

Early Music REVIEW

Number 153

April 2013

ISSN 1355-3437

Price £2.50

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2 Sheppard Vol. III	Hugh Keyte
4 Reviews of Music	Barbara Sachs & CB
9 & 14 Reviews of Books	Barbara Sachs & CB
10 The Good Old Days	Simon Ravens
12 Semper Dowland...	David Hill
15 London Music	Andrew Benson-Wilson
19 Glories of Venice at Girton	CB
20 Chains of Gold: Verse Anthems	Simon Ravens
21 Lechner: Festive Mass & Motets	Hugh Keyte
22 Neobaroque; Czech... Inégal	BC
23 Overflow reviews: Handel, Daniel Taylor	
24 CD Reviews	
49 Introduction to...	
50 'Vivon', an extra me ipsum	Hugh Keyte
52 Miscellaneous	

Early Music Review is published in
alternate months

The International Diary is published every month
except January

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Payment information
on page 11

Apologies for being personal again, but this is a very personal magazine and various medical problems are making life difficult at present. In February I mentioned the forthcoming cataract operations. I hoped they would be dealt with fairly quickly, but two days before the first eye was due to be done it was discovered that both eyes were infected as a result of the lower lids inverting. A corrective operation was needed for this, which is now fixed for April 29th. Recovery from this and the following operations will mean that the next and possibly the subsequent issue may be affected – though we will try to increase the number of our contributors and reviewers. Book reviews (except two) are held over: our apologies to the publishers as well as readers.

The last concert I went to was a mainly Gabrieli programme at Girton College on Saturday Feb. 16th, with enough players to include the 22-part *Canzona* (just... the Mistress of Girton had been a band trombonist in her youth, so did a bit of rapid practise to fill the vacancy as 12th sackbut.) Then on the Sunday I felt exhausted and slept most of the day. By the end of the Monday evening, I collapsed and Elaine decided that she should take me to the hospital; I was investigated for about three hours, then given an emergency bed at 2.00 am. I was attached to two drips, and stayed there till a bed in a ward became available on the Tuesday evening. Curiously, despite frequent enquiries about pain, I had none. No specific diagnosis was made, except that there was infection and there appeared to be some kidney damage. By Friday afternoon I was bored (no radio or TV, and my eyes were not good enough to read – what a waste of time!) and asked to go home. My request was granted, as my temperature fluctuations had settled. At discharge, Elaine was told that I had had pneumonia – are patients not given information direct?

Now nothing is specifically wrong with me apart from tiredness and general weakness, and I can't see things very clearly. Thank you for all the good wishes that arrived as the news of my hospitalisation spread. There might be even more misprints than normal, despite Elaine's and Hugh's efforts to read everything. I managed to write music reviews, though the music was more legible than the introductions.

CB

SHEPPARD: HYMNS, PSALMS, ANTIOPHONS ETC.

Hugh Keyte

John Sheppard [Vol] III: Hymns, Psalms, Antiphons and other Latin Polyphony Transcribed and edited by Magnus Williamson (Early English Church Music, 54.) Stainer & Bell, 2012. xxxiii + 269pp, £85.00

This third EECM collection of Sheppard's Latin church music supplements two largely overlapping pairs of existing volumes, two in the same series,¹ two published by the Oxenford imprint.² And we are promised a fourth EECM volume that will complete the oeuvre with Sheppard's Anglican church music. Weighing in at 1.8 kg, the present one is a vast, generally well-edited cornucopia that lovers of Sheppard's music will welcome with open arms: a *Te Deum*; 17 office hymns; six antiphons and "other items of ritual polyphony" (including tantalising but unreconstructable fragments of a six-part *Magnificat*); six settings of Old-Testament texts; and four "settings of devotional texts", all but the first fragmentary. (A number of the items are alternative settings of the same text.) The lengthy and very readable Preface presents an up-to-date overview of Sheppard's life, which was for so long a matter of conjecture and controversy. And the practical problems of performance (many and thorny) are for the most part intelligently and helpfully considered in editor Magnus Williamson's copious introductory material.

Williamson's primary source is the great MS collection made by the Windsor singing man John Baldwin in the reign of Elizabeth, when most of this music, composed for the revived Sarum Use in the reign of Mary Tudor (1553–58), had ceased to be performed.³ (Some of the settings will have been composed for the Chapel Royal, some for Magdalen College, Oxford, where Sheppard was intermittently in residence.) Since one of Baldwin's part books is lost, the Tenor of virtually every item has had to be editorially supplied (occasionally plus one other part), a labour of love that has made available to church and chamber choirs a great swathe of mainly large-scale mid-century polyphony that has until now been scarcely known.

A number of the missing Tenors carry the plainchant as long-note cantus firmi, but where they were freely composed they have been never less than adequately supplied. I have looked at only one item in detail, the 5-part setting of *Beati omnes qui timent Dominum* (No. 29;

1. Ed. David Chadd, *John Sheppard I: Responsorial Music* (EECM 17, 1977); ed. Nicholas Sandon, *John Sheppard, II: Masses* (EECM 18, 1976). Latin settings by Sheppard are also in EECM 48 & 51 ed. David Mateer, *The Gyffard Partbooks* (2007).

2. Ed. David Wulstan, *John Sheppard, Collected Works I: Office Responds and Varia* and Roger Bray, *John Sheppard, Collected works 2: Hymns*. Both editors impose the now generally discredited upward transposition of a minor third from stet-clef notated pitch.

3. Some might just possibly date from the latter years of Henry VIII, when the king backtracked from much of his earlier radical ecclesiastical reform.

Psalm 127), which may have been composed for the Winchester nuptials of Mary Tudor and Philip of Spain in 1554. Williamson generously acknowledges that in this case "the Tenor part is largely based on a reconstruction provided by David Skinner". This certainly looks like a particularly hard nut to crack, but there are places where the composite editorial part could perhaps be improved upon: bars 28, 58ff (is the semibreve D/semibreve G in the bass of 58 a scribal error for minim/dotted semibreve?), 77, and possibly 95ff and 101-2; and there's an in-your-face pair of parallel fifths between the highest and lowest sounding voices in bar 123. (The Introduction very properly points out that "Sheppard's polyphony includes contrapuntal idiosyncrasies that would have appeared barbarous to later generations. These include direct consecutive concords.... When reconstructing missing Tenor and Triplex parts, the editor has attempted to capture Sheppard's compositional characteristics, including some of [these] idiosyncrasies."⁴ Fair enough, but I have spotted no others as crudely obvious as these, which look more like oversight than policy. The occasional parallel octaves which Williamson cites are another matter, and he is surely right in letting these stand. But for some obviously corrupt passages emendations could usefully have been suggested. In *Inclina Domine I* (No. 27), for instance, he picks his way sure-footedly through the confusions in two subsidiary manuscripts at bars 16-18, but fails to draw attention to Baldwin's mini-muddles at bars 36 and 39. In both cases, solutions on the Occam's Razor principle are fairly easy to devise. For a series that seeks to accommodate both scholar and performer this seems to me a pity.

Some items that many musicians will already know illustrate the extremes of complexity, if not of length, of the 34-odd works presented here. One is *Laudes Deo dicam*, the dramatically troped Lesson from Isaiah ('The people that walked in darkness...') that was chanted from the pulpitum by a pair of clerics at the Christmas dawn *Missa in Gallicantu*. Sheppard provides two-part settings not only of the introduction and postlude, which were to be chanted by the two clerks in unison, but also of six of the tropes to the verses that the service books assign to the second singer alone.⁵ Here we have it immaculately presented, with the editorial paraphernalia (which conveniently precede each item) using Roman, Italic and bold type to allow pain-free identification (in both texts and translations) of the biblical text and of the chanted and two-part tropes.

4. In this paragraph (page xxii RH column beginning 'Editorial interventions') I cannot make sense of the reference to scribal slips in No. 20; and the error in No. 10 bar 57 is presumably the (momentary) unison of Countertenor II and Tenor rather than anything between Medius and Bassus.

5. Robert Johnson goes a step further in his similar but unconnected version, the notes inform us, providing two-part settings of several of the biblical verses that the service books assign to the first cleric

Probably composed for Mary's Chapel Royal are two soaring settings of the antiphon *Libera nos, salva nos* which will be familiar to many from performances by David Wulstan's Clerkes of Oxenford, who have done so much to make Sheppard's music known.

Also championed by the Clerkes has been the vast and fascinatingly hybrid *Nunc dimittis* antiphon *Media vita in mortis sumus*. Sung at Compline on the Saturdays, Sundays and feasts of nine lessons of the second half of Lent, this functioned as a kind of enveloping antiphon-cum-responsory. It was sung in full before the canticle, after which are appointed three consecutive Verses, each followed by a stretch of the antiphon's latter stages in the familiar diminishing format ABC/BC/C. Sheppard sets the antiphon for six-part choir, with trebles. His verses are for soli, two of them à4 with trebles in gimell, the third à5 with *divisi* trebles and means providing a mouth-watering double gimell.

Sung with the assumed plainchant canticle which the editors provide, this comes out at heavenly length, but I have a few nagging concerns. Can we be certain that the *Nunc dimittis* was not followed by a repetition of the entire *Media vitae* antiphon in responsory form, ending with the three verses? The breviary rubric looks ambiguous to me, and I'm not sure that I haven't heard the longer version sung. And for performances outside the specified high days Williamson stipulates that the entire antiphon, without the verses, should be sung both before and after the canticle: but except on double feasts (when the antiphons were by definition to be 'doubled' – i.e. sung in full both before and after their psalms or canticles) would not the plainchant incipit alone precede?

I have a few more liturgical worries, which may well reflect my own ignorance. With the exception of *Ave maris stella*, the incipits of the plainchant opening verses of all the office hymns are marked "Beginner", the remainder "Full choir". Would the incipits not have been sung by the rulers of choir on the festal days and seasons for which these settings were made? And if the full choir sang the remainder of verse 1 and the other odd-numbered verses, how did they cope with the dauntingly high tessituras in the many cases in which Sheppard sets the melody a fourth above the service-book level?⁶ Did a sizeable proportion of the assembled clerics resort to falsetto? In a few instances the problem would disappear if the high-clef setting were transposed down a fourth (see below) but elsewhere there is no such easy solution. The choir can hardly have sung the melodies at service-book pitch, i.e. a fourth lower than the *cantus firmus* of the polyphonic verses, so what did Sheppard expect? Were the rubrics ignored, with particular singers supplying the chant verses in such cases? In that case, given that Sheppard consistently places the hymn melody in the same voice-type in

6. Gracie Fields recalls in her autobiography a horrific occasion when, as a child star, she was required to begin an unaccompanied rendition of the National Anthem. The pitch she chanced upon had most of the audience constantly skipping between the higher and lower octaves, to ludicrous effect. Things were no doubt better ordered in Magdalen Chapel and Mary's Chapel Royal.

every polyphonic verse of a given hymn, would (for example) the trebles have sung the plainchant verses stratospherically when they were assigned the melody a fourth above service-book pitch in Sheppard's even-numbered verses, and the basses have sung it sepulchrally when their part has the melody a fifth below, as in *Jesu salvator saeculi*, No. 14?⁷ Or did a high- or low-tessitura *cantus firmus* presuppose organ settings of the intervening verses?⁸ I should have welcomed guidance, too, on those hymn settings in which it is the *faburden* melody associated with the plainchant that is set rather than the plainchant itself. In such cases can we be certain that the *faburden* was not also to feature in the odd-numbered verses, whether sung or supplied by the organist?

As regards performing pitch, Williamson's policy seems inconsistent in the volume as a whole. On the now-generally-accepted assumption that Sheppard's pitch was a little over a semitone above A440, he presents the stet-clef items at notated level and (surely correctly) transposes the low-clef ones up a fourth. But two of the three in high clefs are left as writ, with their C4-clef basses unnaturally high. (For the third, No. 34, *Igitur O Jesu*, a complicated argument centering on lute sources justifies the convincing downward transposition of an octave.) The introduction suggests that in the case of Nos. 7 (*Aeterne rex altissime*) and 17 (*Deus tuorum militum II*) "downward transposition by a tone would mitigate the high written vocal ranges", but the preliminary notes to the latter proposes performance either at written pitch or down a fourth. So why are low-clef pieces transposed up a fourth but their high-clef counterparts left stranded? Partly because in the former case the bass parts are unsingably low, but also, I imagine, because Williamson has what seems to me an over-scrupulous objection to the sharp key signatures, unknown to the 16th century, which transposition down a fourth produces. Yet all kinds of things about a modern printed version are at odds with historical practice, so why demur in this instance?

Also on the practical front, it seems a pity that verses 3-5 of No. 15, the five-verse hymn *Christe redemptor omnium*, are given in plainchant with no suggestion that verse 4 could be sung to the music of verse 2: several of the hymn settings, after all, include just such repetition.

Despite my quibbles and reservations, this handsomely-produced volume is heartily to be recommended. Aside from the works singled out above, the choral repertory will be splendidly enhanced by the larger-scale hymn settings such as *A solis ortus cardine* (Christmas) and *Sacris solemniis* (Corpus Christi). There is no mention of off-prints.⁹ I already know of one excellent London amateur choir that is itching to include *A solis*, complete with organ verses, in its upcoming Christmas concert.

7. The preliminary note states that the melody is "a fourth above service book pitch", which is true only of the editorially-supplied plainchant verses.

8. Included in the introductory material is a helpful list of organ settings that could supplement Sheppard's choral settings, which are invariably of the even-numbered verses.

9. Unlike *Musica Britannica*, EEMF does not state that copies can be supplied by Stainer & Bell.

REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett & Barbara Sachs

ORFEO VOCAL SCORE

Monteverdi *L'Orfeo: favola in musica...* Libretto: Alessandro Striggio junior... Piano reduction based on the Urtext Edition by Rinaldo Alessandrini. Bärenreiter (BA 8793-90), 201

2. xiv + 143pp, £32.00

I wish I'd had Alessandrini's full score to review – it's difficult to say anything about the editorial decisions, and personally I'd never play from a vocal score – or, for that matter, from a score with an elaborate realisation.¹ The full score costs £100, so few performers will see the more thorough introduction.² Judging from the solo sections, Alessandrini's chordal accompaniments work as a basis, though thickness of chords depends on the singer's interpretation. Ideally, singers should work with keyboard players or theoribists experienced with Monteverdi and his contemporaries as soon as possible, and learn the notes exactly in time and leave flexibility until the proper accompaniment is available. The vocal score's introduction concentrates on definitions of the period concerning types of recitative. These are obvious enough from the music, but nothing is said about the way that *Orfeo* is structured in a far more complex way than Monteverdi's later operas with choruses and instrumental sections an integral part of the work. The infernal sinfonias and choruses are transposed down a fifth, with alternatives down a fourth in an appendix. There is no option of not transposing.³

Thirty pages are devoted to setting out the libretto, with the left-hand pages having a column for the libretto and another for the text in the score, with opposite them English and German translations by Derek Yeld and Gery Bramall. Useful though it is, I prefer my way of doing it – our *Orfeo* and *Poppea* have translations at the foot of each page of music. I don't understand why anyone needs a vocal score of any early 17th century operatic work, but this is as good as one is likely to find elsewhere.

CB

1. The Novello score is ruined by Denis Stevens' failure to understand that the continuo chords should be basic, with the voices clashing against the underlying harmony. It is much easier to play the chords with no aid (or simple editorial figures) than have to blot out what is printed – the Novello *Dido & Aeneas* has the same problem.

2. In contrast, my edition is a complete score, with bass figures added, and costs £16.00. We also have instrumental parts.

3. Have we won? I think, incidentally, I was the first to point out that the clefs indicated downwards transposition. The cornett and sackbut Sinfonias look plausible with G2 clefs on top with top A as the highest comfortable note on the cornett, but the two bottom clefs are F3, implying down a fourth or fifth. The Sinfonias have C3C3C4F3F3; the top part (which presumably would have been C1) is omitted, so this is for an ensemble without the upper parts and is presumably intended to sound infernal.

A LESSON TO EDITORS!

Giuseppe Corsi detto "il Celani" *La Stravaganza – Cantata per Soprano e Basso continuo* [Critical edition and Basso continuo realisation] Ed. by Davide Gualtieri. Lucca, LIM, (2012) 221pp, €30.00. ISBN 978 870966916 www.lim.it

Where to begin? Here is an extraordinary solo cantata, published in a cumbersome, inconvenient format, only in Italian, whose editor has dedicated ten years to the project. I am torn between devoting the time necessary for learning the piece, in order to give him, and the composer, every benefit of the doubt before attempting to evaluate this work, or doing two other things. One is to supply readers with some information about Corsi, which this edition does not do, and describe the piece itself; the other is to describe the mega-hassle of trying to use this impractical edition. In fact I keep asking myself for whom it is intended?

If Corsi (1630?-90) was indeed born in Celano, near L'Aquila, then he was Abruzzese, though he is also said to have been Umbrian, and in any case his activity was mainly in Rome, where he was ordained. According to the Perugian composer Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni (1657-1743), Corsi was Carissimi's favourite pupil. He held numerous positions as *maestro di cappella* in various churches, but got himself exiled from Rome by Innocent XI for having circulated books banned by the Church. He went to Parma to serve in the ducal court (1681-88), where he was extremely well-paid and sought out by students, an eminent one being G. A. Perti (1661-1756), who in addition to operas, composed remarkable sacred music, thanks to Corsi's teaching. Another was G. B. Martini. The latest documents show that Corsi composed an oratorio for Ferdinando [III] de' Medici, *Santa Teodora*, in 1688 and was commissioned by him in 1690 to write 27 Responsories, a Miserere, three cantatas, and two madrigals. He died in Modena at the end of that year.

A vivid anecdote concerns the origin of *Era la notte e lo stellato cielo*, now known as *La stravaganza*, from the final line of the text "e nostra guida sia la stravaganza" [may extravagance be our guide] and because of its unusual features – continuous and extreme modulations, "bizarre" changes of time signatures, short sections of contrapuntal continuo realisation and instrumental ritornellos written for the harpsichord, strong language, and relentlessly difficult vocal writing. It circulated and found its way into contemporary collections under the new title. It is surprising that Gualtieri assumed that this story, as recounted by Pitoni [*Notitia de' contrapuntisti e compositori di musica*, edited by C. Ruini (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1988, p. 329)], was too well-known to warrant its being quoted in full:

[...] while living in Naples, serving a prince of that city, in an academy of composers [il Celano] had to play at sight a composition, put before him in order to challenge and at the same time deride him; in fact, he was mocked, since the composition was written precisely as an affront towards him. But this virtuoso, to recover the honour lost in this test, applied himself to ingeniously compose a cantata, namely *La Stravaganza*, full of the most extravagant and never-used tempi, clefs and accidentals; and returning to the same academy, placing it before the members who had ridiculed him, for them to play and sing, they were even more embarrassed and derided, not being able to play or sing such a type of composition, which il Celano successfully played and sang, to the disgrace of the others. Therefore, to general applause, the previous affront was gloriously vindicated. And this composition is now very well-known..."

According to Gualtieri, the vehement oratorical invective of the anonymous text (80 lines plus a refrain of four lines occurring four times within the work) expresses a moral and aesthetic protest against the adversities of the world (by way of analogies with fearsome, destructive nature), resolved by the rebellious imperative at the end. Entirely through-composed, it consists of four sections plus a finale: R[ecit] -arioso, A[ria], R, Refrain (aria); R, A, R, Refrain; R arioso, A, Refrain; R arioso, Refrain; Aria with fugal finale between soprano and bass.

Gualtieri's report on the sources is clear and well-reasoned. The music follows (pp.10-52), which could well have been printed smaller, i.e. with more than 5 soprano-bass systems per page and more than 2 or 3 bars per line, and without blank spaces inserted so that every new section begins on a new page! I find it hard to play music when I can see so little of it at a time. In fact, I hesitate to play a new piece without also availing myself of the footnotes and suggestions offered by the editor. Here this entails jumping back and forth to pages 53-89 to find and then add into the score the continuo figuring, which, because of minute, inconsequential differences in the sources, Gualtieri does not collate and print in the music, but presents like a score of four bass lines (without voice) in a separate section. The occasional octave transpositions, or tied notes equal to those of longer values, or the fact that not all the sources contained all of the realised fragments, could have been footnoted. Actually, the vocal part is so dense and "violinistic" that the harmony is almost clear without figures, but that is not a reason for omitting them, if only for confirmation and to facilitate sight-reading. For the user of his "synopsis of the continuo" section, Gualtieri often makes the figures incomprehensible: where manuscripts are inconsistent in placing accidentals on either side of a numeral, or above or on the staff to the left of a bass note, the editor's function should be to show them in a uniform manner in a modern edition, as he interprets them.

By the third page of the piece I was already up to page 92 in the footnotes, in addition to checking and transcribing the basso continuo. After a while I was mildly curious to look at Gualtieri's personal realisation of the continuo

(pp.167-211). He does distinguish between original notes and notes added by him, but he does not seem to appreciate that fragments of obbligato keyboard writing do not imply that such a fabric is to result throughout! Corsi had the keyboard provide instrumental ritornellos in distinct contrast to a simple accompanying function of the continuo, under the rich figuration of the voice. Gualtieri's realisation is extremely busy, with semiquavers in parallel with the voice or with the bass; but perhaps more objectionable are the frequent off-the-beat insertions of complementary imitations which neither reinforce the voice or the bass line. There are also, to be fair, purely chordal sections which might do for players not wanting to play from a bassline, though where Gualtieri's keyboard part is impossible to intuit as chordal, those very players would be forced to figure out what to play. As with any editorial realisation, some chords may be "wrong" stylistically – there should be more root position triads and fewer presumed inversions, providing more frequent changes of harmony. Players also have to catch on to his cumbersome way of inserting appoggiaturas in chords: instead of writing a plain chord with an optional a grace note, he ties a stack of semiquavers to a longer value, changing only the top note!

The composers of the Academy, who were challenged to play *La Stravaganza*, must have balked at the strange time signatures. The protagonist's struggle, compared to a battle of the air with the sea, is expressed in the following brief sections: C – 12/16 – C – 6/8 – 9/6 ("9 quavers instead of 6", or 9/8) – 5/9 (i.e. 5/8) – 8/5 (= 4/4) – C – 7/8 – 6/7 (i.e. 6/8) – 5/6 (i.e. 5/8) – 3/5 (i.e. 3/8) – 8/3 (= 4/4) – 6/8, returning finally to C. These are proportions: only the number of quavers per bar changes. But the effect of 5/8 and 7/8 is certainly intriguing. Another challenge to the singer is the range, from b to b", both extremes recurring throughout.

I should mention the middle part of the volume (pp. 107-166): the polyphonic aspects of the written-out accompaniment sections are obvious enough, but Gualtieri uses rhetorical figures to define them; ornamentation is discussed with the usual terminology, but it is extremely annoying to see musical examples printed without clef signs; on p.113, before example 39 there are repeated references to d sharps not appearing in the music on p.11 – is the music wrong, or the commentary? "On the art of rhetoric", Gualtieri gives a good summary of the structure of the whole piece, and then presents his very personal analysis (pp. 119-164) of the opening Recitative-arioso (pp.10-16), in terms of antitheton, catabasi, anabasi, mimesi, epizeusi, exclamatio, prolongatio and so on. He applies the rhetorical terminology to melodic units, to verbal devices, and to his own realisation. Given his conviction about the rhetorical basis for the piece, I'm surprised that he doesn't wonder if Corsi himself could have been the author of the text. Without such an assumption, I find it hard to feel that so much rhetorical analysis is truly necessary. These musical examples, too, are rigorously without clefs and without key signatures (how maddening!), printed very large, and refer as much to his uncharacteristically invasive accompaniment as to

the original score. (E.g. he adds long sustained high trills over the voice, and inserts chords on the singer's rests, explained as *tmesi in ipallage of the soprano's suspiratio*.) A glossary of rhetorical terms is given at the end of this analysis.

To sum up, the work is undeniably remarkable and Corsi, for his vocal and instrumental virtuosity, is a composer worth performing. The volume, however, is not designed for playing from without the assistance of a page turner on the right, and someone to keep the book on the stand on the left. I recommend first photocopying whichever of the two versions of the music you prefer playing from and obtain continuo figures from the Continuo Synopsis. Writing them in will require you to do the editor's work of disentangling combinations like "# 5/6 #" which may translate to a vertical 3-tier #6/5/#3]. Accidentals may refer to ciphered or unciphered intervals (3rds, 5ths, or 6ths), so analysis may be necessary. Meanwhile... your singer has a lot to bite off!

Barbara Sachs

GRAUPNER

Graupner *Gott will mich auch probieren* GWV 1121/14... edited by Guido Erdmann. Full score. Carus (10.353), 2012. 31pp, €22.50 (chorus score & parts available)

Christoph Graupner comes before Bach by being born in 1683, the same year as Telemann, whom he knew while studying with Schelle and Kuhnau in Leipzig. From 1709 he was based at Darmstadt, where the majority of his vast output still survives, including over 1400 cantatas. He became blind in 1754 and died in 1760. The publisher or editor avoid adding the name of a form to the piece. The text, by the court librarian, was published in 1714: the edition includes a facsimile. It has two verses, to the meter of *O Haupt voll Blut und Wunde*. These are set rather like two opening movements with each line framed by instrumental interludes. There is a four-bar link of five chords, above which the editor adds a stream of semiquavers. The work survives in score and parts, with single voices, though if sung with choir (as the editor suggests, though it isn't essential), some indications of solo and tutti might be added. The scoring is for four voices and strings, the two violin parts sometimes being marked H (oboes) to cue silence from the violins. It's odd that they did not have separate parts: the oboes must have shared with the lead violins, since the additional violin I & II parts do not have the oboe parts indicated. As well as a violoncello there is a violono (8' or 16'?) and a cembalo. There is no mention of bassoon in the score or a separate bassoon part, but it could have doubled one of the bass parts. As for the music, it's worth eight minutes of anyone's time. It is, however, disappointing that, of Graupner's 1400+ church pieces to choose from, Carus duplicated one that Brian Clark published in 2008 which the editor was aware of. (BC's edition: score £10.00, 4 scores & parts £30.00). Fair enough to compete with major works, but duplication of unknown music that is hardly likely to differ significantly from an existing one when there are so many alternatives is a waste – though I must confess that we have committed the same offence!

CARUS BACH

Bach *Johannespassion... Traditionelle Fassung* (1739/1749) BWV 245... edited by Peter Wollney. Vocal score [by] Paul Horn. Carus 31.245/93. 151pp, €15.50.

The basic research on the complex situation of the versions of the St John Passion by Arthur Mendel showed that there were five versions (1724, 1725, c.1730, 1739 and 1749). Carus has separated them out where they are identifiable. Describing them is confusing, since BWV 245 lists one sequence with alternatives, plus three separate arias. The Carus numbering runs from I to IV, merging 1739 and 1749. They produce two full scores. 31/245 is based on the 1749 version, but also includes a transcription of the surviving nos. 1-10 in Bach's hand. Interestingly, John Butt's recent recording (see p. 31) is based on 1739 – leaving him a certain amount of leeway in choice of versions. The other full score, 31.245/50, gives the 1725 version. Both these scores and the vocal score which is listed above include tables of the five versions. (It is confusing that the 1739 version doesn't have a Roman number but appears in the final column.) Carus produced a vocal score to match the 1749 version. It would be a lot easier to make a choice if the table made clear the difference between 1739/1749 (the one of our heading) and Version IV (31.345/03, €12.00). There is also a vocal score of version II (31.245/03) at the same price.

As always, the text is given in German and Henry S. Drinker's copyright-free translation, though the italic English below the German is less legible. The clarity of the music is as clear as one can expect. I think I'd like to see a sample violin or continuo part to check if there are any problems in using parts for 1749 with a score for 1739/49, but Carus are usually very sensible in such matters. It's obviously easier to decide on 1725 or 1749, but not all conductors take the easy way out. If you want to use the two movements from 1724 that are not included in the other versions (nos 19 & 20 with viola d'amore and lute), they can be bought separately (31.245/81 & 82).

CANTATAS 126, 163, 190

Carus are progressing well with their Bach Cantata series, neatly published with full score (sent for review); they also issue study score, vocal score, chorus score and orchestral parts. Each cantata has an introduction in German and English and a critical commentary. The most interesting of these three is Cantata 190 for Bach's first Leipzig New Year, 1724, *Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*. This survives in an incomplete form, printed thus with many blank staves in the score in NBA I/4. The Carus score does bracket the added parts, but seeing only two violins and four voices on a page with 16 blank staves draws attention to how much has been added to the opening chorus; the instrumentation is given by the scoring of the closing chorale – three trumpets & timps, 3 oboes, strings and continuo. No. 2 is a chorale and recit, which lacks the continuo part. No. 3, an alto solo with strings, is complete, as is a bass recit. No. 5, a duet for tenor and bass, has an unspecified treble part, with the A below

middle C the bottom note and a G sharp almost two octaves higher. The editor suggests oboe d'amore or violin, but one would expect a violin solo to have a higher tessitura. No. 6 is an accompanied recit for tenor. Masaaki Suzuki completed the missing continuo part for No 2, his son Masato undertaking the greater challenge of the opening chorus with great success: this will surely replace the earlier one by Walther Reinhardt. This movement can be heard on line if you don't have the Suzuki complete cantatas to hand. The publication is impressive and deserves performance. There's a strange misprint on the English half of the title page: *mouvement* for *movement*. (31/190: full score £24.00, study, vocal scores & complete performance material available for all three cantatas.)

Cantata 126, *Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort*, was composed for sexagesima (4 February) 1725. The opening couplet is now rather embarrassing:

*Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort
Und steur des Papsts und Turken Mord.*

Uphold us, Lord, by your word
and ward off the murderousness of Pope and Turk.

The editor, Karin Wollschläger, changes the second line to
Und steure deiner Fiende Mord.

Obviously, with church attitudes being rather more generous now, the bowdlerisation is sensible, but if the work is performed in a historical context, it might be interesting to represent Luther's equal hostility to Catholics and Turks; the change should at least have been shown in the commentary. The opening chorus is based on a soprano chorale; as well as two oboes and strings, there is a solitary trumpet in D having to cope with sounding in A minor – if you want to perform the cantata, first find your trumpeter! There is a tenor aria with two oboes, a secco recit for alto and tenor, and a bass solo with a virtuosic continuo accompaniment. After a tenor recit, there's a tutti chorale. It's not a cantata that I know, but musically it's impressive. (Score 31.126; £13.90)

Cantata 163, *Nur jedem das Seine*, headed *Concerto*, is from a cycle of cantatas written by Salomon Franck in Weimer and composed for 24 November 1715. The usual four solo voices are present, but not in an opening chorus. To save space, Bach only wrote the bass of the closing chorale: he would have written the rest in the parts, but they do not survive. However, it was not too difficult for the editor to find a version of the tune that fitted the bass and add the middle parts (as Bach's heading notes) in *simplice style*. The text of the opening tenor aria is somewhat repetitive – "Do justice to all men" has 12 statements with 5 part-repetitions. There follows a bass recit and (unusually for the same voice) an aria headed à 2 *Violoncello obligat: è Basso*. with obbligato parts for two cellos. The "continuo" part is labelled *Basso* in the score; my guess is that it was played only by organ or perhaps with an 8' violone as well. The editor assumes that the scoring is for single strings: did the violone make a quick change to cello, or was an extra cellist brought in just for that movement? The next two movements are both for soprano and alto, the aria with violins and viola in unison and a separate bass. The text is based on paying to Caesar and to God. (Score 31.163; £11.80) CB

Less confidence is placed in Drinker's translation in these cantatas: 163 & 190 are Drimnker revised by John Coombs, the English text of 126 is by Jutta and Vernon Wicker.

HANDEL'S FIRST OPERA

Handel *Almira, Königin von Kastilien...* HWV 1. [Vocal score]. Barenreiter (BA 4050-90), 2012. xv + 280, £33.50.

The title-page is a bit of a mouthful, crediting two librettists and the translator into German of some arias in Italian. It is based on HHA II: 50 edited by Dorothea Schröder (but her name only appears in small print on the back of the title page – the piano reducer's name, Andreas Köhs, is more prominently visible). Hamburg's Goose-market Theatre had intended that Keiser would set *Almira* for 1704, but instead he had the work performed at the court at Weissenfels in honour of a visit from the Palatinate Elector Johann Wilhelm. Hamburg wanted the delayed opera performed the following year, so Handel had his first chance to write an opera, with support from his friend Mattheson, who also took the role of Fernando.

It's not a work I have much experience of. A note on my Chrysander score shows that I did once record it off-air, but in the late 1960s/early 1970s I was far too busy music-making to have time to sit and listen. It has rarely been performed in living memory, though it was revived by Telemann in 1732 and versions arranged by Johann Nepomuk Fuchs were heard in Hamburg (1878 & 1905) and Leipzig (1879). It has never been very popular, but the Boston Early Music Festival is staging it in June (see our Concert Diary). The style comprises mostly short arias – HWV and HHA share the numbering system with 74 items: for a few comparisons, the first version of *Rinaldo* has 39, *Giulio Cesare* has 44 and *Alcina* has 42. There are few sources, but nothing with the authority of an autograph or the equivalent of the fair copies Handel worked from for most of his life. There is plenty of Handelian flair here, but he rapidly developed more sophisticated ability to extend the structural and emotional power of his arias – even if the da capos can be ruined by lack or excess of embellishment. However, if the recitatives are interrupted by shorter arias, the whole experience may be more effective on stage. At least there is now a score (published in 1994) and vocal score to buy, and hire material: I would suggest that a student production in English (perhaps leaving the Italian arias untranslated) might be effective.⁴ CB

BARNABUS GUNN

Barnabus Gunn *Six solos...* 1745 edited by Martin Perkins and Chloe Werner Edition HH (HH 20.319), 2013. viii + 35pp + vln & vlc parts, £24.95

My only previous awareness of Barnabus Gunn (c.1680-1753) is his 1750 *Six Sets of Lessons for the Harpsichord*.⁵ He

4. The HHA score (BA 4050) costs £181.50. If you are poor, you can buy an A4 Chrysander score for £20.00.

5. Published by JPH Publications in 2002; now available from The Early Music Company Ltd @ £12.00.

studied with Pepusch and spent most of his career in Birmingham. His other publication was a set of *Two Cantata's and Six Songs* (1736). It's good that local editors have produced so interesting a collection, perhaps a bit old-fashioned for 1745, but well worth playing. The original edition was just a two-stave score, which is presented thus without realisation. Presumably, the 1745 print was large enough for the two string players to look over the harpsichordist – unlikely to work with the new edition, since the size of the score staves is quite small – but there's no problem with the parts. With my declining sight, however, I wonder whether the bass figures under the score could be a little bigger, and I wish I'd done the same with my own publications! A CD would be interesting. CB

VIOLA & CELLO

Cajetan Wutky *3 Duets for Viola and Cello op. 2: Book I op. 2/1 in C*, edited by Rudolf H. Führer. Dilettos Musicale (DM 1383), £12.95. 10 pp + vln & vla parts.

