeable is the tendency to have a silence before the main cadential note rather than linking it with a trill: fine as a change but irritating as a habit. I also find that the speeds seem to be varied for the need of contrast rather than for the need of the music. It seems quite progressive for its date, and is very well played. The sound is often very beautiful. I wouldn't buy this as my only recording, but it's worth hearing and presents a distinctive style.

CB

**Corelli *Concerto Grossi, op. 6*** The Avison Ensemble, Pavlo Beznosiuk 129'37"  
Linn Records CKD 411

Corelli and Handel's op. 6 are often thought of as comparable sets, but here the performing style is very different from the Handel op. 6 reviewed on p. 28. Combattimenti Consort's Handel displays vigour verging on the over-excited (tipping at times into slightly less than perfect intonation), while the Avison Ensemble's playing is never less than silky perfection, impeccably blended sound, and never a hair out of tune. Their interpretation is also faultless and the concertino team of Pavlo Beznosiuk, Caroline Balding, Richard Tunnicliffe, Andrew Skidmore, Paula Chateaufneuf and Roger Hamilton are all highly skilled and informed. So why is this recording not more gripping? Perhaps the works themselves play a part. After all, they are a 'set' in every way and 12 works in the same form by one composer do tend to exhibit similarities. Possibly a little more breadth in the slow movements could help. After

several concerti, one feels a little breathless and in need of a little aural space in which to enjoy the beautiful shaping of phrases in which the ensemble excels. But despite my misgivings, this is still a beautiful disc and the excellent sleeve notes add to its allure. Violet Greene

**G. Gabrieli Christmas in Venice** Musica Fiata, La Capella Ducale, Roland Wilson Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 1944742

*Audite principes, Canzons a8, a10 & a12, Magnificat a20, O Jesu mi dulcissime (1615), O magnum mysterium, Omnes gentes, Quem vidistis pastores, Salvator noster, Sancta et immaculata, Sonata pian e forte; + Grandi Audite populi, Missus est Gabriel, Hodie nobis de coelo*

To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the death of Giovanni Gabrieli, Musica Fiata has created this disc of his music with a loosely Christmassy theme. It opens with a 12 part Canzon which, although evidently large scale, is performed and recorded with a chamber music feel. This provides a sensitive lead-in to the second piece: Grandi's motet *Missus est Gabriel* for three voices (narrator, Angel, Mary, and sounding rather arch on occasion) and choir of celestial voices. The same thread is taken up in the third piece: a new reconstruction (from the surviving 8 parts) of the 20-part Magnificat in Ecco, and given its first performance here. This piece is remarkable for the a capella echo choir, which answers each of the other four choirs (of one voice plus instruments) after their solo entries. This commenting chorus (reciting "as it was told to us by our forefathers") is reminiscent of the role of the Greek chorus, and used in many early operas to great effect – giving the listener a little space to reflect and absorb the elements of the story. The polyphony of these sections is suitably restrained and formal, and perhaps referencing earlier compositions. By the end of the Magnificat we have experienced the first really extrovert and celebratory crescendo. These exemplify the continuing trajectory of the programming, which is well thought out, mixing dramatic changes of scale with an awareness of the need for continuity. Particularly effective is the 1615 *O Jesu mi dulcissime* which Wilson scores for one voice and instruments in each choir. It is delicate and tender and laced with baroque idioms which communicate the message perfectly. Gabrieli's virtuosity as a composer and commander of multiple styles is amply represented and well explored, on this disc. Stephen Cassidy

**Gesualdo Sacrae cantiones Liber secundus** Vocalconsort Berlin, James Wood 69'22" Harmonia Mundi HMC 902123

*This will be reviewed by Hugh Keyte in our next issue along with the edition showing James Wood's completion of the two missing parts.*

**[Monteverdi] Andrea Gabrieli, Claudio Monteverdi Madrigali accomodati per concerti spirituali** I Cantori di San Marco, Marco Gemmani dir 59'20" Tactus TC 530002

I've placed this under Monteverdi since 13 of the 20 pieces are by him. It is a programme of sacred Latin versions of madrigals – 13 by Monteverdi from Books IV (1603) & V (1605) and 7 by A. Gabrieli from 1566-1580. 14 are adapted by Aquilino Coppini (1607 & 1609), 5 by Simone Molinaro (1610) and one by Girolamo Cavaglieri (1616). It is interesting that when I first encountered Monteverdi in the 1960s, it was the madrigals that were thought important and his church music was, apart from the 1610 Vespers, virtually ignored. The opposite is now true, and madrigals are much less known and available, apart from CDs reproducing complete books, which isn't necessarily the best way to experience them. Amateur early-music singers tend to have difficulty with Italian; but why not try the Latin versions? This CD is a brilliant example of how well the new texts fit and how marvellous they sound with this ensemble. The fluency, imagination and emotion of the madrigals (especially those in Book IV) survive the verbal metamorphosis brilliantly, and the performance of the six singers is utterly convincing. CB

**Nascimbeni Messa Paradis del amours 1612** Cappella Musicale di S. Barbara, Umberto Forno 61'18"

Tactus TC 561401

Bargnani, Cardi, Contino, Dognazzi, Franzoni, Malgarini, Pallavicino, Rasi, Sanci,

This begins with an anonymous Toccata that immediately caught my attention. It did, however, give the impression that it could have stopped anywhere – useful for fitting liturgical movements. The following Kyrie was at first disturbing: the sound was bold and the four singers (SATB) were a bit vibrato-laden (though I got used to it), with cornetto and an Antegnati organ as continuo; the second choir was softer, with soprano and tenor voices, flute and gamba, with continuo of archlute and positive organ – the title page (on the same pattern of that of *Orfeo*) is repro-

duced in the booklet. The Mass is interspersed by motets and canzonas, and makes a very satisfying programme.

It is appropriate that this review follows one of Monteverdi, since Nasimbeni succeeded Gastoldi (he of the light balletti) in 1609 as head of music at the independent Basilica of S. Barbara within the Mantua palace instead of Monteverdi, who was longing to leave the court chapel. Obviously, he can't match Monteverdi, but he isn't as weak as has been claimed. Smaller pieces by various contemporaries contrast with the mass, including a strangely easy-going duet of *Vulnerasti cor meum* by Rasi. CB

**D. Purcell The Unknown Purcell: Sonatas by Daniel Purcell** Hazel Brooks vln, David Pollock hpcsd 75'32"

Chandos Chaconne CHAN0795

One of several CDs that I have played and enjoyed, but haven't been able to write up. One reason for asking for it was that I've got a score of some of the music (which vanished before the CD arrived), the other was that I knew Hazel some years ago, though now only see her occasionally at the early music exhibition. Daniel comes over as far more interesting than his current reputation, and the convincing playing is a model in that the music isn't played in an overpowered, virtuosic way that distorts it – and no, that's not a polite way of covering the players with faint praise. The partnership works well, and David Pollock plays his solos with appropriate style and manner. Much of the programme is of music not hitherto on record. CB

**Rosenmüller Sonatas 1682** Musica Fiata, Roland Wilson 67'59" cpo 777 688-2

Rosenmüller is another of my favourites. A complete recording of the 1682 sonatas is much to be welcomed, especially when one can rely on the musicological thought that went into it; questions of likely pitch and temperament will have been discussed and resolved. There are many things I like about Roland Wilson's reading of the pieces; there were even moments when sounds so beautiful came from my player that I had to rewind and listen again. Unfortunately, however, I was not completely satisfied. Quite apart from trivial things like a phoney picture of the composer (the wig is at least 100 years too young) and some odd things in the translation, the title-page does not, to me at least, suggest that strings and winds should play together. I'm not aware of a single printed



source where someone has added ink notations to say "violin here" or "cornetto there"; to be fair, some of Rosenmüller's large-scale church music *does* have passages where strings accompany one section, and winds accompany the next, but when they do combine, they usually double different choirs rather than one another. So I find the present renditions of Sonatas IX and X, where choirs of matching instruments take various sections alone, and share others, unconvincing. The decision not to follow the printed order is slightly odd, not only because we can all choose how we listen to them, using our remote control, but also since the note-writer discusses each piece numerically. With very occasional reservations about some edgy high violin tone, this is a very fine recording that will establish this set once and for all as the monument of late 17th-century chamber music that I have always known it to be. BC

A complete score by Johan Tufvesson is available online. CB

**Scheidt *Sacrae Cantiones*** Vox Luminis, Lionel Meunier 6r 11"

Ricercar RIC301

*Das alte Jahr vergangen ist, Ist nicht Ephraim mein treurer Sohn, Jauchzet Gott alle Land, Lobet im Himmel den Herrn, Puer natus, Richtet mich Gott, Sende deine Licht, Surrexit Christus hodie, Vater unser im Himmelreich*

An almost exact contemporary of Schütz, Scheidt spent almost his entire life in Halle, making it all the more astonishing how well acquainted he seems to have been with the latest choral compositional styles emanating largely from Italy. It seems that he was learning them at second hand from Schütz and Michael Praetorius, both of whom he met around 1619. Although he lacks the startling genius of both these masters, he brings a degree of originality in melodic ideas and scoring to his eight-part *Sacrae Cantiones* published in Hamburg in 1620, from which the bulk of this programme is drawn, showing further awareness of the new concertato style in his *Geistlicher Concerten* of 1635, which supplies the balance of the programme. The core of the CD consists of an elaborate setting of the Lord's Prayer from the former and a masterly setting of *Lobet im Himmel den Herrn* from the latter, both of which illustrate the composer's varied compositional techniques, while the complementary motets demonstrate considerable vitality and rhythmical energy. Vox Luminis, comprising ten voices and two dulcians with bass viol and organ,

produces an agile and expressive sound under the direction of bass singer Lionel Meunier. Incidentally, the organ continuo is ably played by talented Masato Suzuki, the son of Masaaki Suzuki, director of the Bach Collegium Japan. D. James Ross

**Schütz *Musicalische Exequien*** Vox Luminis, Lionel Meunier 56' 55"

Ricercar RIC311

This is a powerful account of Schütz's masterpiece by Vox Luminis under the direction of Lionel Meunier. Composed for the peace-loving Heinrich Posthumus Reuss, who successfully steered his small principality largely undamaged through the Thirty Years' War, Schütz's German burial service suggests a genuine attachment to his employer, whose perhaps understandable obsession with death had caused him to commission in advance of his demise the building of an elaborate Baroque coffin (pictured in the notes) as well as probably his funeral music. Schütz makes clear that in the straitened economic circumstances of the time the work can be performed by six soloists, doubling up that number for ripieno sections, with bass viol and organ continuo, and these are precisely the forces employed to great success by Vox Luminis. The rest of the CD is made up with an enterprising selection of funeral motets, of which the two settings of *Herr, nun lässest du dein Diener in Friede fahren* for the funeral of Georg I Elector of Saxony and the lovely *Das ist je gewisslich wahr* composed for his friend and colleague Schein are the highlights. The latter work is sung with its elaborately decorated final cadence restored after its later disappointing simplification by Schütz. (Compare SWV 277 & 388.) The singing and playing of all the music on this CD is first class from an ensemble whose authority springs from considerable experience with the music of Schütz and his contemporaries. D. James Ross

**The Ahrend & Brunzema organ** Gustav Leonhardt, Matteo Imbruno 62' 46"

Tactus Serie Bianca TB570001

Music by van Noordt, Scheidemann, Scheidt, Sweelinck & anon

The organ is Flentrop & Brunzema's 1964 reconstruction of the 1657 transept organ that replaced the one that Sweelinck knew when he was organist at the Oude Kerk. It was, for its day, an important milestone in the historic reconstruction of historic organs, with faithful copies of the original pipes, many of which still exist in another

organ. One step too far, at the time, was a historic temperament, something remedied in 2002 when Flentrop retuned the organ to a meantone temperament. The difference can be heard by comparing the first three tracks recorded by Gustav Leonhardt in non-historic temperament with the remainder of the CD, recorded in 2004 by Matteo Imbruno, the current titular of the Oude Kerk, as Leonhardt was for many years. The music is by Sweelinck, his pupils Scheidemann and Scheidt, and one of his successors, Anthoni van Noordt – a fascinating repertoire that forms the foundation of the German organ school. The playing is excellent with both players making use of clear articulation and subtle rhetoric to define the musical line in the large acoustic. Andrew Benson-Wilson

**All in a Garden Green: Four Seasons of English Music** ensemble Le Tendre Amour Brilliant Classics 94313 64' 25"

I met ensemble Le Tendre Amour (an international group based in Barcelona) during a festival in Croatia in 2008, and was very impressed. They have kept in touch over the years, and have now sent me their new CD, attractively explored English 17th-century music through the lens of the four seasons. Le Tendre Amour (soprano, flute, violin, oboe and a continuo group of gamba, theorbo and harpsichord) make imaginative use of the full range of their resources. The Swedish soprano Nina Åkerblom Nielsen has a clean and focussed tone, with very neat ornaments, 'proper' trills and a good grasp of English pronunciation. Around half the tracks are based on Playford's *Dancing Master*, the remainder often either using a ground bass or featuring divisions, with many pieces played in attractive re-interpretations of the original text. The booklet notes (entirely in English) include texts of the songs and some well-written notes by Katy Elkin, one of the group's directors. Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Ciacconas, Canzonas & Sonatas: Violin music from the Partiturbuch** Ludwig (1662) Harmonie Universelle, Florian Deuter 75' 24"

Accent ACC 24274

Bertali Ciaccona, Sonata a5, Sonata a6 Clementis Sonata a4 Nicolai Sonata a 6 Schmelzer La bella Pastora, Sonata Tubicinum Anon Ciaccona a3, Canzone a3, a4, a5, Sonata a6

This was always going to be a rave review – the *Partiturbuch Ludwig* in Wolfenbüttel is full of the kind of music I love editing and

listening to, and the performers are masters of the repertoire; added to that, both fiddlers and three of the four violists play on instruments by the same maker, so the homogeneity of sound is unrivalled. In selecting a dozen pieces from over 100, the group decided to concentrate on works with multiple violas and feature music by Bertali (the composer with the biggest representation in the volume); five of the works are anonymous, and another might as well be so for nothing is known of "Clementis". Only Bertali's *Ciaccona* for violin and continuo has previously been recorded, so most of the tracks are world premiere recordings. In all honesty, the anonymous works did not pale into insignificance alongside the superstars of the Viennese musical world. It puzzles me that neither of the note-writers mention how inaccurate the manuscript is, nor that the Wolfenbüttel version of the aforementioned *ciaccona* is different from its Kromeriz cousin. But this is not a musicological exercise, but an sumptuous hour and a quarter of utter delectation! BC

**Harpsichord Music from England, Spain and Portugal** Zuzana Růžičková 99' 57"  
Supraphon SU4118-2 (2 CDs)

These CDs contain a transfer of two earlier recordings by the doyen of Czech early musicians (and a Terezín and Auschwitz survivor). The first, of English music by a variety of composers from Byrd to Croft, was recorded in 1966. The music on the second CD, by Cabezón, Seixas, Carvalho and Soler, first appeared in 1983. There is no information provided on the harpsichord used but it was clearly a typical instrument of the 1960s which now sounds very old-fashioned, with a lot of action noise and many quick register changes using foot pedals. There is a somewhat excessive use of the four-foot and lute stops. However, the playing is generally idiomatic and shows a clear understanding of the music with upbeat tempi. There is a sparkling tongue-in-cheek rendition of Bull's *The King's Hunt* and some sensitive Dowland on the English CD; on the Iberian one the playing is confident and virtuosic when necessary. Růžičková was ahead of her time in some ways and it is good to have this tribute released to mark her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. Noel O'Regan

**La Royale Music for Kings & Courtiers** Gordon Ferries guitars, lute & theorbo 72' 51"  
Delphian DCD34111

Music by Brayssing, Corbetta, Hurel, LeRoy, de Visée + arr. by Attaignant, Hurel & Morlaye

This CD cure for sleepless nights begins with the deep notes of a slow, restful Allemande 'La Royale' by Robert de Visée, performed on a 14-course French theorbo in D. It is followed by the brighter sound of an 8-course lute for Adrian Le Roy's Pavane and Gaillarde 'Est-il conduit'. Unfortunately, an excess of rolled chords blurs the rhythm, and the divisions for the repeats are not played in time, so that it lacks the "strong rhythmic drive" mentioned in the booklet notes.

Next come five quiet, introspective movements of Corbetta's Suite in D major for 5-course baroque guitar. Corbetta's style involves complex, highly ornamented melodies supported by gently strummed chords. Speed appears to be no problem here, since the fast roudades in the Sarabande and Chaconne are tossed off effortlessly, albeit quietly, but the overall effect is nevertheless ineluctably soporific.

It is nice to hear three Fantasies by Gregor Brayssing for the diminutive four-course renaissance guitar. The first two are slow and reflective, and the third is lively with some forward movement. Ferries returns to the 8-course lute for two sleepy Bergerotes published by Pierre Attaignant.

The dreamy mood continues with a Suite in C by Charles Hurel for theorbo – a static Prelude, a slow Allemande, an ambling Courante, a mournful Sarabande and an unhurried Menuet. The deep bass notes of the single-strung theorbo produce a nice, clear texture, but why does everything have to be so slow?

Prolonging the drowse-inducing experience, Ferries returns to the guitar music of Corbetta with an Allemande 'La Royale', which he describes as having "the elegiac quality of a French *tombéau*", and Sarabande 'La Stuarde', which he says "appears to be a companion piece", because it "shares its yearning quality". The Sarabande is enlivened by a double of slow-moving quavers.

Lully's *Les Pellerins*, arranged for theorbo by Hurel, is a gratifying piece, evoking a weary pilgrimage. Pierre Certon's gentle, over-rolled 'Robin' arranged by Guillaume Morlaye for 4-course guitar is followed by Adrian Le Roy's setting of Almande tournée, which sadly decelerates for what should be invigorating divisions.

Robert de Visée used to play his guitar to Louis XIV when Louis lay abed in the evening trying to get off to sleep. The King would have fared well with Ferries' nine movements from De Visée's Suite in D minor, since only the Gigue, Bourrée

and Menuets are anything like up-beat. The CD ends with a soulful rendition of De Visée's Allemande 'La Royale'.

Stewart McCoy

*I listened to the CD one sleepless night, and not even that could manage to send me off!* CB

**Venetian Art 1600** The new instrumental style by G. B. Fontana & G. B. Buonamente  
Le Concert Brisé, William Dongois 76'  
Accent ACC 24253

This disc sets out to explore the "moment" when instrumental music first broke away into its own distinctive style, from the hitherto overwhelmingly vocal art of music. This is exemplified by the compositions of Buonamente and Fontana. The word "art" in the title is apposite, as William Dongois' style is always, and never more than here, "arty". The dynamic, tone colour and pacing are all used to create a whole palette of effects which suggest stage movements and tableaux as much as music. Whilst there is plenty of "pose", there is always a touch of introversion and reflectiveness which bring an intimate charm to the performances, and an awareness of the personality of the players – and perhaps the composer. As a result, although the historic move has been to bring the instruments to the fore in this "new instrumental style", there is in no sense a mechanisation of the music: the listener is as aware of the individuals and their thinking as in any vocal piece. This repertoire is much recorded and so it is ever more necessary to have something to say about it any new recording. The Concert Brisé achieves this in these, sometimes almost meditative, but not undramatic, renditions. Stephen Cassidy

**verklingend und ewig** Rarities from the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel  
Mädchenchor Hannover – Gudrun Schröfel, Knabenchor Hannor – Jörg Breiding 78' 22"

Rondeau Production ROP 6054

**Casulana** Il secondo Libro de Madrigali a quattro voci; Chinelli Ecce nunc benedicite; Förkelrath Wer überwindet sich; Gibel Die Liebe Gottes; Hammerschmidt Verleih uns Frieden; Kindermann Ich hab ein guten Kampf gekämpft; Knüpfer Erforsche mich Gott; Peetrinus Il primo Libro del Jubilo di S. Bernardo; Pfefferkorn Arie; Schelle Ich weiß daß mein Erlöser lebt; Duchess Sophie Elisabeth of Braunschweig-Lüneburg Gott geliebter Fürsten Held

This CD was produced in conjunction with an exhibition that explored the riches of one of Germany's (possibly the

world's) most important early libraries. Quite apart from the beautifully-recorded sound of the two youthful choirs from Hanover and their instrumental support (essentially an expanded *Musica Alta Ripa*, with the appropriate name *Capella Augusta Guelferbytana*), the programme reveals just how rich in depth the duke's music collection is; presumably for most listeners, this will be the first time they have ever heard the repertoire. Besides an assortment of German wedding and funeral compositions, there are two complete printed sets, one of Italian madrigals from 1570 and the other settings of words from St. Bernard's *Jubilus* by Jacobus Peetrinus (a Flemish composer and singer based in Italy) from 1588. The booklet notes talk a lot about the transformation of music from the printed page into performance; I found these performances mostly convincing, with the youthful voices blending well. The only piece that did not quite work for me was the final one on the disc, Chinelli's fine setting of *Ecce nunc benedicite*; no matter how beautifully the girls sing (and they *do!*), I prefer this repertoire with solo voices – the third part of the Profe anthology was printed during the Thirty Years War and there cannot have been many ensembles in Germany at the time who could have mustered so many voices. That said, this is innovative and attractive programming, and a CD that will bring pleasure to anyone who hears it. BC

#### 18<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**de Almeida *La Spinalba* (or *The Mad Old Man*)** Ana Quintans *Spinalba*, Inês Madeira Elisa, Joana Seara *Vespina*, Cátia Moreso *Dianora*, João Fernandes *Togno*, Luís Rodrigues *Arsenio*, Mário Alves *Leandro*, Fernando Guimarães *Ippolito*, Os Músicos do Tejo, Marcos Magalhães 206' 51" (3 CDs) Naxos 8.660319–21

*La Spinalba*, ovvero *Il vecchio matto* is the only complete surviving opera of the Portuguese composer Francisco António de Almeida (c.1702–c.1755). Little is known of him for certain other than that he studied in Rome between 1722 and 1728, after which he returned to Lisbon, where it is believed he may have died in the famous earthquake of 1755. In 1733 his *La pazienza di Socrate* became the first Italian opera to be given at the opulent court of King João V, while the three act *La Spinalba*, termed as a *dramma comico*, was first given at court during the Carnival season of 1739. The anonymous libretto

involves many of the ingredients that would become common fodder for comic opera, including roles for buffo bass (two of them here) and a female servant who is a close relation of Pergolesi's Serpina, in addition to *mezzo di carattere* parts for confused or distressed lovers. The opera reveals Almeida to have been an exceptionally gifted composer who had thoroughly assimilated the Neapolitan style. This is particularly true of the many andante cantabile arias, often cast in the sentimental or pathetic style, where the writing is unfailingly grateful to the voice and falls graciously on the ear. But the composer also revels in the buffo elements, providing some richly comic moments for both Arsenio (the mad old man of the subtitle) and Togno, who in true fashion announces himself with a popular song, a *barcarolle*.