Wutky's family came from Silesia and his father was a town musician. Wutky (17345–1815) worked for most of his life for Duke Albert of Saxon-Teschen, where he was a virtuoso horn player, capellmeister and door-keeper in Bratislava, though for a while moved to Brussels as servant of the Archduchess. His duos were famous, even if nothing else survives, and were recommended to any household with a viola and cello. Until fairly recently, such music (like two-violin and violin-viola duets) were published only in parts, and one wonders whether that practice might produce better musicianship. Had this been available when my piano teacher started learning the cello, I'm sure he and I (on viola) would have enjoyed playing Wutky, despite the horrible noise we would have made! But I think that players are expected to be more analytic and systematic now – or are the scores just an extra expense so that examiners and competition judges can have scores in front of them? All three duos were previously published by Amadeus in 2008 (UK price around £15.50). Other things being equal, I'd go for the set of three. CB

BEETHOVEN op. 41

Beethoven *Serenade in D op. 41 for piano and flute (violin)* Edited by Egon Voss. Henle (HN934), €13.50. v + 24pp + part.

I wonder how many readers will have recognised the headline "Beethoven op. 41"? It was one of a group of arrangements of Beethoven's music prepared by Franz Xaver Kleinheinz around 1803, allegedly under the supervision of Beethoven's brother. My guess is that Kleinheinz did the work and the brother was involved primarily to give the process credit. In fact, this is quite a free arrangement – having the parts for violin and viola on two staves for a pianist to accompany the flute would sound bizarre. Kleinheinz used his skill and imagination to present a viable work. The editor sensibly has produced an edition of Beethoven arranged Kleinheinz, a statement

of which on the cover might be helpful, and I would have thought that he is more deserving of mention on the title page than the editor and the piano fingerer. But it's the substance that counts, and he seems to have done a very good job. CB

STANFORD CELLO CONCERTO

Stanford Cello Concerto in D minor Edited by George Burrows (*Recent Researches in the music of the 19th and early 20th 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

Despite, as the editor mentions, a recent resurgence in interest in Stanford's orchestral music generated by recordings of the complete symphonies on the Chandos label, the composer remains best known for his church music. Robert King's new CD of orchestral settings of Anglican evening services⁶ reveals the mastery of Stanford's rich palette of instrumental colours, and will hopefully bring many to ask why such an important composer has been neglected for so long. It is astonishing that the present work was most likely first performed in its orchestral form in 2002 (by the editor's brother, and the orchestra of Newcastle University, where much of the source material resides), and that this is its first appearance in print.

This three-movement work of generous proportions is scored for standard orchestra – pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets (in A and B flat) and bassoons, four horns (two in F or D and two in low B flat), two trumpets in D, timpani and strings. The concerto is beautifully laid out in a format somewhere between the European A4 and B4 size. Stanford's characteristic sweeping melodies, clever harmonies and – as already mentioned in connection with the recording – quite Brahmsian ears for timbre are all there; the clever link from the end of the slow movement into the finale by way of an enharmonic shift is an especially satisfying passage. George Burrows does not appear to have faced many editorial problems; Stanford's scores are generally very neat and such extra markings as he notes (some by cellists like Piatti and Hausmann who were involved in the work's creation) cannot have posed any great difficulty, if the alteration shown in one of the very dark facsimiles is anything to go by. There is a description of the work, but no critical commentary listing variants, as we are used to finding in editions of baroque music. The edition also includes a cadenza for the first movement by the composer, Simon Dobson. Solo cello and piano available from A-R at \$32.00, but no mention of the parts. BC

Having requested Hyperion for the CD (details on p. 47), I found that I'd listened to the Cello Concerto several times but hadn't paid critical attention to the Rondo in F, Irish Rhapsody 3 op. 137 and Ballata and Ballabile op. 160 when the deadline came. Details on p. 48.

6. See below and p 48.

CANTICLES & RESPONSES

English Church Music Volume 2: Canticles and Responses.
Edited by Robert King, Series Editor: John Rutter.
Oxford UP, 2011. vii + 330pp, £15.50.

This is quite a bold move in the series. English and Latin church music is often sung in concert as well as in church, but it is rare for Anglican services to be sung thus. I'm not very sure why, since a morning or evening service is shorter than a mass and enables programmes to be more flexible. This is, however, definitely aimed at current Anglican practices, where Holy Communion has replaced Matins (no morning services are included except for Stanford's *Te Deum & Jubilate* in C and a sensible if not intentional pair by Vaughan Williams and Walton). This does suggest that the book is primarily aimed at Anglican churches with capable choirs and organists. By far the most prominent composer is Stanford (four evening services in addition to the lengthy *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*). I found that listening to the CD with its four orchestrated *Mag & Nuncs* shone a new light on music that hasn't previously inspired me: I suspect that the scoring makes an enormous difference. Only one of the Tippett services are included – perhaps a pity; are they still thought rather difficult or is the problem their ownership by another publisher? Some psalm chants by him not previously published are printed on pp. 305 & 306. Stone's *Lord's Prayer* is on the previous page, transposed up the Anglican minor third. This might limit use for more authentic performances of pre-1661 pieces, but in this context, it's sensible to keep to a standard tessitura. The high-clef setting by Farmer is, logically, down a tone. There are seven sets of preces and responses and a plainsong compline. The volume isn't particularly relevant to early-music buffs, but I was attracted by the CD, and my interest in services (which was fairly minimal) has been revived. The main technical question is whether the volumes can be folded back often enough without splitting! I should have asked the singers using two of the earlier Rutter anthologies (including the English madrigal one for which I was the main editor) at a Cambridge afternoon concert whether holding the volumes was uncomfortable. I hope that this sells well to collegiate and cathedral choirs, and others that emulate them. As always with the series, the layout is excellent, the biographical and editorial comments are at the right level, and I trust John Rutter's proof-reading to make it unnecessary to do spot checks.

CB

BOOK REVIEW

PUGNANI'S FEST

Annarita Coltrurato *Mettere in scena la regalità – Le feste teatrali di Gaetano Pugnani al Regio di Torino.* Lucca, LIM, 2012 (*Le Chevalier Errante*, 8) 148pp, €30.00. ISBN 978 870967029 www.lim.it

This volume describes the commissioning and staging of the musical dramas, or *feste*, written and performed for the celebration of royal weddings at the Royal Theatre of

the House of Savoy, in Turin, composed by the important violinist Gaetano Pugnani (1731-1798), during the last three decades of the 18th century. Had the subject not selected his productions, there would have been ten instead of four to discuss.

This is not a criticism: the book is well done and interesting. The political, social and religious circumstances and exigencies of each occasion, the music, the plots, and the figures responsible for each realisation, were often independent of Pugnani's direction, which makes the treatment fuller than might be expected, and in every case vivid. The discussion ends on page 90, followed by four useful appendices of documents:–

I. Roles and salaries for each event [*Issea* of 1771 for the marriage of Marie Joséphine of Savoy and the future Louis XVIII; *L'Aurora* of 1775 for the wedding of the future Carlo Emanuele IV of Sardinia with Princess Marie Clotilde of France; *Demetrio a Rodi* of 1789 for Vittorio Emanuele I of Sardinia's marriage to Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria-Este] with 11 plates [engraved illustrations and frontespieces of the published libretti and 7 colour drawings of costumed characters by Leonardo Marini, the designer of *Demetrio* and its ballet].

II. Musical incipits (and the instrumentation) for each movement of the *Sinfonias*, accompanied recitatives, and arias of the three *Feste*. The unaccompanied recits are listed, so a complete "index" of all pieces is provided for every drama. This gives an idea of the musical content.

III. The libretto of *L'Aurora* in Giandomenico Boggi's printed version next to Pugnani's.

IV. Other documents (contracts). Barbara Sachs

TO BE REVIEWED

I hope to be able to set up a system for a wider range of book reviewers. I have tried to find a reviewer for the first item in the list below, since I don't read German. There is some music outstanding – at the moment I can read music more easily than words, though the prefaces are sometimes a problem.

Tihomir Popović *Mäzene – Manuskripte – Modi: Untersuchungen zu My Ladye Nevells Booke* (Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, 71). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013. 269pp, €52.00 ISBN 978 3 515 10214 8

Richard Turbet *William Byrd: A Research and Information Guide. Third Edition.* Routledge, 2012. xii + 286pp, £95.00 ISBN 978 0 415 87559 2

Sarah McCleave *Dance in Handel's London Operas* (Eastman Studies in Music). University of Rochester Press, 2-13. xiii + 266pp, £55.00., ISBN 978 1 58046 420 8

Anthony R. DelDonna *Opera, Theatrical Culture and Society in Late Eighteenth-Century Naples.* Ashgate, 2012. xxi + 318pp, 65.00. ISB N 978 1 4094 2278 5

James B. Kopp *The Bassoon* Yale UP, 2012. xxviii + 297pp, £30.00. ISBN 978 0 300 11820 2

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Simon Ravens

Something very odd has struck me. Across the arts, there is a commonly voiced refrain amongst the general public that 'it was better in the good old days'. Think about it: if you're Tracey Emin you're no Rembrandt, if you're Ian McEwan you're no Dickens, and if you're a cutting-edge composer, well I'm afraid most people probably won't know who you are in the first place. Now here's the odd bit: in historical performance practice, one field in which you could realistically expect things past to be venerated, the prevailing sentiment seems to be quite the reverse. I can't think how many times I've read critics praising a modern performance by suggesting that the composer could never have heard it so good. I've seen this indirect criticism of various original ensembles – from Josquin's choir, to Purcell's viol consort, Bach's cantata ensemble, and Schubert's orchestra.

You might be thinking that I'm sharpening my skewer to have a jab at another critic or two here, but I'm not, because on one level there's very good evidence that those original ensembles *didn't* deliver results which we would deem as good those of as our own groups. Take Josquin. Give a modern ensemble the same conditions as one of Josquin's choirs, and prepare for a shock. Firstly, assume a lack of rehearsal, poor lighting and no set pitch level. Then, having noted the intake of breath at this initial challenge, show the singers the music. Well, those familiar with reading from choirbooks and facsimiles might negotiate the notes, but would they achieve absolute unanimity and cogency with regard to *ficta* and word underlay? And how about fine details – those homophonic phrase ends when only one part is to continue, but needs to breathe: how will that final consonant be together without the visual cue of the score? If we threw all these challenges before modern performers we would be courting... well, one thing we certainly wouldn't be courting would be an agent prepared to sell us on the basis of this approach.

The factors change a little for each composer and genre. How could Purcell's fantasias have been given great performances (or any 'performances' at all) if they were played by amateurs? Ditto Schubert's symphonies. And as for Bach's scratch body of singers and players, surely all we can do in this case is feel pity for the composer. Indeed, it seems as if we should feel sorry for almost all early composers.

It's quite revealing if we turn the question round, and ask which original performers are regarded as likely to have been superior to today's. Straight away a list of soloists comes to my mind – Corelli the violinist, Bach the organist, Chopin the pianist, for instance. I could go on and on. But ensembles? In our own fields I'm sure we can all think of groups on which, given free use of the Tardis for a day, we would like to eavesdrop. I'd give my eye

teeth (whatever they are) to drop in on one of Byrd's clandestine masses and see who was singing and playing what, and how. Deep down, though, I wouldn't expect them to be superior to my modern ideal. No, I would love to hear Byrd's group, but only so that I could climb straight back into the Tardis, dash back to my own ensemble and put into practice what I had observed. Shouldn't an optimal and well-rehearsed line-up of performers today be able to better the efforts of Byrd's ad-hoc, willing amateurs?

At this point I realise that something does not add up. If early music composers such as Byrd ('the famous organist') were esteemed practitioners, who we suspect to have been at least the equal of any solo performers today, why is it generally assumed that their ensembles were not up to the mark? The answer can only be that those attributes which we prioritise in an ensemble today would not have been so important for the original listeners. Ensemble – ah yes, there's a clue in the word! – is the prime example. Conditioned by recordings, in which sloppy entries quickly become an irritant, precision is now a basic requirement for listeners today. Ensemble, though, does not stop with the entry. When critics notice the blend of the tenors, or that the instruments in a viol consort sound homogenous (perhaps they come from the same maker) they are commanding ensemble. And (although we take this for granted) when performers follow the same editorial *ficta*, underlay, or bowing, they are demonstrating ensemble. Now, how many instances can we call to mind of historic performers being praised for blend, precision and unanimity? Yes, there are instances – the Mannheim Rocket comes to mind – but ensemble is hardly a leitmotif of the historical observations of performance I know. Although we should not get fixated on a single word, it is interesting to note that the first known usage of the English word 'ensemble' in a musical context dates from as late as 1844.

Vocabulary aside, did the concept not always exist? Surely it is nonsensical to suggest that we might play with an ensemble, but without a *sense* of ensemble. Up to a point. I think that ensemble can be thought of as a horse and a cart. I have no doubt that good ensembles always shared a unity of musical purpose, and with this good horse in place, the cart of technical cohesion would have surely followed. That cart might not have been full, but that would have been less noticed, since attention would have been more drawn to the fine horse. Today, when critics talk about the 'ensemble' of a performance, they are fundamentally talking about the unanimity of technical details. In other words, they are referring to the cart alone, with the horse nowhere to be seen. I can think of any number of performances where I feel I'm being asked to admire a stationary cart. However well filled it may be, my interest quickly wanes.

Personally, I am not surprised if it is true that in the pre-recording age, ensemble in this modern sense was less of an issue. In the days when I used to review live performances, I don't think I ever bothered commenting on matters of ensemble. (If I did, they must have been awful performances – whether technically perfect or very imperfect). Reviewing recordings, though, I do mention imperfections: I don't feel big and clever when I nit-pick like this, but I feel that my competence as a pair of ears will only be trusted by the reader if I provide some evidence that I have listened closely.

Our approach to ephemeral and recorded music appears to be different, then. But this appearance might be deceptive. As performers, in recording sessions we often voice our wish to recreate the sense of a live performance: this seems to be a very acceptable sentiment. Altogether less laudable is the unspoken desire we have when preparing for a live performance to ape the essence of the recording session – precision. Every musician I've ever performed with aspires to this. In fact, precision (or 'ensemble', as we must remember to call it in polite musical society) has become so central to our understanding of performance that to question its parentage seems ridiculous. And yet that's exactly what I am doing here. Of course earlier musicians would have enjoyed that moment where everything came absolutely together but, I would argue, they would have done so much as walkers might enjoy a glimpsed scene en route to a panoramic viewpoint.

My reasons for believing that the priorities of early musicians and listeners were vastly different to our own are twofold. The first reason – the lack of praise for ensemble I find in historical observations of music – I have already mentioned. The second, and more contentious, is my belief that within the written sources of the music, the absence of aids to ensemble is significant. It is all well and good saying that musicians, steeped in a single idiom, would automatically have added that sharp or repeated this word, played that cadential trill or double-dotted this note, but what I find impossible to credit is that they would *all* have done so *all* of the time – as we expect to do now. How could we prove that I'm wrong, and that they did these things unanimously? Well if, today, someone can put together a group of academics, all well-versed in the same theoretical sources, and have them separately produce identically marked-up editions of a particular work, I will remove my growing contention that ensemble in historical performance is a modern fallacy. But I'm not holding my breath.

At this point, though, my rolling argument realises it needs a breather before tackling the mountain in front of it. The truth is, I *am* a modern musician, not a historical one. In common, I suspect, with most readers of *EMR*, I have been brought up to value precision and unanimity, and I'm not sure I'm ready – or willing – to change my spots. I can see a possible way forward, perhaps for a future generation of early musicians, but it's so shocking that I'm not sure I have the fortitude to discuss it here...

(At which point I trope myself as I remember the occasion when a radical chaplain from a Cambridge college was invited up to Ely Cathedral to preach. With the words 'and so, what I would argue is this...', he was evidently reaching the end of his powerful sermon. At that point, mid-sentence, he turned the page and paused as he looked up at the aghast faces in front of him. He then stared at his conclusion, sighed, and with the blandishment 'God has willed it so' left the pulpit.)

...but if Clifford is prepared to print it (it hinges on a filthy four-letter word beginning with 'f' and ending with 'k') in the next issue I promise to write about a form of music from which I think we may have something to learn. I'll steel myself now and mention the unmentionable. Folk.

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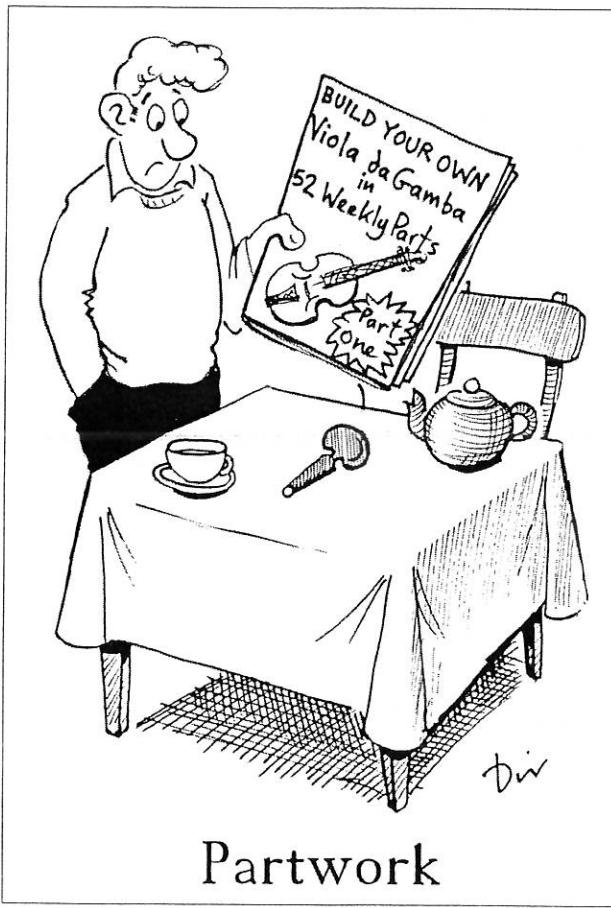
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SEMPER DOWLAND, SEMPER DOWNWARD

David Hill

Dowland Tunes of Sad Despere Dominique Visse *cT*, Fretwork, Renaud Delaigue *B*, Eric Bellocq *lute & orpharion 66' II"*
Saltarino SR121

Part 1

I have always been a fan of Dominique Visse, especially in the operas of Handel and Cavalli, where he often impresses much more than some of the bigger names, for he has a unique voice and amazing technique. But this excursion into lute song is deeply disappointing for me. I should begin by saying that, as always, he sings absolutely beautifully throughout this disc, so if you are a devoted Visse fan and a lover of falsetto voices in this repertoire, I suggest you stop reading here and get the disc anyway, because it will give you just what you want. With one surprise.

Visse attempts here "original pronunciation" (OP) of English (though nowhere is this mentioned in the booklet). It's a subject about which, unluckily for him, I'm afraid I happen to know quite a bit. Nothing has ever been officially published in the form of a guide on "how to do ye olde Elizabethan/Jacobean pronunciation for singers", so it's always been transmitted in the business as a bit of a free-for-all, pick-it-up-from-the-discs system. But I have good evidence that a version of the notes that I copied down as "the Rules" for "Dobson's Strong" OP from Glenda Simpson's classes at the Early Music centre in the early 80s has been circulating amongst musicians ever since.¹

I am normally impressed whenever anyone attempts to add the extra patina of colour that OP gives, and Charles Daniels, Clare Wilkinson and several others have recently shown that it can be a wonderful and expressive, even sexy device. All the rhymes such as 'bonny lass' and 'greeny grass' are allowed to work in OP, and provided one does not follow the extreme, strict, 'full strength' OP that E.J. Dobson advocated, rather the gentler version advocated by David Crystal, as used at The Globe, it really does make an enormous difference, and is easy to comprehend when used by sensitive performers.

There is evidence from the utter mess that Visse sings on this disc that his grasp of OP has been based on the old 1981 Camerata of London OP disc, and perhaps a few later ones; but when he doesn't know the 'correct' period pronunciation of a particular word, he seems to either make it up, or not bother, for it's simply all over the place. At one point, in "Flow my tears", Visse's bass singer, who appears on several tracks, sings "bird" pronouncing it, more or less authentically, like the modern "beard", but Visse, immediately above him sings the modern "bird"

pronunciation. The OP does not disguise Visse's French accent, and the result is not a happy combination. Not his fault, but oh dear, nevertheless. And as I said, he sings beautifully, and I have never heard him sing better, or more sensitively.

But I have a much bigger problem with the fact that nearly all of the songs have been transposed down at least a third, usually a fourth, and probably even a fifth in the case of *Fine knacks*. OK, so he is being accompanied by a 'transposing' lute tuned lower, as is usual for falsetto altos. But here he is also accompanied on most tracks by a transposing viol quartet, members of the excellent Fretwork, no less. I know of no historical evidence that viol consorts ever transposed music downwards to accommodate male falsettists – perhaps someone can supply a contradiction, and tell me where there exist manuscript examples of viol parts for consort songs transposed as much as a fourth lower. Yet here the booklet proudly proclaims that they are employing "1/6 syntonic comma meantone". Oh good. What is the point in telling us the tuning system, and quoting the provenances of the lovely instruments, if the whole premise of the performance, falsettist and transposed quartet and lutes in lute song has no known historical justification whatsoever? No knickers, again (see my *EMR* contributions *passim*) The tuning system alone won't make such a performances practice any more authentic!²

I believe that there is so much that one *can* do with these songs, but this solution simply isn't a good one, because although male altos may be lovely and creamy and swoony, *that is not the same as a proper expressive projection of the text*. It is a *parody* of what we know the composers wanted.

Hinge and Bracket, wonderful falsetto alto performers, impressed and amused us precisely because we, the audience, were aware of the joke that they were men sending up a post-war genre of song and style of performance. Altos singing lute songs are always presented in all seriousness, yet can anyone tell me how, without any historical justification, this practice is any different from Hinge and Bracket? Sorry to sound so negative and critical yet again, but this is yet another "reconstruction of something that probably didn't happen" and here it is just a real train crash of a disc. Pity poor Visse's excellent bass singer, Renaud Delaigue, who joins him in several of the songs, for his bass line has also needed to be transposed downwards, making it so uncomfortably low in places, some measures have to be transposed up the octave in order to be singable! Aargh!

1. Glenda was a pioneer in singing the pronunciation in music of this period, recording as a member of Camerata of London. CB

2. How many viol-players make a point of NOT tuning the fourths in perfect pitch – though the third is more flexible. CB

I've been very careful, tactful and, I hope, kind, when discussing this before, but surely, enough is enough. I am now going to come out and say: "just prove it, countertenors and musicologists". Prove to us all that any male falsettist anywhere ever sang early 17th century lute songs or consort songs transposed downwards as a regular practice.

I'll suggest a fantasy scenario to try to explain the important questions we should all be asking about falsetto altos. Forget the "It all depends on what you mean by the word countertenor" business that some use to muddy up the waters when discussing this – forget the modern use of the name countertenor, and all the debate as to what that term may have meant in the past for a moment. I am talking specifically about the male falsetto alto, whatever you call him, singing popular (Dowland and friends) early Stuart soprano or tenor music transposed down to make it not just comfortable but performable.

Imagine someone emerged in the middle of the 20th century intent on reviving one particular type of theoretical, quirky historic viol that had somehow slipped through Praetorius' and everyone else's nets – let's call it the '*Viola Spuriosa*' – and began performing on it to a very high standard. Recordings by pioneer musicians with amazing techniques upon a few conjectural reconstructions of the instrument (for which there is no known surviving original, though it is believed that an instrument bearing this name, whatever that meant, was once used in churches), convince everyone to take the *Spuriosa* seriously, and audiences are seduced by the lovely sound it can make in the right hands, swooning at its creamy, pure, seemingly sexless sound. Eventually, through sheer persistence (and the fact that it has sneaked in under the radar and become well established before the advent of the authenticity police), it becomes completely accepted and comfortably established in the mainstream of the revival of early music, and ever more good players flourish, and are all the more encouraged to do so, thanks to the *Spuriosa*'s eventual acceptance and adoption by the music academies.

Players of the *Viola Spuriosa* (and its fans) enjoy nothing more than performing the repertoire of the early violin, because it has such good tunes, and thanks to radio and recordings, it is assumed that it represents a genuine 'voice from the past', chiefly because so many like it so much, and some of the performers are such great musicians. No-one ever questions this.

But the *Viola Spuriosa* has one serious drawback – due to a quirk in construction, it can only ever exist as an alto instrument, and simply cannot tackle pieces in a higher register unless they are transposed downwards to make them sound within its frustratingly limited compass, and this means that everyone else in any consort, band or duet needs to transpose the accompaniments to this early violin repertoire considerably lower in order to accompany it in this popular violin repertoire. Since the very first appearance of the *Spuriosa* in the 1950s, all accompanists, either individually or in consorts collude to do this, even though it means extra effort for them (the *Spuriosa* players

never do this work themselves), because everyone loves the sound the *Spuriosa* makes, and besides, it is such good box office, for it has a kind of unearthly and timeless sound that audiences imagine is a "voice from the past". Very few people seek to question its very qualifications for performing this repertoire in olden times, even though scholars are well aware that there is not a single piece of music from any period that says *per la Viola Spuriosa* on the title sheet.

Now, surely, if I bought one, and started to play and record early violin repertoire transposed down a fourth on my *Viola Spuriosa*, no matter how good it sounded, every musician and musicologist who takes historical performance practice seriously would be demanding to know what justification there is for:

- a) the very existence of the *Viola Spuriosa* in the early 17th century;
- b) a tradition of downward transposition of another instrument's repertoire, (which is the only way the *Viola Spuriosa* can perform the violin tunes);
- c) everyone in "the business" deciding to brush the whole issue under the carpet and ignore it, even declaring it doesn't really matter, because it's all so complicated now, and besides, it sells those tickets.

I have read critics who utterly dismiss performers who (shock horror) have spikes on their cellos, play using wound strings, or who play at A = 440, employ historically inappropriate stops on organs, or even had the wrong type of quills in the jacks of their harpsichord, yet never once have I heard anyone question whether or not this widespread business of transposing music down to enable a falsettist to sing lute songs ever happened in earlier times. I often hear "well, does it really matter if it sounds good?", but surely it really *does* matter, especially if you can't prove anything like it ever happened? Any musician would expect to see historical evidence for the *Viola Spuriosa*, and it's time the falsettists, the professors and the record producers decided to produce good, or even any evidence that this particular practice occurred, or turn to other repertoire – there's plenty to go around.

Remember, I am only talking about English lute songs here, not Purcell, not Handel, but the bigger issue is, did 'countertenors', falsetto alto, whatever, ever perform early 17th century solo music outside of the chapel or court?

Poor Sting came in for a lot of stick for daring to do an album of Dowland songs because he was "not quite our sort", as far as some critics were concerned, though he sang every number at the written pitch, *and strove to communicate the text expressively*, not just dreamily croon in a lovely but inappropriately 'churchy'- sounding line.

Now, almost every month, we have yet another falsettist making yet another disc of downward-transposed English lute songs, and it perpetuates the myth that this was an actual performance practice. Even Catherine Bott on a Radio 3 Early Music Show last year (26/05/2012) remarked, when introducing a lute song, "Ah, Dowland – now we're getting to *core countertenor repertoire...*" (my

italics). That's not her fault, it's just that this 'urban myth' is now so widespread that almost everybody believes it, or worse, has decided to turn a blind eye to the issue because it is perhaps beyond their scope to research it! And still no evidence whatsoever supporting falsettists in Dowland has been produced, even after my first attacks on the practice, neither in print nor online, merely the same old, missing-the-point, Joad-like quibbles about "it all depends what you mean by countertenor" and "does it really matter as long as it's musical?" and the ever-popular, "pitch wasn't fixed back then like it is now".

I know performing conditions are different, and that things like A=415 are a modern compromise to help us use an agreed standardised pitch for some music nowadays.² We really cannot ignore this whole topic and just say: 'Well, that was then, this is now', because if we do that we are admitting that we do not really care about hearing the words expressed properly in song, preferring the sometimes goose-bump-inducing sound of the historically inappropriate male alto over the proper communication of the text by proper voices. Perhaps someone should offer a large cash prize as an incentive to anyone who can conclusively prove that even one alto ever did this between 1597 and 1620.

We are talking about the very integrity of the performance of some truly great music here, a big issue that we all claim to take very seriously indeed, as serious musicians. But our world is professional music-making, it is not 'Renaissance Fayre', 'Blackadder', or even the much-missed Hinge & Bracket. Of course, some will say: 'Surely lute songs should be for everybody, all singers, whatever voice', just as most music *can* be played on whatever instrument to hand. But my point is, we should ask ourselves whether the emphasis upon the projection of the text itself, in order to move the listener, which we know the composers of the early 17th century desired, is served by accompanists constantly bending over backwards to provide a comfortably lower accompaniment for this relatively inexpressive and above all, by its very nature, colourless 'churchy' voice. *Something that is normally done for comic effect*. Do we want to hear a Brahms clarinet sonata played on the crumhorn? I think not.³

BOOK REVIEW

Medieval English Lyrics and Carols Edited by Thomas G. Duncan D. S. Brewer, 2013. xiv + 466pp, £25.00 pb) ISBN 978 1 84384 341 2

My awareness of medieval lyrics and carols comes chiefly from the three Clarendon Press volumes of Carleton Brown and one by Rossell Hope Robins, along with

2. But that's primarily a late baroque convention. CB

3. Several other assumptions are gradually falling away – the need for a string bass in much 17th-century monody, for instance, especially when the bass has only one of two chords in a bar. And when did 16' violones become normal? One further point on lute songs: when there are settings for four voices, what does the alto do? CB

Richard Leighton Greene on the carol, all basically interwar. In certain areas of music parlance, the "lyrics" are the text. Going back to the beginning, *lyric* comes from the Greek *lyre*, lyric poetry being poetry sung to the lyre – though over two and a half millennia, it's become less and less clear if the poet singing to the lyre is a pretence. But it was the songs that interested me, and the literature about them was, at the time I was reading English (1958–62), there was very little information. In my third year in Cambridge, I tried to put together the words and music of such 13th and 14th century poems as survived together. I copied music and words, and during the next few years I did a bit more investigation, but nothing ever came of it, and the bibliographical information was enriched enormously by Christopher Page in an early issue of the RMA Research Chronicle.

I was fortunate that my director of studies happened to be John Stevens. I didn't discuss the topic with him – it was meant to be independent. But his work on the borderline of poetry and music was long an influence, and I was glad to resume a friendly relationship when I moved within reach of Cambridge. One wonders how many of the 282 poems were intended to be sung. Most of the literature about public entertainment is associated with music, sometimes with an accompaniment played by the poet/singer, sometimes with a more elaborate ensemble, presumably improvising. One might be able to exclude some poems as purely verbal, but it seems wrong that Duncan's extensive (and in other respects good) introduction ignores the invisible music.

I'm interested in the change of presentation. The editors mentioned above printed the poems without comment (except footnoting variants), but with a commentary and a glossary. Duncan has no glossary, but prints translations alongside the originals when he thinks they are necessary: surely it would be useful, when so much is translated anyway, to complete each poem, helping all levels of use. I'm not going to throw away the books I've already mentioned, but the new one is well worth having. Perhaps the publisher could provide a book with the omitted music (a small proportion of the poems) and an appendix giving hints on how to improvise.

I was surprised that poems from the pre-Chaucerian period are modernised into late-14th-century London English (which we are not told until page 47!) This strikes me as extraordinary – you might as well modernise the poems to 21st century London English. The earlier poems certainly present greater problems, not just because they are earlier but also because there was a greater variety of dialects: apart from unexpected words and syntax, the actual sound is different. How close the linguistic scholars are to a real knowledge of the sounds is variable, but at least you can get a clue from current dialects. In a way, any dialect makes the point that poetry of this period isn't written in a standard literary language. With a parallel translation, modernisation to the late 14th century isn't needed anyway. I wonder if Robbie (or rather Robert) Burns should be published with parallel English translations! Seriously, though, the anthology is good value. CB

LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach unwrapped at Kings Place

Kings Place, the latest addition to London's concert hall scene and to the regeneration of the industrial wasteland just north of King's Cross station, has launched a year-long festival under the banner of 'Bach Unwrapped'. They are taking a very liberal view of Bach interpretation, with performers ranging from established early music groups to jazz combos – and rather a lot of Bach on the piano.