That making the acquaintance of *La Spinaldo* has proved such an enjoyable experience is due in no small measure to a splendid performance. Indeed, in a number of respects it sets standards that could be studied to advantage by more prestigious artists. The direction of Marcos Magalhães in particular is near exemplary, with beautifully judged tempos that are neither forced nor exaggerated, yet are at the same time informed by well sprung rhythms and a truly idiomatic feel for the style. Both the continuo playing and ornamentation of da capos are an object lesson on how to do such things. Incidentally, on the subject of the latter, a number of repeats are cut, always a regrettable course, but perhaps understandable here given the considerable length of the opera. Praise, too, to the all-Portuguese cast, who are likely to be unknown to most listeners. All acquit themselves to excellent effect, though Ana Quintans, who has the only truly bravura part in the role of Spinalba, becomes a little undisciplined when the voice is put under pressure. But I want to take nothing away from a remarkably successful set that should be heard by anyone with a real interest in 18th century opera. As is customary with Naxos these days, a libretto (Italian only) can be downloaded from the company's website; there is also an excellent synopsis of the plot in the booklet. Brian Robins

#### Bach *Cantatas 46 & 102*

see under Lamentationes below, p. 26

**Bach *Saint John Passion*** Charles Daniels *Evangelist*, William Sharpe *Jesus*, Julia Doyle, Daniel Taylor, Benjamin Butterfield,

Christophersen Nomura, David Newman, The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, The Bach Festival Orchestra, Greg Funfgeld (2 CDs) Analekta AN 2 9890-1

The oldest American Bach Choir numbers 95 singers, and their performance with their festival orchestra is one in a succession that began in 1888. Their style has clearly evolved and is informed by period performance practice but is still in the large choir tradition. They sound slightly distant – they probably are! What I find more disturbing is that the orchestra uses modern instruments so they sing at 440: it's just too high and imposes a strain even on the wonderful Charles Daniels as the Evangelist. But he is the great delight of the performance: not only is he equally lyrical, dramatic and fluent in turn at this high pitch, but he is as well-tuned to the way the chorus sings the *turba* parts as he is to a small-scale, 415 version like Monica Huggett's. The other soloists – and here that is very much what they are – are excellent, and the playing is accomplished, even if the piercing sound of modern oboes gives some unexpected sonorities. But this is a performance centred on the choir: and if you want to refresh your experience of this tradition, this would be a good choice. David Stancliffe

**Bach *Cantatas 52* (BWV 29, 112, 140)** Harna Blaziková, Robin Blaze, Gerd Türk, Peter Kooij SATB, Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki 63' 38" BIS-1981

Since our current Bach enthusiast has been travelling a bit, I have taken it upon myself to enjoy this, the last offering in the Suzuki Bach cycle. The three works on Vol. 52 are packed full of wonderful music and, surprise, surprise, the Collegium has more than got the measure of it all, whether it's the uplifting opening to *Wachet auf!*, the familiar opening movements of *Wir danken dir, Gott* (though perhaps not familiar from this context) or the charming ST duet from *Derr Herr ist mein getreuer Hirt*. The solo quartet (who, as usual, also sing the choruses – here backed up by three other singers per part) are in great voice throughout, declaiming the recitative effectively and giving distinguished readings of the *concertante* movements. The chorus and orchestra are equally commendable; this has always been my favoured complete cantatas cycle, and I see absolutely no reason to sway from that opinion. It's almost enough to make me go to church on a Sunday. BC



Bach "A 2 clav. Et pedal" *Six Trio Sonatas for two harpsichords* (BWV 525-530) Emer Buckley & Jochewed Schwarz 68'12"

Bach's six Trio Sonatas were written as organ (or pedal clavichord) practice pieces for his eldest son. They have often been reinterpreted by instrumental groups, but on this CD we hear them played on two harpsichords. The more astute readership will have already spotted a potential issue – one too many hands. Fortunately Emer Buckley and Jochewed Schwarz avoid the approach of many harpsichord continuo players when these works are performed by instruments, of filling in spurious and unnecessary continuo harmonies. The CD cover is misleading, showing two single manual harpsichords when, in fact, both were two manual instruments, one after Blanchet c1730, the other after Mietke c1710, the latter with a timbre that looks back rather further than the 20 year gap between them. The sound of the two instruments is very different, which might have prompted the performers to adopt a rather different approach to the structure of the works, with episodes often played on the quieter instrument (or quieter manual) rather than providing a continuous interplay between three independent voices. Organists may feel that it is like playing the works on two separate organs, switching from one to the other. The playing is fine, despite very occasional moments of rhythmic uncertainty. Although there is not always agreement on matters of detail between the two players these are, after all, supposed to be independent and individual voices. There are some attractive little da capo links, made necessary by the lack of sustaining power of the harpsichords over the organ. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

AB-W was told that the CD was available from the site below, but I didn't manage to find it. CB  
<http://jochewedswartz.com/pages/recordings.html>.

Bach *Organ Trio Sonatas arranged for multiple instruments* Florilegium 75' 53"  
 Channel Classics CCS SA 27012

Florilegium present here the BWV 525-530 organ trio sonatas, transcribed for their existing line-up of flute, violin, gamba, cello (doubling piccolo cello), lute and harpsichord. Hardly a new idea, of course – one recalls the Palladian Ensemble's 2006 disc, in which at least a couple of the same transpositions were adopted for Pamela Thorby's recorder. This is, in the main, very well executed – flautist and director Ashley Solomon has a supremely limpid and flexible tone, with dazzlingly secure

intonation and moments of deeply beguiling sweetness. The booklet notes declare the group's intent, when transcribing the works, to take into account 'the tonal contrast so intrinsic to organ registrations'. Certainly their line-up is sufficiently rich to provide a wide colouristic palette across 18 tracks. Some colours, though, whilst interesting, are perhaps less successful than others: the D minor trio sonata, here presented in G minor by piccolo cello and harpsichord, has some moments of sour tuning from the otherwise excellent cellist, who gives us very fine intonation elsewhere on the disc, perhaps suggesting slightly unidiomatic attribution of instrument to line. If you're familiar with the organ originals, transposition from sharp majors/minors to flat majors/minors and vice versa can provide something of a jolt, but one certainly couldn't accuse Florilegium of any practical inauthenticity on this score. Channel Classics' recorded sound is, it goes without saying, beautiful. *Cat Groom*

Bach *Schübler Chorales, 8 Preludes and Fugues* Matteo Messori (Creutzburg organ (1735) of St Cyriakus, Duderstadt & Köhler organ (1738) of Kreuzkirche in Suhl) 106' 08"  
 Brilliant Classics 94380 (2 CDs)  
 BWV537, 538, 541, 544-548

I struggled to continue listening beyond the first bar of music on this CD. Matteo Messori's cavalier disregard for Bach's clear rhythmic intentions in the opening B minor Praeludium (with his application of *notes inégale*, amongst other sins) really make no sense to me. Unfortunately, this style of playing continues. I really cannot work out if it is just erratic and mannered playing or whether Messori is really attempted to communicate something special about the music. But either way, the result is unsettling and, to me, distinctly unmusical. The first CD is a succession of Preludes and Fugues, all played at a wearing full blast. The 2<sup>nd</sup> CD has some slight relief in the *Schübler Chorales*. Messori swaps back and forth between the two organs, with no apparent logic. It is a shame, as the central German organs are eminently suitable for Bach's music. The booklet notes are by Peter Wollny, of the Leipzig Bach-Archiv. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Bach *Toccatas & Fantasias for organ* Bernard Foccroulle 72'  
 Rewind REW500 (© 2008)  
 BWV538, 542, 565, 572, 582, 718, 720, 735 & 1128

There is minimal information about this

recording on the CD sleeve, and you will have to use an internet link to find out what is going on. Not a good start, as far as I am concerned. Despite the title of the CD, which suggests a succession of free works, the most interesting pieces are the four early choral fantasias, notably the recently discovered chorale fantasia on *Wo Gott der Herr nicht bei uns halt*, an example of the influence of Tunder and Buxtehude on the youthful Bach. *Ein feste Burg* and *Christ lag in Todesbanden* follow in the same vein, Bach's own registration instructions for the former being followed well by Bernard Foccroulle. *Valet will ich dir geben*, one of the few Bach works with a melody that English listeners will recognise, is given a rather unusually peaceful reading, with the gently voiced pedal Trompet carrying the theme. The Toccatas and Fantasias of the title are all well known works. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Bach, *Italian Concerto, French Suites I-III, Aria variata* Lorenzo Ghielmi, *hpscd* 71' 47"  
 Pasacaille 984

Ghielmi gives a useful account of the Italian Concerto. The outer movements move along nicely with good rhythmic propulsion, but are a bit lacking in agogic accents and subtlety in timing in the 'solo' sections. I would also have liked a bit more rubato in the slow movement, where the accompaniment gets a bit stodgy. The French suites fare better: they are played with authority and a strong sense of stylistic variety in line with the characters of the different movements. French aspects are well captured without being exaggerated and there is a good balance between forward movement and leeway. The Italian variations (BWV 989) also show this same balance and are attractively played. Ghielmi uses harpsichords by Keith Hill and Andrea Restelli, both good for this music and beautifully recorded. A satisfying recording convincingly displaying Bach's mastery of various styles. *Noel O'Regan*

Bach *Praeludium in B minor, French Suites I-III, Passacaglia in C minor* (Vol. I) Mika Väyrynen *accordion* 64' 52"  
 Alba ABCD 346

This variety of keyboard pieces is played on the free bass accordion, which proves itself a very versatile instrument indeed. At times it can sound very like an organ, as in the opening Prelude or the Gigue from Suite I; at other times it is more like Bach played on the banks of the Seine, as in the D minor French Suite – the lugu-

rious character of that suite's Sarabande is in fact particularly suited to the accordion. Väyrynen plays with energy and a strong sense of style, adding subtle ornamentation. The balance between the voices is well thought out. His Passacaglia is a real tour-de-force which builds its series of climaxes with confidence and authority. Väyrynen already enjoys cult status among accordion players (having recorded the Goldberg variations among other works on the instrument). Whether non-accordion players would want to listen repeatedly to this recording is questionable but the instrument's sustaining power and particular range of sonorities do bring some new insights to the our appreciation of the contrapuntal and melodic writing.

Noel O'Regan

**Bach Harpsichord Concertos** Matthew Halls, Retrospect Ensemble 64' 24"  
Linn CKD 410  
BWV1052, 1055, 1057 & 1058

This is an exceptional recording on every level. Playing a double-manual harpsichord by Ian Tucker after Ruckers/Hemsch, Matthew Halls takes the solo parts and directs the Retrospect Ensemble in four concertos. These comprise the F major concerto which reworks Brandenburg 4, the G minor concerto based on the A minor violin concerto, the D minor one presumed to have been conceived for harpsichord, and that in A major which may be a reworking of a concerto for oboe d'amore. The quality of the recording is outstanding, with everything splendidly in balance, allowing the listener to hear all sorts of detail which is often clouded over. Halls' tempi are always just right and allow the group to play with a wonderful sense of poise while always infusing the music with a sense of the dances which lie behind so much of it. Halls' own playing is confident and full of sparkle while never overstated or forced. Very highly recommended indeed.

Noel O'Regan

**Couperin Messe pour le Paroisses, Messe pour les Couvents** Gruppo vocale Armoniosoincanti, Adriano Falcioni (2 CDs)  
Brilliant Classics 94333

It is not really clear whether this new Italian organ is supposed to have been built in a French style, but it does include some of the stops, if not always the sounds, from that school. The overall sound, however, is not particularly impressive (at least on this CD), with tuning being something of an issue. The female vocal

group is appropriate for the chant interpolations in the *Messe pour les Couvents*, but less so for the *Messe pour les Paroisses*, where male voices might have been expected. However, there is a male voice for the priestly incipit. Unusually for recordings of these works with added chant, a chanted setting of the Credo and Communio are included. I think *EMR* readers would much prefer this repertoire played on an historic French organ.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Handel Deidamia** Sally Matthews *Deidamia*, Veronica Cangemi *Nerea*, Olga Pasichnyk *Achille*, Silvia Tro Santafé *Ulisse*, Andrew Foster-Williams *Fenice*, Umberto Chiummo *Licomedes*, Jan-Willem Schaafsma *Nestore*, De Nederlandse Opera, Concerto Köln, Ivor Bolton 184' (opera) 24' (bonus)  
Opus Arte OA 1088D DVD

Handel's last Italian opera is not one of his best-known ones, but don't let this put you off. Perhaps it has in some way continued to be haunted by its initial reception by a public which was already losing interest in Italian opera seria. Much of it is Handel at his most imaginative, and although he and librettist Rolli were careful to avoid comedy, the tragedy of the unfolding prophecy of Achilles and his destiny at Troy is told through the eyes and emotions of the human *Deidamia*, whom Achilles marries before his departure for Troy. This interpretation of the force of destiny seen through the human eyes of one blinded by love lends the plot a softening angle to the usual hopeless story of humans vs Gods. The staging, by De Nederlandse Opera, is eye-catching in a sort of Death of Klinghoffer way. But Act 1 really doesn't need the strange line-dancing of oddly dressed characters or the simulated (and unconvincing) playing of a viola da gamba (with a spike!); the acting of the main characters would have been sufficient visual stimulus. Achilles, dressed in a bright pink chiffon layered prom dress, is suitably butch with ankle boots and bold spiked short hair, though once again the action is slightly overdone, drinking from a milk carton and tearing roughly at some food. However, any qualms about the staging are rendered unimportant by the quality of singing and playing. It is almost unfair to single out any of the singers, but Sally Matthews does manage to portray the fragility and naïvety of her character outstandingly without detriment to the physical force of her singing. As to be expected, the playing of Concerto Köln is scintillating throughout, under the able

guidance of Ivor Bolton. On the whole, this is definitely a good addition to the DVD library of Handel operas.

Violet Greene

**Handel Messiah** Karina Gauvin, Robin Blaze, Rufus Müller, Brett Polegato SATB, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra & Chamber Choir, Ivars Taurins 131' 33" (2 CDs)  
Tafelmusik TMK1016CD2

Recordings of *Messiah* should always be approached with caution. It must be one of the few works on which the majority of classical music listeners have an opinion, often even a favourite recording or annual performance. However, if you are considering making a recording, it helps to have a tenor like Rufus Müller. After all, the quality of the tenor can make or break a rendition of the piece with his domination of the crucial opening ten minutes. Müller is a delight, his ability to dramatise helping shape 'Ev'ry valley' into the start of the story to come. Brett Polegato continues that drama in 'Thus saith the Lord' and Robin Blaze's assured familiarity with 'But who may abide' does nothing to dull the feeling of magic. By contrast, Karin Gauvin's voice seems a little heavy and – at the risk of sounding like an early music pedant – her constant vibrato really does get in the way of the clarity in 'Rejoice'. Not only that, but it interferes with the pitch of notes longer than a semiquaver. There is a place for vibrato in early music but not at the expense of intonation. Having said that, her voice is beautiful, but perhaps better suited to later repertoire or even just more dramatic roles within early music. The orchestra of Tafelmusik always plays with energy and a high technical standard and it is nice to hear that these qualities are matched by the Tafelmusik choir. However, this is a live-concert recording and so it is even more to their credit that there are no discernable slips in the usual standard (even allowing for patching). The live nature undoubtedly helps to give the disc a fresh feel too.

Violet Greene

**Handel Concerti grossi op. 6** Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, Jan Willem de Vriend 153' 88" (3 CDs)  
Challenge Classics CC72570

What begins as a fairly run-of-the-mill recording of Handel's well-known works contains some surprising twists in tempi and other aspects of interpretation. While the listener may not agree with all of de Vriend's choices, his personal stamp did at least ensure that this listener's ear stayed

focussed on the recording. The same could be said of the at times 'rough edges' in the playing, which occur only as often as they would in a live performance. Too often, such well-known works can appear to our ears as wallpaper music, with recordings offering very little to choose from. However, this is by no means a crazy 'novelty' recording. Furthermore, the quality musical interpretation is enhanced by the recording engineers' inclusion of the 'whole' sound. Sounds such as bow hair on strings add to the listener's experience and make for a much more exciting listening experience than a manufactured ironed-out sound.

Violet Greene

**Handel Organ Concertos Vol. 2** Lorenzo Ghielmi, La Divina Armonia 74' 16"  
passacaille 990  
HWV 287, 295, 296, 304, 310 & 343b

In this volume, Lorenzo Ghielmi explores two of the lesser known Handel organ concertos that were published by Walsh in 1740, two years after the landmark Opus 4 set of six concertos. The first of this "Second Set" is the well-known *Cuckoo and Nightingale* (HWV 295), with extensive borrowings from the op. 5 Sonatas and the Concert Grosso op. 6/9 and from Kerll's *Capriccio sopra il Cucu*. The second concerto (in A, HWV 296, based on op. 6/11) also seems to include ornithological references in the woodpecker-like chattering of the organ in the opening movement. As well as the organ concertos, the Oboe Concerto HWV 287 in G minor is also included, with its alternating combination of French and Italian style movements, and a reconstruction of the 1739 Chaconne in G HWV 343. The manuscript of the latter only includes the opening eight-bar orchestral ritornello and the basso continuo over which the soloist improvises. Lorenzo Ghielmi achieves his reconstruction with impressive sensibility, albeit with some acknowledged help from Handel's two other keyboard Chaconnes on the same bass. The CD ends with the fifth concerto of the posthumously published op. 7 set. The band is Ghielmi's own La Divina Armonia – they play with delicacy and fire in equal measure, the latter mood never getting in the way in the way that some Italian groups are wont to do. The organ is a 'proper' one, rather than the silly little box continuo organs that are so often used for Handel's organ concertos. However, it is very much in the Italian rather than the English tradition, not surprising, I suppose, given the provenance of the recording artists. The acoustic is

favourably resonant, combining clarity with an attractive bloom. Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Leclair Première récréation en musique op. VI etc.** Musica Alta Ripa 75' 44"  
MDG Gold 309 1762-2

As the booklet note hints, it is very quickly obvious that Leclair is one of the ensemble's favourite composers; he also happens to be one of mine. The recital consists of the two *Recréations de musique* (opp. 6 & 8) – which are "adorned" by the occasional deployment of oboe and recorder (make of that what you will) – and two wonderfully creative duets for violins, executed with the utter finesse we have come to expect of the group's fiddlers, Anne Röhrig and Ulla Bundies, intertwining gracefully, swapping "melody" in accompanimental roles seamlessly, and with an energetic drive to the outer movements matched with all the grace required by Leclair's slow ones. I cannot think of having ever heard more satisfying performances than these, and I have no hesitation in recommending the entire disc to our readers. BC

**Locatelli Violin Sonatas** [Locatelli Edition volume 2] Igor Ruhadze, Ensemble Violini Capricciosi 294' 44" (5 CDs)  
Brilliant Classics 94423  
op. 6/1-12, op. 8/1-6, sonata in g

I feel almost embarrassed that I have never heard of these performers! To be confronted with a box of 5 CDs of music by the same composer for the same combination scarcely promised to be a pleasant experience but I must say that I enjoyed every minute I spent listening to Igor Ruhadze and his colleagues, Mark Dupere on cello and Vaughan Schlepp on harpsichord. There are 19 works in total (from opp. 6 & 8, and one without a number), and three of the discs last a little over an hour, with the remainder under that length. The sonatas vary between three and four movements (with one exception), and are all beautifully constructed. Ruhadze is a true virtuoso, more than a match for Locatelli, even on a good day; Dupere helps to drive the music forward by carefully shaping the continuo line, while Schlepp's realizations provide the harmonic background without ever interfering with the melody line. There are plenty of little tell-tale signs that these are well-prepared performances, such as the dramatic *rallentandi* in the second movement of op. 6/5. I think many of our readers would struggle to guess the composer of

the following movement if it were played in a musical quiz. This has very much been a mind-broadening listen. BC

**Pergolesi Il Flaminio** Juan Francesco Gatell Polidoro, Laura Polverelli Flaminio, Marina De Liso Giustina, Sonia Yoncheva Agata, Serena Malfi Ferdinando, Laura Cherici Checca, Vito Priante Vastiano, Accademia Bizantina, Ottavio Dantone 183' (2 DVDs) 183' 00"  
Arthaus 108067 DVD

This, the third of the series of Pergolesi operas being recorded in the theatre of the composer's home town of Jesi, is neither as good as *Adriano in Siria* (EMR 150), nor as bad as *Il prigioniero superbo* (EMR 151). A *commedia musicale* in 3 acts, *Il Flaminio* was the last of Pergolesi's dramatic works, first performed at Teatro Nuovo in 1735. It is something of a hybrid, ranging between farcical elements drawn straight from *commedia dell'arte* buffoonery (the slapstick antics of the wealthy Neapolitan Polidoro, his servant Vastiano and the nanny Checca) and the sentimental and pathetic style that looks forward to the operas of Paisiello. At its heart lies the tangled love affair between Giustina, a *mezzo carattere* role, and Flaminio, a wholly serious soprano part, presumably originally sung by a castrato. Unlike Venetian opera of the previous century, the *parte serie* and *parte buffe* are for the most part kept separate. The opera is typical of Neapolitan opera of the period in introducing local elements such as Neapolitan dialogue, parody of opera seria, and popular local tunes (there is a riotous tarantella scene in act 2), but it is ultimately most memorable for Pergolesi's wonderful melodic writing in the more serious arias. Especially memorable are 'So spiego the exquisitely lovely act 2 duet for Giustino and Flaminio that forms the fulcrum of the opera, and Flaminio's act 3 'Chi ha 'l cor', a touchingly sentimental aria that fortunately finds Laura Polverelli's committed but at times shrill singing of the role at its best.

The production opts for the laudable approach of attempting to achieve interaction between performers and audience in true Neapolitan fashion. To enable this the orchestra is placed at the back of the stage, half hidden behind a greenery-covered rope trellis, while much use is made of extensive aprons to the side of the stage, galleries, and entries and exits through the theatre stalls. This may have worked well enough in the theatre, but the visual image on the film is frequently confused,



especially given that it encouraged the producer to have characters on his wider stage at times they should not be there. The staging is updated to a kind of nebulous late 19th/early 20th century setting, but does not jar too badly and in fact some of the women's dresses would fit happily into a period production. A personable cast is dominated by the comic lovers of the piece, the delightful Laura Cherici (Checca) and splendidly authoritative Vito Priante (Vastiano), both of whom display rich comic talent (among other things in the case of Cherici), as does Juan Francisco Gatell (Polidoro), though his weedy, vibrato-laden tenor makes a less favourable impression. Marina De Liso is an attractively sympathetic Giustina, while the cast is completed by the secondary pair of lovers, Agata (the charming young Bulgarian soprano Sonia Yoncheva) and Serena Malfi as a pleasing Ferdinando, another treble role. Dantone conducts in his now-familiar style of a mixture of over-aggressive attack and true Italianate lyricism, drawing from Accademia Bizantina playing of élan and finish. *Brian Robins*

**Manuel Pla** *Salve regina* **Josep Pla** *Stabat mater* Raquel Andueza S, Pau Bordas B, Orquestra Barroca Catalana, Olivia Centurioni 62' 56"

la mà de guido LMG 2106

Manuel? Pla: *Es tan sumo el amor, Pedro cuánto has dejado, Regocijese el alma venturosa & Tres coronas admite de nuestro celo*