Robin's Bach and Bach's Pergolesi

After a jazz Bach concert which I will leave un-reviewed (partly on the grounds that it wasn't Jacques Loussier), the series for me opened with Robin Blaze and La Nuova Musica (3 Jan). To start with the positive, Robin Blaze was on sparkling form in his two contributions, notably in the cantata *Gott soll allein* (BWV169), his musical insight and sensitivity shining through in a concert that was otherwise lacking in both aspects. Soprano Helen-Jane Howells was also very effective alongside Robin Blaze in Psalm 51 *Tilge, Höchster, meine Sünden* a curious Bach arrangement of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, set to a Lutheran text that didn't quite fit and that added nothing to the original other than a new viola line. I am really not sure why this was included in the programme at all. Sadly, there were far too many issues with the rest of the concert, starting with the positioning of the soloists in the vocal and instrumental works. In the Concerto in C minor for violin and oboe, the conductor positioned himself in front of, and between, the soloists so that he blocked the view and much of the sound of anybody sitting away from the centre of the audience. In my case it was violinist Bojan Čičić who was blocked from view and sound, giving far too much prominence to the oboist Joel Raymond – though both, incidentally, played well. The same happened in Psalm 51, where Helen-Jane Howells was blocked. The little organ, which had a key role on a number of occasions, was hidden away at the back of the orchestra, its puny sound struggling to work its way through. The orchestra seemed under-rehearsed (and not entirely in tune), and the conductor's oddly extravagant gestures gave few real clues as to what was expected from them, other than his flamboyant and unnecessary indications of entries, often by dramatically pointing. For most of the time, the players looked expectantly at the leader for clearer direction. There also seemed to be some disagreement between Robin Blaze and the conductor as to the mood of a piece, notably in *Offne Lippes* (from Psalm 51) where Blaze's mellifluous tone was trumped by some clumpy instrumental playing.

Rachel's Bach

Things looked up considerably when Rachel Podger gave the first of her three concerts of Bach's Violin Sonatas and Partitas (30 Jan), on this occasion giving us the solo Sonata in G minor and Partita in B minor with the 1st and 4th Sonatas for violin and obligato harpsichord. The musical sensitivity between Rachel and Marcin Świątkiewicz on harpsichord was all too evident, notably in the many passages in the Sonatas where the violin takes a subsidiary role, with Podger's mellow tone blending perfectly with some fine harpsichord playing. It was also nice to see performers 'playing the silence' between movements. Rachel Podger has a natural and engaging stage presence which immediately builds a rapport with the audience. As well as demonstrating her obvious virtuosity, she also made much of the contrasts between the various movements, notably in the Courante and its Double in the Partita.

RAMBO's Bach

For many years now, the Royal Academy of Music Baroque Orchestra has consistently been by far the most accomplished and professional amongst the various London conservatories. Further evidence of this came in their Kings Place Bach concert (15 Feb). The 20 players (all playing period instruments, unlike many other conservatory baroque orchestras) and 22-strong choir were directed by the inspiring Laurence Cummings, for 15 years the Head of Historical Performance at the Academy, and now the William Crotch Professor of Historical Performance. Cummings started the concert (with reduced orchestral forces) as soloist in the Concerto in F (1053) for harpsichord and orchestra before being joined for the double harpsichord concerto (1061) by the promising young French harpsichordist, Iris Pucciarelli, currently studying at the RAM as an undergraduate under the Erasmus scheme. The contrasting tone-colours of the four keyboards were particularly attractive. The choir then sang the lovely *Der Gerechte kommt um*, a work by Kuhnau, transcribed from an unknown (possibly Italian) original and then modified and arranged by Bach with added instrumental accompaniment (including two oboes that add to the poignant mood of the piece) and a German text. The evening finished with the Lutheran Mass in A (234). As so often happens, the programme note writer didn't always manage accurate predictions of actual performance, for example in noting a bass solo that was sung by the full bass line. But no matter. In terms of period authenticity, the players were way ahead of the singers, many of whom had already developed the sort of vibrato that may be difficult for them to reign in if they want to continue in this repertoire.

Carolyn's Bach

I steeled myself to listen to the modern instruments (and surprisingly unauthentic playing style) of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in order to hear the wonderful soprano Carolyn Sampson sing two Bach cantatas (22 Feb). As ever, she sang *Non sa che sia dolore* (209) (perhaps written for the departure of a young naval officer from Ansbach) and the sublime *Ich habe genug* (82a) beautifully. But the string players forced the sound out of their instruments and produced an unyielding pulse, with no sense of subtlety, tension and release or of the hierarchy of the bar.¹

Christoph's Bach

Along with the various concerts during the 'Bach unwrapped' year are several study days, the first being the 'The Bach Suites in Focus' with the Academy of Ancient Music (2 Feb). The keynote speech was from one of the most important figures in Bach scholarship, Christoph Wolff (from the Bach Arkiv and Harvard) who explored how more about Bach's life and work has been revealed over recent years. He also provided very erudite programme notes for the day. Sara Mohr-Pietsch and some AAM players discussed performance and instrument issues of Bach. The two linked concerts were Richard Egarr playing the 3rd, 4th and 6th English Suites, relishing the resonance of the harpsichord in music that he described as Bach "becoming more and more deranged" until, in the final Gigue he goes "completely off his trolley".² Egarr then directed the Academy of Ancient Music in an exhilarating performance of all four of the Orchestral Suites, a work they are just about to record.

The Eton Choirbook at Eton Chapel

A particularly attractive and appropriate blending of music, architecture and history came with the concert by the Renaissance Singers, directed by David Allinson, with the programme of works mostly from the Eton Choirbook, sung in the freezing chapel of Eton College (13 Jan). Although the actual choirbook is held in the College Library rather than the chapel, we had a much reduced facsimile to make us feel closer to the score. The programme note pointed out aspects of the chapel architecture and decoration that also reflected the liturgical and devotional life of late 15th century England. David Allinson's notes were helpful as well as the excellently-spoken introductions to the pieces (which my entirely non-musical companion thoroughly enjoyed). We started with the first piece in the choirbook, John Browne's votive antiphon *O Maria salvatoris mater*, the key elements of this uniquely English style being immediately apparent – the contrast between the full eight-voice chorus and smaller vocal forces, the complex interlocking and overlapping musical lines with long melismas, and the occasional flourish, usually featuring high vocal lines. In this case, the latter also

showed one of the highlights of the concert – the clear and bright tone of the Renaissance sopranos (in this case, Helen Price in particular). Indeed, I was impressed with all the singers, most of whom had their moments of glory, notably the three tenors, Tristan Moore, Jason Field and Alister Whitford, in Cornysh's "Ah Robin". Browne's *Jesu mercy, how many this be?* included some beautifully expressive singing to the words "weeping, wailing, sowning for woe" and later, "Ah Jesu! Why suffered though such entreating / As beating, bobbling, yea, spitting on thy face?" The evening finished with Cornysh's glorious troped setting of the *Salve Regina*. An excellent concert by a very well-drilled choir.

"A real find"

I first heard the Austro-German soprano Anna Prohaska last summer at the Wigmore Hall and described her as a "real find" for the early music vocal scene with a "beautifully eloquent and pure voice" despite her very wide repertoire and appearances with the likes of the Berlin Philharmonic. The conductor (of the Academy of Ancient Music) on that occasion was Jonathan Cohen, and the two of them paired up again for another Wigmore concert. As they entered, the audience were handed a sampler copy of the CD that this concert was promoting, 'Enchanting Forest' (16 Jan), with Anna Prohaska now promoted to a starring role, with Cohen's own group, Arcangelo in support. Anna Prohaska is of impeccable musical stock – her father and mother were an opera director and singer, her grandfather and great-grandfather a conductor and composer. Despite her star billing, she has a very attractively un-diva like and engaging stage manner, giving the impression of singing with us, rather than *at* us, and involving us in the emotional turmoil of the various protagonists. She has an exquisitely warm timbre with a slightly mezzo-ish tinge and demonstrated a thorough understanding of her chosen repertoire (and its wide range of emotions), with fine *da capo* elaborations and the rare ability to trill properly. For all of that, I readily forgave the occasional lift up to a note. The concert was a brilliantly conceived pick-and-mix collection of juicy bits blended into a musically satisfying concoction of sequences, with Purcell following into Handel and Vivaldi and a couple of instrumental appearances from Zelenka. Of the Arcangelo players, particular mention goes to leader Sophie Gent, theorbo player Mónica Pustilnik, bassoonist Peter Whelan, and Katharina Spreckelsen and Francis Norbury on oboe and recorder. Anna Prohaska and Jonathan Cohen are both emerging as key figures in the ever-expanding early music scene.

Strange and Ancient

I reviewed The Society of Strange and Ancient Instruments' *Ministry of Angels* CD in the February *EMR*, and had the chance to hear a performed version in the enterprising 'Music in the Village' series of concerts in Walthamstow's St Mary's Church (17 Jan). The strange and ancient instruments on this occasion included Clare Salaman's hurdy gurdy, nyckelharpa and Hardanger fiddle, Clara Sanabras's guitars and Peter McCarthy's

1. Contrast the ASMF in the 1960s, when, before early-instrument bands emerged in the 1970s, it was a pioneering baroque ensemble. CB

2. His recording is reviewed in this issue.

unfeasibly large collection of string bass instruments. Illness forced the absence of Joy Smith's harp, dulcima and percussion contributions to the CD, but Peter McCarthy made up for that with some plonking of strings and by hitting things. Clara Sanabras's evocative singing was central to the evening's enjoyment. The energetic (but clearly hopeless at delegating) Mr McCarthy is the organiser of this concert series and when he wasn't playing, was to be seen mopping the floor, handing out programmes, and clattering a collecting bucket in our faces for new commissioned music. The church was packed, with an impressive collection of fellow musicians in attendance – always a good sign.

Castrati at Wigmore Hall

Another example of opera-lite came with the Classical Opera Company Wigmore Hall concert (22 Jan) of selections from the castrati repertoire. Although it included works by Arne and JC Bach, the concert title was billed as 'Mozart's Castrati', with one aria from each of the seven Mozart operas that included a castrato role. Rather than choosing the arguably more obvious countertenor voice, the vocals were shared out between soprano Sarah Fox and the Croatian mezzo, Renata Pokupić, the two voice types reflecting the very wide vocal range of castrati. The concert started in rather sombre mood, with Arne's "By that belov'd embrace" from *Ataxerxes* – one of his most moving melodies and beautifully sung by Renata Pokupić. A more technically testing piece came with JC Bach's "Disperato in mar turbato" from *Adriano in Siria*, exposing Pokupić's lower register and the clarity of her articulation. In the first half, Sarah Fox gave us "Se il rigor d'ingrata sorte" from *Mitridate*, "Se il labbro più non dice" from *Ascanio in Alba*, concluding with Mozart's cantata *Exsultate, jubilate*. I found her unrestrained vibrato really did no favours to the musical line, clouding ornaments and obscuring her attempts at a trill, and her tendency to lift onto, or slide between, notes is surely more suitable to a much later repertoire. But judging by their whoops and yells, the opera buffs in the audience clearly loved her. And she did impress me more towards the end of the evening with "Aer tranquillo e di sereni" from *Il re pastore* and the concert aria *A questo seno / Or che il cielo* which seemed to suit her voice better. But, for me, the vocal star of the evening was Renata Pokupić, her rich, mellifluous and colourful voice and her ability to get into role bringing a real emotional intensity to "Dolce d'amor compagna" from *La finta giardineira*, with its sensuously flowing melody, "Ah qual gelido orror / Il padre adorato" from *Idomeneo* (the evening's highlight) and "Deh per questo istante solo" from *La clemenza*. Appropriately, the encore was a duet, "Ah, perdon a primo affetto" from Act I of *La clemenza*.

Royal Holloway's Philips

It is 400 years since Peter Philips's *Cantiones Sacrae Octonis Vocibus* was published and the Choir of Royal Holloway College (part of the University of London), together with the English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble, have just

released a CD of half of these 8-part motets based on a new edition by Lionel Pike, a former Director of Chapel Music at Royal Holloway (see p. 24). The CD launch concert, 'English Exiles', was at St John's, Smith Square (1 Feb) when Philips was joined by his companion exiles John Bull and Richard Dering. Giovanni Coprario, not an exile, managed to slip into the proceedings with his *Fantasia à 6*, one of a number of instrumental works played by the excellent Ensemble. Philips was the star of the show though, with his *Benedictus Deus noster, Jubilate Deo omnis terra, Alma redemptoris, Panis sancte panis vive* (arranged for two singers and instruments), *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (played with cornet diminutions by Gawain Glenton) and the instrumental *Dolorosa Pavan and Galliard*, a work with a rather less than dolorosa mood. Dering was represented by two contrasting works, *O bone Jesu* for two sopranos and organ and the powerful *Factum est silentium*. Bull's music featured his own *Masque*, the organ *Gloria tibi Trininitas*, well played by the Choir's director, Rupert Gough and *In the departure of the Lord*. Royal Holloway College has long had an enviable reputation for music studies, but has not always been at the forefront of performance of early music. That has now changed. This is an exciting project and was performed brilliantly by their impressive choir.

A trial of harmony and invention

It is usually overlooked that Vivaldi's Four Seasons are merely the first of twelve violin concertos published as *Il Cimento dell'armonia e dell'Inventione* (the trial of harmony and invention).³ A combination of harmony and invention made that title apposite for the concert/performance of the Four Seasons by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and six dancers (from Oguique Dance), a potential merging of the muses (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 8 Feb). The whole depth of the QEH stage was exposed, with the orchestra already on a raised platform at the back as the audience entered. The normal orchestra performing area was left open for the dancers. Although this was very much the OAE's show, the placing of the musicians, although aurally not really a problem, meant that the visual focus was totally on the dancers. Although violin soloist Kati Debretzeni frequently wandered among them, she was more of an aloof and ghostly ringmaster than an integral part of the dance, the dancers never acknowledging her existence, and she not looking at them. Of course, the narrative of the Four Seasons is clear and precise, but it was not that often that the dance reflected that. Indeed, any attempt at slavishly following the imagery of Vivaldi's sonnets could have appeared trite. Instead we had a story that seemed to hinge around the what attractive young things might get up to when dressed in nothing but vests and tight little pants, that exposed lunchboxes and what I am reliably told are referred to on the street as camel-toes. The concluding Winter started with foot stomps and shivering, as might be expected, but soon led to a triple bout of girls-on-top

3. There's an excellent complete op. 8 score (not a reprint of an old one) published by Dover Books, edited by Eleanor Selfridge-Field, who is an expert both on Venetian music and on computer music-notation. CB

simulated sex, before dissolving into a post-coital circle around Kati Debretzeni. Earlier dance sequences had seemed more focussed on the earthy lead up to the final climax than on any reflection of the seasons, with a driven momentum that reminded me of *The Rite of Spring*, but with a different take on dying at the end.⁴ Indeed, the focus on vibrant young love led one of my right-on female friends to deem it far too heterosexually focussed. But none of this is a complaint. In fact, I thought the dance was amongst the best I have seen in combined dance/music performances. And as in such previous productions I have reviewed, it seems inevitable that the focus will be on the visuals. That said, the playing by the OAE was excellent, giving me one of those 'I thought I knew the music' moments by finding colours and textures that focussed a different light on this oh-so-familiar music. It goes without saying that Kati Debretzeni was absolutely brilliant in her solo role. This event proved to be very popular, with two sell-out performances on the same evening, at 6.30 and 8.30 together with a linked Night Shift event. A brief idea of the dance (albeit with rather more clothing than in the actual performance) can be seen in the promotional video at <http://vimeo.com/57214812>.

Medea

Handel's long-running stranglehold on London's opera scene has been challenged in recent years by the gradual and welcome introduction of French opera, the most recent being English National Opera's production of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's 1693 *tragédie mise en musique Medée* (20 Feb), apparently its first ever professional staging in England. This follows last year's curious ENO production of Rameau's *Castor and Pollux* and UCOpera's version of Rameau's *Acante et Cephise*. I won't attempt to explain the Medea story except to say that it involved Jason (he of the Golden Fleece), Medea (a princess with sorceress and murderer tendencies), a poisoned golden dress, and two little boys in pyjamas who you just know are in for it. Director David McVicar sets the piece in a fantasy baroque mansion requisitioned by the military (and some very curious hangers on), possibly towards the end of the Second World War. The floor and most of the walls consist of mirrors, and film-set lighting spots sent reflections cascading around the set and the auditorium, a clever device by lighting designer Paule Constable. An early indicator of what is to come occurs with Sarah Connolly (as Medea) singing "Vengeance must learn to wear a mask" (the opera was sung in English). Medea's mask was to slowly slip as the evening progressed and as her clothing, along with her character, became more and more monstrous. Her Act 3 "Is this what love is worth" was masterly, a sidekick gingerly edging himself round the walls as Medea's fury builds before she summons the daughters of the Styx to ravage a parade of half dead soldiers. Anybody with any concerns over the welfare of children would have noticed from the start that Medea's two little sons were either bundled out of the room whenever she appeared, or were clinging desperately to

her legs. The excellent Katherine Manley was a delight as Creusa, the erotic and vengeance centre of the action, before she was consumed by the fire set off by her poisoned dress. Roderick Williams (Orontes) and Brindley Sherratt (Creon) gave powerful performances. But the focus, musically and emotionally, was always going to be on the magnificent Sarah Connolly, in what must have been one of her most demanding roles.⁵

Unlike the Handelian procession of recitative and momentum-murdering *da capo* arias, French 'opera' proceeds almost as a through-composed work, with recitative merging into arioso or consort numbers with sequence of dances and a chorus normally ending each of the five Acts. On this occasion, the dance choreography was, for me, the weakest aspect, although many of the traditional opera-going public would have enjoyed the high camp high jinks of a band of mincing sailors and burlesque female dancers – all very baroque I suppose. Christian Curnyn was outstanding in his conducting and direction of the ENO house band – they are becoming more attuned to period performance as time goes by and had clearly been very well instructed in the performance aspects of this specialist repertoire by Curnyn. They were aided by a specialist continuo group. I also liked Christopher Cowell's translation, a welcome change from ENO's usual tritely-rhymed efforts.

Sorrowful Mysteries

For the past 16 years, the Lutheran congregation, currently using the church of St Anne & St Agnes in Gresham St (they are soon having to move to a new church) have been organising a thriving series of twice weekly lunchtime concerts and an annual Bach Festival under the St Anne's Music Society's 'Music at St Anne's' banner. One such lunchtime concert was an excellent performance of Biber's five emotionally intense Sorrowful Mysteries, the central cycle of his Rosary (or Mystery) Sonatas (22 Feb). The violinist was the Hungarian Kinga Ujszászi, using three different violins to speed the path through the different *scordatura* tunings needed for each of the pieces (the violins were taken away to be re-tuned in between movements). In this central cycle, the *scordatura* tuning results in a sombre and subdued tone from the violin which emphasises any dissonances and tension in the music. I have spotted Kinga playing in several orchestras (and gave her an honourable mention in a EUBO review in 2010), but this is the first time that I have heard her in such an exposed role. In what must be one of the hardest playing tasks for any baroque violinist (apart from the virtuosity required, the notes on the score tell the player where to put her fingers, not what sound comes out), Kinga Ujszászi showed herself to be thoroughly on top of

4. Is any HIP orchestra going to put on an "instruments of the period" performance to celebrate the 100th anniversary? CB

5. I was flattered that Brian Clark's typesetting the facsimile for Ivor Boulton at Dartington at short notice in 1998 was acknowledged on the programme, though Brian's name really deserved acknowledgment rather my own name. Many changes were made by others, some for Le Concert d'Astrée last year, with English underlay and extensive transpositions by the Coliseum staff. I wasn't well enough to contribute anything and although the visual aspects probably would have annoyed me, I'm very sorry to have missed Sarah Connolly as Medée. CB

both the technical as well as the musical and, most importantly, the emotional aspects of the music. She played with a beautifully unforced tone, having that rare ability amongst violinists of being able to play really quietly without losing tone, and also showed complete mastery of the virtuoso elements of these complex pieces. The continuo group (viola da gamba – Henrick Persson, with the most testing continuo role, theorbo, harpsichord and organ) provided very good support for Kinga, the varying accompaniments being well judged and well balanced and, most importantly, unobtrusive, often leaving the violin soloist to play over a single held note.

Harpsichord at the Cello Factory

The organ and harpsichord player at Kinga Ujszászi's performance of the Sorrowful Mysteries was Paweł Siwczał. A week later he gave a solo harpsichord concert in The Cello Factory, an interesting new art and performance space near Waterloo (28 Feb). I got the impression that Paweł Siwczał's teaching post at Morley College had helped to produce a sizeable chunk of the audience, who responded very enthusiastically, and rightly so, to his playing. His introductions to the pieces were apt and intelligible, and went down well with the audience. His programme ranged from Frescobaldi and Froberger via Couperin to JS and CPE Bach. He showed a familiarity with the different playing and interpretation styles needed for this wide repertoire, ranging from the exploratory opening of Couperin's unmeasured *Premier Prélude* from *L'art de toucher le clavecin* to the detailed performance instructions of Frescobaldi. He was particularly impressive in Froberger's emotionally charged *Ill, et se joue lentement avec discretion*, making effective use of silences.

Italian Passions

As part of her residency at the Wigmore Hall, mezzo-soprano Bernarda Fink joined with the Academy of Ancient Music, led by Rodolfo Richter, for an evening of 'Italian passions' (25 Feb). With one exception, all the pieces were composed between 1716 and 1735. The exception came from nearly a century earlier, with Merula's extraordinary and moving *Hor ch'è tempo di dormire*, depicting Mary lulling the baby Jesus to sleep. All but the last two verses are sung over a gently rocking two-note theorbo bass, given delicate continuo additions by Elizabeth Kenny. What could have been a simple lullaby from a naïve young woman to her child was turned by Bernarda Fink into almost operatic proportions, with an extraordinary nuanced and coloured performance of real emotional intensity. This set the pattern for her singing throughout the evening, Vivaldi's lament for unrequited love, "Sovvente il sole" (from *Andromeda liberata*) and the youthful Ferrandini's Cantata *Il pianto di Maria* (previously attributed to Handel) bringing similar dramatic intensity, notably in the concluding earthquake moment. Regular readers will not be surprised to read that I found Bernarda Fink's persistent and deep vibrato and frequent operatic portamento distracting. Rodolfo Richter imparted a similar emotional intensity in to the playing of the AAM,

adding his own major contribution in two Vivaldi violin concertos, the 'L'amoroso' and 'L'inquietudine', the former suggesting a chocolate-box romance rather than wild, uninhibited passion, the latter a wild showpiece. The concert started with the tumble-down opening of Veracini's rather formulaic Overture in G minor and also included Albinoni's Concerto for two oboes (Op9/9), with Frank de Bruine and Lars Henriksson as soloists. I was very impressed with Rodolfo Richter's undemonstrative and sensitive leadership of the AAM, eschewing the look-at-me histrionics of so many conductors or leaders. The performance on 27 Feb from Cambridge was broadcast live on Radio 3, so many *EMR* will have their own views.

GLORIES OF VENICE at GIRTON

Hugh Keyte and I were invited to the results of an ad hoc gathering of a dozen sackbuts and five cornetts (directed by Jeremy West), together with strings (directed by Maggie Faultless) and Cambridge University Chamber Choir (26 names were listed), conducted by Martin Ennis (to whom Hugh sent an email of high praise). The players came from Cardiff and London as well as Cambridge and must have learnt much from the experience – which is not to suggest that they sounded like students! The programme mostly alternated between music for voices and instruments and pieces without voices, and if there was any weakness, it was the occasional lack of presence of the vocal sound: perhaps they needed a bit more edge and more practice imitating the wind. But no serious complaints! Perhaps the balance was different at St John's College Chapel (15 Feb); we heard the performance in Girton College Great Hall (16 Feb), which favoured the players.

Hugh was involved because the concert ended with his reconstruction of the Magnificat a33. Very splendid it sounded, so much so that everyone demanded an encore. Hugh had never heard it live, so he was particularly delighted by it.⁶ Jeremy West kept stressing how rare it was to play the 22-part Canzona: those of us who regularly attend the Beauchamp summer school⁷ are quite familiar with it, but I don't find it one of his best pieces – the virtuosity and wit of e.g. the 1615 Canzon a14 is more impressive. Most of the programme was Giovanni Gabrieli. Hassler's chromatic *Ad Dominum cum tribularer clamavi* was stunning and the familiar Monteverdi *Beatus vir* a6 works well when ad-lib sackbuts are added in the tutti. The whole concert was impressive, and I hope Jeremy's presence will encourage cornett and sackbut players to develop in Cambridge. In the absence of one sackbut, Girton's Principal recalled her days as a band trombonist and made her debut as a sackbutter in the last two items. With a virtuoso like Maggie Faultless also regularly visiting Cambridge, early music there should flourish! CB

6. If you want to play or sing his 28-part reconstructed Gabrieli at Waltham Abbey with Philip Thorby on 20 April, please contact secretary@tvemf.org or 01494 721582 (Victoria Helby)

7. Beauchamp has moved a few miles, though the name stays the same. Alan Lumsden has retired, and David Hatcher has joined the team. Details at www.gamweb.co.uk.

CHAINS OF GOLD

Cambridge verse anthem conference, 1-2 March 2013

Simon Ravens

In the first sentence of the first paper on the first day of this conference, there was a telling comment: John Milsom pointedly referred to the “genre known today as the *verse anthem*”. This should have alerted us to the reality that we were all gathered to discuss something which, as a single entity, is a modern construct. And sure enough, from the vast and detailed knowledge of those present it quickly became clear that there were almost as many styles (and historically valid performing styles) of ‘verse anthem’ as there were verse anthems. Sadly, this did not stop some contributors attempting to dress the ‘verse anthem’ with one-size-fits-all academic theories. A pity, since until they reached their ringing conclusions the papers presented were informative and insightful.

Two words in the conference’s sub-title – rhetoric and performance – made it clear that this event was concerned with both literary and musical texts, as well as with their delivery. Inter-disciplinary gatherings such as this are vital to our understanding of any multi-faceted genre, even if those present, having been led out along slender academic branches they have never previously spied, will find themselves momentarily glancing backwards for something firmer to grasp. Those on the musical side of the tree looked a little tentative at talk of propaedeutic scriptural material, and I suspect that those on the other side were similarly baffled at the relevance of Praetorius’s *Kammerton*. (Actually, on that last count I should say that they weren’t the only ones – but more of that later. Oh go on then, I’ll get started now: there’s no evidence that Praetorius ever visited England, and as one authority reminds us, ‘geography, no less than chronology, counts greatly in the evaluation of historical evidence’.)¹ Any observations on such an event, then, will inevitably be biased and subjective. No talk here about what we learned.

What I learned was that there was no such thing as the ‘verse anthem’: that many of the best-known ‘verse anthems’ were conceived as secular songs; that ‘anthem’ could refer to a secular as well as an ecclesiastical genre, and to a spoken as well as a sung text; that literary texts could be contemporary and personal, or scriptural and impersonal; that instruments other than the organ were common in secular performing contexts, but occasionally in ecclesiastical contexts too; that the ‘chorus’ performing a ‘verse anthem’ may have been many or few; that the rhetorical aesthetics of leading preachers and musicians were sometimes related, and sometimes not.

One of the great strengths of the conference, it struck me, was that for every attempt to make a singular observation about the genre, a significant caveat was raised. And no good trying to dissect aspects of the ‘verse anthem’ into

two distinct forms, as some tried – secular and sacred, organ and viols, and so on. Here, again, caveats came from the floor to reveal that these neat ‘distinctions’ were false dichotomies. To others, our inability to pin down the ‘verse anthem’ as a singular (or even dual) entity was evidently frustrating. When one speaker suggested that ‘we need a more complicated model of the rhetoric of the verse anthem’, I wondered what a modern oncologist would make of such a proposition. After all, only a generation ago oncologists were still looking for a cure for ‘cancer’, and whatever progress they have recently made has surely been related to their realisation that it is unhelpful to think of ‘cancer’, but only of cancers – each with its own model. In other words, we do not need one more complicated model for the ‘verse anthem’, but a number of simple models for – well, for those things we were discussing, whatever terms we use for them.

Paradoxically, the only sour note in the conference was a moment of levity – the sound of our stifled laughter at hearing certain recordings of ‘This is the record of John’. And yes, I’m ashamed to admit that I was guilty of this myself. A ridiculously smug response, when one considers the simple truth than of 19 cited recordings, it is highly unlikely that Gibbons would have recognised a single one as a performance with which he might have been involved. I say this with some confidence, because only one recording was sung in an attempted period pronunciation, and the soloist in that record of John’s freely admitted that he had left out any improvised embellishments (which we all seemed to agree would have been part and parcel of the composer’s performance practice) simply because he was pre-occupied with the sound of the words! I hope that the following day’s performance sessions (which I was unable to attend) took those present one step closer to the chimera of authorial intent.

A huge vote of thanks, then, not just to the convenors, speakers and those who chaired sessions. I was particularly impressed by Francis Knights who, following the sting in the tail of Roger Bowers’ presentation, and evidently hearing the tell-tale sound of gloves being unlaced down on the floor, pointedly asked for any questions which were *not* related to the issue of pitch. But here’s my chance! Roger, we all bow the knee to your musical knowledge of the period – I mean it – but if your pitch and vocal scoring argument is to be held valid we need you to engage directly with the counter-arguments advanced since your theory was published nearly twenty years ago. Like those who first proposed that the earth was round, our argument doubtless needs finessing. But if Dominic Gwynn, Andrew Johnstone, myself and others are misguided heretics, we need the fallacies of our theories to be pointed out.

1. Bowers, Roger, ‘An “Aberration” Reviewed’, *Early Music*, 31 (2003)

LECHNER: FESTIVE MASS & MOTETS

Hugh Keyte

Leonhard Lechner *Festive Mass & Motets* (1582)

ensemble officium, Wilfried Rombach

Christophorus CHR 77367 63' 45"

A. Gabrieli Praeludium secundus tonus Lassus *Domine, Dominus noster*
 Lechner *Missa super Domine, Dominus noster + Fontem perpetuus, In*
convertendo, Laudate Dominum a15, Mein Hoffnung zu Gott, Memor esto verbi
tui, O fons vitae, Paratum cor meum, Quam bene convenient & Quid chaos a24

This is a delight: superb, scarcely-known music, well performed, and with a crystal-clear, natural-sounding recording balance that allows the larger-scale items to make their intended sensuous effect. Dying aged 53 in 1606, Lechner was the natural successor to Lassus, under whom he had been a chorister in the renowned Munich Kapelle Ensemble Officium's well-planned recording presents an overview of Lechner's output. It begins with music for a sumptuous 1582 civic wedding, the six-part *Missa super Domine, Domine noster*, preceded by the Lassus motet on which it is based and followed by the astonishing 24-part triologue *Quid, Chaos*. Then come four six-part motets from a 1575 publication and the *Kronborg-motetten*, a set of three delectable secular motets that were composed in 1583 for King Frederick II of Denmark, patron of the astronomer Tycho Brahe and one-time suitor of Elizabeth I. And as a rousing finale we have another wedding extravaganza, the 15-part *Laudate Dominum* (Psalm 147), which dates from the last years of the composer's life.

What a wedding it must have been in 1582, between one Nuremberg city father and the daughter of another! No expense was spared, and the nuptial mass will have been celebrated with the still-medieval ceremonial of the 'high-church' Orthodox Lutheranism that flourished before the Thirty Years' War. *Quid, Chaos* was presumably sung during the associated junkettings. The text was commissioned from the neoclassical poet Paul Schede, aka Paulus Melissus (his pen name a tribute to Melissus of Samos, the celebrated philosopher of the 5th century BC). It takes the form of a somewhat cerebral triologue between Amor (Cupid/Love), Chaos, and J[eh]ova, culminating in a general Chorus (the voice of the Church? or of Mankind?) in which Amor is exhorted not to desert the Earth but to set it aflame with conjugal passion. Lechner does not, as one might expect, assign the speeches of the three protagonists to his three near-identically-scored eight-part choirs and then combine them for the Chorus. Nor (rightly) does Wilfried Rombach attempt to impose a marked aural distinction. Schede was, after all, a composer as well as a poet,¹ and he and his old friend Lechner must have planned the motet as a non-literal exchange, with the full 24-part forces deployed throughout.

1. When Elizabeth I urged the elderly Schede to settle in England (at the conclusion of a highly successful visit during which he befriended Edmund Spenser, praised Oxford and Cambridge in verse, and began a Latin epic on the defeat of the Spanish Armada) it was as a composer and poet – in that order – that she commended him.

There is a fascinating double tie-up here with another piece of renaissance musical gigantism, Striggio's 40-part motet *Ecce beatam lucem*. That, too, had a text by Schede, and the chorister Lechner will have sung it (under Lassus and in the presence of the composer) during the Munich wedding festivities of 1568. Earlier that same day he will also have sung in Padovano's 24-part mass (also for three eight-part choirs), and one might have expected his own multi-voice settings to imitate the leading-voice technique to be found in *Ecce beatam* – and in Striggio's 40-part Mass and Tallis's *Spem in alium*. In all these works the texture tends to be dominated by a 'tune', whether as part of a chain of entries or as the lead treble or tenor voice in antiphonal exchanges of enhanced homophony. But here again (in both *Quid, Chaos* and *Laudate Dominum*) Lechner goes his own way, weaving an ever-varied skein of counterpoint in which no single part predominates – very much in the tradition of Lassus's larger-scale settings. To those familiar with *Ecce beatam* and *Spem* it is a new and subtle flavour, and one to be savoured.²

Rombach's singers (all German) have a clarity of tone and text-based delivery reminiscent of the Taverners at their best. My one grumble is the assignment to sopranos of the G2-clef parts of the two polychoral items. Skilled though the singers are at negotiating the iterated top Gs, these become wearisome after a time. Praetorius knew what he was about when he said that such parts should be instrumental, and that if a voice is to be added it should, if I remember correctly, be at the lower octave.³

Only recently discovered, the three *Kronborg-motetten* again have texts by Schede. They were commissioned by the Nuremberg city council as a graceful apology when a towering, nymph-bedecked bronze Neptune Fountain (which Frederick had ordered from a Nuremberg craftsman for Kronborg Castle at Hamlet's Elsinore was years late in materialising. The first two have a madrigalian sensitivity to the Latin texts which Rombach's singers match 100%. The third is a touchingly song-like setting of a German verse in a style for which Lechner was famed, establishing the template for a long tradition of vernacular Lieder.

A real shortcoming is that only German translations are provided for the Latin texts. Nevertheless, my advice to potential buyers is *nihil obstat*: this is a winner.

2. Both *Quid, Chaos* and *Laudate Dominum* are available free on-line. Both will surely soon be featuring regularly alongside the Striggio and Tallis works in choral concerts – and perhaps at opulent weddings.

3. We don't have the reference to hand. I work on the assumption that G2 clefs in polychoral music are for cornets or violins, not singers. And it's up to the player to keep the part interesting. We don't have immediate access to check the Praetorius comment on singing the part down an octave: my feeling is that, whether or not it works in four-part groups, it would congest eight-part choirs, especially with three of them! CB

NEOBAROQUE & INÉGAL

Brian Clark

NEOBAROQUE

I came upon this group by chance, while browsing the programme of concerts to be given as part of the 2013 Fasch-Festtage, which I shall be attending later this month (report in the June issue). I was delighted to see that they plan a recital of trio sonatas by Fasch and his "dearest friend", Stölzel. Regular readers will know of my enthusiasm for his church music, which has been appearing in dribs and drabs on cpo and mdg. So, imagine my delight, when I discover from their website that there was actually a whole CD of Stölzel chamber music available from them already (ambitus amb 96 949, 67' 38"). The ensemble very kindly sent me a copy, along with three other discs, which I will review below.

Perhaps the best known of Stölzel's instrumental pieces are his Enharmonic keyboard sonata and the Partia in G minor, as transcribed for keyboard by J. S. Bach (whose enthusiasm for his contemporary's music is become more and more evident) for his son, Wilhelm Friedemann. Both of these are recorded here. The remainder of the disc is filled with four trio and three quartet sonatas, all beautifully played – the violins balance beautifully, yet with their distinctive timbres they are clearly distinguishable, the cellist varying attack and touch to each note, giving the bass line true shape, and the continuo player fulfilling the accompaniment role without ever clouding the violins. NeoBarock also enjoy themselves – they are quite happy to accelerate or decelerate for musical effect (in the 12/8 movement of the opening C minor sonata), but always stylish (they even match ornamentation in the canonic final movement of the same piece). They include a piece I did not know before (there is a hint of surprise there, as I have edited most of Stölzel's chamber music), which is a delightful quadro for violin, viola, cello and continuo.

Bach: Chamber music from his own and others' pen (ambitus amb 96 904, 65' 13") features reconstructions of early versions of the G major trio sonata BWV1039 and the B minor suite (in A minor) BWV1067, trios by Kirnberger and Goldberg that were formerly attributed to Bach, and an anonymous contemporary arrangement for violin, cello and continuo of the "organ trio", BWV525. The latter took a little getting used to, since the cello often plays very low in its register and no matter how beautifully it is played (and it is!) low thirds for chords are just difficult to hear. Once one's ears adjust, though, this is another excellent recording, and one that demonstrates (if such a thing were necessary) just how profoundly Bach did imbue his pupils with his compositional style and techniques – it is hardly surprising that the Goldberg and Kirnberger were mistaken for his work!

NeoBarock have dedicated another of their CDs solely to the still little-known Kirnberger (ambitus 96 929, 61' 28"). There are six trios (four in major keys, two in minor) in all, though one (no. 6 in E) is designed to be performed by violin and obbligato harpsichord. The "Bach" sonata rounds off the disc – indeed, if you love Bach and, like me, think there is not enough chamber music, this is the perfect disc for you; Kirnberger's music is as chromatically and contrapuntally complex as that of his master, and with NeoBarock's finely pointed playing, it really comes to life.

The final CD they sent me is **Mozart: Begegnung mit Händel und Bach** ("Encounters with Handel and Bach", ambitus 96 884, 68' 07"). There are any number of Bachs behind the title – arrangements by the young Mozart of JC Bach's clavier sonatas op. 5/2-4, the Adagio and Fugue in D minor after JS Bach, CPE Bach's D minor sonata Wq 145/H 569, and the G major sonata by either JSB or CPEB or both, BWV1038. The Handel is op. 5/4, a selection of most bubbly and uplifting movements. This is the earliest of the four discs I've heard, but already here NeoBarock play with warmth, a familiarity with the music that allows them to take liberties without ever overstepping the fine line of good taste, and with a deft accuracy of touch that many better-known ensembles should envy.

If I was excited by the prospect of hearing them live in concert just by seeing their planned programme, having heard these four marvellous CDs I really cannot wait! For anyone near Zerbst on 19 April, the concert begins at 7pm at Schloß Wendgräben – http://www.buero-ix.de/fasch/de/programm_fr.html.

CZECH ENSEMBLE INÉGAL

I recently received an email from Adam Viktorá, director of the Czech Ensemble Inégal, promoting the latest of their recordings devoted to the masses of that quintessentially Bohemian composer of the Baroque, Jan Dismas Zelenka. Being a cheeky Scotsman, I asked for a review copy and, by the way, we also missed the previous volumes... To my delight, he sent me all three and a rather surprising bonus (more of which anon).

I'll deal with the Zelenka discs in the chronological order in which they appeared. First was the *Missa Sancti Josephi*, ZWV 14 (2010, Nibiru 015322312, 68' 05"). This (astonishingly) is a world premiere recording, and the mass is paired with the Xaverian Litany ZWV 155 (the influence of the Jesuits is everywhere in 18th-century Dresden!) The soloists are Hana Blazíková, Gabriela Ebenová, Jakob Huppmann, Jaroslav Brezina, Tomás

Král, Jaromír Nosek, Marián Krejcík SSATBBB, with Ensemble Inégal and Prague Baroque Soloists.

This recording was followed by the *Missa Omnium Sanctorum* ZWV 21 (2011, Nibiru 01542231, 68' 33") with Gabriela Eibenová, Kai Wessel, Jan Kobow, Tomás Král and Marián Krejcík SATBB. The mass is supplemented by two world premiere recordings, a Christe eleison ZWV 29 and the motet *Barbara dira effera!* ZWV 164 (both with soloist Kai Wessel).

The *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* ZWV 17 is the more substantial work on the most recent disc (2012, Nibiru 01572231, 66' 10"); it is preceded by a gorgeous world premiere, the tenor motet *Gaude laetare* ZWV 168 with Bach Collegium Japan's Makto Sakurada as the outstanding soloist – some of the filigree passagework is astonishingly clear.

Fans of Zelenka will already know his trademark angsty chromatic style, often juxtaposed with scarily virtuosic scales and arpeggios for voices and instruments alike. A typical example would be "Et incarnatus est", a short, beautifully peaceful moment in the midst of a rather ardently hectic Credo, that sinks into the depths of harmonic despair for "passus et sepultus est", only to be shaken back to rapturous delight at "Et resurrexit" – even a non-believing Latinophobe would get the message without understand the words. The words are, incidentally, are always beautifully annunciated by soloists and choir alike. Indeed, the trademarks of any ensemble with which Viktora is involved are unanimity of sound, extreme accuracy of execution and a deeply sensitive care for the words and their meanings – so often in HIP reviews, we talk about the music being driven by texts, and these performers draw every gram of sentiment from these words without ever becoming self indulgent or losing a sense of overall architecture of a movement, or a work in its entirety. As the perfect example of this, listen to the "Et vitam venturi saeculi" of the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* – listen how Zelenka and Viktora make a simple scale into something absolutely magical. There is not a single soloist across the three discs who fails to deliver a captivating performance of the movement(s) they are allocated, and there are many, many fine contributions from the instrumentalists, too.

And now for that surprise, I mentioned. On reflection, it makes perfect sense, given the qualities of the performers at Viktora's disposal and the overlap in musical approach, yet still Benjamin Britten and Arvo Pärt might still strike some readers as an odd choice for a HIP group. I would argue, though, that the purity of vocal sounds, not to mention that of the string players in the Pärt, play right to that Estonian minimalist's strength. I'm not saying that he expected such a performance – perhaps he wanted big voices and vibrato-laden strings. But his music certainly takes on an even more mystical sound, given the HIP treatment. One could argue that minimalism and purity were not what Britten was after, but I find these performances very convincing, and I hope British audiences will

give Viktora and his colleagues a fair crack of the whip. For me, they have earned our respect, and I cannot wait to hear the results of wherever fate will take them next!

OVERFLOW CD REVIEWS

Alcina and the Problems with Handel Opera

Handel *Alcina* Catherine Naglestad *Alcina*, Alice Coote *Ruggiero*, Helene Schneiderman *Dradamante*, Catriona Smith *Morgana*, Stuttgart State Orchestra, dir Alan Hacker Arthaus 102300 159'00" **DVD**

This is a recording of an underwhelming 1999 production. Set in a dilapidated country house, the singers' movements consist chiefly in hugging walls. Alice Coote is the outstanding singer and actor; with better direction, the rest of the cast could have shone too. Although a certain amount of sensuality is essential, the director went overboard on the eroticism with the effect of diluting *Alcina*'s true love for *Ruggiero* – the love which becomes her downfall. *Alcina*, also, is not powerful enough to begin with, and so the destruction of her power is diluted as well. The music direction is uninspired, too, with consistently sluggish tempi and little distinction between the different energies of the characters; the singers' tendencies to sing into the notes, and thus be slightly behind, was not beaten out of them, either. I rather wish the ENO production with Rodgers and Connolly were available; this had its (many) irritations, but was rather more watchable than the Stuttgart effort. Stick with your CDs of either Arleen Auger or Renée Fleming: the pictures will be better.

Katie Hawks

DANIEL TAYLOR & CHOIR

Ave Maria Les petits chanteurs du Mont-Royal, Theater of Early Music Choir, Daniel Taylor
Analekta AN 2 9841
Settings by Arcadelt, Bruckner, Byrd (*Ave verum*), Caccini, Gounod, Hildegard (*Ave generosa*), Josquin, Pärt & Schubert + Monteverdi (*Magnificat*)

It's difficult to work out the *raison d'être* of this release, and relatively little of the programme is really *EMR* territory. Daniel Taylor is a brilliant singer, but the 'Caccini' with which he opens is a 1960s forgery (and the 'Arcadelt', sung by the boys' choir, is also spurious), the Schubert with which he continues has added string and choral backing, as has the Gounod with which he finishes. At least Bach's harmony is there as consolation. DT's finest moment is the Hildegard, with gentle drone backing, which I really enjoyed. The Byrd and Josquin receive perfectly capable, if slightly slow, performances from the adult chamber choir. The note claims that the Monteverdi is the six part setting from 1610 but it's actually a four part alternatim setting from *Selva Morale*. I'd rather pass over the performances of this, the Bruckner and the Pärt.

David Hansell

CD REVIEWS

15th-CENTURY

The Wool Merchant and the Harp Leah Stuttard 47' 35"
leahstuttard.co.uk

This has a lot going for it. The story, as told by the harpist and David Fallows in the booklet, is fascinating. George Cely was a "merchant of the staple" resident in Calais around 1475: he died there in 1489. His harp lessons are documented by the payments he made around 1474-75 to his teacher, Thomas Rede – quite substantial ones. He played a "double harp", probably a single harp of larger than usual size with bray pins, hence the buzz. Harp experts will probably love this, but to the outsider, it seems rather monotonous: I was disappointed at the small vocal contributions – only *O Rosa bella* was sung anywhere near in full. Leah has a nice low voice, and I would have welcomed more. The web site listed above is being reconstructed, and it will be difficult to sell the disc in a shop since until you remove the cellophane there is no information beyond the player, the title and the website, and nothing on the spine, though the decoration is pretty. But early harpers and enthusiasts for late 15th-century secular music should buy this. CB

16th CENTURY

Byrd The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book Volume 2 Pieter-Jan Belder harpsichords, organ & virginal 148' 18" (2 CDs)
Brilliant Classics 94362

Belder shows a real affinity for Byrd's music, to which he has devoted the second volume of his complete Fitzwilliam Book recording. He chooses his tempi carefully so that the music sounds neither rushed nor too slow and he handles time changes particularly well. He plays on a variety of instruments: an Italian-style harpsichord by Cornelis Bom, a Ruckers copy by Gerhard Boogaard, a chest organ by Henk Klop and an original 1604 virginal by Johannes Ruckers from the Accardi Collection. All are well chosen for the music played on them. The two organ pieces are particularly satisfying – it would have been nice to have had some more. There are some excellent booklet notes by Greg Holt. All in all a very satisfying recording. Noel O'Regan

The Musica Britannica volumes of Byrd's keyboard music claims: "On the whole, Tregian's texts are inferior to the primary sources", so it seems a bit odd that a disc devoted specifically to Byrd should be based on lesser sources – though I must confess that I've usually played Byrd from FWVB! CB

Cabezón Music for Keyboard Enrico Bajano 75' 04"
Glossa Cabinet GCD C80004

Cabezón has never been quite ignored on disc but this is still a welcome re-release (from 1998) of a well chosen programme. Several of the pieces are elaborations of polyphonic vocal originals while others are composed 'from scratch', but nevertheless hint at a vocal model. The playing is very clean and sensitively phrased and the instrument used very beautiful in tone. I also enjoyed the temperament, and collectors of 'English' cadences (and I do know some) will find several here for their records. As with all the Glossa CDs I have reviewed for this issue, the booklet is sensibly designed with an essay (English, French, German) that tells you everything you need to know in order to appreciate the repertoire. This one even finds space for some comments on the music's reception history.

David Hansell

Guerrero Requiem Orchestra of the Renaissance, Richard Cheetham, Michael Noone 78' 19"
Glossa Cabinet GCD C81402

This is the kind of recording (from 1999 – the Guerrero quatercentenary) that should be made, and presented in concert form, more often. The programme assumes that the composer's own setting of the Requiem would have been used at his funeral in Seville Cathedral and that the musicians whom he had led for many years would have given of their most elaborate, yet dignified, best for the occasion. So the polyphony is surrounded by plainchant and organ music in a way that enhances its own qualities and creates a sense of grandeur and ceremony. The choir is all male (ATTB) and doubled by the kind of instruments that we know from Guerrero's own hand that he used regularly. All the musical aspects are beautifully handled and I especially appreciated the start of the 'service'. One of the duties the *ministriles* had to perform was to play at the cathedral door to greet

important arrivals and one cannot imagine their not taking the opportunity to mark the final entrance of their late *maestro de capilla*. This opening is perfectly complemented by the fading recessional. The only slight disappointment is that the booklet gives the sung Latin texts but no translations. If you missed this first time around, don't make the same mistake again.

David Hansell

Lassus Missa ad imitationem Vinum Bonum ("Good Wine Mass") Ex Cathedra, His Majestys Sagbutts & Cornetts, Jeffrey Skidmore 68' 37"

Alto ALC 1177

(orig, ASV Gaudemus CDGAU 150 (1996)
+ Agimus tibi a3, Ave verum corpus a6, Bicinia 2, 9, 14, Bone Jesu a8, Christus resurgens a5, Justorum animae a5, Laudent Deum a4, Musica Dei donum a6, Quam pulchra es a6, Salve Regina a6, Tristis est anima mea a5, Tui sunt caeli a8, Vide homo a7, Vinum bonum a8

One of several items offered to a new reviewer, whose copy for the October 2012 issue never arrived and attempts to find him have failed. D. James Ross reviewed it in *EMR* 14 (March 1996), his first and last words being: "Magnificent disc... A vintage recording – *bibemus!*" Not having seen the reissue, I don't know whether my booklet notes have survived.

CB

Lechner Festive Mass & Motets (1582) ensemble officium, Wilfried Rombach Christophorus CHR 77367 63' 45"

see p. 21

Philips Cantiones sacrae octonis vocibus (1613) The Choir of Royal Holloway, The English Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble, Rupert Gough 71' 50
Hyperion CDA67945

I first encountered a couple of Philips's double-choir motets in the mid-1960s, when Nick Steinitz (son or Paul, who conducted all the Bach cantatas) used to have a gathering in Notting Hill. *Ecce vicit Leo* isn't on this CD, and I can't remember the other after some 45 years. I'm slightly disappointed, partly because Philips isn't quite top rank, but also because of the performances. The triple time sections are quite irritating, with the short bars all having something approaching equal stress rather than phrases. In the first track, for example (MB lxi no. 24), the phrase at bar 41 is accented as follows:

et | se-cum re- | gna-re in | ae-ter- - | num
[a second hyphen indicates a second note to the syllable] "and to reign with him for ever"

By 1613, choristers will have been taught classical accentuation for at least a century. The problem with the full phrase is that *se* needs a minimum accent, either *-gn* or *-ter* have the main stress, depending on whether you think *reigning* or *for ever* is more important. *In* needs no accent at all: a hemiola doesn't require each of the three beats to be stressed. When *in aeternum* is repeated in isolation as

in- | ae-ter- - | num.

Latin accent is forgotten. (When a word has a long penultimate syllable – long because it has a long vowel or ends with two consonants – that is the stressed syllable.) Most of my experience has been with singers who know Latin – not rare when I was young, and the people I accompany in early music fora or the Beauchamp summer school are either old enough to have learnt the language or have sung it for decades! More generally, the Holloway choir doesn't shape the Latin words: this is a matter of stress and meaning, not of Italian, Belgian or English Latin pronunciation. I also get the feeling that the conductor is concentrating on beating rather than letting the singers have the tactus in their bones so that he can shape the text. The disc contains nearly half of the 1613 publication. It's not that bad (the performers can seek comfort from AB-W's review of the live performance on p. 17), but I couldn't manage more than a few tracks at a time. CB

O splendor gloriae: sacred music of Tudor England The Tudor Choir, Doug Fullington 79' 05"

Scribe Records SCRD2

Sheppard *Libera nos I & II*; Taverner *Dum transisset I*, Leroy *Kyrie*, *O splendor gloriae*, *Quemadmodum*; Tallis *Loquebantur, O sacrum convivium*, *O salutaris hostia*, *Suscipe queso*; Byrd *Ave verum corpus*, *Laudibus in sanctis*, *Miserere mei*, *Tribue Domine*

I have pleasing memories of Doug Fullington's recordings a decade or so ago. I met him once in Seattle, expressed my enthusiasm, and the next I heard was that he wasn't recording any more – a great pity, since his ensemble had a convincing individual manner. I'm delighted to see that he has returned, offering a distinctive style, vital and expressive, well shaped and communicating directly with the listener. The listing of the composers in the heading matches the roughly chrono-

logical order in which they are arranged rather than our usual alphabetic sequence: the two Sheppard *Libera nos* settings frame the disc. There is a down-to-earth quality that I admire here. Melismatic items are at various tempi, all feeling appropriate. Chant, however, is at more-or-less spoken tempo, as are the more word-based choral texts. The voices number 6, 5, 4, 4, at their maximum. Their sound is refreshing, with none of the mannerisms of English cathedral and collegiate choirs. It's been in my bedside player for weeks, and it speaks so much more powerfully than most recordings of the repertoire. highly recommended. CB

For His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts: English Music from Henry VIII to Charles II Hyperion Helios CDH55406

This is a re-issue of a disc recorded in 1996, which I reviewed. I recall making very similar observations then, but to save wasting time chasing *EMR* back-issues, I am writing this without looking up mine. I am pleased to be prompted to listen to the recording again. How wonderful it is to be reminded of the amazing playing of Timothy Roberts on keyboards. In particular, the extended Fantasia by John Bull on virginals is a tour de force, combining suave and deft handling of complex rhythmical shifts, the intelligent rendering of highly intellectual music as something visceral and at the same time playful, and overall the long measured build up of tension and excitement over the full four and a half minutes, as if it was all one thought. I've not heard anything quite like it in performance of this repertoire. The line up of His Majesty's is the "old one", before the more recent personnel changes. The comparison holds up well, with a touch of the whimsy that characterises HMSC interpretations throughout the years. The playing is neat, and the repertoire interesting – in the heartland of English sagbut and cornett music. If you didn't catch it last time round, now's your chance.

Stephen Cassidy

THEN – Renaissance airs and dances Stockholm Chamber Brass 57' 28" BIS 2017 SACD

It is interesting to hear renaissance repertoire (albeit not all originally for sackbuts and cornetts) played by a hard-bitten mainstream modern brass ensemble. There is a feeling of habitual certainty in the playing and a sense of the players rather enjoying their expertise –

which is indeed great. The inexorability of the rhythms and the interlocking of the parts is as cool as a cucumber. The accurate meshing of the different pieces of the mechanism is made all the more clear by the orchestral brass idiom of very clear starts to notes, which then fade a little to leave room for another start somewhere else. The whole effect is to shine lights into the music from different angles from those we have become accustomed to. The disadvantage is that the way the lines as a whole interlock and play off each other is downplayed. The pieces range from Susato dances to madrigals by Gesualdo (in the programme order, with no intervening pieces at all) and on to Dowland, and round again. These present extremes of compositional style, but nothing like extremes of performance style. Interesting to hear what these performances reveal, but disappointing in what they conceal. Stephen Cassidy

Passion & Resurrection: Music inspired by Holy Week Stile Antico 71' 13"

Harmonia Mundi USA HMU 807555

Byrd *In resurrectione tua*; Cornysh Jr *Woefully arrayed*; Crecquillon *Congratulamini mihi*; Gibbons *Hosanna to the Son of David*, *I am the resurrection and the life*; Guerrero *Maria Magdalene*; Lassus *In monte Oliveti*; Lheritier *Surrexit pastor bonus*; McCabe *Woefully arrayed*; Morales *O crux ave*; Tallis *O sacrum convivium*; Taverner *Dum transisset*; Victoria *O vos omnes*

This has been sitting by my bedside for several months, and every time I play it I'm immediately involved in Cornysh's *Woefully arrayed*, but then find the second track, Gibbons's *Hosanna to the Son of David*, utterly incompatible. It's not that I don't like Gibbons, but it somehow makes the wrong contrast – a gap of 100 years makes more of a clash of styles than the modern setting by John McCabe. My experience of Stile Antico is that they initially sound impressive but lack variety. Surely 16th-century singers throughout Europe didn't make the same sort of sound? And another worry is the way dynamics can seem externally imposed rather than growing out of the phrases. But it's a pleasing anthology, and not everyone will share my view-point. I just wish that it sounded more varied. CB

Pellingham's Saraband English duos for viol and lute Susanna Pell gamba, Jacob Heringman lutes 65' 50" www.pellingham.co.uk PSO01

Music by Byrd/arr. Cutting, Collard, Draghi, Solomon Eccles junior, Finger, Johnson, Keller, Simpson & anon

A Scotch Tune unaccompanied at first on treble viol, joined by lute plucking drones, announces a very atmospheric recording, intimate, tuneful, some familiar and mostly popular music, so accessible, it's also very enjoyable. Divisions, or variations, are sometimes on a popular tune (*John come kiss me now, Go from my window, The leaves be green*) sometimes over a ground bass. In the 17th century, and now, they were able to cross what we regard as our modern categories of musical taste – everyone can enjoy them.

Susanna Pell plays four viols in all: treble, tenor and two basses, each a modern copy by Jane Julier. Her playing is particularly impressive in the Simpson Divisions in D and in the unique divisions on *Barafostus' Dream* for treble viol. The only other recording I know of this is Savall's and he plays it on the bass. Jacob Heringman plays two lutes, with which he at times takes over the divisions, either in one of several solos, or on occasion, accompanied by the bass viol playing a chordal accompaniment, giving a pleasing variety of tone and tessitura.

The music is taken mostly from the many 17th-century publications of divisions, with great variety and opportunities for display. It is a joy to listen to, in part because of the complete command and brilliance both players show, in part the quality of the music, but perhaps the most important, the intimate, domestic atmosphere, in which this music and these sounds flourish.

Robert Oliver

Where late the sweet birds sang Magnificat, Philip Cave 75' 31"

Linn CKD417

Byrd *Christe qui lux es, De Lamentatione, Domine quis habitabit, Quomodo cantabimus* Parsons *Ave Maria, Domine quis habitabit* White *Christe qui lux es, Lamentations* as

What a way to open a CD! The spare beauty of Byrd's hymn *Christ qui lux es et dies* is quite devastating: no fancy part-writing, just simple block chords in which the hymn tune, sung in its unembellished form at beginning and end, weaves through the harmony leaving the other parts forlorn and angular. Performed with measured solemnity, this epitomises Philip Cave's style. The whole recording is pervaded by the Phrygian mode which instils a sense of loss and longing, fitting for both the exiled nation of Israel for which Jeremiah wrote his Lamentations, and for the covert Catholics of the Tudor age, exemplified by Byrd in his setting of those texts. White's *Lamentations* are less

well-known than those of Byrd or Tallis, but I hope this recording, and Sally Dunkley's superb editions, will help to redress that. The first section of White's version ends yearningly with its desolate first-inversion dominant chord; there are wonderful passages at each iteration of "Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum" where the parts lap like gentle waves. Magnificat's recorded sound is spacious and rich, underpinned by a strong bass department, but with all the parts clear and some marvellous chording and part-crossing; false relations are met with discretion, and the phrasing is heart-rending. The 'English' pronunciation of the Latin is not obtrusive. The low pitch chosen for Parsons's otherwise familiar *Ave Maria* transforms it from showpiece to prayer. Very highly recommended. Selene Mills

17th CENTURY

Charpentier *Judith H391/ Le Massacre des Innocents H411* Dagmar Sasková, Erwin Aros, Jean-François Novelli, Arnaud Richard, Les Pages, les Chantres & les Symphonistes du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, Olivier Schneebeli K617 242 59' 19"

These recordings by the Versailles 'home team' were made live at concerts in the palace chapel. I do find the applause at the end of each piece intrusive – it could easily have been removed. *Judith* was Charpentier's first *historia*, and at 1000 bars and 42 minutes is comfortably the longest. He rises to the challenge inherent in such an undertaking by varying the voicing of the narration between soloists, trios and choruses with some use of the traditional French *petit/grand choeur* division. Naturally, named characters are sung by soloists. Dagmar Sasková is excellent in the title role – both tonally and stylistically assured. As Holofernes, Arnaud Richard is inclined to over-dramatise to his musical disadvantage, and the men do not combine happily as a trio.

The choir's bigger moments come in the fine *Caedes sanctorum innocentium*, which completes the programme. Here they take their roles as mothers, soldiers and 'the faithful' with enthusiasm and only very occasional loss of discipline among the younger singers. These works are scored for modest instrumental forces – continuo, violins and flûtes and I continue to believe that the last-named should play in unison with the strings and not an octave higher. The booklet offers Catherine Cessac's concise but informative essay in

French and English and translations of the sung Latin texts into French. Halving the length of the formulaic soloists' biographies would have allowed space for English too.

David Hansell

Dowland Tunes of Sad Despere Dominique Visse cT, Fretwork, Renaud Delaigue B, Eric Bellocq lute & orpharion 66' 11" Saltarino SR121

see p. x

Frescobaldi Volume 5 Richard Lester org & hpscd, Schola Gregoriana del Duomo di Bergamo, Don Gilberto Sessantini, Elizabeth Lester renaissance recorder, Polly Armitage renaissance flute, Londa Ntotila S, Judith Dolosso vlc 77' 15" Nimbus Records NI5887

This CD completes a series of Frescobaldi keyboard works and has something of a 'mopping up the pieces' feel to it. The first 15 tracks are lesser works for keyboard together with pieces with (not always authentically) either recorder (attractive division playing from Lester's daughter, Elizabeth), flute (Polly Armitage) or voice. These tracks are apparently recorded in Richard Lester's own home and reveal some curious acoustics. For example, on tracks 12 and 13, the singer sounds as though she is at the far end of a large room, well away from the much closer harpsichord. The recording focus and volume of the harpsichord changes between pieces, notably in tracks 12-14 when it switches from the left to right and then to the close centre. Unfortunately the unstable vocal quality of the singer is really not up to professional standards in the two arias. I think the organ used on tracks 3 and 15 might be different from that in tracks 17-23 – it doesn't sound quite right, and its irritatingly predictable clicking sound at the beginning of every note makes me wonder if it is an electronic instrument's attempt to add 'authenticity' by mimicking that often charming clatter of a real historic organ.

A real organ comes to the fore with the fine 1588 Antegnati organ in the church of San Nicola, Almenno San Salvatore (just north of Bergamo in Lombardy). It is used in Frescobaldi's little polyphonic *alternativum* settings of three Magnificats and four hymns. Again there are recording issues. The organ sounds to the fore, but the singers are distant. This is surprising as the organ is on a side wall close to the altar so I would have assumed that the sound focus would have been similar. The playing is accurate but rather restrained and safe, rarely going beyond the notes.

And it would have been good to have heard a wider range of registrations from the Antegnati organ. Andrew Benson-Wilson

D. Gabrielli Complete Cello Works Bettina Hoffmann, *Modo Antiquo* 53'52"
Tactus Serie Bianca TB 65070

This is a re-release of what was, in 1999, claimed as a world premiere recording. It includes two four-movement sonatas with continuo, seven 'ricercar' for unaccompanied cello and a canon for two cellos. Gabrielli preferred his top string tuned to G, but re-wrote and re-thought one of the sonatas for an instrument tuned normally, also taking the opportunity to replace the last movement with completely new material. This revised version rounds off the programme. The playing is very good, with clarity maintained in rapid passages, though the thick continuo combination of archlute and harpsichord does a bass instrument few favours. This was pioneering music in its time, advancing the cello's cause as an aspiring melodist and the music is more than merely 'interesting'.

David Hansell

Richard Tunnicliffe's 'complete Gabrielli' CD (2007) also includes music for basso by Frescobaldi and others, giving a sense of context.

DH

Michael Praetorius Ostermesse Weser-Renaissance, Manfred Cordes 68'20"
cpo 999 953-2

One of my fondest memories of early music summer schools is a week spent at Beauchamp with Philip Thorby and Alan Lumsden doing a whole sequence of music by Praetorius – none of the well-known, jolly Christmas pieces, but mostly striking settings of more angsty texts, and especially a dramatic, imposing setting of the Lord's prayer. This recreation of an Easter mass is much more in that vein (although there are also some of the more familiar hymn tune settings, as well as Lutheran chant) with a total of seven singers, cornetto, two trombones, violin, two viols, dulcian and continuo of organ, chitarrone and harp. The mass setting is taken from the 1611 publication, *Missodia*, while the remainder of the vocal music is from *Musae Sioniae*, published four years earlier and the *Hymnodia* also from 1611. As we have come to expect from Weser-Renaissance Bremen, these are very high quality performances – the voices shine in solo numbers, and blend beautifully in consort. The instrumental contributions are equally stylish, with some typically tasteful ornamentation. I hope there will

be more Praetorius discs to come – especially one featuring that Lord's prayer setting.

BC

since editing the music for the first CD (over a memorable Christmas when I was also editing a disc of Josquin for Andrew Parrott) made me want to carry on!

CB

Good to see someone other than me lauding the Vater unser! The Beauchamp Summer School returns to Praetorius this year, to new premises not far from the old ones. Date: 28 July – 3 August. Info: www.gamweb.co.uk

My Beloved Spake Anthems by Henry Purcell & Pelham Humfrey Iestyn Davies, James Gilchrist, Neal Davies, Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, St John's Sinfonia, Andrew Nethsingha 69'41"
Chandos CHAN 0790

Humfrey Mag & Nunc in e, O Lord my God Purcell Behold now praise the Lord, Hear my prayer, Jehova quam multi sunt, My beloved spake, O sing unto the Lord, Rejoice in the Lord alway & Remember not Lord our offences

I'm sure that this distinguished choir's many admirers will find nothing here to upset them greatly. Listening with my HIPsters and headphones on, I'm not quite so sure. Surely *Remember not* and *Hear my prayer* should have organ support, and shouldn't *Jehova quam multi* (described as a 'Latin motet' in the track list and a 'Latin-texted domestic anthem' in the notes) be sung by a consort of soloists, at least on disc? The engagement of 'celebrity' soloists with voices naturally more mature than those of the choir also introduces an additional sonic element to the verse anthems in which the performing forces – solo vocal ensemble, choir and instrumental ensemble – are notoriously difficult to integrate both musically and when recorded, and for me there are too many places in which they just don't sound all of a piece. Even the choir itself is not consistently at its best with slips of ensemble and tuning both within and between parts: as an example the final chord of the last item isn't quite together. They are at their most comfortable in the canticles by Humfrey and I must say that a whole disc of his music (or a re-release of a 2004 recording conducted by Nicholas McGegan) would be most welcome. Quite the loveliest part of this programme is the opening 'bell' symphony of the 'Bell Anthem', with the descending bass scales delicately etched by the lute and that's a strange thing to say of a programme of essentially vocal music. The booklet translates the notes (to French and German) but not the sung texts, other than the Latin into English. David Hansell

Harmonia Mundi very much wanted to issue another Humfrey CD, but sales were too low. A pity,

Sweelinck Organ Works Joseph Kelemen (1643/90 Van Hagarbeer/Duyschot organ, Pieterskerk, Leiden) 75'44"
OEHMS OC 680

It is entirely appropriate that this, the fifth in the Northdeutsche Orgelmeister series, should focus on a composer that never set a foot outside of the Netherlands. For it was through the German-speaking pupils of Sweelinck in Amsterdam that the whole North German organ school was developed. The pieces chosen give a good representative view of Sweelinck's music. The playing is sincere, if not entirely note-perfect. Sometimes Kelemen overdoes to my taste the articulation that early fingering can (but need not necessarily) produce, giving a slurred effect to pairs of notes. And there is an occasional feeling of being a little rushed, notably as the tension builds up in the *Fantasia Ut re mi fa sol la* and the *Fantasia Crommatica*. But those are minor points of detail that should not take away from a fine recording. The registrations chosen are always interesting and generally apt, and explore the wide range of colours of this fine organ, which includes earlier pipework dating back to the 15th century, as well as the Jan van Covelens organ of 1518 – some of the oldest pipes in the world.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Alfabeto Songs: Guitar songs from 17th-century Italy Raquel Andueza S, Private Musicke, Pierre Pitzl 58'24"
Accent ACC 24273

Music by Aldigiatti de Cesena, Corbetta, Corradi, Fabriano, Foscarini, Kapsberger, Merula, Montesardo, Sanz & Stefani

Why is this lovely repertoire not better known or performed? I suspect the answer probably lies, at least partly, in the title of the CD – *Alfabeto*, the fingering notation for chords for these songs as published. As the helpful booklet note explains, this is essentially a very minimal version of guitar tablature, developed, or rather formalised, by Montesardo in the first decade of the 17th century, by which a single capital letter beneath the vocal stave implies a particular chord: A for G major, B for C major, D for A minor, and so on. This is not unlike the large chord letters still seen in sheet music of popular songs since the early 20th century (and at one time often featuring tab 'windows' for

ukulele), enabling those whose reading of music was not as hot as a 'professional' to vamp their own performances of songs, and many editions of songs with *Alfabeto* were published in the first half of the 17th century. An early Italianate 'Tin Pan Alley', in other words. Some publications were even issued without the melody line, just the alfabeto itself, because many of the tunes were already in circulation, and too well-known to require the printed notes, again, similar to the minimal way many pop songs used to be laid out in pop magazines, with just the chords over the lyrics.