This engaging CD of music by the Catalan Pla brothers makes no bones about the fact that vague attribution of many of their works to 'signor Pla' or worse still 'signors Pla's' or 'de Pla' means that we cannot be absolutely sure which work is by which brother. A combination of context and biographical details suggests that Manuel Pla is most likely the composer of the bulk of the religious music on the CD with one work attributed to the youngest brother, Josep. Widely travelled in their short lives, both composers display influences from the two leading centres of composition in the mid-18th century, Italy and Mannheim, in their works for solo voice and orchestra. Josep's setting of the *Stabat Mater* makes highly idiomatic use of the soprano voice and the two orchestral horns, while Manuel's setting of *Salve Regina* for solo bass voice and string orchestra is melodically rich and contemplative, with sections allowing vocal improvisation. A pair of recitative and arias for soprano and strings feature an obbligato trumpet and

underline the influence of the fashionable Stamitzes. Most colourful is the folk-influenced aria from the little-explored Biblical Play repertoire of which Manuel set at least three to music, where the soprano voice is joined by strings, guitar and castanets. A brief biographical note of 1800 describes Manuel as a composer of zarzuela, and there are elements of this passionate dramatic genre in his religious music, and particularly in the Biblical piece which concludes the CD. The characterful playing of the Orquestra Barroca Catalana directed by Olivia Centurioni suggests that the influence of Jordi Savall has permeated Catalonia with good practice, while the two soloists, soprano Raquel Andueza and bass Pau Bordas, are technically and musically superb. *D. James Ross*

**Platti** *Sonatas for Violoncello, Violin & Basso Continuo* Sebastian Hess vlc, Rüdiger Lotter vln, Florian Birsak continuo 73' Oehms Classics OC836

Giovanni Benedetto Platti, 1697(?)–1763, had a certain elegance of turning a phrase that was somewhat before his time. Though these sonatas for cello, violin and continuo (note the implicit order of priority) adhere rigorously to High Baroque four-movement structure, though a couple of them are titled 'ricercate' and though his slow movements are densely polyphonic, there's a Classical sleekness to these works in which Sebastian Hess and his colleagues seem to revel. It is very much presented as 'Hess and his colleagues', with his biography given due privilege, which is indicative of the instrument of the aristocratic beneficiary of Platti's pen.

Northern Italian by birth, Platti was drawn to Bavaria by appointment to the Prince-Bishop of Würzburg. On his demise, the Prince-Bishop's brother, a keen cellist who resided nearby, provided Platti with sufficient employment to remain in Würzburg despite the dissolution of the court's music at the hands of the Prince-Bishop's less musical successor, all of which explains the prominence of the cello in Platti's output. Hess, Lotter and Birsak feel their phrases together in the most organic and fundamental way, and Hess and Lotter share each other's joy in the palette of colours their strings can produce. The first two bars of track six alone contain a kaleidoscope of timbre. Birsak's continuo playing is equally classy, his fortepiano by turns feathery and searingly cantabile. *Cat Groom*

**Porpora** *Il Vulcano: Cantatas for soprano* Maria Laura Martorana, Accademia Barocca I Virtuosi Italiani, Alberto Martini 71' 44" Brilliant Classics 94311

*Il Nome, Il Ritiro, Il Sogno, Il Vulcano, Venticel che trà le frondi* – world premieres except *Il Ritiro*

Regular readers are by now doubtless familiar with my impatience at CDs of Italian chamber cantatas that display few signs of having made any real attempt to understand the genre. Gone, it seems, are the days when an intelligent singer like Gerard Lesne prepared and interpreted such music with the sensitivity and insight it demands. This, I fear, is just one more example to add to a long and depressing list. Just what can one say about a singer who can make absolutely nothing of a line like 'tu sospiri tu deliri', who brings as much expression and nuance to these exquisite cantatas as she would to recounting an eventless day to a bored husband? Add to that some execrably sour string playing by an ensemble that anachronistically includes a double bass, an inadequate note half as long as the space devoted to the singer and instrumental ensemble, and you end up with the conclusion that even at Brilliant Classics bargain price, this is a non-starter. The texts are given in Italian only. The box states that 'extensive liner notes' can be downloaded, but I was not able to find a link. Brilliant Classics failed to respond to my request for information before it was necessary to submit the review, but did subsequently provide a link that shows these notes to be indeed extensive and useful. There is, however, still no English translation. *Brian Robins*

**Sarri** *Dixit Dominus – Missa* Sächsische Vocalensemble, Batzdorfer Hofkapelle, Matthias Jung 73' 24" cpo 777 726-2

Trained in the Neapolitan conservatoire system – in his case S. Onofrio – Domenico Sarri (or Sarro) (1679–1744) is today almost entirely associated with opera, of which he composed at least thirty full length *drammi per musica* and numerous intermezzos for Neapolitan theatres, including *Achille in Sciro*, commissioned for the opening of San Carlo in 1737. Far less of his sacred music is extant, the present *Dixit Dominus* and *Missa* (Kyrie-Gloria or Neapolitan Mass) probably owing their survival to being among a select group of works that found their way north, in particular to Dresden, which had significant contacts with Naples. Almost

certainly the earlier of the two works here, *Dixit* is however preserved in Prague. Modestly scored for 5 voices and 2 violins, it is typical of its genre in being a multi-movement work alternating florid solo sections with contrapuntal passages, here frequently taken up by the choir, which I would guess was not the composer's intention. The *Missa* is considerably more ambitious both in scope and orchestration, calling for pairs of flutes ('*Laudamus te*' is an airy soprano aria with solo flute), oboes and, in more festive movements, trumpets. Employing archetypal Neapolitan church style, Sarri again juxtaposes solo work, often in the form of melismatic contrapuntal duets or ensembles, with homophonic, syllabic choral writing. The invention in general here seems to me to be on a different level to *Dixit*. The Saxon forces don't always seem completely comfortable with a style that they are probably not accustomed to, and the soloists especially have some testing moments in more florid passages, while Jung's direction is best described as efficient and workmanlike rather than inspirational. Notwithstanding, this is good honest music making and the *Missa* in particular is well worth investigating. *Brian Robins*

**D. Scarlatti *La Dirindina*, *Sinfonie & sonate*** Marina Bartoli S, Makoto Sakurada T, Giulia Mastrotaro Bar, L'Arte dell'Arco, Federico Guglielmo 63' 59"  
cpo 777 555-2

Composed for insertion in Domenico Scarlatti's *opera seria* *Ambeto* during the 1715 carnival season in Rome, the two-part intermezzo *La Dirindina* was withdrawn when it fell foul of the censor. Reading the libretto, it is not hard to see why. A cynical satire centred on musicians, it forms a musical counterpart to Benedetto Marcello's savage *Teatro alla moda* of 1720. Don Carissimo is a singing teacher, whose prime interest resides more in the charms of his young female pupils than music. When the intermezzo opens he is vainly attempting to give a lesson (and more) to Dirindina, a talentless but beautiful young singer. But she is more interested in the castrato Liscione, especially when he comes to tell her he has got her work at a Milan opera house, a part that Dirindina is manifestly not capable of taking. 'No matter', Liscione tells her, 'you have a pretty face and that's enough'. *Plus ça change!* The piece ends in delicious farce, with Don Carissimo getting completely the wrong end of the stick when he eavesdrops on Dirindina and Liscione

practising a scene from the tale of Dido and Aeneas. Musically slight and vocally undemanding, the piece nonetheless has considerable wit, point and a charm admirably conveyed in this thoroughly winning performance. Incidentally, for some curious reason Scarlatti scored the role of the castrato Liscione in the tenor clef in the first part and the treble in the second. Here the stylish Makoto Sakurada sings the second part down an octave.

The instrumental pieces that complete the disc, two violin sonatas and four instrumental sinfonias, are played with considerable vitality, if not always technically in the most finished style. The booklet gives the scoring of the sinfonias as strings and continuo; in fact the original scoring of Nos. 10 in C and 15 in B flat is oboe and strings. *Brian Robins*

**Domenico Scarlatti *Stabat mater*** Vox Luminis 64' 01"  
Ricercar RIC 258

*Miserere* a4 in e, *Salve Regina* (SA), *Stabat Mater* a10, *Te Deum* a8; Sonatas K 87 & 417

This exact contemporary of Bach and Handel is probably still best known for his keyboard compositions, and indeed this CD includes two of his 555 sonatas, although even they appear in a new light played on the organ. The fugal complexity and unfolding virtuosity of K417 and melodic subtlety of K87 are brought out very powerfully. However, it is the vocal music here which is most striking. The ebullient eight-voice *Te Deum* is a masterpiece of double choir composition as is the beautifully expressive ten-voice *Stabat Mater*, where the voices interweave in textures of breathtaking complexity. Striking too is the simple, stark polyphonic setting of the *Miserere* for four voices composed for the Cappella Giulia and firmly in the tradition of Allegri's setting – prior to later embellishments and doctorings. Both the ten-part *Stabat Mater* and the *Miserere* were probably composed for the voices of the Cappella Giulia, and the severely conservative contrapuntal style of the latter reflects the prevailing papal taste. The ensemble Vox Luminis gives radiant performances of Scarlatti's music, making one wonder why it isn't performed and recorded as regularly as the choral music of his contemporaries. *D. James Ross*

**Stölzel *Quadri di Dresda e Bruxelles*** Epoca Barocca 51' 09"  
cpo 777 764-2

Fans of baroque chamber music are

perhaps familiar with the many quartet sonatas associated with the Dresden court, scored for a pair of oboes, independent bassoon and continuo, by composers like Zelenka, Heinichen and Fasch; there seems also to have been a second grouping that proved quite popular, and it is this that the present recording celebrates – a combination of oboe, horn, violin and continuo. Epoca Barocca have supplemented the set of eight that survive in Dresden (copied in pairs) with a ninth piece from the Conservatory Library in Brussels. Each is in the *sonata da camera* format (fast-slow-fast) and each has many a catchy tune. My habitual criticism of Stölzel is once again pertinent – he is essentially a miniaturist, and seemingly chooses not to create anything of length (none of these works even lasts seven minutes). I'm surprised (and, yes, slightly disappointed) that the group did not explore the other Stölzel quartets (there are works for two violins, obbligato cello and continuo, and one for violin, two cellos and continuo), which – as well as padding out the CD – would have helped vary the soundscape for a few tracks at a time. That said, the playing is excellent, the music absolutely delightful, and the disc an utter triumph. It is hardly surprising that Bach was more than happy to plunder Stölzel's music for ideas! *BC*

**Tartini *Sonatas for solo violin*** Luigi De Filippi 71' 12"

Challenge Classics CC72561

Sonatas 4, 10, 14, 15, 17 & "in A minor"

Having known little about the 26 *Piccirole Sonate*, this is the second recording in as many issues! Rather than attempt a complete recording, or mix and match "unaccompanied" pieces with "accompanied" (inverted commas because there is some doubt over how these works were intended to be performed), Luigi De Filippi selects five substantial (and fine) sonatas. Despite them all being in major keys, there is a certain degree of introspection about them, which ties in with De Filippi's belief that they represent a period in his life when Tartini was searching for new solutions, or perhaps unsure of whether he would present these works to the public. The recorded sound is exemplary on this, and the microphones pick up De Filippi's beautifully paced and phrased readings of some extraordinary pieces. *BC*

**Telemann Arias: Hoffnung des Wiedersehens** Dorothee Miels S, L'Orfeo Barockorchester, Michi Gaigg 68' 52"

deutsche harmonia mundi 88697901822

Arias from operas and cantatas, Ob d'am concerto TWV 51:e2, Vn concerto ex Keiser's *Nebucadnezar*

I was not entirely sure this disc would work. For all his superstar status among his contemporaries, Telemann continues to struggle to convince modern listeners. If you are one of those doubters, let the incomparable Ms. Miels and Michi Gaigg take you on a veritable voyage of discovery with two little-known concerti, even less well-known cantatas (including the title piece that opens with a beautiful aria with two bassoons and strings that will melt your heart), and extracts from various other works, judiciously chosen to showcase Mr T at his very best. L'Orfeo barockorchester clearly relish playing this music and their enthusiasm is infectious, their drive and vigour impressive, and their overall performance wonderful. No-one who reads these pages regularly will be the slightest bit surprised that I loved the singing – understated but perfectly crafted for maximum impact, nicely (but sparsely) decorated repeats, and not a whiff of *prima donna*-ism. This is the ideal partnership for this wonderful music. BC