This is a wonderful disc, and I hope it inspires more singers and lutenist/guitarists to dig out and explore this repertoire – every single piece here is an absolute gem. These renditions are not the only performance options, but I have to say they come pretty close to an ideal. The percussion is limited to a very gentle pointing up of rhythms in some of the dance-based forms, far removed from the bongo-fests indulged in by more colourful ensembles.

David Hill

Cembalo: Inspiration und Originalität
Mechthild Winter 70' 26"

querstand BVKJK 1217

D'Anglebert Extracts from Deuxième Suite in g J S Bach BWV 813, 903 & 971 Froberger FbWE106 & 506 Vivaldi op. 7/8 transcr. JSB

In this intelligently-planned CD three major works by JS Bach are prefaced with matching works by three other composers. Thus the C minor French Suite is prefaced by a set of pieces from D'Anglebert's *Deuxième Suite*. In fact this serves to make clear just how un-French the Bach suite is. Winter brings a good sense of style to both works and continues this into an elevation toccata and a capriccio by Froberger whose chromatic themes and forms provide a useful prelude to Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue. This gets a solid performance, worthy rather than exciting and a bit stodgy perhaps. Bach's Italian Concerto is prefaced with his transcription of Vivaldi's G major concerto, making a useful comparison. Both works are again given solid accounts: I liked the middle and last movements but found the opening ones lacking something in excitement and liveliness. Winter plays on a copy by Matthias Griewisch of the Colmar 1624 Ioannes Ruckers which works well over the broad range of music here and is admirably recorded. An interesting programme, certainly, and generally well played.

Noel O'Regan

Complete Organ Works – Säker, Düben, Schieferdecker Friedhelm Flamme Lorentz-Frietzsch organ, Helsingør cpo 777 502-2 73' 47"

Andreas, Gustav & Martin Düben, Hintz, Neunhaber, Nittauff, Säker & Schieferdecker

As well as the three composers in the CD's title, we have the (almost) complete organ works of two further Dübens (making up the triumvirate of Andreas, Martin and Gustav), Nittauff, Hintz, and Neunhaber, all (but one) little known today, even to organists. Säker (d.1740) came from Celle and in 1734 succeeded George Böhm in Lüneburg before moving to Lübeck. His three delightful and masterly Praeludia are in the final stages of the ebullient and expansive *stylus phantasticus* before it finally evolved into the two-movement Prelude & Fugue form. There are two other Säker Praeludia published that are not on this CD. The first two of the three Dübens were sons of Andreas Düben, a late 16th-century predecessor of Bach in the Leipzig Thomaskirche. After studies with Sweelinck, they both settled in Stockholm. Their chorale works are very much in the Sweelinck/Scheidemann style, in one case including a direct copy of a Scheidemann piece. Their Praeludia are in the gentle Italian *duresse e ligature* style. Gustav Düben is justly famed for the Düben Collection, an important source of north-European music, now in Uppsala University Library without which many works of this period (including several by Buxtehude) would not be known today. His chorale fantasia on *Nun lob, mein Seel* is a virtuoso piece showing a full understanding of this important genre. Nittauff also hailed from Stockholm and was born about the time of Gustav Düben's death. His six attractive little preludes are all that survives of his life's work. Hintz (from Danzig/Gdansk) was a pupil of Froberger and held posts in Copenhagen and his home town. He is also known today for a single chorale fantasia (on *Allein Gott*), as is Neunhaber (born in Danzig 10 years before Hintz) and his extensive *Ich ruf zu dir*. The CD ends with a piece by the hapless Schieferdecker, forever known as the man who eventually married Buxtehude's eldest daughter (thus gaining the Marienkirche post) after she had apparently been turned down by the youthful Handel and Bach. Despite being without the selling attraction of any of the big names, this is a very attractive group of pieces. And the Helsingør organ is well worth hearing – it was under the young Buxtehude that the 1662 Freitzch

alterations were made. The organ is a 1997 Marcussen reconstruction, in the original case, and voiced on the principals of the 1641/61 organ that Buxtehude knew.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Italian Virtuosi of the Chitarrone Jakob Lindberg 74' 10"

Bis BIS-CD-1899

Castaldi, Kapsberger & Piccinini

This excellent CD begins with a fast yet unhurried interpretation of Kapsberger's well-known *Toccata Arpeggiata* from his *Libro Primo* (Venice, 1604). Lindberg's time of 2.03 minutes falls comfortably between the more leisurely speeds of Paul O'Dette (2.46) and Matthew Wadsworth (2.43), and the frenetic Rolf Lislevand (1.39). The piece consists of a series of chords marked with a sign for arpeggiation similar in appearance to %. Kapsberger discusses the interpretation of this sign in all three of his extant books for theorbo, and in most detail in his *Libro Quarto* (Rome, 1640). Modern theorboists should beware the SPES facsimile, where important finger-dots have vanished. A faithful facsimile may be seen in Martin Lubenow's edition of *Hieronymus Kapsberger Zwölf Toccaten* (1994). Although the right-hand finger pattern remains the same throughout, the pitch pattern does not, since the theorbo's re-entrant tuning causes some notes to sound an octave lower than expected, and it is difficult for the player not to let some off-beat notes obtrude.

Canzona 1 from Kapsberger's *Libro Quarto* begins with a succession of 4-note chords also marked with the % sign. Here Lindberg spreads the chords as Kapsberger would have done, using a thumb and just two fingers. The rest of the Canzona consists of short contrasting sections in duple and triple time, ending with a series of super-quick flourishes. His *Bergamasca* rolls along nicely without undue haste – think English Country Gardens with a smile. The short 2-bar ground of the Canario is enlivened by arpeggios and fast campanellas. The *Passacaglia* is a fine piece, sombre in mood, with a constantly changing series of melodies over the inescapable 4-bar ground. Lindberg adds a great many ornaments, which lighten the overriding gloom.

Less quirky is the music of Belleroonte Castaldi. His *Fantasia detta Pegasea* is a well-worked fugue with clear part-writing; his *Arpesca gagliarda* has delicate campanellas reminiscent of the baroque guitar; and his jolly *Cecchina corrente* has exciting shifts to the minor.

Different again is the music of Alessandro Piccinini. A dignified, thoughtful *Toccata cromatica* with some surprising harmonies is followed by a splendid *Romanesca con partite variate* enriched by discordant passing notes and a sudden rush of semiquavers down to the twelfth string (Partita 2), jerky rhythms (4), slurred left-hand demi-semiquavers (5), and exciting arpeggios (6).

Back to the flamboyant Kapsberger with music from his *Libro Terzo* (Rome, 1626). The sole surviving copy resurfaced only a few years ago. The % reappears in *Toccata 7*, for chords which Lindberg spreads and arpeggiates, depending on the context. The last variation of the *Gagliarda* is spiced with passages of resolving seconds (tones and semitones), and the single variation of *Corrente Prima* has truly bell-like campanellas.

Lindberg's playing is exceptionally fine, and he does credit to what is a most extraordinary, extravagant and virtuosic repertoire. The theorbo, with its rich sonorities, deep bass notes, filigree flourishes, constantly changing moods, encapsulates the essence of the Baroque. The unsettling harmonies of Castaldi's *Cromaticca corrente*, the discordant passing notes and the sequence of fast cadential figures in *La Follia*, the creepiness of Kapsberger's *Capona* over a short mesmeric ground, the other-worldliness of Colascione ending with a nine-fret portamento slide up the 6th course, and the tenderness of the final piece (called *Kapsperger*) combine to create a kaleidoscope of ever-changing colours and music of considerable beauty.

In his booklet notes Lindberg bemoans the modern practice of using baby-sized theorbos, which are easier to play. The string-length of his theorbo – a 15-course instrument made by Michael Lowe – is a whopping 89 cm/159 cm, but this was standard in the early part of the 17th century. All the strings are gut. The sound is smooth, warm, well-balanced, and a delight to the ears. *Stewart McCoy*

...pour passer la mélancolie Andreas Staier
hpscd 74' 52"

Harmonia Mundi HMC 902143

D'Anglebert from *Livre I*; Clérambault Suite in C (1704); L.Couperin Suite in F; J.C.F. Fischer *Musikalischer Parnassus "Uranie"* in d, *Ricercar "Da Jesusnan dem Creutze stund"*; Froberger Suite 20 in a, *Lamento sopra...* Ferdinando IV; G. Muffat *Passacaglia* in g (1690)

Melancholy is a loose catch-title for this programme of music by many of the

major composers of the second half of the seventeenth century. It highlights their preference for tombeaux and plaintes as well as the general seriousness of many of their suites, ricercars and passacaglias. There is a good mixture of French and German music and lots of opportunity for comparison across countries and composers. Staier's reflective approach is particularly suited to this repertory. He plays with great authority on an anonymous harpsichord given a *ravalement* by Joseph Colesse in Lyon in 1748 and recently restored by Laurent Soumagnac. It is beautifully recorded, with close microphoning to enhance the intimate quality of the music. The whole package is delightfully presented, with reproductions of a number of 17th-century paintings which relate to Staier's approach to this music. Definitely recommended. *Noel O'Regan*

Strike the Viol Philippe Pierlot, Rainer Zipperling viols, Giovanna Pessi harp
Flora 1409
Music by Jenkins, Lawes, Locke, etc

This recording is a mix of familiar repertoire for two bass viols (Locke, Lawes) with the not-so-often recorded Jenkins duets and the Simpson D-minor divisions, his most technically advanced example of what he calls 'Divisions for the practice of learners'. There are over 20 duets known by Jenkins, and they are marvellous music, similar in construction, (ayre with divisions, with some suites) but abounding with invention. Six of them are presented here, all played with the requisite virtuosity and control, with an exquisite feeling for their musicality, whimsy and humour. Interspersed are duets by Locke (the suite in C major-minor), a fantasy by Coperario, the 'Pavan of Alfonso' by William Lawes, and two short pieces for the accompanying harp.

Each of the players gets a solo: Pierlot's is an exciting performance of *Tregian's Ground* by Daniel Norcombe – similar in its style and technical requirements to Henry Butler, and Rainer Zipperling plays the Simpson D minor set, wonderfully well. Viol players know its difficulties: very rapid passage-work, and fluency on chords at the very top of the finger-board, it is several degrees more difficult than any other of his known divisions. This is the only recording of it I know of, and it is superb.

There are no booklet notes, no biographies, just a facsimile of a brief passage from Simpson's book *The Division Viol*, and another, very amusing, (I think

from Mace) about fashions. Some may find this a hindrance, but I like the idea. The presentation is visually pleasing, the music is outstanding, and needs no further explanation. We are told who they are and what instruments they play. The harp plays the lute-like realisation, or the organ parts, and the texture is enchanting. Highly recommended. *Robert Oliver*

The Trio Sonata in 17th-Century Italy
London Baroque 68' 51"

BIS-1795

Music by G. M. Bononcini, Buonamente, Castello, Cavalli, Cazzati, Cima, Corelli, Falconiero, Legrenzi, Marini, Merula, Pandolfi, Pestalozza, Turini, Uccellini & Vitali

London Baroque may at some stage have played an ill-considered note but it's not on this disc, the sixth in their eight disc series exploring and documenting this key baroque chamber ensemble genre. The composers here range from Cima (born c1570) to Corelli (d1713, so one of this year's anniversary people) – Purcell's 'fam'd Italian masters', in fact – and the programme is played in publication order from 1610 to 1681. We hear clearly the development from through-composition to movements, while woven through the programme is a sub-anthology of ground basses. In short this is a classy ensemble doing what it does best with no fuss. Let's all listen and learn. *David Hansell*

... to touch to kiss to die... Valer Barna-Sabaudus cT, Olga Watts hpscd, Axel Wolf lute, Pavel Serbin cello 66' 57"
Oehms Classics OC870

The young Romanian-born countertenor Valer Barna-Sabaudus has been building something of a reputation in the opera house in recent years – he was one of the four falsettists in the remarkable recent recording of Vinci's *Artaserse* – but this seems to be his first venture into the English song repertoire. It is, of course, difficult terrain for non-native singers. The Dowland and Purcell songs are so familiar to British audiences that invidious comparisons are inevitable, and while there is no doubting the integrity of the performances, they fall considerably short of being ideal. The voice itself is appealing, pure, more soprano than alto, but, as I found in *Artaseres*, not always fully under control. There is a tendency for it to spread, not helped here by slow tempi in more serious songs and a recording made in a resonant church. But it is the poor diction, verbal articulation and evident lack of understanding of

English syntax that will rule out the disc for most British listeners. The players provide competent support, each also contributing a solo in their own right. The notes betray a shaky knowledge of 17th century English history (both musical and political), the German (?) author's final sentence – 'After his [Purcell's] death, English music sank into oblivion for centuries' – being hardly likely to endear her to those of us who have expended much energy demonstrating otherwise.

Brian Robins

LATE BAROQUE

Albinoni *Sonates pour violon* Guillaume Rebinguet-Sudre *vln*, Claire Gratton *vlc*, Jean-Luc Ho *hpscd* 55' L'Encelade ECL1102 op 6/II, VI & X, Sonata IV (1717) & Sonata "per il Signore Pisendel"

Of the two Venetian composers whose compositional technique I have found at times somewhat limited in skill and invention, namely Vivaldi and Albinoni, the latter has often seemed – at least to me – the less interesting of the two. I found these five sonatas, all in the four-movement da chiesa style, however, a cut above many of his concertos and sinfonias in quality. This may be partly due to the stylish Corelli-like ornamentation that Rebinguet-Sudre adds to the slow movements, but the allegro movements are nevertheless always spirited and convincing. (The article on Albinoni in Grove has an autograph example from the 4th movement of the Sonata for Pisendel). I was most attracted to the final sonata on the disc, op. 6 no. 2 in G minor sonata, with its particularly expressive slow movement and lively finale. The period instrument playing is most stylish and refined, though perhaps the harpsichord might have been a little more forward.

Ian Graham-Jones

The considerable number of Bach reviews by David Staccliffe have been accumulating, partly because I didn't pick them up when they were emailed to me over the last few months – mea culpa.

CB

Bach *Matthäus-Passion* Netherlands Radio Choir, National Children's Choir, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Amsterdam, Iván Fischer 174' Arthaus Musik 101 676 2 DVDs

Mark Padmore *Evangelist*, Peter Harvey *Christ*, Maria Espada, Reante Arends, Ingeborg Danz, Barbara Kozelj, Peter Gijsbertsen, Henk Neven SSMS/AmS/ATB

Fischer and the Concertgebouw use modern instruments, but their playing style – little vibrato, 4.4.3.2.1 strings in each band, 4 wind (no bassoon), an organ and a Viola da Gamba (shared between the choirs) – is well-informed by historical performance practice. The players are seated in two arcs with the choirs (21 singers in each, plus a section of the Youth Choir behind, singing in all the chorales) with the central arc giving a degree of separation. Fischer's direction in the arias is minimalist, but clear and incisive when it is needed by the whole ensemble. To my relief, the film director doesn't treat him as the arch-maestro!

The stars of the show are Mark Padmore and Peter Harvey, for my money the best Evangelist and Christus you can possibly have today. They are also the Tenor and Bass of Choir I, so Peter Harvey sings the two wonderful arias that come late in the work, *Komm, susses Kreuz* and *Mache dich*, and Mark *Ich will bei meinem Jesu wachen*. But other soloists also sing well and clearly, especially AI and BII. The obbligato playing is beautiful, and the whole performance is filmed with a degree of understanding that doesn't flit from camera to camera but understands the structure of the work as a whole and of how the constituent parts are formed. This makes the whole performance as easy to watch as to listen to, and while in some ways it takes me back to the performances I was taken to as an 8 or 9 year old by a wise godmother in the Albert Hall (given by the massed Bach Choir under Reginald Jacques), it creates a coherent and moving experience. As a performance with relatively large forces (though maintaining roughly equal numbers of singers and players) given in a concert hall rather than a church, it is a rare treat.

David Staccliffe

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.

Stephen Layton's recording of the John Passion with Polyphony and the OAE follows the NBA published version, and contains no surprises textually. The programme notes are by Christoff Wolf, and there's only a short paragraph on this actual performance, so we don't have Layton's verbal take on the distinctiveness of this recording.

Bach *St John Passion* Ian Bostridge *Evangelist*, Neal Davies *Christ*, Carolyn Sampson, Iestyn Davies, Nicholas Mulroy, Roderick Williams, Polyphony, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Stephen Layton 117' 44" (2 CDs) Hyperion CDA67901/2

We scarcely need it: Layton is after drama, and from the choir's first entry the listener is clear that this is a highly tensioned version. Every ounce of passion is screwed out of the performers, and I felt so battered after the first chorus that I had to pause before I could continue. Ian Bostridge is an intelligent, emotionally committed Evangelist, and the others who take part in the drama sing as if on stage (the booklet profiles tell us of their operatic triumphs). This is a performance on the edge of the big choir mould and Polyphony (8.7.8.8) are splendid, but their over-forced sound here doesn't really match the OAE's (5.5.2.2.1 plus the 5 wind with lute and organ), whose articulation and clarity is sometimes lost. I'm sure this very full choral sound is exciting in a live performance, but does this – to me – overwrought style make a good recording? By contrast, the chorales are well-paced and the more reflective moments are wonderful. The obbligato players of the OAE are the tops, and the soloists (as they are in this performance) sing their arias

Bach *Saint John Passion* The Bach Choir of Bethlehem, The Bach Festival Orchestra, Greg Funfgeld (2 CDs) Analekta AN 2 9890-1

Charles Daniels *Evangelist*, William Sharpe *Jesus*, Julia Doyle, Daniel Taylor, Benjamin Butterfield, Christopher Nomura, David Newman

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

with them sensitively: there's a real give and take in these numbers which I feel is absent from the *turba* choruses.

I am glad to have heard this recording, and Layton's followers will love it; there's much musical singing and playing, but I can't pretend that it will find a place among my favourites. I sense that it was essentially conceived as a conductor's version, rather than a way of getting us closer to JSB.

David Stancliffe

Bach John Passion Reconstruction of Bach's Passion Liturgy Dunedin Consort (Nicholas Mulroy Evangelist & T, Matthew Brook Jesus & B, Joanne Lunn S, Clare Wilkinson A, Robert Davies Petrus & Pilatus, John Dunn 139' (2 CDs)
Linn CKD419

The Dunedin Consort's John Passion is something else. The result of careful research into the Good Friday Vespers Liturgy in Leipzig gives us a context that includes congregational singing of the proper chorales (with alternate verses in unison – 3 octaves!) and organ preludes on the tunes, carefully chosen so that part of the Buxtehude Prelude in F# minor played on the substantial Peter Collins organ in Greyfriars at 440 leads directly into the opening chorus of the Bach Passion. Similar sections surround the sermon – downloadable with other material – between Parts 1 and 2, and follow the Jacob Handl motet at the end. This is welcome both for understanding the practical as well as the theological context in which Bach wrote and re-wrote the material we know as the John Passion over a long period, and musically the performance by the University of Glasgow Chapel choir provides just that vigorous hymn-singing contrast to the Dunedin Consort's extraordinarily nuanced sound-world. If you've read John Butt's Bach's Dialogue with Modernity (CUP 2010), then this is the worked out musical counterpart.

In BWV 245 itself, there is everything you might expect: it has all the numbers of the mainstream NBA version. Nicholas Mulroy's Evangelista is poised and dramatic without being overblown, but I was less impressed by his arias than I expected – rather too brawny for the very delicate *Erwege*. Both Joanne Lunn and Clare Wilkinson were made for this kind of singing – voices that seem to have been formed in small consort ensembles, yet characterful with flute or oboe (Alexandra Bellamy – so good). Matthew Brook not only sings Jesus with conviction, but is

splendidly lighter in the wonderful *Mein teurer Heiland*, whose accompanying chorale provides one of the texts for the Erdmann Neumeister sermon. But what is so very special is the ensemble – voices and instruments perfectly balanced without any recourse that I can tell to the endless rebalancing that sound engineers practise. The pairs of violins play so well in tune that it's hard to imagine there are two of them, and nowhere do the instruments fail to be heard as equal partners, though the words are always crystal clear.

This is far and away the most musical and satisfying performance around among the many, many versions available; no-one – however many recordings you have of the John Passion – should be without it.

David Stancliffe

*This isn't our reviewer going over the top: it's a revelatory performance. Each time I've played it, it seems better. John Butt is a brilliant musicologist and, earlier in his career, he was a fine organist. That element returns in the framing sections of the CD – which involved transposing by a semitone on the 440 organ at Greyfriars, Edinburgh, for the solos. John's career was transformed by his move from Cambridge to Glasgow (where he is professor), though the Dunedin Consort is based in Edinburgh. The mutual inspiration of scholarship and performance, together with his general vitality and imagination, brings his performances to life. Apart from the Passion itself, the surrounding liturgy is fascinating. I've known for years that the amazing final chorale (hitched up above normal congregational pitch) was followed by Handl/Gallus's long-surviving *Ecce quomodo moritur* but I'd never heard them in sequence. (Incidentally, Handel quoted a section of it forcefully in his Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline in 1737, though I doubt if non-German listeners would have realised its significance). Whatever St Jhn Passions you own, buy this one – it's unique!* CB

Bach Weihnachtsoratorium Ersteinspielung
Teil I-III Originalbesetzung 1734 Leopold Lampelsdorfer, Thomas Riede, Jan Hübner, Georg Lutz, Les Hautboistes de Prusse, Musicalesche Compagnie, Holger Eichhorn 75' 49"
Querstand VKJK1238

This is a most satisfying, well researched and beautifully performed CD of the first 3 parts of the Christmas Oratorio. What the casual listener will be aware of at once is that the Concertisten-chor has no more than the four singers required – Leopold Lampelsdorfer, a splendid boy soprano

from the Tolzer Knabenchor and coached by its director, Thomas Riede, who manages the frequently high tessitura well, Jan Hubner and Georg Lutz: listen to the second part of the opening chorus to gain some sense of their blend and balance. Second, the instruments are treated as 'choirs', placed opposite one another (as the photo in the booklet shows), and cultivating their group tone – quoting W.C. Printz (1689) – "nobody can handle an instrument delicately who doesn't borrow the most and the best... from singing, in that everything... serves if only to copy the human voice... as everything must sing, i.e. even played music itself must sing." Third, the director specifically refers to the parallels between the registration of groups of players and singers and the way a North German Baroque organ is used. At last someone is consciously articulating that Bach's orchestra is not a cut-down version of the nineteenth century swamping strings, with a few piercing woodwind solos and a batterie de cuisine of brass and percussion to heighten the climaxes, so much as a number of bands, in the Gabrieli/Schutz tradition, playing antiphonally and together. This makes the pastoral Sinfonia at the start of the second Cantata sound freshly different – really reedy. He also uses his oboe da caccia players in parts I & III to double the viola and bass on taille and bassoon.

But this is more than a fashionably 'correct' version: it's a highly convincing one musically. The oboes produce different timbres when in soothing lullaby mode (19) from their punchy accompaniment to a bass recitativo (14); the blend and balance of the brass choir – top notes beautifully shaded and sufficient attention given to the harmonic structure of the chords – makes a different effect from a number of trumpeters arriving for a gig and all playing their individual lines in their own ways. The only doubling up is in the violins, and my one caveat is about the size – and therefore registrational possibilities – of the small chamber organ.

The singers are splendidly together, and on their own or in duet they are equally convincing: where are they placed in relation to the players? A series of maps would be fascinating, though of course you can fudge a lot of balance questions with microphones and mixers! But clarity of detail never descends into losing a sense of the whole. Tempi are well-judged: nothing feels over-hurried. The flow of adjacent numbers maintains the dramatic tension splendidly. Did they

record parts IV to VI with the same forces at the same time, or will the disc that completes the set be performed by a different grouping? *David Stancliffe*

Bach Ach süßer Trost – Leipzig Cantatas
Collegium Vocale, Philippe Herreweghe
PHI LPH006 67' 24"
BWV25, 46, 105 & 138
Hana Blaziková, Damien Guillon, Thomas Hobbs, Peter Kooij SATB

Philippe Herreweghe has recorded a number of Bach cantatas, some more than once, without ever attempting a complete series. His performances are informed and musical, and the sound of his group – for this CD twelve singers and 3.3.2.2.1 strings with various combinations of oboes, recorders, and brass, including an old motet band of cornet and three trombones – make these spirited and contrasting performances. All the cantatas come from the first Leipzig cycle and were composed within a few weeks of each other in the summer of 1723. While Bach in his mature Leipzig years tended to re-score his cantatas with flutes rather than the recorders which occur in these earlier ones – most notably in 46/1 which reappears a decade later in the *Qui tollis* in the Gloria of what would become the B minor Mass – here the recorders look back to the earlier style of cantata scoring, and I can't help wondering if single strings wouldn't have been a better balance in 25/5. Of the soloists – and they are that here – Hana Blaziková and Peter Kooij are well known to those who have invested in the complete Suzuki set, and they are splendid: only Peter Harvey can equal him I think. I find Damien Guillon slightly hooty, but Thomas Hobbs is refreshing and clear: I don't think he sings with the ripienists in the opening movement of 25, where the Tenor dialogues with the 'chorus'. Here is one of the moments when the positioning of ripienists and the four principal singers may suffer from the solo/chorus divide.

The sound is well blended in this acoustic, and Herreweghe is a masterly interpreter: Christoph Wolff writes his programme notes, which are a model of the combined theological and musical reflection of the very kind of which Bach must have been capable. Some parts of these performances could hardly be bettered – especially 105, where the soprano aria (3) and the following bass accompanied recitative (4) and then the aria with a *corno da tirarsi* (5) make a splendid group. What I miss is details in the

booklet about who made the instruments, and what models the makers copied.

David Stancliffe

Bach Cantatas for the Complete Liturgical Year Vol. 15 La Petite Bande, Sigiswald Kuijken
Accent ACC25315
BWV 52, 60, 116 & 140

Kuijken's Bach cantata project is based on selecting one of the cantatas for each of the Sundays and major feasts. This disc contains cantatas for the last Sundays after Trinity, including *Wachet auf* (140), which only comes round on those years when Easter is very early – in Leipzig in 1731 and 1742. The booklets have an essay on the rhythmic underlay of the libretti and the chorales and the interplay between them, and on Kuijken's basis for thinking that the violoncello was – before the 1750s – a deeper viola-style instrument, played across the chest rather than between the knees. For his sole bass string instrument, he uses a reedy *Basse de Violon* of 8' pitch. I would certainly agree that an 8' instrument was what Bach had in mind in the earlier cantatas, but a single string bass when both violoncello and violone appear in the score? Nor am I entirely won over by the absence of any 16' tone in later works (see my review of Kuijken's *Johannespassion* in *EMR* 148), though it is a relief not to have the 16' used throughout, as so many do: even with a bassoon, as in 52 and 140, the balance feels lightweight. The well-known engraving of an orchestra in Johann Gottfried Walther's *Musikalisches Lexicon* (1732) shows a substantial five-stringed violone – surely at least a G instrument – balanced on a stool, and Bach's predecessor at the Thomaskirche, Kuhnau, had brought a 16' instrument for use there before Bach's arrival.

The performances are alert and musical, and the words and the emotions they generate are given full rein. Cantata 52 is suitably anguished and the opening of 60 – the dialogue between Fear and Hope – is given pace and urgency by the edgy, throbbing strings and the feeling that the oboes d'amore are on the very edge of their comfort zone. The whole of the cantata, except the extraordinarily chromatic final chorale, is dramatic dialogue and suits Kuijken's engaged style – here is one of Bach's most operatic cantatas, performed here by people who aren't afraid to treat it in an un-churchy way.

116 and 140 are both Chorale cantatas, and this feels more normal territory; but

here again the dramatic interchange is central – in the wonderfully extended *Terzetto* (116/4) where the complex chromatic tuning is managed with apparent ease, and in the better-known duets (3 & 5) between the soprano and bass in 140 we never forget that we are in the presence of lovers.

These are splendid performances and you won't get better understood drama between singers and players, but I miss male singers on the two top lines, and sometimes a second string bass. Again, in the 94 pages of accompanying booklets there are no details of the instruments and their makers. *David Stancliffe*

Bach Secular Cantatas, Volume 2 Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki 74' 40"
BIS BIS-SACD-1971
BWV 134a, 208 & 1046a/1
Bach Nun danket alle Gott: Cantatas vol 51
Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki
BIS SACD 1961 80' 18"
BWV 120a, 157, 192 & 195

Volume 2 of Suzuki's Secular Cantatas contains two works: the Hunt Cantata (BWV 208) written for a post-hunting contest jolly in 1713, prefaced by the Sinfonia in F (BWV 1046a), a version of the opening movement of Brandenburg 1 and using the eponymous *corno da caccia*; and the New Year cantata for 1719 (BWV 134a), written during Bach's Cothen years when he worked at the liturgically austere Calvinist court and so had no opportunity for concerted church music.

Both these cantatas are given the excellent performances you would expect, and at first hearing only rather more florid harpsichord playing in the recitatives differentiates the performance style from that of the church cantata volumes. But there are other subtler differences: a slightly more swashbuckling style of semi-operatic singing and a chorus of 16 rather than 12, rather more whoops from the horns – but they seem rather less rustic than the terribly natural horns of the French massed performance of Handel's Water Music from this year's Proms: is there a Mike Diprose of horn players? – and it would have been instructive to compare 208's playing with Suzuki's version of Cantata 68 (1725) where some of the Hunt Cantata (including the splendid 12/8 bass aria with 2 oboes, *taille* and bassoon) is parodied, and Cantata 149 (1728) where the finale of the New Year cantata become the opening chorus.

The fluid interchange between sacred and secular reveals that Bach had a more

integrated, incarnational view of music and the later sharp distinction had little place in his theology: all music gave voice to the divine, and 'Soli Deo gloria' was a tag that could equally well apply to the 'secular' cantatas as to those written and performed by the Cantor of St Thomas, Leipzig.

The Church Cantatas in Vol 51 are a real mix. Under the heading of *Nun danket alle Gott*, the title of 192 – a setting of the three verses of the well-known hymn, three of the cantatas are, in their surviving form, wedding cantatas. 195 exists in the form it took for a wedding in 1736, and has a big band with flutes (an accompanied recit has flute and oboe d'amore semiquaver scales!) and trumpets, and three movements are choral. The only aria has a curiously modern feel with what Durr calls 'the predominance of the Lombardic rhythm, or Scotch snap' making it sound as if we had strayed into the territory of Mozart's *Spatzenmesse*. 120a is preserved incomplete, but can be reconstructed from other cantatas where much is parodied, and the slow movement of 109a, a violin sonata. The first movement, re-used as the *Et expecto* in the B minor, is particularly fine with its extended fugal writing.

By contrast, 157 is a splendid miniature, scored for flute, violin (or possibly viola d'amore as here), oboe d'amore and continuo with tenor and bass until the final choral. Originally for a funeral, but re-used appropriately for Candlemas with Simeon's *Nunc dimittis* forming part of the gospel, it has a delicate chamber-music quality. This is a particularly lovely performance with the sinuous lines of the opening duet done as well as I could wish. Persist with all the jollity of the wedding stuff till you get to this wonderful piece.

David Stancliffe

One of our readers has pointed out that we mistakenly wrote that the sacred cantata series was already complete: the online list of nos 1-200 with the number in the CD sequence looks complete, but there are more to come.

Bach Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen BWV12, Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben BWV147 Judith Spiesser, Annekathrin Laabs, Robert Sellier, Timo Janzen SATB, Arcis-Vokalsolisten München, Barockorchester L'Arpa Festante, Thomas Gropper 51' 13" Oehms Classics OC 425

This group have already produced Cantatas 131 and 182 on a previous CD, and the theological/musical comment is a

serious essay by Professor Gropper which suffers from a heavy English translation. The choir is apparently 50 strong, and its professional singers perform a wide repertoire in Bavaria. The band is a similarly large body, and no indications are given in the booklet of its size in this recording, let alone what instruments they are playing, but both the choir and the band sound pretty large, and that is the performance style. Were it not for the pitch, one would be tempted to think that this recording, which feels – for all its energy and accuracy – slightly foggy in this acoustic, was an updated version of the Karl Richter Munich Bach Choir. Trumpet and oboes are miked effectively, but the style is robust and direct – there must be more than one contrabass in the curiously held note at the end of No 2 in 147, and the secco recit at No 4 seems to be accompanied by massed cellos and contrabassi – rather than poised and elegant.

But it will have its champions and is a style that many accepted as the genuine article in the 1960s.