**Telemann Complete Violin Concertos Vol. 5** Elizabeth Wallfisch, The Wallfisch Band

cpo 777 550-2 58' 24"

TWV 51: e4, F3, f1, G5, A1, A3 & B2

There are seven works on this CD – to be honest, there is plenty of room for at least one more! – each of them quite different from the others. Some have elements of Vivaldian virtuosity, others are content to display Telemann's ample gift for melodic invention, while yet others display his seemingly endless ability to compose imitatively without becoming predictable. I'm not entirely sure that I would have reserved the works with two soloists (52:e4) and four (54:A1) until last; they could have been better used to alter the texture of the recital a little. The E minor double concerto is a real favourite of mine, especially when Telemann throws triplets into the rollicking gigue. This is a masterful series from Wallfisch and co., and one hopes there will be many more volumes to come! BC

**Telemann Oeuvres pour clavier** Olivier Baumont

Loreley LY052 58' 16"

TWV 32:13, 33 & 34, 33:1, 2, 13, 14, 33 & 34; Bach BWV 985 [=TWV 51: g1]; Handel *Jesu meine Freude* HWV480

On this recording Olivier Baumont matches up a representative sample of Telemann's extensive keyboard output with five original instruments, four of which are in private collections in Normandy. The two main works, a French *ouverture* or suite and an Italian concerto, are played on a large Goermans which provides a clear if not overly-rich sound. The suite shows a fine mastery of the French style to which Baumont responds well. The concerto was arranged by JS Bach from Telemann's original for violin and strings. It is not of the calibre of Bach's own Italian Concerto and gets a somewhat matter-of-fact performance here. Most of the rest of the programme is made up of Italian Fantasias and French *Fantasies*, the Italian ones played on two anonymous Italian harpsichords of 1610 and 1720, while the French are played on an anonymous late 17<sup>th</sup>-century French instrument. These are made up of short rather inconsequential movements which are repeated to make ternary forms: they are not inspired nor do they call forth inspiring performances here. The disc concludes with three chorale preludes on *Jesu meine Freude*, one by Handel and two by Telemann, played on an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Austrian fretted clavichord now in the Musée de la musique in Paris. Again the playing could have benefitted from more subtlety. But it is good to hear these instruments, especially the single 8' gut-strung 1610 Italian harpsichord once owned by Wanda Landowska. Noel O'Regan

**Vivaldi Concerti per fagotto III** Sergio Azzolini, L'aura soave Cremona 70' naïve OP30539

Tesori del Piemonte Vol. 54; Concerti per strumenti a fiato Vol. 7; RV474, 475, 480, 485, 494 & 502

I have been trying to read a book on the history of the bassoon for the past few weeks, so it was nice to hear some virtuoso playing from Azzolini. If I have come across in previous issues as critical of him, let me state quite clearly that it is not his playing that bothers me – he is the utter master of the instrument, and surmounts the technical difficulties works such as the present six concertos pose to lesser mortals with enviable ease; perhaps it is this that then gives him so much scope to go beyond the written notes that his taste and mine diverge. There is much to enjoy in this third instalment of the Complete Edition's survey of bassoon

concerti – quite apart from the large number of them, the quality is so astonishingly high that Vivaldi was clearly inspired by the instrument, or particular performers. L'Aure Soave Cremona (33221 strings with lute and harpsichord) continue to impress with their wide range of colour and incisive playing in the fast movements. This is not just a recording for completists, though – all lovers of Baroque music will enjoy this. BC

**Cembalo Paradiso** Anna Paradiso *hpscd* Barn Cottage Records BCR007 67' 14"

d'Anglebert from Troisième suite; Bach Concerto in f, BWV1056; Frescobaldi Toccata 2 & 8 (Bk 1); Leigh Concerto; Froberger FbWV112; Paradis Sonata VII; Royer Le Vertigo; A. Scarlatti from Toccata VII (1723); D. Scarlatti K141 in d

This showcase CD by the Swedish-based Italian harpsichordist contains an eclectic mix of music. She uses three different harpsichords: a copy of an anonymous French 17<sup>th</sup>-century instrument by Antonio de Renzis, a Guarracino copy by Masao Kimura and a Blanchet copy by François Paul Ciocca. Paradiso possesses a fine technique which is displayed to advantage in pieces by Royer and the two Scarlattis. I also like her approach to Frescobaldi and Froberger, which she plays on the Guarracino copy. The 1934 concertino by Walter Leigh (killed in Libya during the Second World War) is something of a curiosity, but it is an attractive piece which blends melodies in the English modal fashion of the time with baroque figuration. It is well performed here with stringed instruments playing in an appropriate period style for the 1930s. Unfortunately, they continue this style into their performance of JS Bach's concerto in F minor, making it sound strangely old-fashioned. The outer movements are rushed and lack subtlety, though the pizzicato middle movement works better. A bit of a mixed bag, then, but with some very good moments. Noel O'Regan

**L'âge d'or baroque** Pavel Kohout (1675 Mundt organ, Church of Our Lady of Týn, Prague) 63' 47"

Hortus HOR 953

J.C.F. Fischer Aria; J.K. Kerll Canzona III in d, Passacaglia in d; K.B. Kopřiva Fugue in d *supra cognomen* DEBEFE; G.T. Muffat Aria sub *Elevatione*; J.E.N. Seger Prelude and Fugue in C, Fantasia and Fugue in d, Toccata and Fugue in d, Toccata and Fugue Pastorale

The 1675 Mundt organ in Prague's Týn church is one of the most important



historic central European organs, and by far the finest in Bohemia. Typically of the organs of this area, it has no manual reeds (and only a single 8' Posaunbass on the pedal), but has a wide range of flue stops topped by some sparkling upperwork. The real joy is the gentle sound of the individual stops (for example, the solo 8' Principal stop at the start of track 2 and the Copula Major on track 3). Alongside works by Kerll, Fischer, Muffat and Kopřiva, the main focus is on the music of Josef Seger, organist at the Týn church for most of his life. Seger impressed Burney during his visit in 1772, and his music is well worth exploring. Pavel Kohout is a talented young organist and plays with a fine musical sense, using the resources of the organ extremely well. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

**Lamentationes** Bach & Zelenka, Damien Guillon, Marcus Ullman, Lieven Termont *ATBar*, il Gardellino, *dir.* Marcel Ponseele *Passacaille* 977 62' 02"  
**Bach** *Schauet doch und sehet* BWV46, *Herr, deine Augen sehen nach dem Glauben* BWV102; **Zelenka** *Lamentations I & II*

Radio 3's Sunday morning pot-pourri at the moment includes a Bach Cantata each week and the 'host' clearly finds it difficult to say anything much about the performances – unless there are some soloists he can name and venerate. So he would not choose this disc: its unknown (to me) singers, backed by eight ripienists (so described), would puzzle him: which choir is it? The group sings this programme – two Bach Cantatas for Trinity 10, 46 & 102, sandwiching two of Zelenka's Holy Week *Tenebrae* Lamentations – as it deserves, committedly and intelligently but not as if it was a display for a soloistic personality.

The contrast between the Bach and the less well-known Zelenka is rewarding. Near contemporaries; one a committed Lutheran and the other working in the Roman Catholic court at Dresden; one setting a dramatic, meditative text which takes the gospel – Jesus weeping over Jerusalem – as its starting point, the other setting the Latin of the liturgy – the Lamentations of Jeremiah straight. The Bach is broken up into distinct movements; the Zelenka a seamless whole of arioso, recitative, concerted passages and even fugato in delightful performances of a true chamber-music style, where singers (the baritone and the alto) weave their lines into those of the instruments. This music is in the tradition of the Buxtehude *Membra Jesu nostra*, but the Italianate influences of Caldara and Lotti and

perhaps his teacher in Vienna, Fux, are more responsible I suspect for his restrained operatic style.

This is not a perfect production: the player of the trumpet obbligato in 46/3 is not named; and the booklet gives a different order to the tracks from that in which they appear on the disc. But the music is refreshingly performed – one to a part strings giving great clarity, and the balance between the singers and instruments is just right without much twiddling around with the microphones to engineer the balance, I guess. These are good and polished performances: just the kind of music-making to encourage and broadcast.

*David Stancliffe*

**Musici Da Camera** [Music from eighteenth-century Prague] Collegium Marianum, Jana Semerádová 112' 31" (2 CDs)  
Supraphon SU 4112-2  
**Caldara** Sonata in A **Fasch** Concerti in C and D, Quartet in D **Jiránek** Trio in B flat **Orschler** Trio in f **Postel** Trio in A **Reichenauer** Quartet in g, Trio in B flat **Tuma** Partita in C **Vivaldi** Trio in g

The two CDs which make up this entertaining set feature music heard in Prague during the second quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Music of very high quality, too, it must be said. Though Reichenauer and Jiránek are little more than names even to most lovers of baroque music, all of the pieces recorded here could easily sit on a programme alongside music by "the great composers". Many of the composers had connections with Count Václav Morzin, dedicatee of Vivaldi's Op. 8 (including the Four Seasons), and it is soon clear that he enjoyed listening to chamber music with interesting instrumental line-ups, such as Reichenauer's Quartet in G minor for violin, cello, bassoon and continuo, or Fasch's Concerto in C for flute, violin, bassoon and continuo. Six works are recorded here for the first time, in performances typical of the Collegium Marianum – lively, loving and impeccably stylish; even trio sonatas by the little-known Orschler and Postel will entertain you! *BC*

#### CLASSICAL

**C. P. E. Bach** *Keyboard Sonatas II* Danny Driver 73' 38"  
Hyperion CDA67908  
H37, 39, 121, 135, 290 & 300 (or Wq 52/4, 62/5, 65/31, 65/32 *Fantasie* Wq67. *Rondo* Wq 61/4)

This is the second volume of music by CPE Bach from a pianist who shows an excellent understanding of this music.

While playing on a modern Steinway piano he achieves lightness of touch as well as strong dynamic contrasts and rhythmic sharpness, all allowing CPE Bach's mercurial and imaginative music to speak for itself. The extended opening movement of the F sharp minor sonata which opens the disc is a particularly challenging example of the composer's unsettling style, with very quick flighty passages alternating with slower, more lyrical, ones; Driver has the confidence to bring this off and continues to respond with intelligence and flair to the rest of the music here. The Steinway is occasionally a bit too heavy in forte passages – in the middle *Andante pathetic* movement of the C minor sonata for example – but it is very well recorded and Driver is a very persuasive advocate for CPE Bach's music.

*Noel O'Regan*

**J. C. Bach** *Zanaida* Opera *Fuoco*, David Stern *dir.* 128' 59" (2 CDs)  
Zig-Zag Territoires ZZT312

This recording of the second opera Johann Christian Bach composed for London stems from a beautiful period production first given in Leipzig in 2011. Regrettably, it does not appear to have been filmed for DVD. Premiered at the King's Theatre in May 1763, *Zanaida* received six performances, but was never revived, the score subsequently being lost until it turned up in a private collection in the USA in 2010. A tale of political and amorous intrigue set in Persia and Turkey, it belongs to the post-Metastasian genre of *opera seria*, with relatively brief arias, none of which are cast in *da capo* form. As so often with J. C. Bach's operas, much of the pleasure comes not from the vocal writing or the drama, which in truth is pretty low-key, but the originality of the orchestration. The wind writing, including clarinets, frequently recalls the delicious concertante writing in the orchestral works.