David Stancliffe

Bach Cantatas 46 & 102 & Zelenka Lamentations Il Gardellino; Damien Guillon, Marcus Ullman, Lieven Termont, SATB, dir Marcel Ponseele
Passacaille 977

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, that is, 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 – 2 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

Bach Une cantate imaginaire Nathalie Stutzmann, Orfeo 55, Mikaeli Kammarkör Deutsche Grammophon 481 0062
Movements from BWV 4, 18, 21, 30, 33, 42, 74, 85, 133, 147, 169, 174, 182, 191, 244, 505, 508 & 1068

This CD is an excuse for a collection of some sinfonias and one or two choruses, like the Gloria from the B minor, interspersed with Alto arias. Nathalie Stutzmann sings the arias in a rich and flexible contralto – a real, creamy contralto with a well-controlled vibrato – and directs the band that she founded, ORFEO 55, who play modern as well as period instruments as on this CD in a sonorous, full-blooded style. The tempi are extreme in both directions, and the style is post-Elgar: very rich, splendid tuning, with pointed articulation and plenty of jammy rubato. It's a novel experience.

David Stancliffe

Bach Motets Kammerchor Stuttgart, Christoph Roos org, Hartwig Groth violone, Frieder Bernius 66' 29"
Carus 83.298
BWV225–230, Anh. 159

I know Carus Verlag chiefly as the publisher of the Schütz collected edition, but also as a supplier of parts of Bach Cantatas when NBA editions aren't available. [Three recent Carus cantata scores are reviewed on pp. 6-7.] I had known they were embarking on a complete recording of Schütz, but they are clearly using their good local resources – the regions in Germany are still strongly distinct – like this choir, founded by their

conductor in his student days for other music they publish: they published a B Minor by this choir, and on the showing of this CD's singing they represent the best in well drilled, homogenous German provincial choirs. If you want the Bach motets (including BWV Anh 159) sung by a choir of 8.6.7.6 then this would be a good choice. You could find some technical quibbles – their bar-line accents are not always sensitive to phrases which cross two bars of triple time; the violone player occasionally drops to 16' pitch inappropriately – as when he doubles a bass entry at the start of a fugue – but he plays as fluently as the choir sings. And their fluency is the key: the sound is beautifully blended and they know the scores inside out: this is music that is in their bones, and some of them may have been singing in this choir for thirty-five years. So the phrasing is gracious, the texts are crystal-clear, and this is just how we all aspired to sing Bach in small choirs – clean, instrumental, blended sounds; neat articulation; breathing as one – all aided by being recorded not too close. And perhaps many still do: it's really good of its kind.

David Stancliffe

Bach The French Suites BWV812-817
Alessandra Artifoni 90' 44 (2 CDs)
Dynamic CDS 757/1-2

This release includes just the 'standard' six suites BWV 812-817, even though the 'other two' BWV 818/9 would have fitted comfortably on the discs. However, pricing does reflect this – about £15 for the set, though that's still more than the Hogwood recording of all eight. Alessandra Artifoni plays a copy of an early 18th century instrument which manages to combine clarity with a cheerful tubbiness of tone. Her *tempi* incline towards the steady, but I found that this offered a welcome opportunity to focus on the resourcefulness and imagination of the composer (hard to imagine six more different *gigues*) rather than the brilliance of the player. It also creates scope for discreet and spontaneous-sounding decoration on the repeats. On the downside, I sometimes felt the need for a little more character and consistency in the articulation. The notes are in Italian and English. David Hansell

Bach Sechs Partiten BWV 825-830 (Organ arrangements) Hansjörg Albrecht (Metzler organ St Cyriakus, Krefeld-Hüls) 157' 56"
Oehms Classics OC 684 (2 CDs)

Arranging JS Bach's partitas for a large

organ brings both benefits and disadvantages. On the plus side, the big set-piece opening movements and gigues are very impressive on full organ. On the negative side there is a fuzziness and lack of clarity in some of the faster movements (especially those played on flutes), caused by the acoustic of St. Cyriakus, Krefeld-Hüls, whose 1999 Metzler organ is used for the recording. There is also some lack of clarity in the part-writing in the more complex movements. Rhythm can sound unsettled and some of the dance movements lose their intimate character. Others, such as the Burlesca and Scherzo in Partita III, gain a fairground character which provides a real insight into their inspiration. Registration in a recording like this is an interpretation and Albrecht gives some clues as to his inspirations in the booklet notes. While this is a useful experiment I remain unconvinced that the partitas as a whole are well suited to arrangement for such a large organ. While grand in their scale, they still seem to me to be chamber music and it would have been interesting to hear them played on a more intimate chamber organ in a less resonant acoustic. Certainly worth a listen, though.

Noel O'Regan

Bach Sonatas & Partitas – Vol. 1 Hélène Schmitt 79' 21"
Rewind REW502 (© 2004)
Sonata 1, Partitas 1 & 2 (BWV 1001-2, 1004)

This is a re-issue of performances first released in 2004 as ALPHA082. The booklet is available online though I had to burrow through the website to get there – the link suggested didn't work. The playing consistently treads the fine line between spaciousness/rhetorical freedom and rhythmic distortion though is never as wilful as a performance of the cello suites I reviewed a while ago. For me this approach is more successful in the sonata movements than the dances, which sometimes lose their poise and character. I also sense at times that the player is attempting to make a baroque instrument sound modern via some rather forceful bowing. There's a lot to enjoy here, but in this house Rachel Podger remains the performer of choice in this repertoire.

David Hansell

Bach Sonatas & Partitas for solo violin
Vol. 1 Rüdiger Lotter vln 69'27"
Oehms Classics OC 838

This recording neither follows the "normal" order of the three sonatas and

three partitas, nor presents them in some wanton order on the whim of the performer; rather, Rüdiger Lotter has opted to follow the order in one of the 18th-century manuscripts in which the music is transmitted. So we have the A minor sonata, followed by the D minor partita and finally the G minor sonata. Although I've heard Lotter play before, this is the first time I have been forced to sit up and listen to what he has to say; that is not intended to sound critical – previous recordings have featured him in chamber music, and no one voice should draw attention in that repertoire. His Bach is among the best I have ever heard; I have put off writing this review, hoping sufficient words would occur to me to convey what it is that is so striking – is it the way he plays relatively freely and yet maintains the relative lengths of the notes in Bach's originals? or the way he manages truly to sound like two violinists at once (in the third movement of the A minor sonata, for example)? Is it the way that notes within chords are coloured differently? or the way he uses a variety of bow strokes to give the polyphonic lines individual sounds? Actually, it's a combination of all of these things and many more besides. This is Bach for the soul, and Bach for the heart – quite superlative playing, wonderfully recorded, and I for one cannot wait for volume 2!

BC

Bach Sonata BWV 1001, Partita BWV 1004
Miguel Rincón lute 52' 19"
Carpe Diem CD-16295

The Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin "senza Basso accompagnato" are six works (BWV 1001-6) which Bach had composed by 1720. The three sonatas each consist of four movements (slow, fast, slow, fast) in the form of a sonata da chiesa, and the three Partitas consist mainly of contrasting dance movements. Although composed for the violin, the music is largely polyphonic in character, and transfers well to a *strumento da corpo*. The Fuga of BWV 1001 was reworked for lute (BWV 1000) and for the organ (BWV 539). For the present recording Miguel Rincón has chosen one of each form – the well-known Sonata BWV 1001 and Partita BWV 1004 – and made his own arrangement of them for baroque lute.

Rincón plays a 14-course lute made by Francisco Hervds, tuned to A=392, with fretting set (according to the booklet notes) to Vallotti temperament. Its tone is rich, warm and clear, which helps Rincón explore a range of sonorities in the static

Adagio of BWV 1001. The Fuga bustles along nicely at a comfortable speed, enriched by deep bass notes and sustainable chords. I confess I find the sound of a plucked instrument with frets and many strings, a more satisfying medium for this fugue. One can enjoy Bach's lush, surprising harmonies and the way he develops the theme, without the distraction of having to admire the pyrotechnics required in playing a bowed instrument with no frets and only four strings. There follows a restful Siciliana, very nicely played, although it is a pity an occasional squeak creeps in from the wound strings. The Sonata ends with a fine Presto, involving shifts from triple to duple time.

Here I question the wisdom of opting for unequal spacing of the frets. What is commonly called Vallotti on fretted instruments is similar to sixth comma meantone, at least as far as the "white" notes (on the piano) are concerned. One cannot achieve these temperaments on a lute, as one can with a keyboard instrument, because each fret affects the pitch of more than one course. Inevitably there will be some unwanted enharmonics, particularly with a composer like Bach. The chord at the end of the first section of the Presto has a major third which is so sharp, the chord sounds sour. I think it is caused by a sharply placed first fret which produces G flat, not F sharp, for a chord of D major. Better stick to equal temperament!

The Partita opens with a slow-moving Allemande, benefitting from the "missing" Basso accompagnato supplied by Rincón. He has made a good job of the arrangement, and his expressive interpretation of the music is most convincing. His playing of the Corrente is impressive as it runs along at a good lick, as does the Giga. In the final Ciaccona he is sparing in adding extra bass notes, since there were many full 3- and 4-note chords for the violin, but he does so tastefully and always in a way which enhances the music. *Stewart McCoy*

Bach Suites 1 3 5 (BWV 1007, 1009, 1011)
Antoine Tamestit vla 59'
naïve V5300

This is one of those recordings that totally and utterly forces one to reconsider what one has always thought of certain pieces. If you search for the performer playing on youtube, you will get the measure of the man – I most recommend the absolutely stunning video of his Hindemith encore. No-one who has ever told a viola joke will ever do so again! Armed with such mind-

blowing virtuosity (and a warm, richly-toned instrument), Tamestit's Bach is lighter than you will ever have heard it before, possibly slightly faster, too, but never with the slightest loss of detail or focus; if anything he is able to shine new light on the detail, with a daintier step to the underlying dances. Despite myself being a viola player (and having taught various movements from these works to several Associated Board-minded students), I will always believe this to be cello music, but Tamestit's breathtaking renditions, crafted with great care but never to the extent of seeming artificial, are akin to someone sitting a heavy goods driving exam in a BMW sports car. *BC*

Bach Cello Suites Richard Tunnicliffe 137' 52" (2 CDs)
Linn CKD 396

I have had these discs for some while and apologise to both the cellist and Linn for my failure to write them up before now. This is very much the thinking man or woman's Bach. This is not the same as saying that the tempos are slow. As one might expect, some are either faster or slower than one has heard before, but they all feel right. Apart from this, what strikes me most about the playing is the fine judgement displayed over just how much weight (and occasionally wait) to give each note, dependent on its role in the general harmonic/melodic spectrum. In this context I especially enjoyed the control and above all the musical elucidation of the fugue in the prelude to the fifth suite. The instruments used for these performances are both contemporary with the music and their glorious sound is faithfully captured by the technical team. The final suite is played on a five stringed instrument whose lighter tone seems thin if one plunges straight into the prelude from the previous track but it soon establishes its own personality. Indeed, its clarity and agility ensure that we end the cycle on a distinctly jolly 'up', even though the final arpeggio goes down. Among the *EMR* readership there will be many friends and admirers of Richard Tunnicliffe who will already have these discs. The rest of you should join them – they're terrific.

David Hansell

Bach Violin Concertos BWV1041-1043,
Concerto for three violins BWV 1064R
Petra Müllejans, Gottfried von der Goltz,
Anne Katharina Schreiber vlns, Freiburger
Barockorchester 61' 35'
Harmonia Mundi HMC 902145

This recording will either captivate or annoy you; the Freiburgers have decided to treat the Da Capo aria-form movements like their vocal counterpart and decorate the reprises. They do not quite go as far as some of the pre-composed ornamentation that some recent opera performances have opted for, but the original line does sometimes disappear for a few notes before re-emerging under a trill, and once the approach has been established they start to take liberties in other places, too. Some people will find this approach heretical, but in the presence of such wonderful violinists, and being something of a heretic myself in respect of not buying into the theory that Bach wrote out all the ornaments that he wanted (could it be he didn't want particular passages altered but accepted that players might improvise elsewhere?), I find these performances dynamic and original in a way that just another recording of these same works never could have been. The two solo concertos are taken by von der Goltz and Müllejans, who also duet in the double concerto (could actually have done with more ornaments in the slow movement!), and they are joined (and equalled) in the reconstruction of the three violin concerto. All in all, a wonderful disc. *BC*

Bach Concertos for 2 Harpsichords & Strings, Fabio Ciofini hpscd, Markku Mäkinen org, Opux X Ensemble 49' 01"
La Bottega Discantica 117
BWV1060-1062

This 2004 recording of Bach's three concertos for two harpsichords and strings uses a harpsichord (Flemish-style by Hendrik van Scheikoven) and the organ of the church of Kotka in Finland, accompanied by a baroque string ensemble playing at a pitch of A=465. The use of contrasting instruments makes the dialogue clearer than usual, helped by more relaxed tempi. The slower tempi do lead to some loss of excitement but a strong sense of phrasing and balance goes a long way to making up for this. The recording balances the two instruments beautifully. This is a very satisfying disc and worth having as an extra alternative to a two-harpsichord version. *Noel O'Regan*

Bach's Library The Bach Players 59' 12"
Hyphen Press Music HPM 006
J. B. Bach Ouverture no. 2 in G J. S. Bach
Ouverture no. 2 in B minor Dieupart Suite no.
6 in F minor Marais Symphonies de l'opéra
d'Alcide Steffani Ouverture "La Tempête"

Apart from the slightly fiddly packaging and a shortish playing time this is an exemplary release. Graham Sadler's note both explains the *rationale* of the programme and draws attention to notable musical details, and the lively performances back him up. I applaud with some relief the either/or decision with regard to the use of harpsichord and theorbo for the continuo and the one-to-a-part performances of the 'orchestral' items emphasise the absolute validity of this approach and sonority. Much of Bach's music, like the suite recorded here, is so familiar that we can easily overlook just how brilliant it is. Playing like this is a timely reminder, and programming like this also serves to emphasise that he and it didn't just 'happen'.

David Hansell

Bach / Couperin Jean-Luc Ho *hpscd* 62'
L'Encelade ELCRI01

Bach Ouverture BWV831 Couperin *Huitième ordre* (Second Livre, c. 1716)

Playing on a Jobin copy of the 1749 Goujon in the Musée de la Musique in Paris Jean-Luc Ho pairs Bach's grand French Overture with François Couperin's *Huitième Ordre*. The pairing makes sense given that both works are in B minor and share many of the same dances. Both are also major composite works by composers at the height of their powers, indeed written when both were roughly the same age. It is fascinating to see both similarities and differences in approach and Ho's clear and unfussy performances allow us to appreciate both. I find his playing a bit restless, however, even relentless in some movements. This approach can work in the extended first movement of the Bach where he keeps up the momentum very well. As the suite progresses it gets a bit too gung-ho and rushed, especially in the Passepieds and Bourrées. Even the Sarabande doesn't provide respite. On the other hand, there is much to admire in his Couperin with some sensitive playing in the Sarabande, Gavotte and in the final *La Morinéte*. The Passacaille, on the other hand, is very rushed indeed and shows none of the subtlety usually associated with this iconic piece. Something of a mixed bag, then, but a useful combination of music and well recorded. *Noel O'Regan*

Couperin *Trois Leçons de Ténèbres*
Carolyn Sampson, Marianne Beate Kiel-
land, The King's Consort, dir. Robert King
78' 35"

Vivat VIVAT 102

+ Couperin *Magnificat anima mea, Motet pour le
jour de Pâques*, Marais Chaconne in A, *Tombeau*

pour Sieur de Ste Colombe, Ste Colombe le fils
Prélude in E minor

Their size does mean that there are challenges inherent in the design of CD booklets. However, I really can't imagine why anyone thinks that faint print on tinted paper is a good idea (ironically, the reproduced Couperin facsimiles are easier to read than the main text) and it is unusual not to include any artist biography. But the music here is absolutely top drawer – lucky Robert King to get another go at a programme very similar to one he recorded 20 years ago with Messrs Bowman and Chance. Comparisons are also invited, inevitably, with the Kirkby/Nelson duo. But they are not really needed. These ladies make their own case, singing the *Tenebrae* music with passion, commitment and attention to the many details. The felicitous combination of viol, organ and theorbo provide positive support, the little splashes of colour from the clear-voiced French theorbo being especially welcome. The other vocal works are not unknown (the Easter motet, sounding a little cautious here, was on the Kirkby/Nelson disc and the Magnificat was recorded by Bowman/Chance) but have been rare visitors to the concert platform – perhaps others will now take them up. Finally, Susanne Heinrich's solo bass viol pieces are exquisite in both content and execution.

David Hansell

Couperin *Leçons de Ténèbres* Monique
Zanetti, Françoise Masset SS, Jonathan
Dunford *gamba*, James Holland *theorbo*,
Mathieu Dupouy *org* 56' 17"

Hérisson Productions LHO9

+ Campra *Cantate Dominum* Couperin Messe
pour les Convents (extracts)

The most interesting aspects of this release are the first recording of the very jolly Campra motet and the use of a historic church organ for the continuo. In that particular role only a limited palette can reasonably be explored but it is nonetheless welcome. More of the forthright colours can be heard in the three short solos. However, there's room on the disc for much more and it is a disappointment that the instrument isn't really given the chance to live up to its prominent billing in the booklet. The singers do not really match the standards others have set in this music. MZ uses just a bit too much vibrato just a bit too often and FM is prone to portamenti – one of them really most disagreeable.

David Hansell

Couperin *Pièces de violes* – 1728 Jordi
Savall *gamba*, Ton Koopman *hpscd*, Ariane
Maurette *gamba* 43' 51"

Alia Vox AVSA9893

SACD

This reissue of their 1975 recording on the Astrée label, digitally remastered for Alia Vox, is part of the series to make all of Savall's recordings 'available under a single banner', as the lavishly produced booklet puts it. There are photos of the players as they were at that time, facsimile reproductions of some of the pages of the parts, 26 pages cataloguing their recordings, and essays in French, English, Catalan, Spanish, German and Italian. Savall's own essay on the music, written in the year of the re-release, together with a note by Harry Halbreich, and a memoir from the producer of the original Astrée LP, Michel Bernstein, are all very interesting.

But the playing is what one would buy this record for, and although it is short by modern standards it is well worth having. The young Savall plays with great authority, intense musicality, and an involving impulsiveness, which betrays itself in the occasional rushed bow stroke. In the first suite his approach is quite literal, even conservative in his tempi, but the great *Passacaille ou Chaconne* is marvellously controlled. The second suite is beautifully played: the *Prelude* really drawn out, the *Fugue* lively, followed by a masterly performance of *Pompe Funebre*, played so slowly that supreme control from all is demanded and given, followed abruptly by *La Chemise blanche* dashed off in exciting virtuosity. The accompaniment is beautifully judged and the music is wonderful. If you missed it 40 years ago (!) get it this time.

Robert Oliver

Couperin *Suites for Viola da gamba*, 27e
Ordre de clavescin Mikko Perkola *gamba*,
Aapo Häkkinen *hpscd* 60' 03"

Naxos 8.570944

Savall, even a young Savall, is a hard act to follow, but this young man approaches this very characterful music with great assurance and considerable intensity. He plays a copy of a Colichon – which some believe was the maker Marais favoured – a rounder sound than the anonymous 17th century French viol Savall plays. The first suite's *Prelude* has a lovely lyricism, and while in the *Allemande* and *Courante* his flexible rhythm shapes phrases, I do prefer dance movements to be played without rubato. The *Sarabande Grave* is lovely, and the solo viol's high entry in the *petite*

reprise is beautifully done, and he takes the liberty of plucking the final chord – a nice touch. The most technically demanding movement in the suite, by some distance, is the final *Passacaille ou Chaconne*, and his performance is exciting, if a little rough around the edges. He rushes the closing rapid semiquaver passage, and his use of rubato is inappropriate in this movement, in particular. The second suite is played with great panache. He is a dramatic player, particularly in *Pompe Funebre*, and he delivers *La Chemise Blanche* at breathtaking speed, using little or no rubato and bringing it to a close with a lovely sweetness in the final ascending phrase. The harpsichord, a Taskin copy, has a sensuous full sound which goes very well with the viol. It is heard on its own in the 27th *Ordre de clavecin* in B minor, a delightful piece with which to conclude the recording. I enjoyed this very much, particularly the third movement *Les Chinois*, a character piece, sounding more like an overture than anything remotely Chinese, and the final movement a brisk *Saillie*.

Robert Oliver

Couperin Complete Sonatas Les Dominos, Florence Malgoire 69' 47"
Ricercar RIC330

Couperin's composition of suspiciously Italianate sonatas under an 'alias' is documented in all relevant writing, including this booklet essay. Unusually, this disc gives us the music in this original sonata form – four of the pieces, including the recently discovered (in this guise) *La Convalescente*, were revised to serve as the preludes to the suites of *Les Nations* and that is the context in which they are now customarily presented. Catherine Cessac's informative and lively note makes all this clear as well as including helpful pointers for the listener. The music is all top drawer stuff – graceful melodies, elegant ornamentation and deft counterpoint – and although these performers understand all this and play very well I do not think that the performances overall do Couperin the best possible service. This is because of the scoring used. In *La Sultane*, for example, which is unusually scored for two bass viols (one plays the bass, the other a liberated 'tenor' part) as well as the two treble instruments and chordal continuo, the upper lines are played by doubling flutes and violins and the continuo is assigned to harpsichord and theorbo. For me this just muddies what is already a rich and complex texture conveyed with just as much dignity but

greater clarity, despite a slightly faster tempo, by London Baroque's 2003 recording which uses just strings and harpsichord. I found that I enjoyed the current disc most when it was at its quietest – a clear victory, then for flutes and theorbo.

David Hansell

François Couperin & Pierre Du Mage
David Ponsford (1640/1772 Levasseur /Dangeville organ of Prytanée National Militaire, La Flèche, France) 63' 38"
Nimbus NI 6213

The organ at the Prytanée National Militaire has had a complicated history, but after a "resurrection" in 1996 (by Benoist et Sarelot, retaining about half of the early pipes) it now speaks with an authentic French Baroque voice with a very complete specification. Unlike some recent CDs, there is no chant between the organ verses (as was originally intended). However, I often find that the chant can be the weakest aspect of these more liturgically accurate CDs. As well as allowing the focus to be on the thrilling sounds of the French organ, this also allows the inclusion of Pierre Du Mage's 1708 *Suite du premier ton* from a few years after Couperin's *Messe*. Helpfully, Du Mage's suite includes the distinctive sound of a *Tierce en taille*, a registration style missing in this Couperin Mass – and the sensuous *Recit* is also worth seeking out.

David Ponsford has explored this repertoire thoroughly (not least in his excellent 2011 book *French Organ Music in the Reign of Louis XIV*), and his masterly playing demonstrates a thorough absorption of the style. There are some very tiny points of articulation that I could attempt to debate, such as the rather detached touch of the *Basse de Trompette* in the *Gloria*, *notes inégale* very occasionally becoming a little insistent, the harpsichord style spread chords in the concluding *Deo Gratias* and the use of Lombardic rhythms in the *Kyrie's Recit de Chromorne* and the *Gloria's Duo sur les Tierces* and *Recit de tierce*. But the latter point is explained fully in the programme notes (it reflects Ponsford's view of the Italian and dance influence on several of Couperin's movements), and I am sure that he has well rehearsed arguments to support all his other performing decisions in this fascinating but complex repertoire. There is no absolute 'right' way to play this music, but Ponsford is most certainly very far from adopting any of the many 'wrong' ways. Strongly recommended.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Couperin Les Ombres Errantes Iddo Bar-Shai piano 70'
Mirare MIR195

This excellent programme draws on all four books of *ordres* and is supported by very good notes. The pianist has nimble fingers and it was no surprise to read that his Haydn disc has been highly acclaimed. He can certainly play all Couperin's notes: whether or not he should have done is a different matter. On the whole, the more lyrical pieces fare better though even these, when encrusted with ornaments (*Le rossignol-en-amour*) sound bizarre as piano music. It is in the faster music such as *Le tic-toc-choc* that one really misses the harpsichord's 'ping' and in *Les barricades mystérieuses* the lack of its colour undermines much of the music's impact. In the end I was left wanting to hear the music on the proper instrument. David Hansell

Geminiani, The Complete Sonatas Op. 1
London Handel Players 119' 47" (2 CDs)
Somm SOMMCD 248-2

Geminiani is undergoing something of a welcome revival recently. This recording represents a major attempt to get to grips with the music of a composer who was influential in his lifetime but has been rather neglected since. The sonatas are played here not just in their original form but in various versions reflecting the different editions and rearrangements they went through. First published in 1716, two years after Geminiani arrived in London, he revised and recomposed them for republication in 1739. Further revision followed in 1757, this time as trio sonatas. Finally, various movements from the sonatas were used as the basis for *pièces de clavecin* published in 1743 and 1762. All this gives the London Handel Players lots of choice when deciding which version of each sonata to present but they expand the choice even further by including trio arrangements by Francesco Barsanti (with 2 violins) and Pietro Chaboud (flute and recorder). The result is a fascinating journey through the different manifestations in which baroque chamber music could be heard. Two of the sonatas are given in two versions allowing for direct comparison. For Adrian Butterfield who leads the group the most interesting facet of Geminiani's rearrangements is the way they show an Italian composer becoming increasingly fascinated by the French style. The playing, both individually and collectively, is impeccable and the result is a very significant recording indeed. Noel O'Regan

Geminiani *Pièces de clavecin* Hank Knox
earlymusic.com EMCCD-7772

Knox plays 13 pieces from Geminiani's *Pièces de clavecin* of 1743 on a 1772 Jacob and Abraham Kirckmann harpsichord, now in Montreal. It proves generally suitable for this music, if perhaps a bit too bright overall in this recording which rather favours the much-used 4' register. These pieces are based on movements from his own earlier violin sonatas op. 1, 2 & 4, transcribed and ornamented by Geminiani himself. The composer rewrote the music considerably, giving it a pronounced French flavour which Knox brings out successfully. He is a sympathetic interpreter with a technique capable of dealing with the considerable demands of the music. Two extended minuets with variations are a particular attraction here. All in all a useful recording.

Noel O'Regan

Greene *Spenser's Amoretti (25 Sonnet Settings)* Benjamin Hulett T, Luke Green hpsc'd, Giangiacomo Pinardi theorbo 66' 17" Naxos 8.572891

Described as a cycle by Matthew Gardner, these lovely songs by the Master of the King's (George II) Music are some of the best English songs from this period that I have ever heard or seen, and deserve to be much better known. In his booklet note, Gardner comments that Greene was 'one of England's foremost composers', a title which, on the evidence of this disc, I see no reason to dispute, although Handel, who is known to have been much less fond of Greene, certainly would have. The tenor, Benjamin Hulett working his socks off expressing all the subtleties of these texts, impressed me enormously, as did the harpsichordist, Luke Green, whose idea the project was; he gives all the support necessary, and not a single note more, never intruding or dominating Hulett's story-telling. Opting for no bowed bass instrument to point up the bass line, the voice here becomes very centre stage, allowing us to concentrate on the words, and the theorbo is only used in relatively few songs to add to the variety of possible colours and prevent the tenor/harpsichord combo outstaying its welcome, for it has to be admitted that for all their ingenuity, and the lovely sound of Hulett's tenor, many of these songs do sound very similar. Greene handles word painting in songs such as *The rolling wheel* very cleverly, but *Gretchen am Spinnrade* it isn't, though we should not expect it to be. It is no mean feat to pull off over an hour

of Georgian song with just one voice, all in very similar keys, and still make the listener look forward to the next one, although I suspect that if they were all to be programmed in concert, I might find my seat becoming harder and harder, and being quite glad to reach the chequered flag at number 25. But on CD there are no such problems, and forgetting the cycle aspect we can happily dip into and out of Greene's collection without overdosing. Essential listening for all singers. Let's hope there is a modern performing edition of these songs available for all before too long, though evidence in the recording (one long 's' is mistaken for, and sung as an 'f' – hardly a hanging offence) suggests that the performers were using a facsimile of the original edition. Highly recommended.

David Hill

Guido *The Four Seasons* The Band of Instruments 66' 05" divine art dda25072

On opening the review packet, my instant reaction was "not another Four Seasons". On looking more closely at the sleeve, I saw that it was "not another Four Seasons". Understandably the company has marketed this as "The Four Seasons" rather than its full but hardly saleable title of *Scherzi armonici sopra le Quattro stagioni dell'anno*. Giovanni Antonio Guido warrants only a couple of paragraphs in *Grove*. Hailing from Naples, Guido (or Antonio, as he was more commonly known in Italy), appears to have settled in Paris after 1700 under the patronage of the Duke of Orléans. He was well-known as a violinist in his time, but his compositions are few – just six motets, a set of violin sonatas and these *Scherzi*, listed as op. 3. The scoring, as listed in *Grove*, is for 3 violins, viola, cello, flute, oboes and continuo, but the viola and wind are missing on this recording. The set of four *scherzi* are based, like the Vivaldi set, on four seasonal poems (thought, according to the notes, to marry up with four paintings representing the seasons commissioned by the Duke). Clearly Guido had soon assimilated the French style, for the writing is clearly in the manner of the French suite, with short descriptive sections or dances. In 'Spring', *the streams and the birds*, for example, are followed by an *Air de trompette*, a *Muzette*, and *Danse des bergers*. Very occasionally one can hear touches of Corelli, for example in an *adagio* section in 'Summer', followed by a *Chant des coucous*. Any direct comparison with Vivaldi's Italianate concerti would be inappropriate – it is much more in the

style of an *ordre* by François Couperin. There is no clear evidence of the date of composition of his op. 3 (nor have Guido's birth/death dates as yet been firmly established), but whether Guido's *Seasons* beat Vivaldi's set by a year or two – or vice versa – is immaterial. My only grumble would be lack of an English translation of both the movement titles and the four poems, which would have been helpful in following the logic of the sections in the suites. Although musically and technically less assured than his well known contemporaries, Guido's suites make fascinating listening and are admirably and stylistically played. The Band of Instruments is to be congratulated in making this music available. Ian Graham-Jones

Handel *Agrippina* Susanne Geb Agrippina, Hiroshi Matsui Claudio, Judith Braun Nerone, Elizabeth Wiles Poppea, David Cordier Ottone, Markus Jaursch Pallante, Steve Wächter Narciso, Guido Baehr Lesbo, Saarlandisches Staatsorchester, Konrad Junghänel 153' 23" (2 CDs) Intergrove Classics IGC004-2

This is a live recording from the Saarländisches Staatstheater Saarbrücken, and, from the sound of it, it was a good production. Junghänel's tempi are well-judged – of course, he's helped by the music, for this is surely one of Handel's best operas. The orchestra is excellent. The singers are good – it is, as said, a live performance, and sometimes the singers can be a little shouty (Pallante is, most of the time) and over-vibrated. This is a shame – it would be good to have a studio recording of this line-up, for they would give all the current *Agrippinas* a run for their money. However, a number of arias and recitatives have been excised and yet more have been truncated, so this is no recording for purists. Katie Hawks

Handel *Giulio Cesare* Marie-Nicole Lemieux Giulio Cesare, Karina Gauvin Cleopatra, Romina Basso Cornelia, Emöke Baráth Sesto, Filippo Mineccia Tolomeo, Johannes Weisser Achilla, Milena Storti Nireno, Gianluca Buratto Curio, Il Complesso Barocco, Alan Curtis 221' (3 CDs) naïve OP 30536

Giulio Cesare must be among the most recorded of Handel's operas and so this most recent recording needs to say something to compete. Thankfully, because this is Alan Curtis and Il Complesso Barocco, that something is a genuine wish to bring forth their interpretation of this most

beautiful of operas without resorting to superstar names or gimmicks. Of course there is the odd aria or ritornello that I prefer in other recordings but overall this one benefits from Curtis's long acquaintance with Handel, and the opera runs its course in a sure-footed manner. As usual, all his singers are a joy to listen to. I was interested to read, however, that he personally writes their cadenzas in order 'to ensure continuity'. I'm sure most singers work out their cadenzas beforehand but I do wonder whether Curtis's habit accounts for the odd moment of uncertainty in some of the cadenzas. Also, would Handel have expected or experienced that continuity from his singers? Unlikely. However, this is a minor point in an excellent and enjoyable recording. *Violet Greene*

Handel *Rinaldo* Deborah York *Almirena*, David Daniels *Rinaldo*, David Walker *Goffredo*, Axel Köhler *Eustazio*, Eglis Silins *Argante*, Noëmi Nadelmann *Armida*, Charles Maxwell *Mago christiano / Donna / Araldo* Orchestra of the Bavarian State Opera, Harry Bicket 162' Arthaus Musik 100 389

2 DVDs

David Alden sets this in gangsterland, with Rinaldo first stepping out of a tent in some lounge with a statue of Christ and wallpaper covered with the Hamsa (no doubt to give a Middle-Eastern flavour). The whole production is flat: there is no momentum – no drama, just gimmicks. The 'Christians' are all in very 20th-century costume, but Argante comes on in full medieval Saracen gear. Armida turns up in some one-shouldered lamé cocktail dress, and she appears blown on stage (oh, for some dragons). Lots of Christ figures appear and are waved around by the 'Christians', but there doesn't seem to be much point to this beyond a camp Catholic tat-fest. It's difficult to pick the nadir, but it might be the battle scene in Act III, which includes a duel with some sort of Big Boy statue and dominoes with Jesus statuettes. Bicket's conducting is, as usual, safe and unexciting. The singing is all right – Daniels and York are on good form, and Eglis Silins' Argante is quite convincing, even when challenged by Bicket's tempi (either too slow or too fast); Noëmi Nadelmann's Armida is underwhelming (and she finds it hard to keep up with the orchestra). David Walker (Eustazio) is weak and out of tune. I didn't think it was possible for there to exist a worse production than Glyndebourne's of 2011, but here it is. Avoid. *Katie Hawks*

Hidden Handel Ann Hallenberg, Il Complesso Barocco, Alan Curtis 71' naïve V5326

Music from *Admeto*, *Alessandro*, *Amadigi*, *Berenice*, *Muzio Scevola*, *Ottone*, *Pirro e Demetrio*, *Rinaldo* & *Teseo* + instrumental movements, including 10 world première recordings

At first glance this is just another compilation but closer inspection reveals a reason behind this disc – yes, a reason other than the promoting of an ensemble, director or voice! Each of the twelve arias included is either 'comparatively unfamiliar' or 'practically unknown' as Handel scholar John H. Roberts points out in his excellent and highly informative notes. In fact, these alone are of enough interest to warrant purchasing the CD. Some of the arias are fresh discoveries while others have only recently been properly identified. Instrumental music interspersed between the arias is all of unknown origin but certified Handel. Ann Hallenberg is fantastic as always and Il Complesso Barocco really come to life in these unknown works, although they can sound a bit ploddy and less certain of direction in the instrumental numbers. A surprising gem of a CD, the enjoyment of which is enhanced by its *raison d'être*. *Violet Greene*

Handel *Dixit Dominus*, Bach *Magnificat* Christina Landshamer S, Diana Haller mS, Maarten Engeltjes cT, Maximilian Schmitt T, Konstantin Wolff Bar, Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Concerto Köln, Peter Dijkstra 56' 07' BR Klassik 900504

I can still remember the first time I heard each of these two pieces. A (young) teenager at the time, I was blown away by the sheer magnificence of both works. Since then no performance has stimulated anything near that same effect. Of course part of it was my own newness to the works. However, the opening of this recording comes the closest. Everything about it is sublime – choir and orchestra sound as if they are genuinely *making* the music together. Of course the performers, soloist and director are all working at the highest standards of their fields but this does not guarantee the result. Neither choir nor conductor are early music 'specialists' but the thought and musicality that have gone into the rendition of these two incredibly well known masterpieces portray a humble approach that lets the focus rest on the music rather than the performers. Even if you have every other recording of these two works on your

shelf go and buy this one. It will be forever inspirational. *Violet Greene*

Handel / Vivaldi *Dixit Dominus* La Nuova Musica, Lucy Crowe S, David Bates Harmonia Mundi HMU 807587 66' 38" + Vivaldi *In furore iustissimae irae*

I reviewed *La Nuova Musica*'s first recording for Harmonia Mundi about a year ago and on the whole enjoyed it so was pleased to see this, their latest recording. In the interests of comparison, I started this disc with Handel's *Dixit*. On paper, this recording should be on a par or even better than the previous one. In practice, however, the performance begins disappointingly. The opening ritornello is overworked, with every note emphasized and while the choir's enunciation is impressive, the blend is not. *Virgam virtutis* offers more promise, with sensitive playing from the continuo team matched by countertenor soloist Christopher Lowrey's command and understanding. Joy is short lived, however, for *Tecum in principium* is so slow that the violins have to play the triplets as individual notes, losing all sense of line in the process. Anne Dennis manages somehow to sustain her breath enough to create something of a line, although despite lungs of steel one can still hear the breath dying (understandably) at the end of the phrase. Pacing continues woefully slow in the ensuing *et non poenitebit eum*, but just when you think it cannot get any worse there is another offensive and bizarre choral 'ornament'. I could go on, for example to question the dotting of the rhythm of *Judicabit in nationibus* or the insertion of more choral ornamentation that is questionable in both legitimacy and taste. By the time I got to yet another slow, turgid rendition (*conquassabit*) I felt as if my head had indeed been 'wounded'. This single movement (*Dominus a dextris tuis*) takes a minute and a half longer on this recording than on BR Klassik.