The present recording was made during the course of performances given 2012 at the theatre of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, greater Paris. The sound is excessively dry, leaving it difficult to determine just how much blame should be attached to the acoustic for the obvious vocal deficiencies. With one exception (the pretty Silvera of Julie Fioretti), all the female voices take on a hard, shrill edge in the upper register, making for an uncomfortable listening experience at times. Sara Hershkowitz brings to the title role a dramatic intensity, her act 3 accompanied recitative and aria well

conveying Zanaïda's plight (the poor woman has been falsely accused and condemned to death), but her voice as recorded lacks vocal allure. Much the best singing comes from baritone Pierrick Boisseau, an excellent Mustafa, the father of Zanaïda's rival, Osira. The orchestral playing is fine, but David Stern does not convince me that he has the measure of Bach's gracious Italianate lyricism, his direction too often sounding peremptory and lacking any real sense of line. The booklet is poorly laid out, with the bizarre English text (which I would guess is taken from the original King's Theatre libretto) miles away from the Italian words. And this is the second Zig-Zag booklet I've encountered this month absurdly printed in very light grey, thus making it near impossible to read.

Brian Robins

**W. F. Bach, Keyboard Works 3: Sonatas and Suite** Julia Brown, *hpscd* 75' 58"

Naxos 8.572814

F. 2, 4, 5, 9 & 24 (aka BRA 3, 5, 7, 16 & 39)

I find it hard to get very excited about Wilhelm Friedemann Bach's music even when, as here, it is well played by Julia Brown on an appropriate-sounding harpsichord by Richard Kingston. Without the charisma of Carl Philipp Emmanuel or the grace and popular appeal of Johann Christian, Wilhelm Friedemann's music can seem awkward and ill at ease with itself. There are quirky phrase-lengths and passages which seem to get stuck in an improvisatory spiral. There are also sections or movements which do repay listening. The more baroque-style Suite in G minor comes across most convincingly here; perhaps the sonatas might have benefitted more from being recorded on a clavichord or fortepiano? Maybe some more flamboyance in the playing would have helped too. Brown gives a solid account, however, and it is good to have this music available on a budget label.

Noel O'Regan

**Grétry *Le Magnifique*** Emiliano Gonzalez Toro *Octave le Magnifique*, Elizabeth Calleo *Clémentine*, Marguerite Krull *Alix*, Jeffrey Thompson *Aldobrandin*, Karim Sulayman *Fabio*, Douglas Williams *Laurence*, Randall Scarlata *Horace*, Opera Lafayette Orchestra, Ryan Brown 80' 00"

Naxos 8.660305

*Le Magnifique*, an *opéra comique* first given at the Comédie-Italienne theatre in Paris in March 1773, is famous in two respects. The first is its colourful and richly orchestrated overture, one of the first

programmatic overtures in operatic history, which depicts processions of prisoners, soldiers and priests, each given its own musical character. The note compares this striking piece with the combination of dances in the act 1 finale of *Don Giovanni*, a silly piece of nonsense given that no contrapuntal combination of themes takes place in Grétry's overture as it does in Mozart's stunning tour de force. Then in Grétry's second act, the scene in which the heroine Clémentine, courted by Octave (*Le Magnifique*) under the watchful eye of her tutor, drops a rose to indicate her love was a romantic *coup de théâtre* that became the talk of Paris. Otherwise, I confess to finding little to enthuse about in the piece, which I suspect may come over better as a live theatrical experience, especially as we are given only the musical numbers, which as always leaves an unfortunate impression of fragmentation. The music itself, which leans heavily on ensembles (there is no solo for the hero), conveys a certain charm, but it tends to melodic predictability and is desperately thin harmonically. I've previously admired some of the valuable revival work done by Ryan Brown in this field, but this performance does not strike me as one of his more successful. The singing is never less than good, but I think if this kind of work is to be shown in its best light it really needs to be projected with more character and greater panache.

Brian Robins

**Haydn Trios for Nicolaus Esterházy** Rincontro (Pablo Valetti *vl*n, Patricia Gagnon *vla*, Petr Skalka *vlc*) 71' 26"

Rewind REW504 (© 2007)

Baryton Trios Hob. XI: 14, 59, 80, 85, 96, 97. Adagio in D [? Hob XI: D2?]

This is a re-release of a 2007 Alpha recording and features six baryton trios played on violin, viola and cello, and an Adagio in D, probably not by Haydn. The performances are excellent, but this is not the kind of music I can imagine coming home from a hard day's work and rushing to put on. Perfectly fine for background to reading or dining or while you're involved in your favourite hobby (assuming it doesn't involve music or other noise!) Haydn's baryton trios were among the first pieces I learned to score-read at the piano, so they don't hold especially fond memories; but don't let that put you off!

BC

*I do have fond memories for the trios – at least, for the six available c.1960. They were useful repertoire for my music teacher, then a novice cellist, me as a bad viola player, and his sister-in-law, who wasn't as good a violinist as she thought!*

CB

## 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**Beethoven *Missa solemnis*** Marlis Petersen, Gerhild Romberger, Benjamin Hulett, David Wilson-Johnson, Collegium Vocale Gent, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, Philippe Herreweghe 75' 22"

PHI LPH007

This was another of the university set works I keep mentioning in these pages, and – once again – I wish this recording had been around when I had to explore its every bar. Of course, there has been an excellent recording for many years in Gardiner's version, which was partnered by his ground-breaking performance of the C major mass. Amazingly, that was over 20 years ago now, so it was about time, perhaps, for a new recording that would take advantage of all the discoveries HIPsters have made in the intervening period, especially in terms of music from Beethoven's time and after. Herreweghe's forces are a disciplined bunch, and it shows in the choral and orchestral work; each section of voices is perfectly blended, and the string sections sound like an amplified quartet. The four soloists carry their parts expertly, and blend as and when required without seeming to "sing down". One technical thing: The *Agnus Dei* is listed as *Benedictus* on my player display: a tiny price to pay for a wonderful, uplifting performance of a work whose importance, stature and spirituality I now understand better than ever before.

BC

**Schubert *The Complete Symphonies*** Anima Eterna Brugge, Jos van Immerseel (4 CDs) Zig-Zag Territoires ZZT308 (© 1997)

If one of the objects of musical performance is to make us think afresh about music with which we think we are familiar, then Jos van Immerseel's set of Schubert symphonies must be accounted a triumph. His recordings are not new, having originally been issued by Sony to celebrate the Schubert bicentenary in 1997; as such they were the first to draw upon the then incomplete New Schubert Edition. The present reissue comes with a fresh English translation of a 20-page essay by van Immerseel explaining the rationale behind his revelatory approach. It makes for essential reading, proving beyond any doubt the thought and experimentation that went into producing the finished performances. Likely to be one of van Immerseel's more controversial topics is his contention that the correct tempos can be found within the music and are not a

subjective matter. Nowhere does he put this into greater practical perspective than in the 'Great' C-major, where by taking the opening at a true Andante rather than some kind of inflated portent for what is to come, Van Immerseel makes the transition to the Allegro (one of music's most awkward moments) sound a seamlessly inevitable continuation. Much the same thing happens in the Scherzo, where there is no exaggerated slowing down for the central Trio, thus leaving it to take its place as a delightfully fresh episode within the movement. Van Immerseel's refusal to be distracted into making uncalled for changes of tempo also pays dividends in the Andante of the 'Unfinished', where the *con moto* is observed from the start, leaving the second idea to sound particularly felicitous: a briskish walk, but one not too hurried to miss out on the surrounding beauties.

These are not performances likely to find favour with Schubertians who want to caress and love the composer à la Beecham or possibly even Minkowski, whose fine set I reviewed in *EMR* 151. Van Immerseel's Schubert is a more resilient, tougher character, displaying a leanness that allows for not an ounce of flab. It is often said that Schubert's earlier symphonies follow Classical models. Paradoxically, the sound world Van Immerseel produces sounds far more Romantic, the decision to use a pitch of A=440 (rather than the 430 adopted by most period instrument groups) frequently giving his splendid *Harmonie* band a kind translucent radiance – Caspar David Friedrich in music. In van Immerseel's hands the powerful development of the Allegro of the 'Unfinished' does not emulate Minkowski's great tragic statement; rather it is a Fusellian nightmare writ large.

There is so much more that might be written in detail about these remarkable performances: the exceptional clarity with which part writing is exposed, the fresh colours achieved by the near-perfection of the instrumental balance, and the unusually acute observation of the huge range of dynamics. Zig-Zag Territoires deserve profound thanks for restoring these recordings to the catalogue, for they deserve a place in the collection of anyone who loves and thinks he or she knows Schubert. And that means you, surely?

Brian Robins

Johann Strauss *Waltzes, Polkas & Overtures* Anima Eterna Brugge, Jos van Immerseel 70' 32"  
Rewind REW505

This is a re-release of Zig-Zag Territoires recording from 1999 with a back-cover blurb, a listing of the tracks on the inside cover and nothing else, but it's bargain price and a bundle of joy. Having told my Viennese waltz story when I reviewed Harnoncourt's recent 2-CD set of such music, readers will know that I have little serious affinity with the repertoire, but I must confess that Anima Eterna Brugge's transparent and delicate textures once again confirmed that, actually, although this is considered light music, Strauss was every bit Brahms' match on the orchestration front, and vastly superior to Schumann! If you're planning a classy dinner party, you could do much worse than have this on in the background – your guests are bound to leave invigorated. BC

**Der Michaelsorgel** (Munich) Peter Kofler (2011 Rieger organ, St Michael, Munich) VKJK 1216 62'

Bach BWV536; CPE Bach *Sonata in a Wq 70/4*; Bruhns *Nun komm...*; Dupré *Cortège et litanies* op. 19; Mendelssohn *Variations sérieuses in d* op. 54; Widor *Sinfonie 5 in f* op. 42

Although the organ history of the Jesuit St Michael's church in Munich goes back to 1590, the organ on this CD is a recent reworking and expansion of an organ from the early 1980s. It is enormous, with around 75 speaking stops speaking into a generous acoustic, and this eclectic programme demonstrates the wide variety of styles that it is able to represent, with varying degrees of compromise, as is inevitable with such instruments. Bruhns' *Nun komm der Heiden Heiland* is given in the currently out of fashion version with added French style ornaments rather than his more austere original. I was more than happy to listen to an organ version of Mendelssohn's extended piano work *Variations sérieuses*, Dupré's *Cortège et Litanie* (also based on a piano work) and the first movement of Widor's 5<sup>th</sup> Organ Symphony, but other *EMR* readers might not be so willing. Peter Kofler is the church organist, and plays with a fine sense of style. Andrew Benson-Wilson

#### 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

Martyn Harry *At His Majesty's Pleasure* His Majesty's Sagbutts & Cornetts 71' 28"  
SFZ Music SFZMO412

Hats off to HMSC and Martyn Harry for this brave venture. This world-premier recording presents Martyn Harry's new composition, inspired by HMSC. Nineteen

movements totalling seventy one and a half minutes make it quite an exercise. The opening movements prompt the question: how abstract is a composition from the instruments it was conceived for? How much of their typical range, tone, idiom and canon infect the creation of a piece? The initial idiom is that of modern writing for modern wind ensemble, and so the aural lens curiously resolves those instruments in the music, since the characteristics of the historic instruments are crowded out, or perhaps suggested out. The programmatic construct (the story of a fictitious young prince approaching kingship) is explicitly inspired by the historic instruments, at least by their names and historical context. The unconscious musical implication of this is that the ear is motivated to seek out a narrative thread (in the musical, pattern-evolving sense, as opposed to the programmatic narrative) as it would do in that repertoire. A more natural distance from this quest gradually evolves, in which the appreciation becomes more about the canvas of tonal colours. Having made this transition, we reach the fourth movement, in which musical narrative does arrive, and stays throughout the remainder of the disc. This is strange jolt, but stimulating one, and it perhaps sets up the ear for appreciating compositional elements which do remain throughout.