Readers will be glad to note that the Vivaldi's *Dixit* does not suffer quite so much at the hands of conductor David Bates and *La Nuova Musica* as Handel's. But the piece is less well known, and so perhaps Bates felt he did not have quite so much to 'prove'. Making changes to the interpretation of a work simply for the sake of marking one's territory most often comes back to haunt, especially in the digital age. So too do statements (in the 'reviews' section of the ensemble's website) such as 'Praise for David Bates's artistic vision and direction has been

unanimous'. I'm not sure that Neil Fisher's description of the 'flamboyant Bates' as a 'Wodehousian' 'figure' was intended entirely as praise! Moreover, eyebrows should be raised at Bates's opening biographical statement in which he describes himself as 'one of Europe's most exciting and creative directors of Renaissance and Baroque music and as a figurehead for a new performing generation'. On the basis of this CD I would advise the new performing generation to steer clear.

Violet Greene

Handel Cantatas *Valentina Varriale, Musica Perduta, Renato Criscuolo* 69' 15" Brilliant Classics 94426

Mira Lilla gentile (versions with obbligato violin and obbligato cello), *Tra le fiamme* HWV170 + *Anon. La caduta di Icaro*

The title is slightly misleading; in fact only *Tra le fiamme* is undoubtedly by Handel. However, Renato Criscuolo makes a convincing argument for the inclusion of *Mira Lilla gentile* in the Handel catalogue for reasons of provenance as well as style. The cantata exists in two forms, one with obbligato violin, the other with obbligato 'cello. I couldn't identify any discernible difference between the two versions (other than the instrumentation) and so wonder at the inclusion of both on the same CD. *La caduta di Icaro* is by an anonymous composer but is a setting of the same libretto, by Cardinal Benedetto Pamphilj, as *Tra le fiamme*. Rather fun, *La caduta di Icaro* rather sets in the shade both versions of *Mira Lilla gentile*, with engaging interplay between voice and instruments and a particularly pleasing arpeggiated accompaniment to the cantata's third movement. Handel's reputation is, however, rescued by the lovely *Tra le fiamme*, with its thoroughly imaginative combination of recorders, oboe and strings (including that gamba solo line). Written in 1707/8, this cantata contains premonitions of Handel's later style exhibited by works such as his *Neun Deutsche Arien*. Valentina Varriale is a new name to me but her voice really suits this repertoire, sailing steadily through every twist and turn. Equally steady are the musicians of *Musica Perduta*. Playing one to a part, they each manage to find a solid core tone without sounding forced. Balance is also great.

Violet Greene

Handel English Arias *James Bowman, The King's Consort, Robert King* 66' 03" Hyperion Helios CDH55419

Airs from Belshazzar, Esther, Judas Maccabaeus, Saul, Solomon, The Choice of Hercules & Theodora

A re-release of a 1995 recording, this collection of songs and duets from Handel's oratorios is exactly as described above – a compilation that sells James Bowman's voice in repertoire to which it is ideally suited. Playing and singing are beautiful and the performance is, as with the other Hyperion disc, well-informed. The choice of repertoire is, however, the total opposite, perhaps reflecting Handel's writing for the two voices. While Handel's 'finest arias for Bass voice' are for the most part stirring stuff, his English arias for alto are more laid back. A good disc to keep in circulation, it does not sound at all dated and so Hyperion's budget label must be congratulated.

Violet Greene

Handel's Finest Arias for Bass Voice *Christopher Purves, Arcangelo, Jonathan Cohen* 70' 54" Hyperion CDA67842

Arias from Aci, Galatea e Polifemo, Acis & Galatea, Agrippina, Alexander's Feast, L'Allegro, Apollo & Dafne, Belshazzar, Deborah, Muzio Scevola, Orlando, La Resurrezione, Riccardo Primo, Rinaldo, Semele, & Theodora

I always find myself faintly ambivalent about compilation CDs. Some 'names' can of course sell any compilation of music by any composer but I'm not sure that Christopher Purves comes into that category. Having said that, however, his voice did in fact metaphorically sell this CD to my sceptical ears. As David Vickers puts it, in his excellent sleeve notes, 'Christopher Purves is not only enthusiastic about singing from a purely musical point of view, but is also intrigued by characters whose predicaments and feelings encompass humour, nastiness, affection, lust, violence, tenderness, grief and joy'. This level of attention to detail appears to have been applied to the whole CD, for it is really a work of art, 'each aria carefully considered to the extent that it becomes an emotional journey for the listener. The instrumental standard is high and Cohen's musical choices and direction come across as well researched. Any aspiring bass or Handel-loving player (or director) would do well to own this disc. Highly enjoyable listening experience.

Violet Greene

Handel Sacred Music

Naïve V5312 (6 CDs)

Messiah (arr. Mozart) *La Grande Écurie et la Chambre du Roy* / Jean-Claude Malgoire

Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini

A Song for Saint Cecilia's Day *Les Musiciens du Louvre* / Marc Minkowski

Streams of Pleasure *Karina Gauvin, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Il Complesso Barocco* / Alan Curtis

This somewhat random collection of sacred music by Handel is a budget compilation of previous recordings. If you do not have Mozart's arrangement of *Messiah* on your shelves, the Malgoire version is as good as any. The recital disc by Karina Gauvin and Marie-Nicole Lemieux is drive-time stuff, a comforting selection inoffensively performed. The *Song for Saint Cecilia* is delightful, and Lucy Crowe is always worth listening to. Alessandrini's *Trionfo* is still the best on CD, so the set is worth getting for that alone.

Violet Greene

Handel Concerti Grossi, Op. 6 *Aradia Ensemble, Kevin Mallon* 167' 41" (3 CDs) Naxos 8.557358-60

The Aradia Ensemble is one of the better Early Music ensembles to feature on Naxos recordings and although still a little bland, their interpretation of the Op. 6 Concerti has much to recommend it. The CD case and sleeve notes make much of the fact that the recording includes the optional oboe parts that Handel added to the concerti. However, the notes also make the sweeping statement that as it was the custom for most 18th-century oboists to double on recorder and flute they have 'similarly adopted this practice for movements when the oboes are silent'. This makes it sound rather as if there is a constant wind presence throughout every concerto, based on a misunderstanding of the economic practice of 18th-century oboists. Fortunately, however, this is not the case. As far as I could tell from close listening there are fortunately some wind-free movements.

Violet Greene

Hasse Didone abbandonata (1742) *Theresa Holzhauser Didone, Flavia Ferri-Benedetti Enea, Valer Bara-Sabadus Iarba, Magdalena Hinterdobler Selene, Maria Celeng Araspe, Andreas Burkhardt Osmida, Hofkapelle München, Michael Hofstetter* 163' 13" (3 CDs) Naxos 8.660323-25

Hasse's setting of Metastasio's first original libretto was composed to celebrate the birthday of Frederick Augustus II, the Elector of Saxony (and King of Poland) in 1742. As usual on such occasions, *Didone abbandonata* was premiered in semi-private conditions in the theatre of the electoral summer residence at Hubertusberg, which not having the resources to stage Dido's final immolation in the flames of her palace, featured a new ending by

Francesco Algarotti. When it was staged in Dresden the following year the original ending was restored. Subsequently it became one of Hasse's most popular operas, apparently usually given in a conflation of the two versions. This is what happens on the present recording, a live performance of what appears to have been a dreary modern production given in Munich in the spring of 2011. It is, I fear, notable only for all-round inadequacy, being apart from anything else quite the noisiest live recording I have ever heard. The cast are apparently all shod in hob-nailed boots, while one can only assume the sounds akin to kitchen utensils being hurled around were a reflection of Dido's impatience with the irresolute Aeneas. At one point a loud gunshot can be heard, but the identity of the victim is not clear.

Michael Hofstetter seems little interested in Hasse's gloriously elegant and noble melodic gifts, being largely inclined to push tempi to extremes, while at the same time inspiring choppy, fragmented rhythms. Both Theresa Holzhauser's Dido and the Aeneas of Flavio Ferri-Benedetti make a creditable attempt on their respective role, but in general the young cast are rarely up to meeting Hasse's coloratura demands (the original Dido was Hasse's wife, Faustina Bordoni), and are allowed or encouraged to indulge in some horribly unstylish ornamentation, for once rendering the excision of many *da capo* repeats a blessing in disguise. As is customary with Naxos, a full libretto with English translation is available to download, but in truth this is a sub-standard production of a fine and important opera that demands far more sympathetic treatment.

Brian Robins

Hasse *La Contadina* (Naples, 1733)
Graciela Oddone, Lorenzo Regazzo,
Ensemble Arcadia, Attilio Cremonesi
Glossa GCD 922511 70' 28"
+ Mascitti: Concerto in G, op. 7/6

This was first issued on harmonia mundi HMC 905244 in 1999, although Glossa makes no acknowledgement of the fact. Nonetheless, it is an exceptionally enjoyable production that is welcome back in the catalogue. As his *Didone abbandonata*, reviewed above, reminds us, Hasse is of course better known as a composer of *drammi per musica* than comic intermezzi like *La Contadina*, but during his youthful years in Naples in the 1720s, he produced a number of full-length comic operas and intermezzi. *La Contadina* dates from 1728, when it was first given at the Teatro S

Bartolomeo as insertions between the acts of Pietro Scarlatti's *Clitarco*.

The plot, concerning a wealthy farmer smitten with an artful peasant girl who tricks him, contains more action than *La serva padrona*, which it predates by five years, but otherwise conforms closely to the familiar characteristics of the genre. The music is delightful, witty and melodically gracious, while the performance presents the work in the best possible light, with an enchantingly coquettish Scintilla from Graciela Oddone and the richly comic Don Tabarano of Lorenzo Regazzo, who mercifully avoids the temptation to overplay the role. Cremonesi directs the string ensemble with lively, idiomatic verve. Since the intermezzo is in the usual two parts, which would have been separated by an act of the serious opera, it is a pity that Glossa did not take the opportunity to reorganise the running order and intersperse the pleasing concerto by Michele Mascitti between the parts, rather than leaving it at the end of CD.

Brian Robins

William Hayes *Six Cantatas* (1748),
Orpheus & Euridice (1735) Mirjam Berli,
Ulrike Hofbauer, Evelyn Tubb, Paul
Bentley, Daniel Cabena, David Munderloh
SSSTAT, The SCB Hayes Players, Anthony
Rooley 89' 31" (2 CDs)
Glossa GCD922510

Anthony Rooley has already put the Oxford Professor of Music William Hayes (1708-177) on the map with his recording of the big *Ode on the Passions*, also on Glossa. He now continues his championship of this important 18th-century English composer with some smaller scale pieces. The ode *Orpheus & Euridice* is one of Hayes' earlier works, composed as the examination piece for his Bachelor's degree at Oxford in 1735. It reveals that by this date he was already an accomplished composer, his inexperience showing only in occasionally awkward word setting and arguably over-reliance on his much admired Handel. But it is a fine work, at the heart of which lie an imposing *da capo* aria for Eurydice, here extremely well sung by Ulrike Hofbauer, and a deeply touching siciliana final duet and chorus which perhaps look back beyond Handel to nod to Purcell. Scored for two oboes, strings, bassoon and continuo, the ode is splendidly performed by the Schola Cantorum forces.

The Six Cantatas of 1748 exploit the genre of the chamber cantata devoted to pastoral themes, a particular favourite with English 18th century composers.

These are for me a real find, charmingly unpretentious pieces that display Hayes' gift for turning grateful, elegant melodic lines with an endless diversity of means. Here one notes especially the confidence of the word setting, skilfully employed by Hayes to suit the needs of the text. The performances by the three young singers, all at one time or another pupils of Evelyn Tubb and/or Anthony Rooley, are utterly engaging in an appropriately homespun way, it being left to Tubb to bring a touch more sophistication (maybe a little too much so at times) in the two cantatas she sings, *Chloe's* (erotic) *Dream* being put across with a winning saucy insouciance. Tony Rooley's glory days with the Consort of Musicke may now lie well in the past, but it is good to find him still opening up new paths. All lovers of 18th-century English music owe him a big debt for leading us down this one.

Brian Robins

Leclair *Violin Concertos* Op. 7 Luis Otavio Santos vln, Les Muffatti, Peter Van Heyghen 77' 38"

Ramée RAM1202
Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

Leclair's Op. 7, published in 1737, consists of six concertos. However, the third is more idiomatic for flute (offered by the composer as an alternative to the violin, along with oboe) and is not recorded here. The booklet concedes that it wouldn't have fitted on the disc anyway. The writing in these pieces shows the influence of both Vivaldi and, especially, Locatelli with liberal use of multiple-stopping, a high range and elaborate passage-work which take the heroic soloist to the edge of technical possibility. The accompanying ensemble is 33221 – a not impossible prospect at the *Concerts Spirituels* where these pieces were surely first heard – which does make for a few not quite unison moments that the equally plausible single strings would have avoided. I do find Leclair's sonatas of greater musical interest than these concertos, but violinists will admire this playing.

David Hansell

Marais *Folies* Philippe Pierlot, Rainer Zipperling, Eduardo Egüez, François Guerrier

Flora 2511

Pièces de Viole du 2e Livre 1701, Couplets de folies, Suite en La, Suite en Mi

The recording opens with movements from the suite in D minor, *Prélude* and *Bourrasque*, and then launches immediately into the famous *Couplets de folies*, Marais'

compendium of styles for the viol. It's a brilliant performance, the movements alternating between slow and languid, and fast and furious. He aims for maximum contrast, beautifully lyrical, then astonishingly fast, particularly the *dernier couplet*. His viol has a pleasing astringency in its tone, with a full tenor and bass register. It's described in the minimal booklet information as by Thomas Allred, dated 1621 – so presumably the 7th string is added. Its silvery, slightly nasal sound is quite different from the full sound of a Colichon or indeed the Barak Norman with which he recorded the other Marais disc (*Charivary*) I reviewed (very favourably) some issues ago. However I liked the sound very much, as much for its clarity in the crowded texture of two bass viols with continuo. He plays in a compelling rhetorical style, constantly seeking, and finding the mood of each movement. His approach is literal, yet impulsive, without mannerism, yet very expressive.

The Suite in A major follows – the last one in the book, of which he plays nine of the movements, concluding with *Echo* and *Fantaisie* with its contrasting section in the minor, and important 2nd part for the accompanying bass viol. It is one of Marais' big movements not based on a dance, though reminiscent of a chaconne despite its duple time, in its repeated phrases, and its grandeur.

The suite in E, of which he also plays 9 movements, completes a generously full disc. The feature movement of this suite is surely the *Pavane selon le goût des anciens Compositeurs de Lute*. This wonderful movement receives a performance fully worthy of it. The decision to use the Allred instrument could well have been made because its sound is so suitable for this movement: its clear bass, sonorous E and A strings, and that silvery top string! I should also say that the accompaniment is superb throughout, an outstanding recording.

Robert Oliver

Gottlieb Muffat *Suites for Harpsichord*
Naoko Akutagawa 65' 05"

Naxos 8.572610
MC A13, A19, B2* & B19* (*CD premieres)

The younger Muffat had a successful career at the Viennese court and his surviving oeuvre is almost entirely made up of keyboard music. Two of these suites or *parthie* are taken from MSS in the collection of the Berlin Sing-Akademie, returned fairly recently after removal during World War II, and are given first recorded performances here. There is also

a set of 38 variations on the Ciaccona and a suite from his *Componenti Musicali* published in Augsburg c.1736-9. The suites are made up of short attractive movements in a generally Handelian style (Handel borrowed quite a lot from Muffat). The recording has clearly been a labour of love for this talented Japanese harpsichordist and the playing is confident and stylistic. She uses a Ruckers copy by Henk van Schevikhoven which works very well for this music and is recorded with fine clarity and brightness. This is another very useful recording from Naxos of less familiar keyboard music and is well worth listening to.

Noel O'Regan

Pergolesi *Salustia* Vittorio Prato
Marziano, Serena Malfi *Salustia*, Laura
Polverelli *Giulia*, Florin Cezar Ouatu
Alessandro, Giacinta Nicotru *Albina*,
Accademia Barroca de I Musici Italiani,
Corrado Rovaris 185' 2 DVDs

Arthaus 101651

I have never quite been able to understand why some feminists claim that women throughout opera have been downtrodden by men. Take *Salustia*, Pergolesi's first *opera seria* (S Bartolomeo, Naples; 1732). Adapted from Zeno's libretto *Alessandro Severo*, first set by Lotti in Venice in 1717, it is loosely based on fact, the opera taking place in the Rome of Emperor Alexander Severus during the 3rd century. At its heart lies the power struggle between Alexander's mother, the lustful, Machiavellian and vengeful *Giulia*, and his newly wed wife, the heroically feisty *Salustia*. Also central to the action is *Salustia*'s father Marziano, a proud, headstrong, ¹ Bajazet-like figure. Originally intended for the veteran castrato Nicolini, who died before the opera reached the stage, the role was changed to a tenor part. In this company, poor, vacillating Alessandro stands not a chance; he is simply a weak-willed wimp with no discernable redeeming feature. Doubtless this portrayal of a Roman emperor would have gone down well in Naples, where, as in Venice, there was little love for Roman power, temporal or ecclesiastical.

Musically, *Salustia* betrays little sign of being the first opera of a 21-year old, its only concession to immaturity being the occasional suggestion of ambiguity between the *seria* and comic styles. The otherwise splendid quartet that ends act 2 is a significant case in point.

The present DVD set is a continuation of the series recorded in the theatre in Jesi, the composer's birthplace, to celebrate the

tri-centenary of his birth in 2010. It has both good and bad features. Among the positives is a staging whose two tiers of Romanesque arcades not only looks good but also works well, allowing the action to take place on three levels. The costumes, 18th century rather than Roman, are handsome. Also to be commended is the producer's decision to allow some arias to be sung without extraneous stage business (but see below). Vocally, too, this is one of the stronger performances in the series, with a particularly outstanding *Salustia* from Serena Malfi. Her voice is a gloriously warm, rich mezzo, evenly produced across the range, and owing to impressively full chest notes. Her diction and dramatic presence are also strong, the latter quality also a feature of Laura Polverelli's forceful *Giulia*, though she tends at times to overact and, as I've noted previously in these pages, her vocal production has a tendency to be squally when put under pressure. Both men are fine, with an impressive – presumably transposed – performance by baritone Vittorio Prato in the demanding role of Marziano. Countertenor Florin Cezar Ouatu does as much as can be expected of him with the ungrateful role of Alessandro.

The bad features? These revolve principally around the producer's predilection to pay court every so often to the precepts of *Regietheater*. Indeed, there are times when, like Monty Python's general, I felt the urge to exclaim, 'Right, stop this show, it's getting silly'. Among such clichéd examples of silliness was a mania for taking off dresses and going around in underwear, although I must confess that simulated cunnilingus performed on a singer during a *da capo* aria was a new one on me. The orchestral side is mediocre, with scrawny string playing and a conductor who conforms to the current Italian mania for over fast tempi and clipped phrasing. But this is worth investigating for the fine music and some excellent singing, above all from Serena Malfi.

Brian Robins

Pergolesi *Septem verba a Christo* Sophie Karthäuser, Christophe Dumaux, Julien Behr, Konstantin Wolff ScTTB, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, René Jacobs 80' 30" Harmonia Mundi HMC 902155

Promoted without caveat as a genuine work of Pergolesi's, this setting of the Seven Last Words remains firmly rooted under the 'Spurious' heading in *Grove Music Online*. On necessarily limited aural acquaintance and in the face of a number

of pertinent questions not answered in the disc's booklet, my own view sides firmly with that of *Grove*. A large scale work consisting of seven cantatas, each including two arias and in several cases also an *accompagnato* introduction, the piece is known only from sources north of the Alps, all of which seem not only to date from around the 1760s, a period notorious for Pergolesi fakes, but also to have a degree of concordance between them. Its attribution to Pergolesi seems to me to fly in the face of several important questions: firstly, there is to the best of my knowledge no Neapolitan tradition of Seven Last Words settings, so what occasion was the work composed for? I'm surprised the curious inclusion of an obbligato harp part in the third cantata has not raised more eyebrows – the harp had no place in orchestral writing in Italy at the supposed time of composition; the writing for horns in the soprano aria at the end of the third cantata sounds to belong to a later period. But for me the most telling evidence comes from the music itself. Are we really to believe that the composer of this rather featureless, even at times clichéd work, is the same as the young genius who wrote the *Stabat Mater*? It contains little, if any, of the melodic distinction, harmonic interest or bitter-sweet chromaticism of that masterpiece, surely just the kind of writing Pergolesi might have been expected at least to foreshadow in a Seven Last Words setting? Indeed, I would suggest the attribution does disservice to Pergolesi.

What is not in doubt is the authenticity of the performance, since this is without doubt a Jacobs c.2013, bearing as it does all the hallmarks of the idiosyncrasy characteristic of the conductor's work in recent years. Here that includes absurdly drawn out and mannered cadences, grotesque dynamic contrasts etc. etc. The bass (Jesus) is grainy voiced and employs far too much vibrato; the remaining soloists are unexceptionable, while the orchestral playing is of high quality. *Brian Robins*

Telemann 12 Fantasias for Solo Violin
TWV 40:14-25 Maya Magub 69' 34"
crd 3530

Telemann's solo violin music poses quite different problems to Bach's. While no-one would ever argue that they are technically more difficult, they do present problems by being even more suggestive of part-writing than Bach – where the latter would ask you to play three- or four-note chords, Telemann writes a wide-leaping

sequence of quavers that outlines them instead. The problem for a lot of modern violinists is that they don't realise that some notes are a melody, others are a bass and the rest are really harmonic fillers. Not so Maya Magub. She explains in her booklet note that she has strung her modernised baroque violin with a mixture of gut and metal and chosen an old but not baroque bow in order to be able to afford herself a wider range of colours, and she uses these to good effect in characterising Telemann's dances in particular. The only performance practice question the recording raised for me was in a "fugal" movement (one must understand that term in its loosest meaning, given that it is only a fugue by suggestion) where each of the entries was given a different phrasing – I would have expected a single sound to have been selected for the phrase in question and then used each time it appeared. That said, there is much to commend this performance, especially as these pieces are sometimes chosen for examinations and it will be very useful for students to hear them played well by a professional violinist on a modern instrument. *BC*

Telemann Ouvertures pittoresques Arte dei Suonatori, Martin Gester 77' 12"
BIS-1979
TWV 43: G7 & B3; 55: D15, D22 & B5

This will take some beating in the Telemann recording of the year category: pair a director with a wealth of experience with a fine relatively young band, mix in some of the composer's finest music and you have an instant hit. The recital begins and ends with a D major suite, the former with three oboes, the latter with a trio of trumpets. In between come two "Polish" concertos (appropriate choice, given the performers) and the B flat suite whose movements are named after various nationalities. The string line-up of 33211 is perfectly balanced by the winds, and (of course, this is a BIS recording) the sounds and the digital reproduction of them is first class. If you want to hear the descendants of the oft-cited Polish tavern fiddlers letting their hair down, just go straight to Track 22. But this is very much not a CD full of gimmicks; from the opening note of Track 1, I loved every minute. I even forgive them for using percussion! *BC*

Tessarini Sonatas for violin & harpsichord Marco Pedrona, Marco Montanelli, Ensemble Guidantus 64' 11"

Calliope CAL1208
Op 2/2, 3 & 11, Op 14/1-6

This is the second volume in this series we have reviewed in these pages. Like its predecessor, this volume (of sonatas rather than concerti) is well played and nicely recorded. It would appear, given the style of presentation, to be part of an on-going series, so is to be welcomed as a valuable exploration of another relatively little-known composer's music, though I fear Tessarini is really not destined suddenly to outshine any of his better-known countrymen. That said, the works here would sit very nicely on any solo fiddle recital. *BC*

Vinci Artaserse Philippe Jaroussky *Artaserse*, Max Emanuel Cencic *Mandane*, Daniel Behle *Artabano*, Franco Fagioli *Arbace*, Valer Barna-Sabados *Semira*, Yuriy Mynenko *Megabise*, Coro della Radiotelevisione svizzera Lugano, Concerto Köln, Diego Fasolis
Virgin Classics 5099960286925

Coming after Pierre Audi's puerile attempts to stage Gluck (see review in this issue), this is akin to arriving in the Elysian Fields, being a beautifully staged Baroque production of a splendid opera by Leonardo Vinci. *Partenope*, or *Rosmira fedele* to give the opera its correct name, was first given at San Giovanni Grisostomo in Venice in 1725. It was the Neapolitan composer's second opera in quick succession for Venice, following the success of his *Ifigenia in Tauride* some months earlier. Working hurriedly, Vinci not only drew on the recitatives used in the 1722 setting of Silvio Stampiglia's libretto *Partenope* by another Neapolitan composer, Domenico Sarro (1679-1744), but also reused some of his own arias from earlier operas. Surprisingly, despite such an ad hoc assemblage, the opera works admirably on the stage. Already set several times and still to be employed by Handel (in 1730), Stampiglia's libretto was especially popular in Naples, dealing as it does with the myth of the nymph *Partenope*, said to have founded Naples.

The complex plot revolves around the courting of the Neapolitan queen *Partenope* by a clutch of suitors, among them Prince Arsace, the former lover of Rosmira (a part first taken by Faustina Bordoni), who has herself turned up in Naples disguised as a man to seek revenge. The opera was first revived in modern times (as *Partenope*) in an edition by the present conductor in 2004, at which time I heard it splendidly done at the Beaune Festival in a concert performance. The

high quality of nearly all the music did much to convince me that Vinci was at least as good an opera composer as Vivaldi, a view that has further strengthened over the intervening years.

The present staging dates from 2011, when it was given in Murcia, Spain with a cast similar to that in Beaune. In true Baroque fashion, the set makes extremely effective use of perspective, with a view of Vesuvius in the background and an imposing *palazzo* to one side. The costumes and complementary headdresses are possibly the most sumptuous I have seen in an opera production, all rich russets, golds, reds and yellows. The singers have clearly been well coached in the art of the use of hands in Baroque theatre. My single caveat regarding the production would be the inappropriate use of dancers in some arias, stylish though the dancing is, but the spectacular stylised battle scene at the end of act 1 is brilliantly directed.

Vocally Vinci's arias, a judicious mix of virtuoso coloratura pieces and cantabile writing of often languishing beauty, are mostly capably sung. Most accomplished of all is mezzo Sonia Prina's authoritative *Partenope*, but Maria Grazia Schiavi's captivating *Rosmira* repeats the success she enjoyed at Beaune, the odd uncontrolled note above the stave excepted, while Maria Ercolano's *Arsace* is also fine. Only Stefano Ferrari's rather pallid *Armindo* disappoints seriously, this tenor role having been taken to greater effect in Beaune by Makoto Sakurada. No conductor has greater insight into Neapolitan music of this period than Antonio Florio, who directs his Turchini forces with customary élan and sensitivity. Finally, I cannot let pass mention of the delightful intermezzo's by Sarro, texturally augmented to cater for the delighted Spanish audience and riotously brought off Borja Quiza and that great Italian comic actor, Giuseppe de Vittorio.

This set is an absolutely obligatory acquisition for anyone who loves 18th century opera. It should also be obligatory watching for any producer putting 18th century opera on the stage and all those who maintain modern audiences won't (or can't) take historical staging. As it makes clear at the final curtain, the Spanish audience absolutely adored this.

Brian Robins

Vivaldi *Orlando 1714* [Orlando furioso, RV81g] Riccardo Movaro *Orlando*, Romina Basso *Alcina*, Gaëlle Arquez *Bradamante*, Teodora Gheorghiu *Angelica*, Delphine Galou *Medoro*, David DQ Lee *Ruggiero*,

Roberta Mamei *Astolfo*, Modo Antiquo, Federico Maria Sardelli 110' (2 CDs)
naïve OP 30540
Tesori del Piemonte Vol. 53

Vivaldi did not make life easy for those who, 250 or so years later, wish to explore his dramatic music. The number he claimed to have written far exceeds the number known now to be extant; some of these are clearly incomplete; he re-used his own material and borrowed that of others; and in his role as an impresario he staged settings by other composers. The confusion surrounding this particular work is clearly laid out and explained in the booklet but added to by the cardboard case which speaks of *Orlando 1714* on the front but *Orlando furioso RV81g** on the back. To cut a long story short, this is not another recording of Vivaldi's now most famous 1727 opera, but a recording of what can be re-constructed of his earlier *Orlando*, some of which may be by someone else or by Vivaldi but originally for a different context. And what remains lacks an overture, a third act and the upper string parts for some arias. Having got all that clear in my own mind, it came as something of a relief to listen to the recording. The sinfonia RV781 gets us off to a sprightly start and this lively mood and impetus is maintained throughout. Even without a third act, this torso has a basic dramatic integrity and the skill of the necessary reconstructive surgery ensures that the overall musical experience is rewarding. The singers are all impressive in the passagework, though I did find some of the *da capo* elaboration too obviously composed and lacking a sense of spontaneity. Vivaldi completists and explorers of the still shady world of baroque opera will definitely want this and it is not without interest for the rest of us. And we must all admire the investigative and musical skill that has brought it to life.

David Hansell

*Online versions of RV go only as far as 812. However, Federico Maria Sardelli is now adding new discoveries and reconstructions to the catalogue and has given this work the appellation *Orlando furioso RV81g*. Beware the possible confusion.

DH

Vivaldi *Concerti per violino V 'Per Pisendel'* Dmitry Sinkovsky, Il Pomo d'Oro naïve OP30538 78'
RV177, 212a, 242, 246, 328, 370 & 379

I have seen several reviews of this recording – or rather the group and soloist, who have been accompanying soprano

Joyce DiDonato on a tour of her *Drama Queens* recital. Most critics are taken by Sinkovsky's astounding virtuosity, but almost unanimously write about this "new kid on the block" – somehow all the fabulous performances in which he has participated with *Patrum Integrum* on *Caro Mitis* count for nothing (is this label still not readily available in the UK?) The seven concertos on the disc all have links of one sort of another to the Dresden Konzertmeister and renowned virtuoso, Johann Georg Pisendel, one-time violin pupil of the Red Priest and dedicatee of works by other composers, including Albinoni and Telemann. Sinkovsky demonstrates in the written-out cadenzas that he has an awesome technique, and in the slow movements he is not afraid to let Locatelli or even Tartini colour his ornamentation. Il Pomo d'Oro accompany very well, varying the sounds they make to different context (their bassetto of violins and viola is very nice!). Just very occasionally I found the continuo players a little distracting if not exactly annoying. Are silly pluckers making a come-back? Let's keep our fingers crossed! BC

Zelenka *Lamentations* see under Bach
Zelenka *Masses etc* see p. 22

Contra-Ténors James Bowman, Iestyn Davies, Philippe Jaroussky, David Do Lee, Gérard Lesne, Andreas Scholl & Dominique Visse 68' 04"
naïve V5328

Music by Bach, Charpentier, Dowland, Gluck, Handel, Purcell & Vivaldi

There is, of course, irony to conquer here. Was any of this music written for the modern virtuoso falsettist type of voice? But anyway, here they all are and you pays your money and takes your choice. These particular pieces do not perhaps show PJ at his best, but AS is superb in his Bach. GL does not convince in his English song though he is excellent in Charpentier, as is JB, with his heroic timbre, in Handel. I've enjoyed DV's singing more in earlier music than this Vivaldi, but the younger generation more than hold their own. ID sings a very good *da capo* (yet more Vivaldi) and the Korean DDQL has no orchestra to hide behind in his continuo aria but need not fear. The so-called bonus track, from the 1994 film about Farinelli, is astonishing.