The fifth movement is possibly the least abstract, and characterised by a repeated falling augmented octave, as a soporific sigh or gentle snore with interruptions from a known child's melody (a scene from a child's bedroom?) By the sixth we now see the characteristic way the cornett moves between notes being given air time. The intermingling of the harpsichord and (in other movements) the strong-toned chamber organ with the brass is very imaginative, resulting in some really intriguing sounds. Another such sound is the solo for sagbutt and tuning devices. I hear three, although there may be more, for there are not only beats, but these break into rhythmic patterns as the pitches are modified, which is a very inventive trick. The movement which shares its title with the name of the ensemble is the one which references its customary repertoire most – in a multiply refracted way, reminding me of the "Baroque Variations" of Lukas Foss.

This is an extremely witty piece of writing, as is the disc as a whole, and the full hour-and-the-rest is packed with imagination. The titles of the movements themselves are witty pastiches of titles



and turns of phrase from our imagined Tudoresque court. It is wonderful that new music, let alone music of this level of excitement and inventiveness, is being composed for historic instruments. I am sure it will stimulate more to follow, and should be a cultural force which helps maintain the playing of these instruments. This disc is one that itself rewards repeated listening. *Steven Cassidy*

#### MISCELLANEOUS

*El canto de Auroras* Alia Musica, Miguel Sánchez 59' 21"  
Musique d'abord HMA1987018 (rec 1998)

Lauds is the standard Roman office which celebrates the sunrise. A daily monastic office of Aurora was published in Spain in a *Breviarium Gothicum* in 1502 for use in the the monastic chapel of Toledo Cathedral as an attempt to revive the Mozarabic rite. The series offers texts and translations at [www.harmoniamundi.com](http://www.harmoniamundi.com) but the discs reviewed in this issue are not included yet.\* The music itself doesn't appear to stem from any particular period, and some of it is a bit "primitive" (not intended as an insult), though without the vigour of West Gallery or shape note music. I managed to listen to it during an awake spot during the night sometime before the winter sunrise, and didn't fall asleep, which is a compliment to the performers since the music is slow and doesn't have much impetus. But my guess is that if there still is a confraternity of the dawn or some such body and I'd attended a meeting, I'd definitely acquire a souvenir CD, but would hope to have found more information. If any reader knows more, please write us something!

*This is a common phenomenon with all companies, perhaps because we get the discs before the issue date and the online information is prepared after everything else.* CB

*Historische Meisterinstrumente* Walter-Heinz Berstein, Maria Bräutigam, Winfried Schrammek, Armin Thalheim 103' 27" (2 CDs) Acanta 233587

Music by J. S. & C. P. E. Bach, Frescobaldi, Kuhnau & Paladini played on harpsichord, clavichord and early piano

This is a reissue of a recording first released in 1982. Pioneering for its time, it reminds us of the important work done on musical instrument conservation and early music performance in the DDR. Appropriate period music is recorded on a variety of early keyboard instruments from collections in the former East

Germany. The harpsichords fare better on the whole than the clavichords and early pianos, but this presumably reflects their state at that time. The Potsdam Silbermann sounds like a honky-tonk piano here and struggles to cope with J.S. Bach's six-voice Ricercar from the Musical Offering, though it comes across better in the three-voice one. The Leipzig Cristofori is poorly recorded but it is still good to hear it in music by Giuseppe Paladini. The highlight for me is the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue played by Maria Bräutigam on a harpsichord by Johann Heinrich Harras in Sondershausen. She provides an original and expansive take on the arpeggiated section of the Fantasy and generally plays with flexibility and conviction. She succeeds less well with Bach's Fantasy and Fugue BWV 904 on the Händel-Haus Hans Ruckers which comes across as a shadow of its former self. More successful is Berlin-Köpenick's Hans Ruckers in Armin Thalheim's performance of Bach's Sonata BWV 963. Something of a period piece in many respects, this recording does still have something to offer the connoisseur of historic instruments. *Noel O'Regan*

*Lo Guarracino: Tarantelles, Chansons & Villanelles du 16<sup>me</sup> au 18<sup>me</sup> siècle* Neapolis Ensemble  
Eloquentia EL 1235

This is an amalgam of popular and "art" styles, but sometimes leaving me wondering whether we are hearing a style that never existed in its present transmogrification. Fun to listen to, though. The title song (track 3) is a lengthy tarantella, almost a tongue-twister. Track 10 contains Athanasius Kircher's rather less exciting *Antidotum Tarantulae* followed by a less staid cure. The booklet is thorough, with the original dialect texts as well as standard Italian and English, with explanatory footnotes as well. The tarantellas should enliven early music parties and Marina Marone is an impressive singer, but I wish the less lively pieces sounded a little earlier. CB

*Uns ist ein Kind geboren* Konzerte und Arien zur Weihnacht Hans Jörg Mammel T, L'arpa festante 78' 32"  
Carus 83.373

Bernhard Currite pastores, Fürchtet euch nicht  
Böddecker Natus est Jesus Schein O Maria  
gebenedeiet bist du, Uns ist ein Kind geboren  
Schildt Ach mein herzliebes Jesulein Schmelzer  
Sonata "Pastorella" Telemann Göttliches Kind  
lass mit Entzücken, O Jesu Christ dein Kripplein ist  
Vejvanovský Sonata tribus quadrantibus  
Zelenka Laudate pueri Dominum

Sadly, this arrived just too late for inclusion in our December issue. None of the music is particularly well-known, which is surprising, given that it is modestly scored for tenor solo, instruments and continuo. The range of composers is quite broad, running from Schein to Telemann by way of Schmelzer and Vejvanovský, Bernhard and Böddecker, ending (slightly tenuously but dramatically) with Zelenka's setting of Psalm 112 (113), *Laudate pueri Dominum*. My favourite works on the disc are the two cantatas by Telemann, although the booklet note contains at least one nonsense: "By Telemann's time, composers had long ceased setting original Biblical texts." In my opinion, Hans Jörg Mammel is one of today's leading tenors in this repertoire; he has a beautiful tone, he enunciates beautifully and he engages lovingly with the music. L'arpa festante are perfect partners in this fine recital – buy it now and put it away for a treat next Christmas! *BC*

*Miserere: A Sequence of music for Lent, St Joseph, and the Annunciation* The Choir of Westminster Cathedral, Martin Baker  
Hyperion CDA 67938 79' 15"

Describing David Bevan's setting of the Magnificat, Jeremy Summerly's learned programme note says 'Renaissance root and branch provide the homophonic scaffolding from which an ecclesiastically post-Romantic idiom vividly foliates' and indeed upon your reaction to this 'foliation' depends your enjoyment of this CD. Fruity organ chords slip in unbidden under plainchant and 'pure' polyphony by Tallis, Parsons, Guerrero, Croce, Byrd and Palestrina rubs shoulders with pastiche by George Malcolm and David Bevan and a genuinely modern work by Colin Mawby in a sequence of music which could either beguile you with its beauty or upset you with its albeit persuasive eclecticism. The singing is very beautiful indeed and as a representation of the sort of range of repertoire presented by this first-class cathedral choir it has a sort of integrity, but anybody looking for authenticity of performance and context from the chant and early polyphony needs to look elsewhere. However, if you choose not to let the whole thing just wash over you, thanks to current technology you can cherry-pick your own 'early' elements out of the mix, although do beware of the plainsong mass 'Cum iubilo' – sadly there is no way to edit out the spurious organ chords to leave the rather lovely chant singing. *D. James Ross*

## Vivaldi – Concerto in D, RV564a

## 2. Adagio non molto

Violin 1 Concertino

Violin 2 Concertino

Violin 1 Ripieno

Violin 2 Ripieno

Viola

Bassoon

Continuo

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

5

*p*

8

*p*

*p*

*p*

Solo

Solo

11

Tutti

Tutti

14

Solo

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

17

Tutti

Tutti

Tutti

*f*

*f*



STEPHEN DAW  
28.5.1944 – 27.10.2012

Readers of *EMR* will be sorry to read of the death of Stephen Daw. He had been ill for a long time due to various complications associated with type 1 diabetes.

He was born 1944, and went up to New College, Oxford, where he took first class honours in music. After periods at the RAM and as Martin Senior Scholar at Worcester College, Oxford, he joined the staff of Birmingham School of Music (now Birmingham Conservatoire) in 1971 as a lecturer, where he remained until his retirement. He was custodian of the Conservatoire's collection of instruments, and played a major role in the development of the B.A. (Hons) course. His students will not forget how generous he was with his time. He was made an honorary fellow in 2007.

It was as a Bach scholar that he made his name. He revised the Bach work-list for *The New Grove* (1985), wrote a book *Bach: The Choral Works*, edited the English translation of Smend's *Bach in Cothen*, and revised the introduction to the British Library facsimile edition of WTC2. He wrote many articles. These include a most important discussion of the copies of Bach made by Walther and Krebs in the manuscripts P801, P802, and P.803.

I have known him and his family very well since the late seventies, but it was only when I went to his funeral in Darlington that I discovered that he had been a composer:— anthem *Hymn to the Trinity* (Stainer and Bell, 1968) and *Ten Scottish Impressions* for guitar, (Stainer and Bell, 1972). He was one of the founding members of the British Hedgehog Preservation Society.

Paul Kenyon

*EMR* readers will know Stephen from his reviews, mostly of Bach, and we missed him when he became too ill to continue. His reviews were knowledgeable and fair, and we are grateful for his work for us. Strangely, I only met him once, but we had fascinating conversations on the phone, and at one stage he was scheming for me to go with him to judge a Bach competition in the Ukraine, which sadly never happened. Stephen's brother John died last February. I knew him rather better, since he was not just a contemporary at Cambridge but we both read English and one year shared a small Tudor cottage within Magdalene College. John was a keen musician and used to play my piano (and we occasionally played duets).

CB

EMR TEMPORARY PROBLEMS  
Clifford Bartlett

Despite contributions and help, especially by BC, *EMR* is primarily dependent on me, and for the last couple of months my activities have been restricted by eye problems. The glaucoma is now in control, but the drops required make me sleep during the day and wake me between 3.00 and 4.00 am, providing an opportunity to play a CD, then sleep again. Unfortunately, the cataracts have become much worse and vision consequently poor, and in January reading has become difficult. (Thank you, Philip Thorby, for providing large continuo parts with even larger figures for the EEMF Epiphany Party.)

I had a pre-op appointment at the hospital for a cataract operation due on 24<sup>th</sup>, but an infection made this impossible and I came away with a prescription to administer 11 drops a day in each eye. So I have been working with very poor sight – I couldn't have produced this issue if Elaine had not bought me a large screen for Christmas. It is likely that my treatment will take around three months: during this time *EMR* will lack much of my input. Fortunately, Hugh Keyte was staying with us again – it's warmer in our house than his – and has written two reviews for this issue. A recent arrival is a magnificent Early English Church Music volume completing the Latin church music by Sheppard which I was avidly studied by Hugh, though I hope to write the review for April. There is also a batch from Carus which had arrived in time for the last issue, but must wait longer, and *Six Solos* by Barnabas Gunn – is anyone an expert on his music? I haven't been able to read any books, but we do have one review from Brian Robins.

I hope that everything will be over by Easter. I'm looking forward to the EEMF/TVEMF day at Waltham Abbey working on Gabrieli's 28-part Magnificat (20 of the parts are by Hugh Keyte) along, we hope, with the 20-part version by Roland Wilson.

Whatever happens, we will keep going through the next couple of months as normally as possible: I am assured that cataract operations usually improve eyesight enormously. And as always, contributions are welcome.

I hope that some of you saw our appearance on the 'You've been scammed' TV programme on 17<sup>th</sup> December – we didn't know when it would be shown until after the December issue had been posted. It explained part of our situation.

CB