David Hansell

CLASSICAL

Crescentini *Cantate e Ariette a voce sola e fortepiano* Marina Camparato mS, Gianni Fabbrini fp 128' 41" (2 CDs)
Tactus TC 760390

I was expecting sub-Rossini, sub-Bellini bel canto songs, a kind of musical 'treading water' but this surprised and delighted me. The quality of the music composed by Crescentini (1762-1846), the doyen of Castrati (who impressed Napoleon so much that he demanded him as soloist at his coronation), is remarkably high, and both of the two aforementioned composers would have been more than happy to have put their names to any of these pieces, I'm sure. A wonderful discovery of a composer. Lovely singing of lovely, relatively simple unornamented music without histrionics, and sensitive accompaniment on a copy of a 1790 Walter fortepiano. My record of the year so far.

A slight, not entirely irrelevant digression: as we all know, artistes' publicity portraits, like their CVs, are always chosen by the performers (and/or their agents) to reflect either their jolly outgoing personality or sometimes the sense of seriousness and integrity as a performer that they wish to project – there never seems to be any middle ground, and the booklet note here provides an example of both extremes. Fortepianist Gianni Fabbrini appears as the kind of amiable, smiling young chap one might immediately bond with over a glass of Chianti. The icy, basilisk stare of the beautiful Ms. Comparato, a rising star in Italian opera, in her artist photo, however, clearly wishes to convey intense professional seriousness. I'll bet her audiences never even think of coughing if she wears the kind of 'Mirror, mirror on the wall' expression as seen here when singing in a concert. I know that this is not relevant to the musical quality of a CD, especially one as outstanding as this, but ultimately such details really do impact on how we *perceive* and imagine performers, especially if we never get to see Ms. Comparato in concert. In fact, this image reminded me of those books of grim(m) fairy tales many of us had as children, containing at least one very scary illustration that we always took care to skip over. If you are of a nervous disposition, avoid page 8 before you listen to this lovely recording! *David Hill*

Dussek *Duos for Harp and Piano Forte* Masumi Nagasawa harp, Richard Egarr fp Et'cetera KTC1436

op. 26, 72, 73 + duettino for Miss Purling Monzani; + *Introduction & Waltz* by Sophia Giustina Dussek-Corri

Reaching us just too late for a review in the composer's bi-centenary year (d1812) this recital is utterly delightful. Dussek was an important figure musically as well as historically in the world of the piano and his relationships with the harpists of his day, one of whom he married, also inspired him to compose a significant repertoire for that instrument, both solo and in combination with his own. And these are not trifles fit only for the salon – the opening movements of the major works on this disc run to 11, 9 and 10 minutes respectively. The near contemporary instruments (Broadwood piano 1804 and Nadermann harp c1815) combine perfectly to the point at which it can be difficult to distinguish them and both players are so clearly enjoying themselves. Richard Egarr's essay (which needed a more careful proof read) urges us to 'open ourselves' to this music. This isn't difficult.

David Hansell

Gluck *Iphigénie en Aulide / Iphigénie en Tauride* Véronique Gens, Mireille Delunsch, Chorus of De Nederlandse Opera, Les Musiciens du Louvre Grenoble, Marc Minkowski 229' + 38' Opus Arte OA 1099D

IeA Véronique Gens *Iphigénie*, Salomé Haller Diane, Nicolas Testé Agamemnon, Anne Sofie von Otter Clytemnestre, Frédéric Antoun Achille, Martijn Corneel Patrocle, Christian Helmer Calchas, Laurent Alvaro Arcas
IeT Mireille Delunsch *Iphigénie*, Laurent Alvaro Thoas, Jean-François Lapointe Oreste, Yann Beuron Pylade, Salomé Haller Diane

Gluck's two Iphigenia operas stand at either end of his final Paris period (1774-1779), *Iphigénie en Tauride* being the last of his *tragédies*. As such they represent the culmination of 'his' operatic reforms (it is often overlooked that others played a part in the process), the fusion between French and Italian styles into what was in the history of opera up to that point, especially in the sweep and grandeur of *Tauride*, a uniquely powerful form of music drama.

The present set features a 2011 Nederlandse Opera production by Pierre Audi in which the operas were given in a single day, making for a Wagner-length occasion. They are both presented in an ugly set, featuring contorted shapes of scaffolding into which are set dangerously steep metal stairways on either side of the stage. The orchestra, for the second time

in my recent viewing experience, is seated at the back of stage, its activities at times all too evident, thus distracting from what is happening on the stage. There are, mind you, plenty of times when it is a welcome distraction, since Audi's direction is largely a drearily clichéd affair, in drab modern dress – rulers in petty dictator's uniform and shades? AK 47 wielding guerrillas? Oh, please, Mr Audi. We've been there, seen that. At least a hundred times. I suppose the bomb belt strapped to Iphigénie may be an original touch, but I'm not prepared to take bets on it. (In the documentary that accompanies the set Audi expresses the view that it is a 'poetic' way to die.) There is, needless to say, also much rolling and scrabbling about on the floor, especially in *Tauride*, where the chorus plays a much greater on-stage role. I could go on, but will spare you, dear reader, observing simply that there are times when Gluck's music can be sensed to be shrieking in protest at the conflict between its elevated nobility and what is happening on the stage.

It is something of a relief to turn to the musical content, which exists on a higher plain, especially in *Aulide*, where there is the benefit of performances of infinitely touching beauty and nobility from Véronique Gens in the eponymous role and Anne Sofie von Otter as her mother Clytemnestre. Von Otter's singing of 'Par un père cruel' is indeed so unbearably poignant as to induce tears. Nicolas Testé is an appropriately tortured Agamemnon, Frédéric Antoun a heroic Achille, though the image is undermined by the trench coat he sports. *Tauride* features a considerably less effective Iphigénie in the person of Mireille Delunsch (the voice was in better shape when she recorded the role on CD for Minkowski in 1999). Jean-François Lapointe (Oreste) and Yann Beuron (Pylade) make for a strong, if at times vocally overwrought pair of heroes, but Laurent Alvaro's decently sung portrayal of Thoas is laughably reminiscent of a pantomime demon king. Minkowski's direction is splendid, but for a few tempos that drag (the opening of *Tauride* is a case in point), while he draws superb playing from his orchestra throughout what must have been a long and challenging exercise. If you want a DVD of *Iphigénie en Tauride*, William Christie's Zurich performance is the one to have (EMR 144), while Minkowski's Archiv CD set of *Tauride* is infinitely superior to this woefully unimaginative staging.

Brian Robins

Haydn String Quartets Op. 33 Eybler Quartet 117'54" (2 CDs)
Analekta AN2 9842-3

This quartet is going to make a serious name for itself if it carries on playing like this. These are the pieces that Haydn marketed as being composed in 'a new and special way', and one might say that that is just how they're played. I love the slightly gruff sound of the instruments but there's still plenty of brilliance in the tone of all four players when this is required. And above all there's a sense of spontaneity and risk-taking. It may well be that one or two *portamenti* wouldn't be used again, but any slightly raised eyebrows these might provoke will soon be wiped away by a satisfied smile or a swift intake of breath at a rich sonority (there is a ravishing viola/cello moment) or a spectacular piece of ensemble work. The order of performance does not correspond to any of the various published orders but it does make sense to end with the hyperactivity that is *The Bird's* finale. Haydn is the most underrated of the Great Composers, in my view. This group is doing their bit to raise the value of his stock.

David Hansell

Mackintosh Airs, Minuets, Gavotts and Reels Concerto Caledonia (David Greenberg & Greg Lawson vlns, Alison McGillivray vlc, David McGuinness hpscd, sq pf) 68' 18"

Delphian DCD34128

This was the first CD I played after John Butt's *St John Passion* (see p. 31). There is indeed a slight connection – Glasgow, and both CDs include Alison McGillivray. "Red Rob" (Robert Mackintosh, c. 1746-1807) came from Perthshire, but lived mostly in Edinburgh, with little success in Aberdeen, and onwards the end of his life he worked at Newcastle and London. The title of this CD is that of the main source of the music here, his op. 1 of 1783. The scoring is "mostly for two violins and a bass for the violincello or harpsichord". David McGuinness contributes an extensive essay on scoring; the "or" is significant, and there is flexibility whether a bass is needed. Not all pieces have a second violin, and the use of two was part of Scottish dance tradition. I must confess that it's not music for concentrated listening for over an hour, though there is a three-movement sonata which might have led to a more sophisticated style: the *Largo* is pleasing.

CB

L. Mozart Solosonaten und Trios Christine Schornsheim fp, Sebastian Hess vlc, Rüdiger Lotter vln 80' 15" (2 CDs)
Oehms Classics OC860

The city of Augsburg is well worth a visit. As well as a series of grand buildings there can also be found the rather more modest house (with a marvellous pastry shop next door when we visited) in which Leopold Mozart was born and in which resides a 1785 fortepiano built by Johann Andreas Stein. This now makes a rather dry sound, though with a significant dynamic range, which gives the overall sonority captured here a domestic quality even though the recordings were not made in the house. Leopold's music is less bland than one might fear. In the solo sonatas there is much melodic charm and more to the left hand writing than simple Alberti figuration. The trios limit the cello to a quasi-continuo role but the relationship of the violin and piano right hand is rather more varied. All the playing is top class and the supporting material interesting and readable if never quite in idiomatic English. However, given the short running time, the discs are over-priced at c.£20. Better to download for roughly half that.

David Hansell

Mozart Missa Brevis in D, Missa Brevis in B flat, Regina Coeli Elizabeth Cragg, Deborah Miles-Johnson, Daniel Auchincloss, Lawrence White SATB, St Albans Cathedral Choir, Sinfonia Verdi, Tom Winpenny* org, Andrew Lucas 67' 34"
Naxos 8.573092
+ Allegro and Andante in F minor, K608*

An hour or so in Mozart's company is never wasted, even when the music is not something by which he himself would have set great store. The best music here is the organ solo, originally for a tiny mechanical instrument in a clock (has anyone ever heard it like this?) but here 'scored up' very tastefully and played with considerable virtuosity on the cathedral's magnificent instrument. In the choral pieces the soloists are placed very forward in the overall balance to the disadvantage of the choir and to the musical detriment of their antiphonal exchanges. Soprano Elizabeth Cragg has the lion's share of the solo work and combines most happily with the period instruments when she keeps the lid on the vibrato. The choir is well prepared – not too treble-heavy as cathedral choirs can be – and sings with good tuning and ensemble. The trebles are sometimes technically stretched by the

more ornate passages and everyone suffers from some rather clipped phrase endings (perhaps less noticeable in the building) but in the greater scheme of things these are small points. This choir's reputation is growing and this release will do them no harm.

David Hansell

Mozart Clarinet Concerto Eric Hoeprich, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Frans Brüggen 59' 33"
Glossa Cabinet GCD C81107
+ excerpts from *La Clemenza di Tito*, Adagio KV411, Mauerische Trauermusik KV477

This wonderful anthology, drawn from five different recordings (1986-2001), brings together many of the fruits of Mozart's close relationships with the clarinettist Anton Stadler and the clarinet maker/ player Theodor Lotz, especially their collective experimentation with and exploitation of the various forms of basset clarinet. All of these are explained in a newly written and very informative essay by the soloist. The concerto is given a spacious reading, supported by a warm orchestral sound, in which there is much detailed phrasing. The highlights are the arias, with Joyce DiDonato in peerless form, but even after her contribution the little Adagio (2 clarinets and 3 bassoon – gorgeous) and then the Masonic Funeral Music still make an impact. This is the kind of recording that reminds one just how great the Great Composers can be.

David Hansell

Mozart Pieces for two fortepianos Alexei Lubimov, Yury Martynov
ZigZag Territoires ZZT306
Sonata in D K448, Larghetto & Allegro, Adagio & Fugue, Quartetto arr. Pratsch

I greatly enjoyed this recording. A scintillating performance of one of the young Mozart's finest keyboard works, the Sonata in D, brings out its grand scale as well as the operatic quality of the writing in the first movement. The beautifully-played Andante achieves an unforced *cantabile* and uses *una corda* very effectively, while the final movement bristles with Haynesque wit. The two players are united in their approach, achieving great clarity as well as possessing the necessary virtuosity. They carry these on into the other works, particularly the C minor Adagio and Fugue which have been reunited here. Robert Levin has completed Mozart's unfinished Allegro in Eb in a convincing manner and this is skilfully played here together with its partner Larghetto. I'm

not quite convinced of the need for a two-piano version of the Piano Quartet but here, too, the players achieve a successful fusion. They play on two original anonymous forte pianos of c. 1785 and c. 1790, from the Miek Hueting and Edwin Beunk collections respectively. Highly recommended.

Noel O'Regan

Türk Easy Keyboard Sonatas Collections I & II Michael Tsalka (various period pianos) 106' 7" (2 CDs)
Grand Piano GP 629-30

There must be many of us who, either as teachers or pupils, have experienced (or experience) the music of Türk. I'm not convinced that it is quite strong enough to justify this *intégrale* approach to recording though on the other hand this is just the kind of project that a niche label like Grand Piano (part of the Naxos stable) should take under its wing. The music is perfectly competent, often pretty and always charming but I was never really excited by it. In some respects the instruments are the really interesting aspect here. These are a Stein grand of 1784; a Stein (son of the previous) upright of 1820 more brittle in tone than father's grand; the only surviving piano by the Italian maker Sodi (1785) with its rather noisy mechanics, which actually soon stop being intrusive; and a 1781 Shudi/Broadwood harpsichord with swell and 'machine' pedals. All these instruments are from the same, clearly impressive, collection.

David Hansell

19th CENTURY

Beethoven Missa in C Maria Keohane, Margot Oitzinger, Thomas Hobbs, Sebastian Noack [SmSTBar], Kammerchor Stuttgart, Hofkapelle Stuttgart, Frieder Bernius
Carus 83.295 48' 13"

I can scarcely believe it is over 20 years since I heard this work on period instruments, nor that it has taken that long for another rival to appear (the only one of note being Hickox's excellent Chandos disc). Much as I enjoyed *both* of those, this sadly all-too-brief disc from Carus will sit alongside them on the shelf, and may well be taken off it first when I feel an urge for instant uplifting – it feels a little faster and more energetic than its English rivals, and I must say that the clarinets (in such delightful passages as the "suscite depreciationm" of the Gloria) brought an instant smile to my face. The playing across the orchestra is excellent,

and the chorus is very much among the best in the world. The four soloists are all very good, but it is tenor Thomas Hobbs who is my tip for a star of the future – his is one of those marvellously clear voices, and combined with immaculate diction (a characteristic of ALL the vocalists, choir included). With plenty of room to spare, one might have expected more of a filler than Cimarosa's rather nice motet *Sciant gentes*; surely there is a lot more of his church music out there that could also have been included? So full marks to everyone but the executive who approved such a short disc in the 21st century! BC

Beethoven Missa Solemnis Simone Schneider, Gerhild Romberger, Richard Croft, Jochen Kupfer SATB, Gewandhausorchester, MDR Rundfunkchor, Herbert Blomstedt 78' 55"
Querstand VKJK 1237

Since we're rather lacking in reviewers of this repertoire and I had already written about a period performance of the MS last time around, I felt I should hang on to this disc, if only to compare the two. Wholly expecting to have my ears blasted off by the assembled forces and have to scribble furiously about muddy textures and the wobbly chorus but never has anyone had so quickly to eat his own words. In fact, the performance, though in a totally different way to Herreweghe's last time around, is commanding, assured and very dramatic, as all renditions of this monumental masterpiece must be. Upon reflection, much of one's impression of a piece must be relative to the forces used anyway, so in this context slightly bigger voices don't vex the ears as much as they might against the backdrop of a period band. Blomstedt takes few liberties with the score in any case, so no objections in that department. All in all, in my lowly opinion, a very fine performance, finely caught by the engineers. BC

Beethoven Symphonies 5 & 7 Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, John Eliot Gardiner *Live at Carnegie Hall*
Soli Deo Gloria SDG 717

These are new live recordings by ORR made in Carnegie Hall during a US tour. The sound is good, though some might prefer a slightly stronger bass in places, and the audience astonishingly quiet. There are one or two moments which might not have survived studio sessions but they are tiny and the general thrust and drive of the playing is more than

ample compensation. As usual, JEG takes no prisoners and reminds us that this music really was revolutionary: these days we may need the uninhibited and distinctive colours of a period orchestra to make this point. Rhythms are crisp, accents and other details get the full treatment – Beethoven as he wrote it. This is a distinguished and distinctive complement to the studio recordings of these amazing pieces.

David Hansell

Fanny Mendelssohn Quartet in F Felix Mendelssohn Quartets op. 13, op. 80.
Quatuor Ebène 76' 50"
Virgin Classics 50999 464546 2 1

This CD would not normally be reviewed in these pages, but we were sent a copy and there does not seem to be a HIP recording of either the Fanny Mendelssohn Quartet in E flat of 1824 or her brother's Op. 80, a passionate pseudo-Requiem for his elder sister who died suddenly in 1847 – he would only survive her by a few months. The first piece on the disc is his youthful A minor quartet, Op. 13 (for which the two fiddlers of the Ebène Quartet interestingly swap seats) and a fine performance, clearly influenced by HIP thinking, sets the tone for the entire disc. As I'd written before, I used to find an entire concert of 19th-century chamber music rather a chore; had the Quatuor Ebène ever visited Dundee, I think a couple of hours would have flown by! Definitely an ensemble to watch. BC

Molique Violin Concertos Anton Steck, L'arpa festante, Christoph Spering 65' 11"
Accent ACC 24247
Concertos in D minor op 10 & E minor op 30

This is a typically enterprising recording from Accent, one of the most adventurous labels these days. Surely known to a very restricted audience, Molique was a violin pupil of Spohr and music director at Stuttgart from 1826. Anton Speck has selected two concertos from the surviving handful and they make a complementary pairing for the CD. As usual, Christoph Spering draws fine performances from the orchestra, and Steck, while not flawless (I doubt many violinists would be in this repertoire), manages to get to the soul of the music without being blinded by all the notes in a captivating and convincing way. I don't think I would like to hear many more violin concertos by Molique, but I am glad to have heard this excellent recording of some classy performances. BC

Stanford The Complete Works for Cello & Orchestra Gemma Rosefield vlc, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Manze 70' 08"
Hyperion CDA67859

BC reviewed the score used for the performance of the Cello Concerto (see p. 9) but I kept the CD, though only listened to the concerto in detail. It's worth buying just for that, and the other pieces seem fine as well. As with the following disc, the booklet benefits from Jeremy Dibble's expertise. The scoring of the Concerto is particularly expressive, exploiting small-scale grouping of instruments skilfully. BC certainly confirms the quality of the concerto, though it's a pity that A-R Editions does not mention availability of orchestral parts.

CB

I was glad: sacred music of Stanford and Parry. Carolyn Sampson, David Wilson-Johnson SB, Choir of the King's Consort, The King's Consort, Robert King
Vivat 101 67' 52"

Parry Blest pair of sirens, I was glad, Jerusalem, Te Deum in D; Stanford Mag & Nunc in A, Bb, C G

Having been raised with Christian values without actually attending church much, and even then one without a proper choir and little music other than a variety of rousing and rather dour Scottish hymns (with one or two notable exceptions), the world of Anglican services which opened up to me first during a university Renaissance group residence at Lincoln Cathedral one Easter vac was something of a revelation. While most of my colleagues were bored at the prospect of singing more Stanford and Parry, I was completely taken aback by how well these composers wrote for voices, with sweeping melodies, luscious harmonies and – yes, I'm going to mention it again! – clever counterpoint when required. The one thing that I really didn't like was the way much of the music was controlled by the organist – if he wanted to slow down, we had to, too; if he fancied pulling out a few extra stops, we had to move into *can bello* mode, and so on – you get the idea!

Imagine my delight, then, when this disc arrived and I was able, for the first time ever, to hear this fabulous music with all its rich instrumental colour, two fine soloists and a marvellous choir. (No disrespect to the excellent Hyperion series, which I thoroughly enjoyed – the only CDs I think I have actually bought in the last 15 years!)

The music Robert King has selected is

absolutely top notch, and his performances (with instruments specially sourced for the occasion) are knock-out! Prince Charles's recent biographical programme on Parry, (high in personal passion for the man if lacking depth of knowledge) should be followed up by the BBC with another on Stanford, and I suggest they book these forces – perhaps even also to give period instrument performances of one of the symphonies. For Stanford is no mean orchestrator – those in the know draw parallels to Brahms, and I must say that there were many times while I repeatedly listened to this recording that recalled the sounds of particularly his 2nd and 3rd symphonies and the German Requiem.

Carolyn Simpson relishes her solo in the Magnificat in G, a perfect blend of purity of intonation and warmth of tone, while David Wilson-Johnson has an imposing presence in the following Nunc dimittis, without letting his rather more rapid vibrato distort the lines. Although this is a period instrument recording, it is not without its hi-tech moments – the sounds of the Hereford Cathedral organ were digitally relayed into the acoustic of St Jude's Church, where the recording took place. If I had not written this (and you didn't read the informative booklet notes), I doubt if you would realise.

I am not ashamed to admit that I found listening to this a rousing and moving experience, not quite enough to convert me to regular church going (where could one expect to hear such quality performances?) but certainly enough to ensure this disc's place on my "regular listens" shelf for months and years to come. BC
Now I'm having sight problems, I feel even more that designers of booklets should be more aware of the obstacles they create. In this case, the print is very small with unnecessarily wide leading, and the glossy paper is a further handicap.

CB

ANTHOLOGIES

Early Music Collection (Signum classics anniversary series) 73' 24"
Signum Classics SIGCD301

This 15th anniversary compilation from Signum includes 26 tracks which range from an anonymous *Kyrie eleison* from c1000 to Bach and Telemann. While I am impressed by this breadth of repertoire – much of it far from mainstream – I am also struck by the unnecessary amount of make-it-up-as-you-go performance practice that can be heard in the music of all periods. There are also odd descriptions of some items – perhaps a case of

economic paring down to misleading levels. The lovely Byrd organ *Fancie* (track 9) is definitely not being sung by The King's Singers, although it is from a CD on which they appear, and the credit for the next item needs to include the bassoonist rather than the harpsichordist, who is playing the organ in this movement anyway. So the curate's egg must be invoked again, with the excellent parts – Tenebrae singing Alonso Lobo and a track that The King's Singers actually do sing – head and shoulders above much of their surroundings.

David Hansell

Ostinato Le poème harmonique, Vincent Dumestre 65' 23"

Alpha 817

Compilation from previous recordings

This anthology of ground bass settings is drawn from four previous releases. I have always felt that this ensemble develops arrangements of the music that are more elaborate than it actually needs or than are historically plausible and nothing here changes my view. It's all very well done, of course and easily enjoyable. I just find myself wondering 'why do that?' David Hansell

Philippe Jaroussky – The Voice 150' 6"

Virgin Classics 50999 602660 2 6 (2 CDs)

Philippe Jaroussky – La Voix des Rêves – Greatest Moments in Concert 161' (Blu-Ray)

Virgin Classics 50999 017591 9 8

Both recitals include music by Caldara, Handel, Monteverdi, Porpora, Purcell, Rossi, Sances & Vivaldi; the CDs include six new recordings

This substantial anthology is mainly a trawl of back catalogue highlights, but also includes a handful of new recordings. In his 18th century operatic heartland Jaroussky is quite superb and has revived significant forgotten gems such as the arias by JC Bach included here from a recital devoted to the composer. His accompanying ensembles do not always have the best possible taste however. I can feel Antony Hicks turning in his grave at the lute quavers in *Ombra mai fu* and Monteverdians both living and dead may react in the same or an equivalent way to the backing that L'Arpeggiata supply for *Laudate Dominum*. The *mélodies*, while they will not be to all tastes, work for me, but if the thin tone and less-than-perfect intonation of Fauré's *Pie Jesu* were offered by a woman or boy I do not think they would be considered acceptable. Yet another curate's egg then, but with only a few dodgy parts, and the excellent bulk is spectacular.

David Hansell

SCHEDE ON THE NEW JERUSALEM

Hugh Keyte

Striggio's 40-part motet *Ecce beatam lucem* sets the second and third sections – Antistrophe and Epode – of a tripartite neoclassical Ode by the German poet and composer Paul Schede, who took the pen name Melissus from Melissus of Samos, the celebrated philosopher of the 5th century BC. *Ecce beatam* is generally taken to be the 40-part work that greeted two distinguished papal envoys who passed through Florence in 1561 on their way to the *Colloquy de Poissy*. The sole and very brief account (in Agostino Lapini's Florentine Diary) does not specify where the performance took place, and it used to be assumed that it was at the envoys' civic reception at a city gate. But the delicate filigree of *Ecce beatam* could hardly have been designed for outdoor performance, and a much more likely venue was the *duomo*, in which envoys of this calibre will have enjoyed a second, ecclesiastical reception.

There is a detailed account of a later *duomo* reception of this kind for Christine of Lorraine, the 1589 bride of Grand Duke Ferdinand I. It describes how she was led to kneel just before the eastermost bay of the nave, whereupon four great cloud machines descended, bearing masked and costumed singers and instrumentalists, to present a huge sacred tableau. At two still later *duomo* receptions the two massive final numbers of the 1589 *Intermedi* were given new sacred Latin texts and recycled to accompany comparable tableaux. So it seems highly likely that that is how *Ecce beatam* was given, too – particularly since the opening words ('Behold the blessed light') would seem to mirror the knock-out theatrical effect as the sky shutters rolled back far above and the brilliantly illuminated machines began to descend into the always-crepuscular nave. The tableau on this occasion will have been a representation of the Christian cosmos or (loosely) the New Jerusalem: within the vault the Trinity, enthroned against a starry sky with sun and moon; around and below them on the upper cloud machines Christian saints, on the lower ones their Hebrew patriarch and prophet precursors, with the central heroic figure of King David, ancestor and Old-Testament 'type' of Christ, singing and harping the Godhead. All this can be inferred from the text, but the Virgin Mary (patroness of the cathedral) will inevitably have been represented, too; and there may well have been other elements, such as a Christian altar above and its counterpart, the Ark of the Covenant, below.

When I edited *Ecce beatam* (for a 1981 Radio 3 programme on the Charles/Diana wedding day) I was unaware of Schede's authorship of Striggio's text. His youth and Lutheran faith¹ did not prevent Cosimo I from commissioning it from him,² perhaps as a compliment to Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I, who had recently ennobled Schede as Poet Laureate in Vienna.³ But why is there no setting of Schede's Strophe? This sets the scene for the celestial cloud descent, with the poet caught up in the Holy Spirit and taken by the hand by Christ as the cosmic vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem is revealed. My guess is

that Striggio did set this, to be sung to his own lirone accompaniment – something for which he was famed. Perhaps he sang it himself, representing the divinely inspired Poet:⁴ or perhaps – since at least two celebrated female poets were known from ancient Greece – the singer was his soprano wife Virginia, who often performed alongside him.⁵ But in either case, why does the music of the Strophe not survive alongside that of Schede's Antistrophe and Epode? Conceivably because no staging was involved at any of the subsequent performances (among them the one that Lassus directed at the Munich wedding celebrations of 1568): so any setting of *Vivon'* might deliberately have been omitted from the presentation manuscripts of *Ecce beatam* that Striggio distributed to the Bavarian, imperial and French courts: and it would subsequently have been lost, together with the remainder of the original 1561 performing material.

My own setting of the Strophe is intended to replace that putative Striggio original. It was first performed by Clare Wilkinson (mezzo), Erin Headley (lirone), and Eligio Quinteiro and Lynda Sayce (lutes) at a concert given by I Fagiolini, dir. Robert Hollingworth, in St. Augustine's, Kilburn, in September 1912. It was preceded by Malvezzi's six-part Sirens' *Sinfonia* from the first of the 1589 Florentine *Intermedi*, which was to be imagined as played by the instrumentalists of *Ecce beatam* as the clouds descended and the sacred tableau took shape.

My original intention was to compose a simple four-part madrigal in a Striggian manner of around 1561, the soprano part of which could be embellished for a soprano or tenor in an appropriate manner. Despite my best efforts this turned out hopelessly inert, and I opted instead for a kind of writing familiar from the 1589 solo numbers, on the dubious argument that such could have existed twenty-eight years earlier without ever being notated. Subscribers to *EMR* intending to direct a performance of *Ecce beatam* may nevertheless feel like prefacing it with Malvezzi's fine *Sinfonia* and my Strophe: or perhaps my attempt will inspire someone to compose an enjoyable but more historically credible setting of Schede's resonant verse.

1. He later converted to Calvinism, but retained the friendship and respect of people of all denominations. In later life he was even presented with a papal medal and granted the Freedom of the City of Rome.

2. Or perhaps it was selected from existing works. The complete Ode was published in a much later Schede collection.

3. This could have played a part in Duke Cosimo's long-drawn campaign to persuade emperor and pope to grant him the quasi-royal status of Archduke. Eventually the equivalent title of Grand Duke was specially invented for him.

4. He may even have improvised, in line with a long-established Florentine tradition, though there is no record of him as a singer.

5. I am grateful to David Butchart for advice and information on this topic.

For Clare, Erin & Robert: with admiration

Paul Schede (Paulus Melissus) (1539 - 1602)

Hugh Keyte (b. 1943)

At a steady but flexible pace

Vi - von', vi - von', an ex - tra me ip - sum ra - ptus a - gor? San - cte Fla -

9 - tus, San - cte Fla - tus, quas par - tes Mun - di co - lo? Quae lo - ca, mu - ta - tus, fre -

15 - quen - to? Lae - tos cer - ne-re vi - de-or Chri - sti vul - tus, di - vi - no sci - ntil - lan - tes, di -

21 - vi - no sci - ntil - lan - - - tes ful - ge - tro. Pro - xi - mum me de -

26

- xtra tan-git, di - vis im - mi - stum, et pal-me-am ten-den - tem ma-nu vir -

32

- gam. An no-va i - stac, an no-va i - stac Urbs So - ly-me est, Urbs

37

— So - ly-me est, et gem - - - - -

41

- mis ni - tens et au - - ro, ni - tens et au - - ro?

Segue Ecce beatam lucem

Edition Michael Procter

Singers around the world will be pleased to know that **Edition Michael Procter** is available again, some nine months after Michael's sad death. His large collection of sacred choral music by renaissance composers is a very valuable resource for choirs, churches and music lovers.

From about 1990, Michael ran day, weekend and longer courses for singers of renaissance sacred polyphony. His great love was to perform the music in the true liturgical context for which it was created, so far as modern church services would allow. He was unusual in that the music he brought to his courses was mostly his own editions. As the years went by, he relied less and less on other editors' work. With few exceptions, he created fresh editions for every course, all transcribed from original sources in libraries all over Europe. The result was a growing corpus of choral music which he offered for sale as **Edition Michael Procter**.

At the time of his death, there were an estimated 850 pieces in the catalogue (including versions offered in different transpositions). These will be verified and re-catalogued over the next few years. Orders and enquiries are welcome now at info@edition-mp.com and will be produced and sold by Peacock Press (jerry@recordermail.co.uk).

The catalogue is online at www.edition-mp.com. Contact: Robin Rigby, robin.rigby@josquin.com

LETTER

Dear Clifford

I endorse 100% Brian Robins's comments about opera. I myself noted in a recent DVD review the incompatibility of swords and references to armour with a cast wearing grey overcoats. But all is not entirely lost. In January I saw the ROH *Bohème* which looked the way it should and this last weekend I've been to the ENO *Barber*. Crinolines on stage and a fortepiano in the pit for the recitative. And it was very funny.

David Hansell

We are particularly grateful for the large number of reviews signed with David's name this issue.

CB

OVERFLOW CD REVIEWS

Handel Alcina Catherine Naglestad *Alcina*, Alice Coote *Ruggiero*, Helene Schneiderman *Dramadante*, Catriona Smith *Morgana*, Stuttgart State Orchestra, dir Alan Hacker Arthaus 102300 159'00" DVD

Ave Maria Les petits chanteurs du Mont-Royal, Theater of Early Music Choir, Daniel Taylor

Analekta AN 2 9841

Settings by Arcadelt, Bruckner, Byrd (*Ave verum*), Caccini, Gounod, Hildegard (*Ave generosa*), Josquin, Pärt & Schubert + Monteverdi (*Magnificat*)

see p. 23

Ode XV: On The New Jerusalem

Vivon', an extra me ipsum
raptus agor? Sancte Flatus,
quas partes Mundi
colo? Quae loca, mutatus, frequento?
Laetos cernere
videor Christi vultus,
divino scintillantes
fulgetro. Proximum
me dextra tangit,*
divis immistum, et
palmeam tendentem
manu virgam. An nova istac
Urbs Solyme est, et
gemmae nitens et auro?

Do I [yet] live? Or, snatched out of myself,
am I carried away? O Holy Spirit,
in what regions of the World
do I find myself? Whither am I transported?
I seem to see the face of Christ
shining out far and wide,
with divinely luminous
splendour. Closely
his right hand touches me*
as I mingle with the immortals,
bearing a palm
branch in my hand. And is that apparition truly
the City of Salem,
gleaming with jewels and gold?

* Presumably a reference to two identical biblical verses, Song of Solomon II.3 & VIII.3: Leva eius sub capite meo et dextera illius amplexabitur me. / His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.